

FRIDAY - SUNDAY, MARCH 20 - 22, 2009

WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE

Lebanon's wine country

Touring and tasting
in the Bekaa Valley

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WEEKEND JOURNAL

EUROPE

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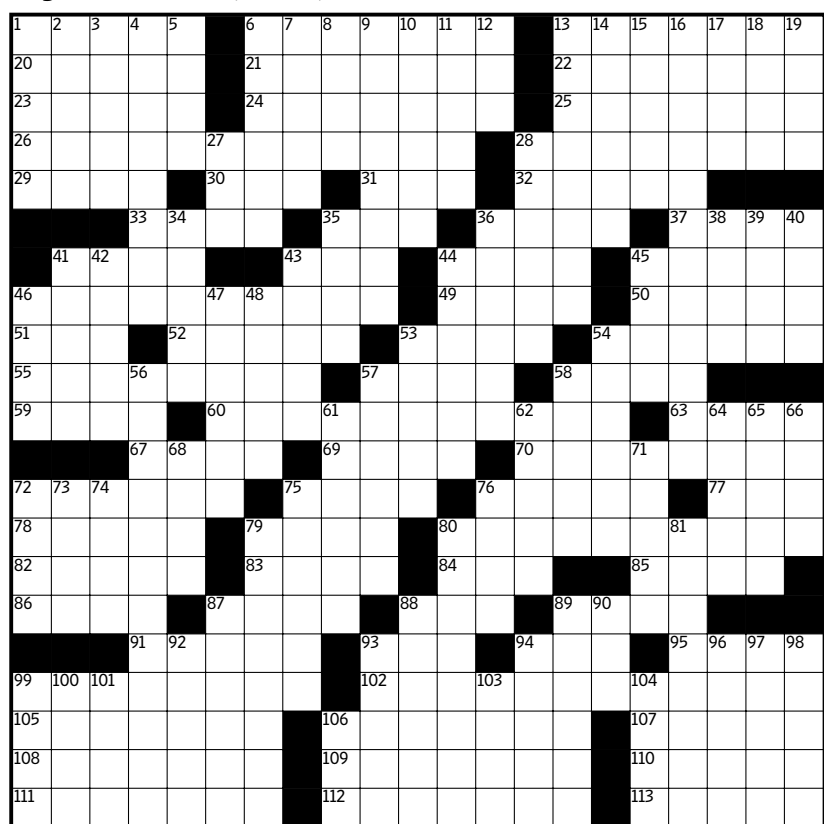
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Last Week's Solution



❖ Fashion

Perfume's affinity for couture

DURING THE PARIS fashion shows, a number of store buyers and style editors veered from the hubbub of the runways to the Yvon Lambert Gallery in the bohemian Marais district.

The draw: a new line of exquisitely detailed womenswear by the house of Rochas, a historic brand that for nearly three years had existed only as a line of fragrances.

On Style

CHRISTINA BINKLEY

When owner Procter & Gamble shuttered the brand's fashion line in 2006, it seemed to be the end of Rochas. But as it turns out, those P&G fragrances kept the brand alive until a new manufacturer emerged.

Fashion and fragrance: It's one of the ready-to-wear industry's most stable marriages. Many, if not most, successful colognes are offshoots of luxury clothing brands. Gucci, Dior, Dolce & Gabbana, Thierry Mugler, Stella McCartney, Juicy Couture—you can pick your favorite designer and smell like them. A number of once-celebrated fashion houses have been reduced to fragrances for years until a designer came along to air them out. Chanel was famously revived after years in a bottle.

The benefits of fragrance for fashion are clear-cut. It costs more to manufacture clothes, which come in all styles and sizes, than scents. With their high margins, fragrances often contribute the lion's share of profits to a brand and can support it through boom and recession. At Puig Beauty & Fashion Group SL, the Spanish fashion company that owns Nina Ricci and Carolina Herrera, 80% of its net revenue came from fragrances in 2007, the most recent year reported.

But even as fragrances enrich fashion brands, it's a truth less acknowledged that fashion helps fragrances as well. Every good eau needs clothes.

When a brand is left with only a fragrance, as in the case of Rochas, it runs the risk of losing its relevance. "Fragrances have only a certain shelf life," says Robert Burke, an investment consultant and former Bergdorf Goodman executive. "Fragrances are generally successful when they're connected to a living person." The buzz created by celebrated designers and runway shows can update and revivify an old perfume.

So it was the fragrance of Rochas that lured Italian fashion manufacturer Gibò Co. SpA to re-open the house. After a licensing deal with P&G last fall, Gibò President Franco Penè hired Italian designer Marco Zanini. Mr. Penè asked for a collection with the elegant understatement of brands like Hermès and Gucci Group's Bottega Veneta, hoping to draw a contrast with flashy, heavily logoed lines.

This is hardly an ideal moment to introduce a new luxury-clothing line. After a six-year boom, luxury sales are expected to fall by at least 15% this year. What's more, even the scent business couldn't prevent Rochas from losing money on clothes a few years ago. The house was founded in 1925 by Marcel Rochas, who has been credited with designing the first 2/3-length coats and skirts with pockets. By the time designer Olivier Theyskens was hired in 2002, Rochas was known

more for cologne than clothes. But Mr. Theyskens's collections were critically acclaimed and turned that image around. He won the Council of Fashion Designers of America's International Award in 2006. Some of those gowns, though, were priced well over \$30,000—reaching a thinly populated stratum that didn't make the line profitable. P&G discontinued the clothes line within weeks of its designer's award.

Still, Mr. Zanini's Rochas is another world entirely. It's reasonably priced, as luxury clothing goes, with dresses costing between \$950 and \$1,400 at retail, and jackets priced between \$850 and \$1,300. Since that still isn't cheap, Mr. Zanini, a veteran of Halston and Versace, has endeavored to include for the brand's luxury clients the sort of interior details that have largely disappeared



The new Rochas collection, designed by Marco Zanini (left), features understated looks and attention to detail.

from modern clothing. Women's cardigans and jackets have generous interior pockets. Feather-light cashmere sweaters are lined in silk.

Everything is manufactured in Italy, and much of the work is done by hand. The result is understated and highly feminine. One knitted lace dress could be a workhorse, packable and, like the blazers, presentable at corporate meetings. Other el-

ements of the collection, such as light silk blouses, are more fragile.

Rather than a logo, a signature Rochas ribbon runs through inside seams—visible only to the woman who wears the clothes. In a knitted dress, the ribbon motif is subtly repeated in the knit pattern.



He's a fan.



To find out why Dennis Hopper is a fan visit www.mandarinoriental.com BANGKOK • BOSTON • CHIANG MAI • GENEVA • HONG KONG • JAKARTA • KUALA LUMPUR • LONDON • MACAU • MANILA • MIAMI • MUNICH
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❖ Top Picks

Norway's unsung architectural hero

STOCKHOLM: Contemporary architecture lost an unsung hero last month, when Sverre Fehn, Norway's best-known architect and the torchbearer of Scandinavian modernism, died at 84. Mr. Fehn, who combined monochromatic building materials, like concrete, unfinished wood and slate, with an intuitive sense of space, found an ideal setting for the modernist enterprise in the fjords and wooded mountains of his native Norway.

In 1997, he was the first Scandinavian to receive the Pritzker Prize, but his work remains largely unknown beyond a small group of architectural devotees.

The reason for Mr. Fehn's lack of celebrity is twofold. Many of his greatest buildings—like the Norwegian Glacier Museum, located at the end of Norway's longest fjord, about 250 kilometers inland from Bergen—are in especially remote parts of an already remote country. And his self-effacing persona made him entirely ill-suited to the p.r.-saturated world of globalized starchitecture.

Mr. Fehn forged a body of work that was essentially a private investigation into the light and landscapes he saw every day at home in Oslo. His Glacier Museum, finished in 1991 and widely considered his masterpiece, is the inverse of Frank Gehry's shimmering, towering Guggenheim Museum; it draws attention away from itself, and away from the architect, into the glaciers that dwarf it.

Last year, in conjunction with the opening of Mr. Fehn's final project, Oslo's Norwegian Museum of Architecture, the museum itself organized a retrospective of his work. "Architect Sverre Fehn" has now reached Stockholm's Arkitekturmuseet.

Architecture exhibitions are notoriously difficult to pull off. Curators, who necessarily rely on two-dimensional tools like photographs, are severely hindered when trying to replicate the three-dimensional experience of actually visiting a building, and even a well-intentioned architecture show can turn into a hermetic display of blueprints and scale models.

The Arkitekturmuseet gets around the usual problem. Its enormous hangar has the space and the light to transform photography, and the Fehn exhibition, in its current installation, is like an alchemist's feat. At least a dozen of Mr. Fehn's buildings, including several of his Norwegian villas, somehow come to life, thanks to oversize color-collage photographs, which present the buildings and their sites from different perspectives.

The collages are accompanied by the usual architectural paraphernalia, like drawings and models, which may only interest a specialist. However, anybody can appreciate the accompanying documentary film, shown in its own little theater, which dramatizes Mr. Fehn's rational approach to architecture and mystical relationship with nature.

Later this year, the exhibition moves on to Helsinki's Museum of Finnish Architecture.

—J. S. Marcus

Until May 3
www.arkitekturmuseet.se



Sverre Fehn's Norwegian Glacier Museum in Fjærland, Norway.

Jiri Havran

Overlooking a Bavarian lake, 'Landscapes of the Soul'

KOCHEL AM SEE, GERMANY: "Landscapes of the Soul," in the new Franz Marc Museum, examines the intimate, personal paintings Lovis Corinth created during his holidays in the Bavarian mountains between 1918 and 1925. The scenery so captivated the artist he built a house overlooking Walchensee, or Lake Walchen, one of Germany's deepest Alpine lakes. Corinth never seemed to tire of the view and painted it repeatedly, much as Monet did with his water lilies.

The main focus of the exhibition is on Corinth's views of Walchensee, including one the artist painted in the moonlight from the terrace of his house. Many of the works on display are from private collections and have been rarely seen.

The show also includes self-portraits, created by Corinth from 1921 until his death in 1925.



'Self-portrait at Lake Walchen' (1922), by Lovis Corinth.

Courtesy Franz Marc Museum

The portraits vary greatly, showing the artist's growing fear of death and age.

Since its opening last year in June, the new Franz Marc Museum has drawn more than 80,000 visitors, far exceeding all projections for its success. Part of the charm is its location overlooking Kochel See, another of the region's picturesque Alpine lakes.

The other is the delightful collection of Franz Marc's works, most of which had previously been in the collection of the artist's wife Maria. The Corinth show is the first of a planned series of temporary exhibitions of artists related to Marc and others from the Blue Rider group.

The new museum, designed by the Zurich architectural firm Diethelm & Spillmann, features windows framing the views that inspired generations of artists, thus creating a symbiosis between art and nature. Now artworks by Marc as well as the 20th-century artists who were inspired by him share space in this white cube-like building overlooking the lake in a landscape that Marc memorialized as the "Blue Land."

—Mariana Schroeder

Until April 19
www.franz-marc-museum.de

Palladio's oeuvre: majestic, beautiful, but also functional

LONDON: The Royal Academy's best rooms look even more handsome than usual with the installation of "Andrea Palladio: His Life and Legacy," an exhibition celebrating the quincentenary of the influential architect's birth.

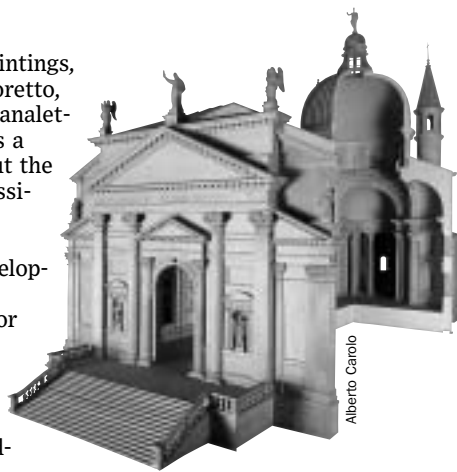
It's fitting, as the RA is situated in a building whose remodeling by the third Earl of Burlington initiated a Palladian revival in the early 18th century.

This is the first exhibition devoted to Palladio (1508-1580) in London for 30 years. With plans, drawings and magnificent large-scale models, the architect's career is traced from early palazzi and the great basilica in Vicenza, where he grew up, to the Venetian churches and the impressive Villa Rotonda, with its four spectacular symmetrical entrances.

As a bonus there are paintings, portraits by El Greco, Tintoretto, Titian and Veronese, and Canaletto's views of Venice. This is a very detailed exhibition, but the models make it easily accessible to non-architects.

The organization of the show follows Palladio's developing career, and gives the viewer a concrete feeling for how he learned and illustrated the basic grammar of architecture from his own studies and reconstructions of classical buildings.

But best of all, it shows how he adapted these models so that they could serve their functions, from the rural villas where the arched façade might conceal the threshing floor and the loggia was used for collecting grapes after the wine harvest, to the suburban villas whose design was more to put on a show, and make it seem that the owners were landed gentry with country matters weighing on



Model of the Church of the Redentore by Andrea Palladio.

their minds.

This wonderful show goes on to Fundació "la Caixa" in Barcelona from May 19-Sept. 6, then to Caixaforum, Madrid from Oct. 6-Jan. 17, 2010.

