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WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE



Building a new look

Big-name architects
start designing fashion



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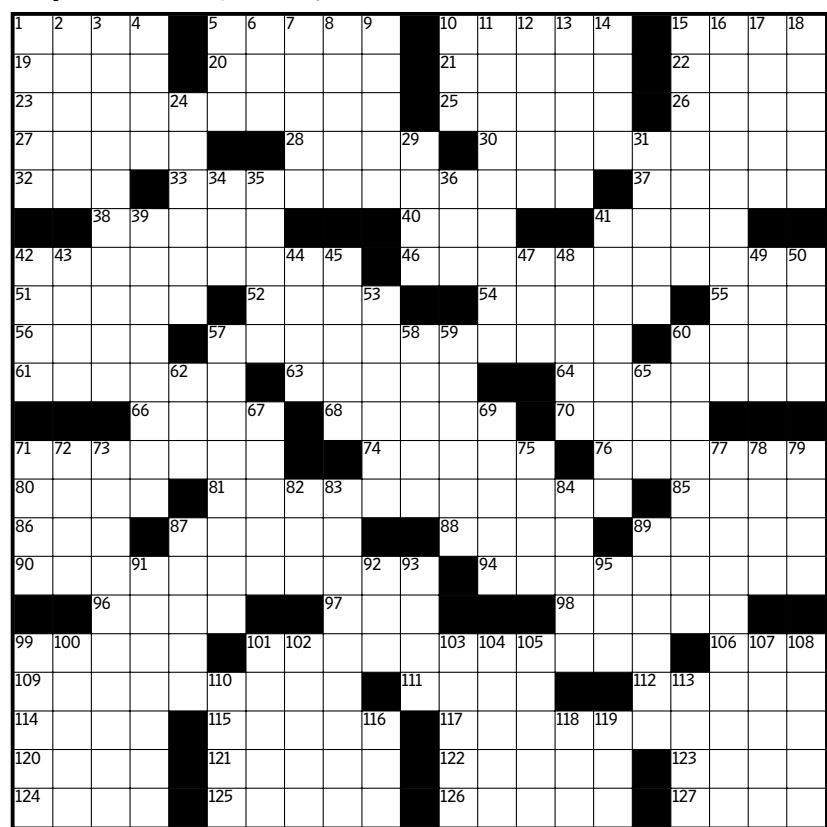
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Last Week's Solution



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Designers send mixed messages in Milan

WATCHING FROM THE helm of the Gucci Group luxury empire, Robert Polet sees longtime patterns changing. “People don’t have the impulse to buy,” the CEO said last week at Milan’s fall 2009 fashion shows. “They think about purchases more.”

That’s a vexing problem for the European designers who are presenting the clothes that will appear in stores next fall. Foot traffic is down in luxury stores everywhere. With the Dow industrials below 7000 for the first time since 1996

On Style

CHRISTINA BINKLEY

and the CAC-40 Index in Paris down 17% since the beginning of the year, how is a fashion designer to sell expensive clothes?

In Milan, there seemed to be two conflicting approaches to this question. Some designers drilled to their cores. Giorgio Armani returned to the sleek executive lines he is known for, with capes, cardigans and slim pants in pewter and various other shades of gray. Versace went for all-out, body-hugging sex—just what the brand is known for. Bottega Veneta showed winning looks for a woman who wants to be subtle about the excellence of her clothes.

In fact, Tomas Maier’s collection for Bottega was outstanding—softly colored, supple wools and silks, such as a graceful silk jacquard trench coat and a soft, double-faced cashmere coat.

Miuccia Prada, who is consistently independent of the trends chased by other designers, rediscovered the suit—creating slightly off-kilter, woodsy suits that were still authoritative enough to be snapped up by working women.

“Women always wear suits,” the influential designer said after her show. Though she’s known for her artistic independence, she made a point of saying that her suits would work “from a commercial point of view.”

Many other designers threw caution to the wind, creating collections of flamboyant, indelibly unique clothes and avoiding items that could be accused of being “commercial.” That went against the nor-