—Paul Levy

Until April 13
www.royalacademy.org.uk



Cohen & Cohen London

Chinese boar's head tureen (18th century); asking price: €225,000.

In Maastricht, no sign of crisis

Maastricht, Netherlands WALKING THE flower-bedecked halls of fine art fair Tefaf in this Dutch town, it's hard to imagine there's a global financial crisis.

A flow of visitors browse the 239 galleries with their wealth of old master paintings, antiques, ancient sculptures, ceramics, glass, jewelry, illuminated manuscripts, modern art and design. The total visitor number will be released after the

Collecting

MARGARET STUDER

fair closes on Sunday but attendance at the invitation-only private view is usually a good indicator of the fair's pull. This year some 9,255 collectors, curators and art world devotees came, nearly as many as the 9,435 in the record year of 2008.

From day one, many dealers reported brisk sales, although they say buyers may think longer about purchases and negotiate prices with more vigor. "Collectors will always collect," says Tefaf Chairman and London-based dealer Ben Janssens. He points out that the fair's main collector base is continental Europeans, and "they don't have the same panicky feeling you get elsewhere." Among the 30 works Mr. Janssens sold at the private view was a striking 18th-century red lacquer Chinese landscape, which fetched "a substantial six-figure sum."

London dealer Robert Hall says "The fair is a welcome distraction. People can get lost here." Mr. Hall is a snuff bottle specialist and his stand glows with colorful, little Chinese bottles. Among the items quickly snapped up was an exquisite orange and yellow glass piece made to imitate realgar, a poisonous mineral that is almost pure sulphide of arsenic, beautiful to the eye but poisonous to the touch (price: around €2,000).

British dealer Cohen & Cohen makes a fun Asian art contribution to the fair, offering the Chinese ceramic menagerie collection of Texas collector James E. Sowell. An 18th-century boar's head tureen has an asking price of €225,000; and an 18th-century pair of monkey ewers, €160,000.

In the popular ancient art corner, London's antiquities dealer Rupert Wace has sold a rare elongated Sardinian bronze figure topped by a sombrero, wearing a cloak and with hands outstretched, from the 10th-7th centuries B.C. The figure, which looks extraordinarily modern, fetched around €120,000.

Versace update: Meanwhile, at this week's Sotheby's sale of property from the Lake Como residence of the late Italian fashion designer Gianni Versace, which I wrote about last week, a giant pair of 19th-century plaster casts of wrestlers by Antonio Canova from Mr. Versace's bedroom sold for £433,250—more than 10 times their pre-sale estimate of £20,000-£40,000.

Inventing for maximum media impact

BY KATI KRAUSE

Special to *The Wall Street Journal*

A FEW YEARS AGO, newspapers around the world reported that a Spanish inventor had created a washing machine that could fight the country's infamous *machista* culture. Activated by fingerprint, the machine would respond only if the man and woman in the household took turns doing the laundry. Never mind that the invention's practicality was questionable. That wasn't the point. It was a good story.

The machine's inventor, Pep Torres, is an expert at thinking up good stories. The 44-year-old is the founder of Stereonoise, a creative studio in Barcelona that generates media buzz for other companies through inventions that are sometimes critical of society, usually contain a grain of humor and are always successful at grabbing people's attention.

His inventions include a door that reminds you to take your keys as you leave, aphrodisiac bed sheets for businessmen, a kitchen towel with a magnet sewn into one corner and a curtain that can be attached to a beach parasol for privacy.

Mr. Torres has worked in many professions, including working with a luthier and composing the music for a cabaret theater in Barcelona. But his real vocation is invention. He was granted the first of his 25 patents at the age of 17 and is the mind behind more than 200 objects.

While most of his inventions today originate from a client's desire to make a p.r. splash, they still serve a real purpose: either to explain our surroundings, or to improve them.

The Mudac museum in Lausanne is currently displaying six pieces from the Pep Torres Futour series in an exhibition on packaging design, "Wrapping to design," through June 1.

We met Mr. Torres at his studio in L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, near Barcelona.

Q: What have you been thinking about this morning?

I've been thinking about not being late, and about all the emails I had to answer.

Q: That's not very creative.

There are more fun parts to my job but generally, it's a lot about management. In the world of ideas, 1% of the work is the idea, the spark. To make it happen is the tedious, annoying part. But people judge you for the idea made reality, not for the idea in your head.

Q: How did you get into this



Pep Torres in his studio; above right, the designer's brush-cleaning dustpan.

job?

I've always liked the world of invention; or rather, the world of creativity. Ever since I left home at the age of 21, I've had millions of jobs. That has given me a very rare education that I apply today. The studio and the people I manage, we do something very strange: We sell ideas.

Q: When you finish an invention, are you usually happy with it?

No. Hardly ever. There is always something missing. And even though it's an invention, the design is important. And I'm never convinced. I'd always be retouching.

Q: But you don't do it?

No. There are the maximizers and the satisfiers. I'm a satisfier. Once I think I've dedicated sufficient time to something, I'm on to something else.

Q: What's the difference between inventing and designing?

Inventing is creating a new object, a new process; design gives a form to that invention.

Q: Your designs, in turn, usually create an impact.

Every invention I make has a discourse behind it. My inventions explain things that concern us—human relationships, or the obsession with dieting—and that makes the audience empathize with them. If on top of it you make it beautiful and pleasant, the object becomes more than an object: It tells a story.

Q: So your inventions criticize rather than solve problems?

There's a little bit of both. Take my kitchen towel with the magnet in one corner: It's an object, it doesn't explain anything. On the other hand, I have invented an egg wrapped individually—the egg for singles. If you are single, you buy six eggs and one of them always goes bad. So this object explains a lot of things: about singles, loneliness and so on.

Q: What are the ingredients of a successful media campaign?

It has to tell a story that everybody can relate to. Secondly, it has to be topical. Thirdly, it has to be surprising. If you claim to have aphrodisiac bed sheets, everybody will want to know how they work. So you create a space and show it to people. That was for a client who wanted something for a very boring business fair.

Q: And do they work?



Well, in order to be real news, they have to work!

Q: What are you trying to achieve with your inventions?

To make a better world, I guess. I want to do something that makes a difference. I need an economic base that allows me to do things that don't generate any money but make me feel good. Media noise is a business, and it allows me to do things like Futour, the exhibition about the future I organized. I lost so much money with that! But it fulfilled me to be able to explain how I think the world works, through everyday objects.

Q: What do you think are the aspects of life that inventions can improve?

All of them, without exceptions. I think we should teach people to grow personally, not to abandon themselves.

Q: Where do you get your inspiration from?

Everywhere. I keep my eyes open, look at everything and question everything. When I ride my motorbike, I have to take out my mobile phone and record something that has just occurred to me.

Q: And what do you do if you can't think of anything?

I can always think of something. I go through hard times because sometimes the idea doesn't want to come out, but in the end it always does.

Q: Do you think anybody can be creative?

Yes. But creativity has to be worked on. The most important

thing is to read, and to be curious.

Q: Read what?

Everything. The more, the better. Don't just limit yourself to the mainstream. What I do from time to time is go to a bookshop and randomly pick up a book or a magazine, and read it.

Q: What's a good idea?

A good idea is an idea that fulfills its objective. What is it you want? Make money? Get on TV? If the idea fulfills its objective, even if it's stupid, it's a good idea. I've often thought that something was a good idea, but people wouldn't buy it. If they don't buy it, it's a bad idea, and your ego will have to put up with it.

Q: Have you ever been wrong about an idea?

All the time! I'm wrong 30 times a day. And I've nearly ruined myself several times for investing in disastrous business ideas.

Q: You seem to be very critical of Spanish society.

I'm critical of a society that does not make progress. There is a culture here of getting rich through shady dealings. That's not my thing. If you want to make money, make an effort; don't try to make a packet overnight.

Q: Tell me a problem you'd like to solve.

Oh God, there are so many. I'm going to look like a Miss Universe candidate if I tell you: peace, poverty, hunger, diseases... those are the big themes. On a smaller scale, I think the issue of locomotion and pollution. To make sure that by moving around, we don't kill the planet.



Another Torres invention: a beach parasol for privacy.



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BRITAIN'S PREMIER NATIONAL FAIR

A movie brings welcome rays of 'Sunshine'

AT THE END OF "Sunshine Cleaning," a foxy grandpa shrugs off the extravagance of an advertising claim he has made by saying: "It's a business lie—it's not the same as a life lie." Be that as it may, there are no life lies in this lovely, sweet-spirited film, which was directed by Christine Jeffs from a strong debut screenplay by Megan Holley.

Though the script has its share of contrivances—maybe more than its share—the director and

Film

JOE MORGENSTERN

her co-stars, Amy Adams and Emily Blunt, bring a steadfast sense of truth to the story of two sisters trying to jump-start their stuck lives and grow up.

They're just wonderful, these two actresses, and quietly spectacular in different ways. Anyone who's seen Amy Adams in such recent films as "Enchanted" or "Doubt" knows she can switch from sweet to witty to radiant to poignant in the blink of a moist eye. Here she is all of those things, sometimes simultaneously. She plays Rose Lorkowski, a single mother in Albuquerque who cleans houses for a marginal living, recites hopeful affirmations to herself, dreams of getting a real-estate license and imagines that her lover will leave his wife. Rose has been hobbled all her life by her need to please, but she's got a brave streak that sustains her when she plunges into the bizarre career of biohazard removal and crime-scene cleanup.

Emily Blunt has been best known until now for her performance as Meryl Streep's fevered first assistant in "The Devil Wears Prada"; though it was a small part, almost overshadowed by Anne Hathaway's star turn, she



Amy Adams, left, and Emily Blunt in 'Sunshine Cleaning.'

made it memorably funny. Far from being overshadowed in "Sunshine Cleaning," she's a comic whirlwind with a still, grave center. She is Norah, the younger sister who lives with their father—he's played by Alan Arkin—and who joins Rose, reluctantly, in her new business venture. Prickly and wry, tough and vulnerable, Norah is a displeaser. She displeases herself, first and foremost, by sabotaging her life at every turn. Where Rose has learned to cover her sadness with brittle good cheer, Norah, lacking any gift for camouflage—or inclination toward happiness—wears her grief on her sleeve, and in the dark beauty of

her eyes.

"Sunshine Cleaning" was produced by the same group that gave us "Little Miss Sunshine," so comparisons are inevitable. "Little Miss Sunshine" had the broader canvas of a road trip and a stronger narrative engine, not to mention a VW bus that functioned as a comic character. It had an irresistible 7-year-old heroine, although Rose's 8-year-old son, Oscar (Jason Spevack), is an endearing kid, too, and if there's any way of resisting Rose and Norah I never found it. "Little Miss Sunshine" got there first with Alan Arkin's lovably irascible grandfather; it wasn't such a great idea to have

him play a similar part again, except that he does it so damned well. And the earlier film's contrivances, however numerous, seemed more organic than those in the new one—most flagrantly a melodramatic scene involving Norah and a railroad trestle, and an underlying emotional structure that springs, somewhat schematically, from events in the sisters' childhood.

Yet that structure yields stirring results—a lacerating argument following an accident, a heart-stopping reconciliation in a ladies' room. (Christine Jeffs, a New Zealander with an unerring instinct for the nuances of Ameri-

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- **Confessions of a Shopaholic** Czech Republic, Norway, Spain
- **Gran Torino** Norway, Poland
- **Marley and Me** Croatia, Denmark, Sweden, Turkey
- **New in Town** Turkey
- **Role Models** Finland
- **The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas** Czech Republic, Iceland
- **The Duchess** Germany
- **The International** Poland, Romania
- **The Reader** Finland
- **Traitor** Spain, U.K.
- **Two Lovers** Italy, U.K.

Source: IMDb

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can life, elicits extraordinary performances from the whole cast, which includes Steve Zahn, Mary Lynn Rajskub and Clifton Collins Jr.) And the one element of "Sunshine Cleaning" that would seem to be pure contrivance—the central premise of cleaning up after murders and suicides—is developed with a solemn (though often comic) respect for its deepest resonances. "We come into people's lives when they've experienced something profound and sad," Rose tells a group of chattering women who can't begin to comprehend what a dear soul she is. "They've lost somebody, and we help. In some small way we help."

In another scene that should seem like naked artifice but feels more like a tender homage to "Our Town," Rose speaks her heart to her dead mother via the long-dead CB radio in her ancient van. "You've missed out," she says. "You've missed out on some really great stuff." You'll miss out on some really great stuff if you don't see this surprising movie.

Actor Jason Segel on comedy, improvisation and 'bromance'

BY MICHELLE KUNG

IN WRITER/DIRECTOR John Hamburg's comedy "I Love You, Man," which opens starting April 8 across Europe, Paul Rudd plays Peter Klaven, a happily engaged real-estate agent on the hunt for a best man for his wedding. Enter Jason Segel's Sydney Fife, an Uggs-wearing, cougar-dating "investor" who crashes one of Peter's open houses for the free food. A member of filmmaker Judd Apatow's "comedy coalition," as he calls it, Mr. Segel began his career as a supporting player on Mr. Apatow's television series "Freaks and Geeks" and "Undeclared" and has recently branched into film, writing and starring in the 2008 feature "Forgetting Sarah Marshall."

Q: Your character, Sydney, is very different from the character you played in "Forgetting Sarah Marshall."

I was really excited that Sydney was so different from Peter, who's less mellow. I only get to do one movie a year because of my TV schedule [for the sitcom "How I



Met Your Mother"], so the notion of mixing it up was really appealing to me. If anything, Sydney was more like Russell Brand's part [as a laid-back Brit rocker in "Sarah Marshall"]; in fact, I basically just did a Russell Brand impression, but with

an American accent.

Q: In your personal life, are you hesitant about making new guy friends?

I grew up in L.A. and because it's a driving culture, you're very used to being in your own personal space. So when a stranger comes up to you, a wall instantly goes up. Whereas when I went to London ... they have a pub culture, which is exactly the opposite of us, and people are constantly offering you pints. I just loved that element of getting to know strangers. Some of my best friends are people that I've met in very strange circumstances. My first night I was in London, in fact, I made really good friends with the fire brigade, as strange and homoerotic as that sounds. But we've all stayed really good friends.

Q: You and Paul frequently riff on each other's jokes in the film. How much of that was improvised?

John's a very thorough writer, and his script was more tightly

honed than on a Judd movie, where we typically go in with the intention of improvising. Most of the scenes that moved the plot along were scripted, but scenes like where Paul and I go on our first man-date, and we're just enjoying each other at a taco stand, were completely unscripted. For that day, we literally just sat for three hours being served tacos and beer. We knew we had to be funny, but it



Left, Jason Segel; above, Mr. Segel and Paul Rudd in 'I Love You, Man.'

was just a great afternoon. Plus, Paul Rudd is dreamy. I'm happy to have tacos with Paul Rudd.

Q: What's the status on the Muppets movie you pitched to Disney?

[Co-writer Nick Stoller and I] have written four or five drafts; now we're just waiting patiently on Disney to see what they want to do. It's such a big commitment for them because it's relaunching the franchise, so it's a bit slower going than a regular movie because there are decisions about rights and toys and timing they need to make.

Q: The word "bromance" is thrown around a lot to describe films done by you and your comedy cohorts. What's your take on the term?

We hate the word—we try at all costs to avoid saying it. We're much cooler than that. Man-date is not bad because it's an accurate description. Whereas "bromance" is an attempt to be witty or clever, but all it really does is rhyme.

Virtual Hype Inc.

To build buzz for coming films, promoters launch Web sites for fictional companies



'Terminator Salvation,' Release date: May 21

www.skynetresearch.com

Skynet is the computer system at the heart of the "Terminator" sci-fi franchise. (The new installment stars Christian Bale.) This site allows users to keep current on research by a fictional corporation also named Skynet by checking out its line of robots and

following it on Twitter. "We know that there are frequent claims by start-up companies that they are the ones to watch," reads a page on the site. "You can rest assured that Skynet is committed to the present with an eye on what is coming over the horizon."



'The Surrogates,' Sept. 25

www.chooseyoursurrogate.com

The site for the futuristic Virtual Self Industries—a made-up company that plays a role in the movie, which co-stars Bruce Willis—offers a developmental history of the first robotic surrogates, necessary in a world where people spend their lives

secluded indoors and send their avatars to complete ordinary tasks considered too intense for the fragile human race. Visitors can take a tour of the VSI factory, customize a surrogate and sign up to be notified when new models are available for purchasing.



'2012,' Nov. 13

www.instituteforhumancontinuity.org

A faux group called the Institute for Human Continuity is focused on ensuring the existence of human life after Earth is decimated by a series of events foretold by the Mayans. ("2012," co-starring John Cusack, focuses on these end times.) The Institute has several possible

disaster scenarios outlined and links to survival guidebooks—including one detailing how to survive a tsunami. Visitors to the Institute can sign up for the IHC Lottery, which offers people across the globe an equal chance at living through the year 2012.

—Rebecca R. Markovitz

My new Twitter flock

BY JULIA ANGWIN

AFTER I WROTE about Twitter, I went almost overnight from feeling like no one was listening to having 1,683 followers.

My large flock of followers, or people who signed up to receive my Twitter messages, showed me that Twitter wasn't just people shouting into a virtual abyss. Actual conversations were going on. Members of my newfound audience were soon sending me messages, or tweets, constantly, letting me know they welcomed, expected and wanted my feedback. It was part of being part of a community, they said.

I realized Twitter—the mass text-messaging service that lets you send out 140-character messages to a group of followers—wasn't just about broadcasting. While I had held off replying to people in the past for fear my replies would be viewed as spam since they hit everyone, my new flock was telling me to start hitting reply all.

"interact - no lurking :)" wrote one follower, a99kitten.

My replies, or "@replies" in Twitter-speak, "R much of the currency on which Twitter runs. It = conversation/engagement," follower Cathy-WebSavvyPR messaged me.

So I tried to keep several conversations going with different followers—and found it surprisingly easy since real-time responses aren't required on Twitter. And I acceded to a few followers' requests that I follow them. The large audience was daunting. I was now expected to act on the Twitter stage before a large audience and to perform Oprah Winfrey-style, involving the audience in my discussion.

I found it reassuring that even professional performers, such as the former actor Wil Wheaton, admitted to some Twitter jitters. After he crossed the 51,000-follower mark in February, Mr. Wheaton, who appeared as a teenager in the movie "Stand By Me," tweeted: "Now I have self conscious performance anxiety."

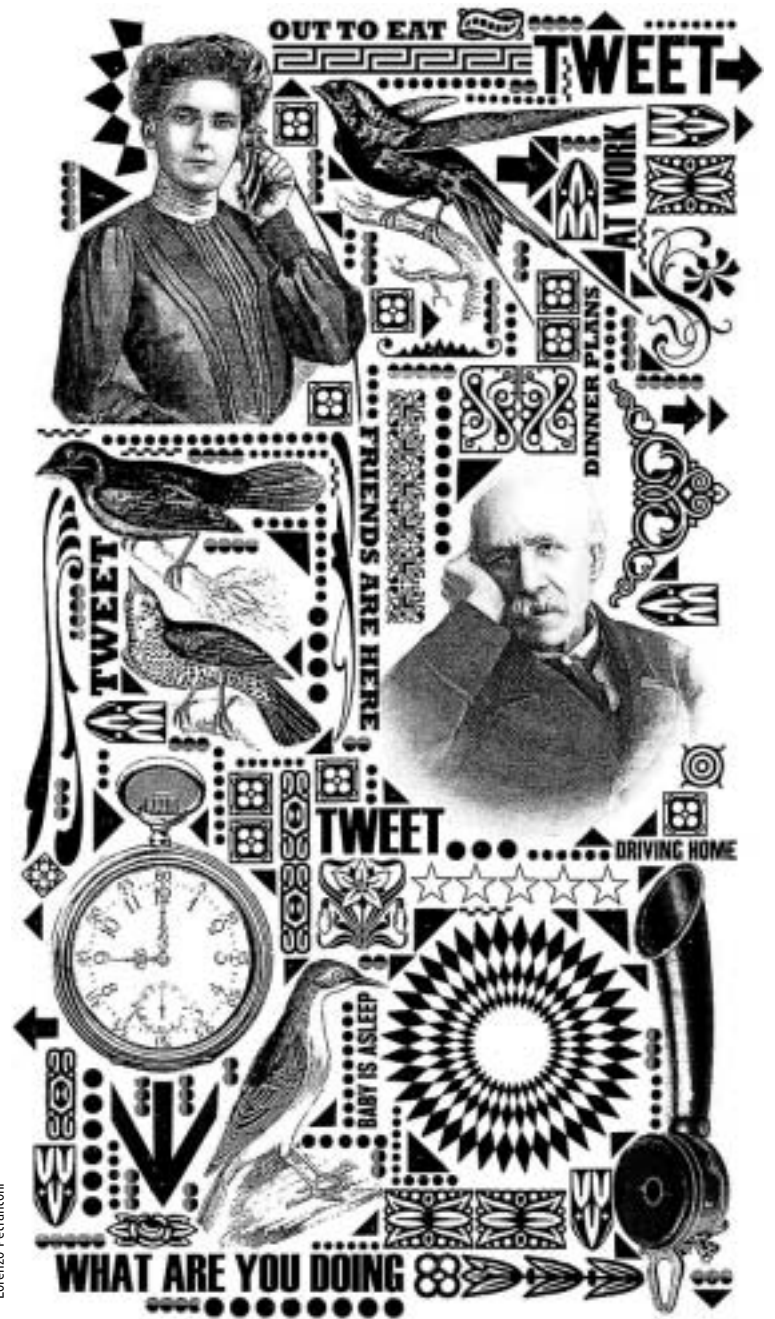
Mr. Wheaton's approach was to set expectations on his blog. He cautioned would-be Twitter followers that he would not be following them and that they should not take it personally. It doesn't seem to have affected his popularity: Mr. Wheaton now has more than 217,000 followers, and only follows 88 people.

I reached out to a college friend and accomplished Twitterer, John Scalzi, for some advice. Mr. Scalzi, a best-selling author of science-fiction books including "Old Man's War," has 3,380 followers and follows only one person, the friend who invited him to join Twitter initially.

Mr. Scalzi told me to lower the bar. "A lot of the performance anxiety related to Twitter is that you feel that everything you post has to have substantial value to it," Mr. Scalzi said. "People just want some whimsy or just want to know what you're doing."

In his tweets, Mr. Scalzi writes a lot about his cats and his socks—topics that he says his followers enthusiastically respond to. Recent updates have included: "Still wearing socks!" and "My fridge compressor is making cat strangling sounds. As all the cats are accounted for, we assume this means it's going to blow up soon."

I decided Twitter itself was my cats and socks. Whenever I mentioned Twitter in tweets, I quickly got responses. Searches on the



word "Twitter" invariably returned as many as 30 results tagged "less than a minute ago."

I retweeted one of Mr. Scalzi's observations: "It strikes me that Twitter works very much like a slow motion IM conversation. No, I'm not claiming profundity."

I also began a discussion with a follower about banning hashtags—the # marks that people use to identify keywords in their tweets, supposedly making their tweets more searchable. I had written that the # was useless since words are just as

searchable with or without a # sign.

A few Twitterers picked up on the idea, and Twitter.com/rozdieterich suggested creating a new hashtag for the movement: "@JuliaAngwin I can't resist contributing to this: #banhashtags" which made me laugh out loud.

That was when the light bulb went off for me: Twitter was fun and kind of flirtatious. So I'm back to my original theory, slightly tweaked: Twitter is still self-indulgent broadcasting but can occasionally lead to some great connections.

Arbitrage

The price of a Cartier Pasha travel clock

City	Local currency	€
London	£445	€482
Hong Kong	\$5,205	€521
Frankfurt	€550	€550
Paris	€550	€550
Rome	€550	€550
Brussels	€560	€560
New York	\$762	€590
Tokyo	¥92,400	€730



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



Tasting notes

Myst de Château Kefraya 2008, \$8.50

This salmon-colored rosé, one of Château Kefraya's most popular labels, is a mix of Cinsault, Tempranillo, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes. It reveals subtle notes of exotic fruits dominated by hints of mango mixed with those of red fruits, such as red currant, strawberry and black currant. The wine is well-balanced and full-bodied.

www.chateaukefraya.com

Domaine de Baal Red 2006 \$24

Lebanon's only organic wine. Made from Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah grapes, this is a premium full-bodied wine, rich in color, full of red fruit and balsamic aromas, aged in French oak. This age-worthy wine is best until 2019.

www.domainedebaal.com

Massaya Gold Reserve Red 2004, \$20

This garnet-colored wine is made from 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Mourvèdre, 10% Syrah. It has a clear and powerful aroma of sandalwood and incense. It is a full bodied, pulpy wine.

www.massaya.com

Ksara Blanc de Blancs 2005 \$12

Made from Sauvignon Blanc, Sémillon and Chardonnay grapes, this light, fresh and subtle dry white wine from Château Ksara is aged four months in oak.

www.ksara.com.lb

Château Musar Hochar Père et Fils 2001, \$12

This full-bodied wine tastes of wild berries and toasted wood. Aged in oak vats for six to nine months, it is made from Carignan, Cinsault and Cabernet Sauvignon.

www.chateaumusar.com.lb

—Brooke Anderson



From top: Ramzi Ghosn, winemaker at Massaya; the bar at Château Kefraya; the Château Ksara winery; the cellar at Château Musar.

LEBANON'S WINE COUNTRY

TOURING AND TASTING IN THE BEKAA VALLEY

BY BROOKE ANDERSON
SPECIAL TO THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Lebanon's wine production dates back to biblical times, but its modern winemaking is only starting to attract attention—impressing foreign visitors with everything from bold Cabernet-Syrah blends to crisp white Sauvignon Blancs and Chardonnays.

The country's wine industry struggled during the 15-year Lebanese civil war, from 1975-1990, but in recent years it has been growing at an impressive rate. Some 30 winemakers operate in Lebanon, more than double the number that were producing in 2005. Now, hoping to capitalize on the success of their wines in the Middle East as well as in foreign markets like the U.K. and France, Lebanon's vintners are building a fledgling wine tourism industry around their picturesque vineyards in the Bekaa Valley.

"The idea is catching on. In the next five years, at least 10 more producers will set themselves up," says Michael Karam, author of the book "Wines of Lebanon." "There are enough small plots of land for people to set themselves up as small producers. It fits in with Lebanon as a boutique destination."

Lebanese wineries are ramping up their efforts to boost tourism, appearing frequently at wine fairs and festivals and encouraging visits through their Web sites. The autumn, during harvest season, is the most popular time of year to visit Lebanon's vineyards, located close to stunning Roman and Byzantine ruins and day-trip distance from cosmopolitan Beirut, are an appealing destination all year round.

"Travel agencies are now organizing bus tours of wineries," says Rania Chammas of Château Ksara, the country's largest winery. "This is new to Lebanon."

John Buchanan, a London-based film producer, visited several wineries in the Bekaa Valley—Kefraya, Clos St. Thomas and Ksara—last spring. "I've discovered Lebanese wine on my trips there so was curious to see the wineries in action," Mr. Buchanan says. "The Lebanese producers understand, are very hospitable and professional and know how to lay on tastings. They don't rush you and are very knowledgeable. They all speak English and French."

For Ramzi Ghosn, winemaker at Massaya, a vineyard in the Bekaa that produces 300,000 bottles per year, learning about Lebanese wine is essential for the wine connoisseur. "If you want to learn about the history of wine, at some point you have to come here," Mr. Ghosn says.

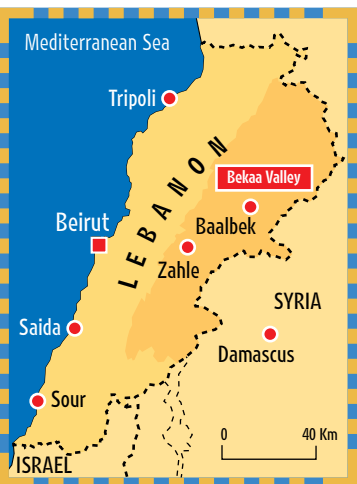
The Lebanese claim to be the world's first winemakers. More than 5,000 years ago, the Phoenicians—the ancient inhabitants of present-day Lebanon—became the world's first wine exporters, shipping their product to Egypt, Rome, Greece and Carthage. Modern-day visitors to Lebanon can experience a bit of that era in the ancient city of Baalbek in eastern Lebanon, with its temple of Bacchus, the Roman god of wine.

Winemaking's biblical roots can also be traced to Lebanon. The tomb of Noah, considered the first winemaker in the bible, is said to be located near Zahle, in eastern Lebanon. Cana, a city in south Lebanon, is where many Lebanese Christians believe Jesus turned water to wine. "In the Bible, when they had all of

Photos from top: Cephas; Getty Images; Alamy; Reuters



Alamy; Brooke Anderson(food)



those references to wine, they weren't talking about Italian wine," Mr. Ghosn says.

Lebanese winemakers take pride in their dedication to their craft, despite the country's sporadic political instability. It was Serge Hochar, from Château Musar winery, who went to the Bristol (U.K.) Wine Fair in 1979 in the midst of his country's civil war and put Lebanese wine on the international map. Mr. Hochar still makes wine in Ghazir, just north of Beirut.

The country's other winemakers are similarly determined. "We've had hard times at Kefraya, but nothing ever stopped," says Emile Majdalani of Château Kefraya, one of Lebanon's larger wineries. Some of the fighting in the July 2006 war occurred near the winery's vineyards, which produce the Bekaa Valley's main grape varieties: Grenache, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cinsault. "The war ended right before harvest. Otherwise, we couldn't have picked the grapes."

Coteaux de Botrys, a winery

near the northern Lebanese coastal town of Boutran, is one of many boutique wineries that have sprung up in recent years. The owner, Neila El Bitar, is continuing a family tradition her father started in 1998, when he planted 5,000 vines.

The hilltop winery includes an old shepherd's house, a single family dwelling with two bedrooms. Ms. Bitar is putting the final touches on the historic home she has renovated to welcome guests who stay overnight while visiting the vineyard. In the main living area, she treats visitors to her home cooking, accompanied by the wine, made just footsteps away.

Château Ksara, Lebanon's oldest wine producer, was started by Jesuit priests in 1857. It is also Lebanon's most visited winery, attracting some 40,000 visitors per year. Guests are welcomed with a glass of wine and shown a short documentary on the winery's history. They are then taken on a one-hour guided tour of the caves and vineyards. The tours, conducted in

French, English and Arabic, take visitors through Ksara's famous caves, which were discovered by the Romans and eventually used by Jesuit monks for wine storage.

Carlos Khachan, who founded Club Grappe in 2002, is taking Lebanese enotourism a step further. His wine tasting group offers two-day tours of three different wine regions of Lebanon as well as a 10-day tour of vineyards around the country. "It's done by experts," says Mr. Khachan, who studied winemaking in France. "Tour companies have done guided tours of wineries, but it works better when it's done by people with a background in wine."

Meanwhile, the Saadé Group, a family of Syrian-Lebanese entrepreneurs whose ventures include shipping, tourism and real estate, is embarking on a series of projects relating to wine and wine tourism in Lebanon. It plans to open a 45-room boutique hotel and wine museum in the Bekaa Valley by 2011.

Most hotels now in the Bekaa Valley are in cities like Baalbek

Above, harvesting grapes at Château Kefraya; left, the Temple of Bacchus at Baalbek.

and Zahle, within easy driving distance of the vineyards.

The wine museum will also be the first of its kind in the Arab world, where the history of alcoholic beverages is often ignored for religious reasons.

"The only way to preserve wine heritage is to spread wine culture," says Sandro Saadé, noting that many of the artifacts at the Lebanese National Museum sit in storage because there is not enough room to display all of the objects.

In November, the Saadé Group announced the opening of two new wineries—one called Bargylus in the Syrian coastal province of Latakia and the other Marsyas in the Bekaa Valley. The group was originally going to build the wineries in France, where they already had experience in the wine industry. But they settled on their home countries, Lebanon and Syria, where they see growth potential in the wine and tourism industries.

The region's political stability is still an issue. But many in the Levant believe the situation in the region is improving—heralding a new golden age for Lebanese winemaking.

"The wines of South Africa didn't become international until the end of apartheid, Chilean wine didn't take off until the end of the Pinochet regime," says Mr. Ghosn of Massaya winery. "The region should be related to good food and a sound environment. The message from a glass of Lebanese wine should be tolerance and openness between civilizations. It's more than fermented grape juice."



Trip planner

Where to stay: There are no hotels at the Bekaa Valley wineries, but you can find decent places to stay within a 20-minute drive.

The Palmyra Hotel in Baalbek combines history and character. Housed in a once-grand building that is a relic from the colonial days, the hotel's rooms have direct views of the city's ancient ruins. Rooms range from \$40 to \$66 for a double room. ☎ 961-8-376-101.

The Massabki Hotel in Chtaura is one of the few luxury accommodations in the area. It's also a relic from the colonial era, but has more modern amenities than the Palmyra. Standard rooms start at \$125 for a double room, and a luxury suite is \$250. ☎ 961-8-544-644; www.massabkihotel.com.

The Grand Hotel Kadri in Zahle, with an outdoor pool and its own restaurant and bar, is probably the most luxurious place to stay in the Bekaa Valley. A double room is \$150 and the royal suite is \$450. ☎ 961-8-813-920; www.grandhotelkadri.com.

The West Bekaa Country Club is near Kefraya and Cave Kouroum. It features a pool, spa and tennis courts, with great views of the mountains. Double rooms are \$100 a night (\$130 on weekends); ☎ 961-8-645-601/2/3; www.wbccbekaa.com.

Where to eat: Most restaurants in Lebanon offer a traditional *mezze*, or appetizer assortment, including hummos, baba ghanoush, spinach pastries, tabouleh (parsley salad), yogurt and olives.

Two restaurants in the area with especially good *mezze* are the Akl restaurant, on the main road in Chtaura, and the restaurant at the Arabi Hotel, located on the Berdawni River in Zahle.

Two of the wineries also have good restaurants. Château Kefraya's menu is a combination of traditional Lebanese (like the *mezze* pictured above) and French cuisine. Massaya's restaurant hires housewives from the nearby villages to cook home-style traditional Arab dishes.

What to see: The ruins of Baalbek are a stunning relic of Imperial Rome. Plan on a half-day to see the temples and mosaics, and visit the impressive museum. Also in the Bekaa Valley is the town of Aanjar, home to the well-preserved ancient ruins of Umayyad City, with strong influence of pre-Islamic cultures, including Greek and Byzantine.



Merlot makes a comeback

AFTER INEXPENSIVE U.S. merlot became popular overnight more than a decade ago, wineries churned out oceans of industrial liquid called Merlot that seemed more like something concocted by the mad scientists on the television show "Fringe." The wines, far more often than not, were sweet, simple, heavy, dripping with vanilla and overly alcoholic. Merlot

Tastings

DOROTHY J. GAITER
AND JOHN BRECHER

became a joke—and then, in 2004, the movie "Sideways" provided the punch line. After our tastings through the years, we have urged you to avoid the Merlot aisle like the purple plague.

Despite all this, Merlot has remained very popular. While its rate of growth has slowed over the years, sales continue to rise, according to Nielsen Co., which tracks sales in food and drug stores. In fact, Merlot appears to have overtaken White Zinfandel in the U.S. as the third most-popular varietal by volume (after Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon). However, wineries have finally stopped planting Merlot in every nook and cranny and thus creating watery grapes grown who-knows-where. After studying the 2008 California grape crush report, wine and grape brokerage firm Ciatti Co. reported that the Merlot crush was down fully 25% for the year and added: "Acreage transitions away from Merlot over the last four years drove major supply adjustments downward. The 2008 Merlot crop is now at its lowest level in more than eight years."

What that says to us is that perhaps less Merlot will mean better Merlot; maybe the people who are making Merlot these days will de-

cide they need to distinguish their wines by focusing not on cute labels but on what's really important and what has really been missing: quality. But are we just whistling past a graveyard filled with Merlot vines? We decided to find out. We had not conducted a broad blind tasting of inexpensive Merlot in three years, so we picked up more than 50 under \$20 from store shelves. We focused on the names you are most likely to see, but we also gathered some more-obscure names. Most of our wines were from the 2005 and 2006 vintages, because those are most common, but we also picked up the few wines from the 2007 vintage that we saw. Inexpensive Merlot is generally meant to be drunk young.

We were not eager to conduct this tasting. We have tasted far too many bad Merlots over the years and we weren't looking forward to more of them. Consider this: Our routine is that when we finish a flight of wines every night, we pour them down the sink and then remove the labels. Whenever we have tasted inexpensive Merlot over the past few years, when we pour out the bottles, our entire apartment is filled with unpleasant smells of fake vanilla, alcohol and something that's supposed to be oak. It really is the most amazing thing. We keep expecting the smoke detector to go off and the fire department to come take us away and charge us with Merlot pollution, which might not be a crime but should be.

So we bagged the wines and started. And the first wine, the very first one, was a winner! "Real wine," we wrote. "Nice intensity, some earth." It also had something that too many Merlots of the past have been missing: acidity, which gives wine zing and crispness, makes it food-friendly and keeps it from being ponderous. We were thrilled to have such a good start. This turned out to be Simi, which costs about \$16. But here's the big news: This was

not a fluke. Having tasted more than 50 Merlots, we are delighted to make this announcement: Merlot is struggling out of the hole that greedy winemakers dug for it. The wines were not uniformly good, but they were uniformly better than they have been in years. Sweetness, creaminess, oakiness and alcohol tastes are all down; acidity, freshness and true grape tastes—that *sine qua non* of good wine—are up. Interestingly, we could see the improvement even before we could taste it. Too many bad Merlots are pitch black, from edge to center, as though all sorts of things have been added to give them color and depth. Many others simply look dull, with no interesting edges or highlights. In this tasting, we found again and again that the better wines looked pretty as soon as we poured them, with interesting shades of purple and gold and a kind of sunny sheen that made us eager to take a sip. They even looked like they might have more complexity than in the past—and, thank heavens, they did.

We ultimately rated eight wines Good/Very Good or better, which is a perfectly fine result. Three of those cost less than \$10 (see index). Our best of tasting, which we found classy and vibrant, was Charles Krug. This was an interesting result because, just a few months ago, in a tasting of "Costco Cabernets"—widely distributed U.S. Cabernet Sauvignon that is sold at U.S. stores Costco and Sam's Club—our favorite was Charles Krug. In a 2005 tasting of American Sauvignon Blanc, Charles Krug tied for our best of tasting. It's clear that this historic Napa winery, better known for jug wines and simple table wines than fine wines for many years, deserves a closer look. The winery says it made 13,194 cases of this Merlot. (From the wine's structure, we would have guessed it had a big dollop of Cabernet Sauvignon, but it's actually 94% Merlot, 4% Cabernet

The DJ inexpensive Merlot index

In a tasting of American Merlots that cost less than \$20, these were our favorites. These Merlots are generally drink-now wines, though the Charles Krug and the Simi would likely improve for a couple of years. Because of the tremendous competition in the Merlot aisle, prices of these can be quite flexible—we paid \$8.47 for Blackstone at one store and \$15.99 at another, for example. We liked the Blackstone, Cartlidge & Browne and Ravenswood equally, but in different ways, and because they all cost about \$9.99, they tied for the best value. Charles Krug, Benziger and Cartlidge & Browne are all repeat favorites

VINEYARD	PRICE	RATING	COMMENTS
Charles Krug 2005 (Napa Valley)	\$18.79	Very Good	Best of tasting. Looks pretty and vibrant. Tight Black core, with some black pepper, herbs and fine acidity. Some structure, good fruit—nothing phony about it. Good with steak.
Blackstone Winery 2006 (California)	\$9.99	Good/ Very Good	Best value (tie). Honest fruit, and more stuffing than most, with minerals, earth, good tannins, lemony acidity and a clean, mouth-watery finish.
Cartlidge & Browne 2005 (California)	\$9.99	Good/ Very Good	Best value (tie). Charming. Quite fruity, round and very easy, with good fruit.
Ravenswood 'Vintners Blend' 2006 (California)	\$9.99	Good/ Very Good	Best value (tie). So very drinkable, not at all heavy or too grapey. Crisp and clean, with some chocolate and earth. Gulpable.
Sebastiani Vineyards & Winery 2005 (Sonoma County)	\$13.99	Very Good	Rich color, with a lovely nose of purple fruits. Nice rich taste, with blackberries, earth, chocolate, and some basil.
Benziger Family Winery 2005 (Sonoma County)	\$15.99	Good/ Very Good	Round, grapey and pleasant. A touch too much vanilla, but pleasant and fun and enjoyable to sip.
Chateau St. Jean 2005 (California)	\$13.99	Good/ Very Good	Exuberant—and that's a word we use too rarely with Merlot. Dottie said: "There's nothing complex about it, but you'd have an awfully good time drinking it."
Simi Winery 2005 (Sonoma County)	\$15.99	Good/ Very Good	A very enjoyable glass of Merlot. Nicely intense, with some earth and good acidity. Tastes a bit hot, but it's real wine, with some edges.

Note: Wines are rated on a scale that ranges: Yech, OK, Good, Very Good, Delicious, and Delicious! These are the prices we paid at wine stores in Massachusetts and New York. *We paid \$15.99 for Sebastiani and \$8.47 and \$15.99 for Blackstone, but these prices appear to be more representative. Prices vary widely.

Franc, 1% Malbec, and 0.5% each of Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot.)

Merlot still has a long way to go before it becomes a consistent treat. But at least there's a pulse and where there's life there's hope. We hope the trend continues because there's no reason American Merlot can't be reliable or even delicious. Heck, just a couple of weeks ago we opened a 1994 Merlot from Havens Wine Cellars (Napa Valley-Carneros "Reserve") from our own cellar, and it was gorgeous—rich with chocolate at the beginning, then tighter, with interesting herbs like basil and rosemary in the middle, and then finishing so smooth it was like a Barry White song and perfect with molten chocolate cake. At 15 years, it was not showing a hint of old age and it proved that it's not just the French who can do something special with this grape.

And here's an ironic postscript: A couple of weeks after our tasting,

we happened to taste the best young American Merlot we've had in a long time—and this small-production wine was from the Santa Barbara County area, the epicenter of "Sideways"-inspired Merlot ridicule. It was Di Bruno 2006 (Grassini Vineyard, Santa Ynez Valley). It cost \$34 and had all of the class, character, structure and stature of an expensive Bordeaux.

At the beginning of the year, we suggested some wine resolutions for 2009. One of them was to try a kind of wine you'd shunned for a couple of years. If you haven't already checked that one off your list, we'd suggest you take care of it by trying a bottle of Merlot.

WSJ.com

Up from plonk
Watch John and Dottie
taste and talk about inexpensive
American Merlot, at
WSJ.com/Tastings

Inspirations from a cocktail artist

Socialite and painter Gerald Murphy's concoctions were the toast of the Hemingway-Fitzgerald set

AFTER YEARS AND years of scribbling, revising and reconceiving, F. Scott Fitzgerald, in 1934, published his novel of dissolute Americans in France, "Tender Is the Night." Ernest Hemingway didn't like the book, and told Fitzgerald so.

"Goddamn it you took liberties with people's pasts and futures that produced not people but damned marvellously faked case histories," Hemingway wrote in a blistering letter to his old friend. "You cheated too damn much in this one."

For all the indignation, one would think that Hemingway was responding to an unflat-

How's Your Drink?

ERIC FELTEN

tering portrait of himself. But his anger was in defense of Gerald Murphy and his wife, Sara, the socialites who served as the thinly veiled source material for the novel's central characters, Dick and Nicole Diver. The Murphys' seaside salon at Antibes hosted a circle of friends who defined art and literature in the 1920s—regular guests included not only Fitzgerald and his wife, Zelda, but Hemingway, Picasso, Cole Porter, Dorothy Parker, Archibald MacLeish and Robert Benchley.

This pantheon sunned the days away at the beach and enjoyed impeccable dinners under the grand silver linden tree that framed the garden at the Murphys' Villa America. But before dinner, they were treated to cocktails—and usually cocktails of Gerald's own invention.

Murphy was fastidious in the preparation of drinks. But also a bit coy: When asked what he put in this concoction or that, he would invariably reply, "Just the juice of a few flowers." If that phrase sounds familiar, you might recall the denouement of "The Philadelphia Story," when a woozy Tracy Lord, played by Katharine Hepburn, awakens to realize an overindulgence in champagne the night before has knocked her off her pedestal. Tracy's ex-husband, played by Cary Grant, makes a Stinger for her as a hangover remedy. Hepburn asks what's in it, and Grant replies: "The juice of a few flowers." Philip Barry, the author of "The Philadelphia Story," was one of Murphy's closest friends and had taken particular note of Gerald's way with a cocktail shaker, which Barry described as being "like a priest preparing Mass."

Murphy brought that same attention to detail to his other avocation, painting, an art that he practiced for an all-too-brief stretch in the 1920s (stricken by the illness and then death of two of his three young children, he just gave it up). But those few years were long enough for him to gain the admiration of such fellow modernists as Picasso and Fernand Léger, who said that Murphy "was the only American painter in Paris." Just seven of Murphy's paintings remain, works that combine a modern taste for abstraction with a skill for meticulous representation. My favorite is his still life with shaker, corkscrew, lemon, cocktail glasses and cigars—the perfectly composed 1927 work "Cocktail." The cubist abstraction of the cocktail glass stands in opposition to the elegantly traditional representation of the cigar-box lid.

What cocktail was in the glass? Perhaps a "Juice of a Few Flowers"—Murphy turned his favorite description of what a drink should taste like into the name for one of his concoctions. It was made of freshly squeezed juices—one ounce orange, one ounce grapefruit, a half ounce lime, a half ounce lemon—together with an ounce of gin. Shake with ice and strain into a cocktail glass that has been rimmed with coarse sugar. It would be the most appropriate of Murphy's cocktails to imagine as the model for the drink in the painting (even though the canvas quaff includes a cherry) because the Murphys would later give "Cock-



'Cocktail' (1927), by Gerald Murphy.

tail" to Ellen Barry, widow of the man who immortalized Gerald's florid mixological phrase in "The Philadelphia Story." (It now belongs to the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.)

But I don't think the flower juice was Murphy's best drink. I much prefer his Bailey cocktail, "invented by me," Gerald wrote to Alexander Woolcott, "as were a great many other

good things." Murphy would tear mint leaves and put them in a shaker with gin, where he would let them steep for a little while. Then he would add grapefruit juice, lime juice and "a great deal" of ice. He would give it all a vigorous stirring and then strain into a cocktail glass, garnishing it with a fresh sprig of mint.

I find the Bailey just a bit too tart, and to my taste just a teaspoon of sugar or simple

Bailey

- 45 ml gin
- 15 ml grapefruit juice
- 15 ml fresh lime juice
- 1 tsp simple syrup (optional)
- 1 sprig of mint

Gerald Murphy's instructions: "The mint should be put in the shaker first. It should be torn up by hand as it steeps better. The gin should be added then and allowed to stand a minute or two. Then add the grapefruit juice and then the lime juice. Stir vigorously with ice and do not allow to dilute too much, but serve very cold, with a sprig of mint in each glass."

syrup makes the drink sing. But perhaps it was there on the terrace of the Villa America, tossing back Bailey cocktails, that Hemingway acquired his taste for tart, unsugared drinks. Decades later in Cuba, Hemingway famously preferred his Daiquiris without sugar, and the special Papa Doble version he favored bears a telling resemblance to the Bailey.

Not that Hemingway would have acknowledged it. His eagerness to defend the Murphys would later be replaced with a vicious contempt for them. Round about his fourth marriage, Hemingway started thinking that it might have been best if he had stuck with his first wife, Hadley. He came to blame the Murphys for introducing him to the homewrecker for whom he left her. He particularly berated himself for once having read aloud to the couple the yet-unpublished manuscript for "The Sun Also Rises." That, Hemingway wrote in "A Moveable Feast," "is about as low as a writer can get and much more dangerous for him as a writer than glacier skiing unroped before the full winter snowfall has set over the crevices."

Such was the thanks Murphy got for making Hemingway a first-rate drink.

The subway and the subconscious

BY NADYA LABI

JOHN HENDERSON HAS watched "King Kong" starring Fay Wray about a hundred times. So in his teenage years, as he was struggling to run up a steep logging trail, he imagined the enormous ape carrying him upward. The trick helped motivate him, so the writer decided to adopt John Wray as his pen name.

"When I was feeling resistant to getting things done," he says, "I would visualize that King Kong was carrying me upward and progress was going to be made whether I wanted it to be or not."

Mr. Wray, 37, has progressed into a writer of significant talents. Starting in 1996, he spent 18 months in a rent-free, rat-infested basement, writing a good chunk of what became "The Right Hand of Sleep" (2001)—a novel about pre-World War II Austria that won him the Whiting Writers' Award, a prize for emerging writers. Then came "Canaan's Tongue" (2005), a fantastical allegory about a slave-trading preacher in Mis-

issippi. Despite receiving an abundance of critical acclaim, Mr. Wray has yet to win a popular audience. His latest novel, "Lowboy"—much of which he wrote while riding the New York subway—may change that. The novel chronicles a teenage schizophrenic's feverish day on the subway.

Q: In "Lowboy," why the subway as a setting?

The initial idea for the book came from a clipping that an Australian friend of mine showed me about this man in Sydney who had a history of violence—a schizophrenic—and there was a citywide manhunt for him... I think he was spending a lot of time in the transit system. Also, the subway—the idea of the subterranean, of a city beneath a city—seemed like an extremely fertile and useful metaphor for the subconscious.

Q: The subway is so knowable and yet you have a protagonist whose mind is so unknowable.



John Wray, author of the new novel 'Lowboy.'

Structure appeals to schizophrenics because their thinking is often so disorganized. Also motion is often cited as something that is very soothing.

Q: How do you know that?
I did a ton of research... Also, I met a number of schizophrenics just riding the subway. It's not hard to interact with a

schizophrenic if you're willing to because a large percentage of New York City's homeless are schizophrenic.

Q: It struck me that you take the research side of things very seriously. The level of detail about the subway system was impressive. What did you do to get that?

A lot of it is not research, unless sitting on the subway and looking around is research... I allowed myself to invent a lot of locations because for me, it's not really a documentary investigation of the subway. The subway is this expressionistic imaginary world in the sense that the character of Lowboy is not perceiving it in a rational way.

Q: How important is commercial success to you?

What's important to me is selling enough books that I don't have to work as a paralegal... I was never concerned about the fact that I wasn't selling like Danielle Steel. But sooner or later you have to make some money.

Return of the Fat Duck

Despite unexplained outbreak, capacity crowds are back

BY RAY SOKOLOV

THE FAT DUCK, the international shrine to molecular gastronomy, reopened March 12 after shutting its doors for more than two weeks following complaints from patrons of a mysterious outbreak of illness.

The Michelin three-star restaurant in the village of Bray-on-Thames, England, served lunch to a full house of 40 diners following extensive but still inconclusive testing by the Thames Valley Health Protection Agency. One of the few signs anything was amiss: The restaurant, at the agency's suggestion, has temporarily banned clams, oysters, cockles and razor clams from its cutting-edge menu.

Still to be found on the menu, though, is the whimsical Sound of the Sea, for which the diner wears earphones from an iPod Shuffle concealed in a seashell next to a "seashore" consisting of a sophisticated melange of marine foodstuffs in the "ocean" that laps the tapioca sand. Under the restrictions, the kitchen has substituted cured fish for the shellfish, a version of the idea that pre-existed the closing.

Many of the dishes are like beautiful little science experiments that amuse you by their daring, first, and then amaze you when they taste so good. Diners seeking the famous snail porridge won't leave hungry; it is still on the menu. Also still being served is the salmon poached in licorice gel with artichoke, vanilla mayonnaise and an elite olive oil—which may sound improbable but there was a wonderful synergy going on.

"It's been a truly horrible time, as you can imagine," chef Heston Blumenthal told me by phone on the day of the reopening, fresh from the kitchen after that first lunch service. The staff had been toiling all night to get the revised menu up and running, but the chef's nightmare was far from over. He estimates his losses will run well north of £300,000, including canceled reservations and operating costs, such as staff salaries that continued without interruption.

Norovirus, a common type of stomach virus, is a principal suspect in the health inquiry, Mr. Blumenthal said. If it turns out to be the guilty pathogen, the Fat Duck will switch its handwashing soap to a chemical that can quell that microbe.

I had a splendid lunch at the Fat Duck in late January, at around the time diners began reporting they had gotten sick after eating there. After some 40 patrons who'd dined there in January and February complained to the restaurant of diarrhea, vomiting and stomach aches, Mr. Blumenthal closed his restaurant on Feb. 24.

Since the health scare, virtually no diners have canceled their reservations, often made two months ahead of time, Mr. Blumenthal said. As a result, it will be months before the Fat Duck can seat all the 800 people who had reservations during the two-week shut-down. Then there are the 40 ill



Clockwise from top, the Fat Duck's quail jelly truffle toast and oak film strip; the 'Sound of the Sea' dish; chef Heston Blumenthal. Below, salmon poached with licorice gel.



people who sounded the alarm, not to mention some 350 others, possible opportunists, who called in sick after the news broke. Mr. Blumenthal said he will wait for the final health report, which will include investigations of each complaint, before deciding whether he'll buy all or some of the self-identified sufferers dinner.

There is another urgent question: Has the outbreak done any permanent harm to the reputations of the chef or the restaurant? Mr. Blumenthal, a self-taught innovator and well-known neatnik, had been sending all his

dishes out for independent testing before any sign of trouble. He hesitated, out of modesty it seemed, before saying: "I had no option. We're so fastidious. But I must say the support here in the U.K. has been amazing."

And off he went to resume doing what has made him one of the most famous cooks in the world in a twee village just a cab ride from Heathrow Airport. Because of some gustatory feng shui, two of Britain's three Michelin three-star restaurants are in this Thames-side hamlet (the other is the Waterside Inn). But the Fat Duck is



where the buzz is—or was, and almost certainly will be again.

During my visit in January, Mr. Blumenthal was making nonmedical headlines because of the TV series "Big Chef Takes On Little Chef," where he tried to perk up the fortunes of the downmarket Little Chef fast-food chain with his upscale, molecular-gastronomic ideas, among them dosing smoked salmon with Earl Grey tea.

Every seat was spoken for on the Saturday when I ate in the pleasant but unspectacular little dining room. Tables are about as crowded as decency and physics permit, especially since the nine-course tasting menu (21 if you count various minor oddments) sets punters back around £135.

My guest had just been fired by Merrill Lynch, and we wondered how many other of the business-casual gourmets tossing back the house signature dish, snail porridge, were also celebrating their freedom from the clutches of perfidious Mammon, but would soon be eating \$10 fish pie at Little Chef.

Or maybe a place like the Fat Duck is both outbreak-proof and bubble-burst-proof. With only around 40 seats and a planet of epicures competing for them, the Fat Duck may well weather the economic storm, too.

Email me at eatingout@wsj.com.



The artist still known as 'Prince' Billy

BY JOHN JURGENSEN

MUSICIAN WILL OLDHAM has been performing as Bonnie "Prince" Billy for the last decade, but his influence first spread in the early 1990s when, under monikers such as Palace, he issued intimate recordings that contemporized the sound of early Americana. His admirers have included Johnny Cash, who covered one of his songs.

Over the years Mr. Oldham has burnished his folk sound with country music touches, such as pedal steel guitar. A native of Louisville, Ky., he came to music by way of acting (one of his first roles was in the 1987 John Sayles film "Matewan"). He wrote most of his new album, "Beware," during three months at an artist's colony near Sausalito, Calif.

Mr. Oldham talked about his residency, his stage name and country music.

Q: This album came out of your residency in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. How was the music shaped by that setting?

Almost everything I did had to do with songs. That never happens on tour where it's all about performing and arranging songs. For three months nobody's going to call me. I don't check email that often. I can work all day, all night long if I wanted to and did, more often than not. I don't know if they sound like it, but these songs are born of that freedom.

Q: Do you use the name Bonnie "Prince" Billy to camouflage yourself, or does it serve a theatrical purpose?

All of those. I grew up with the dream of being an actor. What I feel like I'm achieving right now—knock wood—is making Bonnie "Prince" Billy a part, and I'm getting to play the part.

Q: What kind of relationship do you have with traditional country music?

I think that a privilege of growing up in Kentucky is that it's not as hard to accept country music as a given. It was mixed in with the punk rock that we heard. It's kind of a default thing. Another nice thing about country music is that it's simple. It's in English and the lyrics are sung in a just slow enough way that the lyric is always part of the listening experience—always. And there's a relationship to musicianship where production isn't half or more of the listening experience.

❖ Sports

Mastery in just 10,000 hours

GOLF'S GRAND ILLUSION is that, secretly, we're a lot better than our scores would indicate. All we need is a little more practice and a few more rounds under our belt to get there. But who has the time?

The illusion stems from the ease with which all of us, on rare occasions, drain long putts from the fringe, pitch to tap-in distance from 85 yards and hit drives on the sweet spot. Surely learning to pull off such shots regularly could only be a matter of making a little more effort.

Golf Journal

JOHN PAUL NEWPORT

Two recent business books concur, provided we drop that phrase "a little" from the supposition. The common thesis of "Outliers," by Malcolm Gladwell, and "Talent Is Overrated," by Geoff Colvin, is that super-high achievers are not fundamentally different from you and me, they just work harder and smarter.

Both books, for instance, debunk the myth that Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was a born supernatural. The musical works he composed as a child were not particularly good (and were suspiciously written in the hand of his father, Leopold, a well-known composer). Most of them, even into his late teens, were rearrangements of other composers' pieces. As for his precocious skills on stage, modern musicologists estimate that his abilities were actually only about half as advanced as those of a run-of-the-mill prodigy today.

So why the reputation as a boy genius? Because he did start early, at 3, under the expert tutelage of a father who was not only a gifted musician but also a specialist in the education of young talent. Leopold Mozart pushed his son to practice and perform nonstop, even though it was mostly drudgery, and gave him constant reliable feedback, as did audiences. By 21 Wolfgang was composing works that will live forever, but by that age he had been working diligently at the task for 18 years.

Substitute Earl Woods for Leopold Mozart, as both authors do, and the result is nearly identical. At 5, Tiger Woods was a marvel, it's true, but the only people he was actually beating at that age were other kids (and once—at 2, on "The Mike Douglas Show," with a little cheating—Bob Hope).

In explaining the development of extraordinary talent, both Mr. Gladwell and Mr. Colvin zero in on seminal research by Florida State University Professor Anders Ericsson and colleagues that suggests the threshold for world-class expertise in any discipline—music, sports, chess, science, business management—is about 10 years, or 10,000 hours, of persistent, focused training and experience.

Mr. Gladwell leaves the work component of success mostly at that, and moves on to examine how other factors, such as obscure circumstances from their early lives, contribute to the achievements of hard workers.

Mr. Colvin, on the other hand, bores into the details of all that hard work to identify the most productive components. This is where things get interesting for golfers.

The most successful performers

in any area, he writes, engage in "deliberate practice." This is activity specifically designed, ideally by an expert teacher, to improve performance beyond a person's current comfort and ability level. These activities are repeatable, provide clear feedback and are highly demanding mentally, even when largely physical. The training Mozart received as a youth is a perfect example.

The good news about deliberate practice is that, with commitment, almost anyone can engage in it at any age. And in most endeavors—certainly in golf—deep reservoirs of expertise and pedagogical techniques have developed over the years to help practitioners make the best use of their time and energy.

The bad news is that deliberate practice is very hard, and usually unpleasant. "It has to be. Otherwise everyone would be an expert," said Mr. Colvin, a Fortune magazine columnist, in a telephone interview last week. (Disclosure: Mr. Colvin and I were colleagues at Fortune, although before last week we hadn't talked in 20 years.)

For golfers, this can be a buzz killer. Take what for most of us comprises the bulk of our practice: hitting balls at the range. Mr. Colvin, a lifelong golfer, narrates a typical range session as a way of conveying exactly what deliberate practice is not. We drag over one ball after another and hit, with no plan and no particular goal. We may vaguely aim at targets but we don't closely monitor the results or otherwise seek meaningful feedback. Our minds wander. Most fatally, we often find the experience pleasurable and relaxing.

"There's nothing wrong with that," said Mr. Colvin. "But we shouldn't fool ourselves into thinking that when we hit balls this way we're accomplishing anything at all."

So how should we "deliberately" practice golf? To find out I contacted Pia Nilsson, Annika Sörenstam's longtime instructor. She is the author, with Lynn Marriott, of a book about practice, "The Game Before the Game," that is also based in part on Prof. Ericsson's research.

"You don't have to spend 10,000 hours at it. If you have only two hours a week available, you can make those two hours count for a lot if you commit to quality practice," she said.

The first step should be evaluating your game (preferably with the input of an instructor) and identifying one or two high-value areas to focus on first, and exclusively. "Ninety-five percent of people make the mistake of going right to some kind of technical swing fix, but usually there are more effective things to work on," she said.

Common targets that can produce big, immediate payoffs are tempo, the short game and developing an ironclad, stress-reducing pre-shot routine. Golfers with reduced flexibility and strength want to focus on thoroughly understanding those limitations and developing workarounds, perhaps while also launching a long-term effort to become stronger and more supple.

But don't expect this kind of practice to be as satisfying as whacking balls on the range. One drill that Ms. Nilsson and Ms. Marriott sometimes recommend is a super slow-motion, 30-second swing—the tai chi swing, they call it. "About 25% of our students find this to be so diffi-

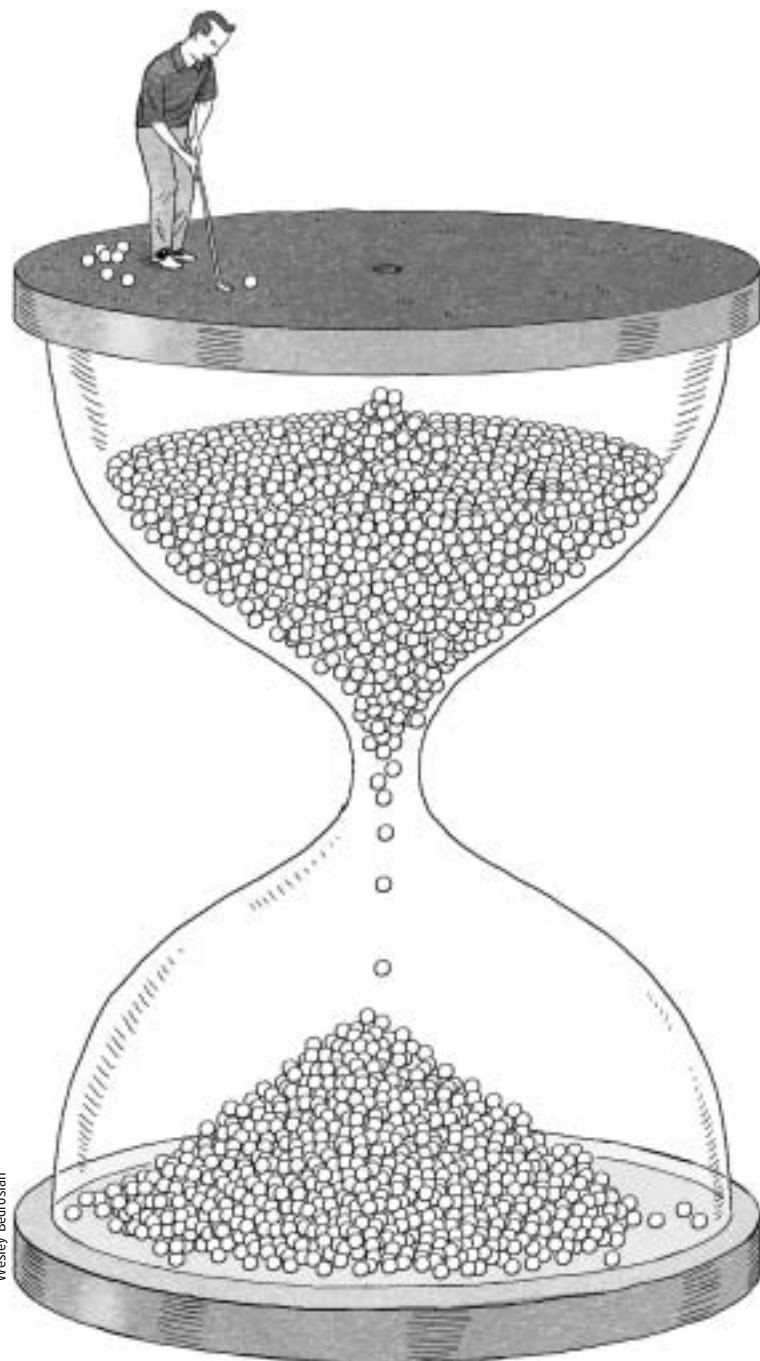
cult and awful that they won't do it," Ms. Nilsson said. I'm one of them. Each second is agony. Why? For people whose minds customarily operate at top speed, slowing to a snail's pace is just plain hard, but being totally in the present moment is a key to great performance, Ms. Nilsson said. The slow swing also reveals blind spots in awareness of where our hands, limbs and the golf club are. This is surprisingly uncomfortable, but the best players are hyper-aware of their positions throughout a swing and thus can detect when things are off.

One effective deliberate practice drill for the short game helps develop feel for distance on lag putts. Immediately after stroking the ball toward a hole, close your eyes and tell yourself explicitly where you think the putt will end up—6 inches to the right and 2 feet long, for instance. Most likely you'll be way off. This drill, too, becomes unaccountably disagreeable after more than, like, three minutes. But it works.

One possible takeaway from all this is to say, "If deliberate practice is what it takes to get better, no thank you. I'm happy with my game the way it is." No problem. That's one of the great things about golf. With its handicap system, you don't have to get better to have fun. Moreover, simply understanding how much hard work is required to make significant progress as a player reduces the power of the Grand Illusion, and that would please even Mr. Colvin.

"One of the main problems golfers have is unrealistic expectations," he told me. "They make themselves miserable when they should be having fun."

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Opening Asia's hidden wilderness

BY PATRICK BARTA

Banlung, Cambodia

PAVED ROADS PETER out long before this ramshackle town emerges in the jungle. Beyond it are crater lakes, sun bears and hunter-gatherer hill tribes that are only now starting to interact with the outside world.

Together they make up one of the last frontiers of Asian adventure travel, the vast Cambodian province of Ratanakiri. For decades, the war-torn region of waterfalls and winding jungle paths held a strange allure for travelers, mainly because it was so cut off from the outside world. The trip, by truck and canoe, would take days and sometimes weeks, depending on the weather.

But as Cambodia has opened more widely to the outside world—it expects some two million tourists in 2009—its northeastern jungles have started to open up, too, even to luxury travelers. Authorities have extended paved roads to within about 100 kilometers of Banlung, the provincial capital, and new construction is expected to cover the last leg sometime over the next several years. That has cut travel time from Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh, to about 10 hours by car and led to significant upgrades in food and lodging.

The Cambodian government is stepping up efforts to promote Ratanakiri, touting it as the "Wild East" in marketing campaigns. Officials cite the region's ethereal landscapes and its wildlife, including exotic birds, elephants and possibly kouprey, the mysterious and rare wild forest cow believed to live in northern Cambodia and surrounding areas.

Commercial flights used to land in Banlung but were discontinued earlier this decade due to safety concerns; now the lonely airstrip here is more commonly used for motorbike races. Officials are planning to upgrade the airstrip and restore the terminal to once again receive commercial flights. Travel guides in Cambodia are advising adventurous visitors to come soon, rather than wait until large tour groups start arriving.

As for luxury, Ratanakiri is still a far cry from better-known Asian destinations like Bali or Phuket. Upscale travelers can stay at Terres Rouges, a comfortable jungle retreat that arranges safaris, elephant rides and multiday hiking treks for its wealthy American and European clients as well as for non-guests. The owner is Pierre Yves Clais, a former soldier stationed in the region, who ran a guide service in the 1990s and eventually opened the lodge for guests who objected to Banlung's rough-and-tumble accommodations. Now, his clientèle includes artists, film directors and aficionados of Southeast Asian culture, he says. "When I first opened the place, people said I was crazy, I would die of malaria immediately," he says. He did get malaria, he says, but he also had a lot of adventures, and eventually he made upgrades to the lodge, adding a spa, a swimming pool and cable TV.

Malaria remains a problem in parts of the region. Roads and other basic infrastructure are still rough, and heat and rain, especially from May to October, can be intense. Before visiting, travelers should consult a physician for advice on anti-malarial pills, and they should use mosquito repellent, wear long-



Alamy (2)



Patrick Barta/The Wall Street Journal



sleeved clothing and sleep under mosquito nets when possible.

For some travelers, the precautions only add to the appeal. Cambodia has undergone a massive travel boom in recent years, and international tourists have overwhelmed the country's more-famous destinations, like Angkor Wat, the renowned complex of ruins further to the west. Many jaded travelers find they prefer a sparsely-populated redoubt like Ratanakiri because it offers a better sense of the way Southeast Asia used to be, before so much of it was covered in concrete.

"I thought I was like Indiana Jones," says Daniel Salmon, a 24-year-old British traveler who stopped in Cambodia on his way to Australia and visited Ratanakiri after hearing about it from other travelers. He spent his time zooming around on a rented motorbike and relaxing at remote swimming holes and waterfalls. "There's nothing better than going to places no one has been to," he says.

Not far outside Banlung is Yeak Lom, a serene, circular crater lake hidden in the jungle. Depending on whom you ask, the lake is either a

few thousand or 700,000 years old. Either way, it feels timeless, hemmed in by dense forest under a wide blue sky. Cambodian families and foreign visitors gather there throughout the day. Residents have built a wooden deck along the water for lounging, and vendors sell soft drinks and snacks from a clearing nearby. Swimmers can float out into the cool waters, surrounded by nothing but jungle. In the evenings and mornings, a silence settles over the lake that makes it seem otherworldly.

Ratanakiri offers the opportunity to visit some of region's ethnic tribal groups, including the Cambodian Kreung and Tompuon, with the help of guides hired through Banlung guesthouses. Residents of these hill communities are quickly adopting Western habits—many now own motorbikes and wear T-shirts and baseball caps—but they retain their own dialects and some of their own customs, including the worship of nature spirits.

On a recent visit to one tribe, I found many older homes were built on stilts from thatch and wood, with rickety, handmade ladders leading up to the front doors. As families shift away from subsistence agriculture and gathering nuts and fruits in favor of raising soybeans and other cash crops, they are encountering money and using it to build far larger homes, many painted in bright blue or other pastel colors.

During my visit, a man hung strips of sliced buffalo skin on a line to dry, while children, who seemed nervous at my presence, gathered under stilt houses to watch. Although some residents in the area wear bright red or orange sarongs, the chief arrived wearing shorts, a blue T-shirt and a gold watch. After a short welcome in the community's meeting house—a dilapidated

Above, tribal communities are rapidly adopting Western-style dwellings and customs, although many older homes on stilts remain; left, a fisherman on a crater lake; below left, headstone carved from wood at a Tompuon cemetery at the village of Kachon.

wooden shack on stilts, with wooden mats for sitting—he showed off the village's motorbikes and other conveniences, including a stereo.

Visitors to Ratanakiri can also arrange guided hikes into deep jungle realms including Virachay National Park, a wild zone along the Laos border so remote that park rangers have yet to fully catalog its wildlife. Observation cameras hidden around the park have captured images of Asian leopards, among other animals.

Some travelers hew close to Banlung, whose chaotic, giant market sells everything from dead birds to gourds to pig heads. Just outside of town are waterfalls and swimming holes that can be reached by motorbike or bicycle along dirt tracks winding through forest, rubber plantations and fields overgrown with shoulder-high plants.

Before Ratanakiri ripened for tourism, it was a prime nesting ground for insurgencies and militant activity. In the 1960s, it served as a main hideout for the Khmer Rouge, a radical rebel group that went on to commit one of the worst genocides in the 20th century. The area was also a popular refuge for Vietnamese communist soldiers during the Vietnam War, prompting U.S. forces to bomb the region in hopes of flushing them out.

With the return of peace, entrepreneurs began opening guesthouses and restaurants to serve the wildlife enthusiasts and adventure travelers who were starting to show up. Agricultural investors rushed in, too, and in many areas they have plowed over large sections of forest, adding to the urgency to visit Ratanakiri soon before more habitat is destroyed.

"There's so much untapped tourism here," says Phil Gordon, a 42-year-old Australian visitor who left the landscape-design business to spend time traveling and ended up in Ratanakiri. He went to the crater lake, toured rubber plantations, shot photographs and read books. When paved roads make it all the way to Banlung, he says, "this place is going to take off."



Patrick Barta/The Wall Street Journal

The Terres Rouges jungle lodge.

Trip planner: Jungle retreat

How to get there: International tourists typically fly to Phnom Penh, in Cambodia, through Bangkok (on Thai Airways or AirAsia), although there are also direct flights from Hong Kong (Dragonair) and Seoul (Korean Air). From Phnom Penh, buses to Ratanakiri are available but uncomfortable; hire a private taxi (\$150-\$200 each way), which can be arranged through most major hotels, or set up transport through a local travel agency (see below). The drive takes roughly 10 hours, including a bone-rattling stretch near the end dodging mud pits and dogs. But most of the trip is comfortable, with scenic countryside and places to stop for photos and local cuisine. Tourist visas (\$20) are available on arrival in Cambodia for many nationalities, but it's wise to check with a Cambodian embassy before traveling.

Where to stay: Many upscale travelers stay at Terres Rouges (www.ratanakiri-lodge.com;

☎ 855-23-215-651, \$85 per night for an air-conditioned suite), a comfortable jungle retreat with elegant hardwood furniture, a large collection of Asian antiques and vintage French maps and prints, and a breezy deck overlooking a small crater lake. The Tribal Hotel (☎ 855-75-974-074, \$15 per night with air-conditioning), by contrast, feels like it belongs in the Rocky Mountains, circa 1850, with wooden slat floors and mounted deer heads, machetes and farm implements on the walls.

Where to eat: Dining out in Banlung is still an adventure, although a handful of Western-style pubs have opened recently. Gecko Café serves pizza and Cambodian beer in frosty mugs kept ice-cold in a giant freezer. Terres Rouges has an excellent restaurant and bar serving French and Cambodian fare.

What to do: Agencies book tours through the region, though at present usually only on request. Exotissimo Travel (www.exotissimo.com), a big Southeast Asian outfit with offices in Phnom Penh, offers a customized, four-day trip with accommodations at Terres Rouges for roughly \$700 per person, including excursions to villages, waterfalls and lava fields.



Vitali Klitschko Prepares to Defend His Crown

By Gordon Marino

It's not easy to get Ukrainian heavyweight champion Vitali Klitschko off the topic of politics. At the start of an interview about his coming title defense, he said: "Ukraine is at the crossroads between being a part of European society and a Third World country. In order to become a modern democratic state we have to get rid of the corruption."

Mr. Klitschko was an important figure in the Orange Revolution and is now a member of the Kiev City Council. Dr. Mark Andryczyk of the Ukrainian Studies Program at Columbia University observed: "He is very intelligent, authentic, and a true patriot who always uses his fame to help his country."

Mr. Klitschko plans to run for mayor of Kiev for the third time next year—after he defends his heavyweight title against Juan Carlos Gomez (44-1; 35 by knockout) on Saturday in Stuttgart, Germany.

Most serious professional boxers aspire to be world champions,

but heavyweight sensations Vitali (36-2, 35 by knockout) and Wladimir Klitschko (52-3, 46 by knockout) are driven by a different dream. "Long ago," Vitali said, "my brother and I promised my mother that we would never fight one another. Our dream has been to share the title."

In boxing, titles are conferred by sanctioning bodies. At age 32, Wladimir Klitschko holds the

WBO (World Boxing Organization), IBF (International Boxing Federation), and IBO (International Boxing Organization) titles. Vitali, age 37, sits on the WBC (World Boxing Council) throne. Nicolay Valuev (50-1, 34 by knockout) is the only obstacle to Klitschko dominance. He rules the WBA (World Boxing Association) roost.

Early in their careers, the brothers moved to Hamburg and were quickly embraced by the German people. They are top-tier celebrities in Europe. But despite living for a time in the U.S., neither Klitschko has been able to capture the sports fancy

of Americans. It is hard to figure. Americans adore knockout artists. Wladimir is one of the hardest punchers on the planet, and 35 of Vitali's 36 wins have come by way of a stoppage. That's the highest knockout percentage in history for a heavyweight champion.

Vitali, who speaks four languages and earned a doctorate in sports science and philosophy, retired from boxing in 2005 because of back and knee injuries. At the time, he was WBC world champion and at the peak of his powers. "You have to keep a healthy mind and a healthy body," he told me. "During the years I was away from competitive boxing, I went to the gym every morning before I went to my office so I never got out of shape. The skills never go away, but more than anything I missed the chance to test and exhibit those skills."

In October 2008, without any tune-up bouts, Vitali Klitschko returned to the ring to wrest the WBC crown from then-champion Samuel Peter. A ferocious puncher, Mr. Peter had thrice floored Wladimir Klitschko in a bout that Mr. Peter lost on decision. Vitali Klitschko crushed Mr. Peter in eight rounds. Until that fight, Mr. Peter was the most the most menacing heavyweight in

the division. And if there was one heavyweight contest that was highly marketable, it was a rematch between Wladimir Klitschko and Samuel Peter.

The Klitschkos work in each other's corners at fights and are so close emotionally that when they walk down the street together their bodies seem tethered by invisible strings. Still, the younger Klitschko confessed that he was ambivalent about big brother's return to the ring: "I was sad because it meant the rematch with Peter was gone and because it would now be even harder to find good opponents. At the same time, whatever makes Vitali happy makes me happy, and he was very happy to be back."

Almost all experts consider Wladimir the more gifted boxer. A tad shorter than his 6-foot-6½ brother, the 1996 Olympic gold medalist is quicker of hand and foot and possesses a much more potent right hand.

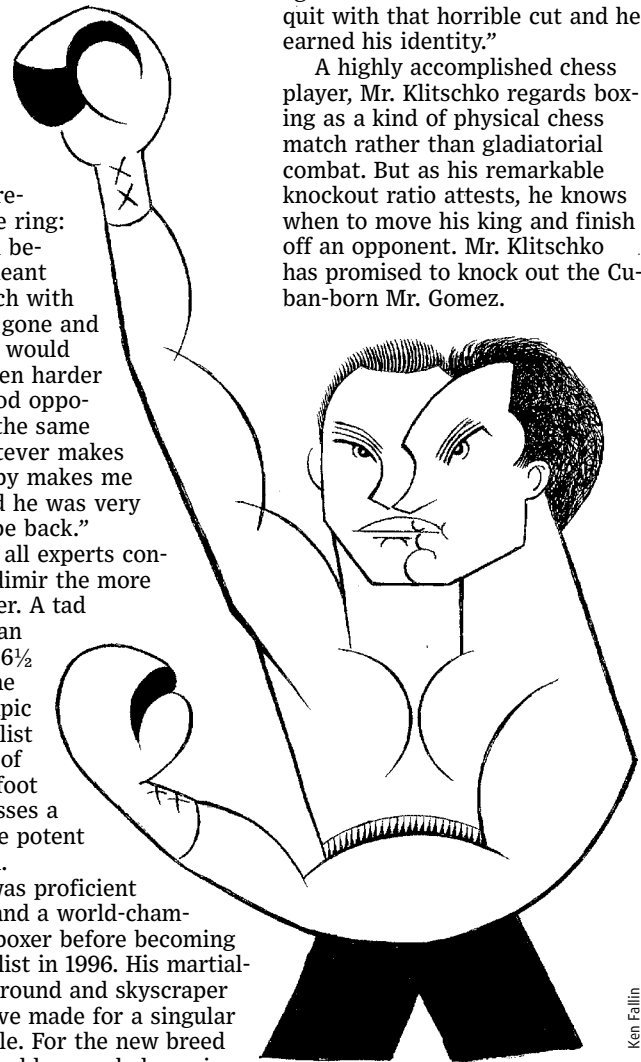
Vitali was proficient in karate and a world-champion kick-boxer before becoming a pro pugilist in 1996. His martial-arts background and skyscraper stature have made for a singular boxing style. For the new breed of NBA-sized boxers, balance is the hardest virtue to achieve. Vitali can appear heavy-footed and clumsy. Emanuel Steward, who coached the last undisputed heavyweight king, Lennox Lewis, and now trains Wladimir, has another take: "Vitali is more awkward than he is clumsy. He throws punches from strange angles. Like very few men of his size, he fights tall and is hard to reach. He will invite you to come in, and with his great size he can stay out of danger; then, when you do come forward, he will hit you with his right hand and slide to his right, away from his opponent's power."

In his 2003 title bout with Vitali, Mr. Lewis was gaining momentum but behind on points when the Ukrainian suffered a gruesome gash and the contest was halted. Mr. Lewis, who retired months after the fight, acknowledged: "Vitali is tough, very strong—and though he is not fast, he is hard to hit squarely."

Boxing trainer and commentator Teddy Atlas spoke to another issue. In 2000, Vitali disappointed his American audience when he ran up the white flag against Chris Byrd after the ninth round. Mr. Klitschko, who has a rock-solid chin and has never visited the canvas, was far ahead and needed only to endure the last three rounds against the feather-punching Mr. Byrd. Early in the tussle, Mr. Klitschko tore a tendon in his left shoulder and by

the late rounds was in searing pain. He feared that by continuing he might do permanent damage and not be able to fight again. Mr. Atlas insisted: "He quit. Vitali gave up. He was not a greenhorn. He had tons of amateur fights and knew how to last nine more minutes." Mr. Atlas, however, is also quick to add: "But Vitali did redeem himself against Lennox Lewis. He didn't quit with that horrible cut and he earned his identity."

A highly accomplished chess player, Mr. Klitschko regards boxing as a kind of physical chess match rather than gladiatorial combat. But as his remarkable knockout ratio attests, he knows when to move his king and finish off an opponent. Mr. Klitschko has promised to knock out the Cuban-born Mr. Gomez.



Ken Fallin

A 35-year-old, former cruiser-weight champion with only one loss, Mr. Gomez is a technically sound counterpunching southpaw. He will look to land his straight left in response to Mr. Klitschko's jab. Messrs. Gomez and Klitschko have been in the ring together before, as they trained in the same gym in Hamburg. The quick and agile Mr. Gomez will give up three inches in height; nevertheless, he promises to run circles around the colossus. "You will not be able to hit me," he recently jabbed at the champion.

If Vitali Klitschko triumphs on Saturday, he will begin two campaigns—one for the mayor of Kiev and the other for a title fight with the seven-foot tall Mr. Valuev.

Mr. Marino writes about boxing for the Journal.

'My brother and I promised my mother that we would never fight one another,' Vitali says. 'Our dream has been to share the title.'

Down With Denim

By Daniel Akst

If there is a silver lining to a financial crisis that threatens to leave us dressed only in a barrel, it is this: At least we won't be wearing denim.

Never has a single fabric done so little for so many. Denim is hot, uncomfortable and uniquely unsuited to people who spend most of their waking hours punching keys instead of

cows. It looks bad on almost everyone who isn't thin, yet has somehow made itself the unofficial uniform of the fattest people in the world.

It's time denim was called on the carpet, for its crimes are legion. Denim, for instance, is an essential co-conspirator in the modern trend toward undifferentiated dressing, in which we all strive to look equally shabby no matter what the occasion. Despite its air of innocence, no fabric has ever been so insidiously effective at undermining discipline.

If hypocrisy had a flag, it would be cut from denim, for it is in denim that we invest our most nostalgic and destructive agrarian longings—the ones that prompted all those exurban McMansions now sliding off their manicured lawns and into foreclosure, dragging down the global financial system with them. Denim is the SUV of fabrics, the wardrobe equivalent of driving a hulking Land Rover to the Whole Foods Market. Our fussily tailored

blue jeans, prewashed and acid-treated to look not just old but even dirty, are really a sad disguise. They're like Mao jackets, an unusually dreary form of sartorial conformity by means of which we

reassure one another of our purity and good intentions.

There was a time, of course, when not everyone wore denim. In the 1950s, Bing Crosby was even refused entry to a Los Angeles hotel because

he was wearing the stuff. (Levi Strauss obligingly ran him up a custom denim tuxedo so he

The fabric that has done so little for so many.



Levi Strauss

wouldn't have that problem again.) By then, of course, denim was a symbol of youthful defiance, embraced by Marlon Brando, James Dean and—well,

just about every self-respecting rebel without a cause. Even Elvis, who didn't often wear denim in public during the early part of his career (like many in the American South, he associated it with rural poverty), eventually succumbed. Now we're all rebels, even a billionaire CEO like Steve Jobs, who wears blue jeans and a black turtleneck whenever unveiling new Apple Computer products.

Although a powerful force for evil, denim has achieved a status that will come as no surprise to fashion historians. Like camouflage fabric, aviator sunglasses and work boots, blue jeans were probably destined for ubiquity thanks to an iron-clad rule of attire adoption. "The sort of garments that become fashionable most rapidly and most completely," Alison Lurie reminds us in "The Language of Clothes," "are those which were originally designed for warfare, dangerous work or strenuous sports."

I can only hope the Obama administration sees denim for what it is: a ghastly but potentially lucrative source of much-needed revenue. Let's waste no time in imposing a hefty sumptuary tax on the stuff. It's a great example of "soft paternalism" (especially if the pants are pre-washed). We can close the budget deficit at the same time we eradicate the fashion deficit. All we've got to do is impose a federal levy on Levi's.

Mr. Akst is a writer in New York's Hudson Valley.

time off



Amsterdam

art

"Fritz Behrendt—Marked by the War" shows drawings and sketches made during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands by Dutch artist and political cartoonist Fritz Behrendt (1925-2008).

Dutch Resistance Museum
Until Nov. 15
☎ 31-20-620-2535
www.verzetsmuseum.org

Berlin

art

"The Bauhaus Collection, Classic Modern Originals" presents paintings, drawings, sculptures and models by Bauhaus masters and students.

Bauhaus Archiv
Until April 14
☎ 49-30-2540-020
www.bauhaus.de

art

"The Power of Expression" includes works by Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985), Henri Michaux (1899-1984), Antoni Tàpies (born 1923) and Arnulf Rainer (born 1929).

Neue Nationalgalerie
Until May 10
☎ 49-30-266-2651
www.smb.museum

Bruges

art

"Charles the Bold—The Splendor of Burgundy" showcases a collection of Burgundian tapestries, paintings, armor and clothing.

Groeninge Museum
March 27-July 21
☎ 32-50-4487-11
www.kareldestoute.info

Brussels

opera

"Le Grand Macabre": Catalan theater group La Fura dels Baus stages a new production of György Ligeti's "Le Grand Macabre" based on the surrealist drama by Michel de Ghelderod.

La Monnaie
Until April 5
☎ 32-7023-3939
www.lamonnaie.be

Bucharest

art

"Swiss Design in Hollywood" examines the influence of Swiss artists on design in international film and video game production.

National Museum of Contemporary Art
Until April 18
☎ 40-21-3189-137
www.mnac.ro

Cologne

science

"The Moon" shows 130 objects depicting human fascination with Earth's natural satellite over the last 500 years.

Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud
March 26-Aug. 16
☎ 49-221-221/211-19
www.museenkoeln.de

Dublin

jewelry

"Calder Jewellery" exhibits necklaces, bracelets, brooches, earrings and tiaras, designed from the 1920s to the 1960s by the American sculptor Alexander Calder (1898-1976).



'Josephine Baker au Bal Nègre' (1925) by Kees van Dongen, in Paris; above, Marianne Brandt's 'Ashtray with triangular opening' (1924), in Berlin.

Irish Museum of Modern Art
April 1-June 21
☎ 353-1-6129-900
www.imma.ie

Edinburgh

art

"Turner & Italy" presents oil paintings, watercolors, and sketchbooks by British Romantic landscape painter J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851).

National Gallery Complex
March 27-June 7
☎ 44-131-6246-200
www.nationalgalleries.org

Helsinki

art

"Marita Liulia Choosing My Religion" is the most recent multimedia project by Finnish artist Marita Liulia (born 1957), juxtaposing major world reli-

gions through photographs, paintings and objects.

KIASMA Museum of Contemporary Art
Until April 19
☎ 358-9-1733-6501
www.kiasma.fi

Krakow

art

"Guilt and Punishment" shows 120 prints and 10 antique books exploring themes of justice, guilt, punishment and law.

International Culture Centre
Until April 19
☎ 48-12-4242-800
www.mck.krakow.pl

London

art

"Annette Messenger: The Messengers"

is a retrospective of the French contemporary artist Annette Messenger (born 1943).

Hayward Gallery
Until May 25
☎ 44-871-6632-598
www.haywardgallery.org.uk

art

"Kuniyoshi: From the Arthur R. Miller Collection" features over 150 works by Japanese print artist Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797-1861).

Royal Academy of Arts
Until June 7
☎ 44-20-7300-8000
www.royalacademy.org.uk

theater

"Madame de Sade" is a play by Yukio Mishima featuring an all-female cast including Dame Judi Dench and Rosamund Pike.

Wyndham's Theatre
Until May 23

☎ 44-8444-8251-20
www.donmarwestend.com

Milan

art

"F.T. Marinetti = Futurismo" explores the career of Italian poet, writer and editor Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944), the founder of the Futurism movement.

Fondazione Stelline
Until June 7
☎ 39-02-4546-2411
www.stelline.it

Paris

art

"The Jazz Century" examines the relationship between jazz and graphic arts in the 20th century.

Musée du quai Branly
Until June 28
☎ 33-1-5661-7000
www.quaibrany.fr

art

"Valadon—Utrillo" shows over 100 works by French artist Suzanne Valadon (1865-1938) and her son Maurice Utrillo (1883-1955), bridging Impressionism, Fauvism and the modern Ecole de Paris.

Pinacothèque de Paris
Until Sept. 15
☎ 33-1-4268-0201
www.pinacothèque.com

Prague

art

"Prinzhorn Collection" presents works created by mentally ill artists hospitalized at the Prinzhorn clinic. These works inspired artists such as Max Ernst, Paul Klee and Jean Dubuffet.

Until May 3
Stone Bell House
☎ 420-2333-2533-0
www.ghmp.cz

Rome

history

"The Divine Vespasian: The 2000th anniversary of the Flavian Clan" examines the Roman imperial dynasty of Vespasian and his sons Titus and Domitian.

Forum Romano
House of Livia-Criptoportico (Cybele's temple)
March 27-Jan. 10, 2010
☎ 39-06-3996-7700
www.pierreci.it

Stockholm

photography

"Andreas Gursky: Works 80-80" exhibits 150 works by German photographer Andreas Gursky (born 1955), famous for his large-scale photography.

Moderna Museet
Until May 3
☎ 46-8-5195-5200
www.modernamuseet.se

Venice

art

"Theme & Variations—From the Mark to Zero" explores the theme of the pictorial "mark" with work by Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), John McCracken (born 1934) and others.

Peggy Guggenheim Collection
March 21-May 17
☎ 39-041-2405-411
www.guggenheim-venice.it

Source: ArtBase Global Arts News Service, WSJE research.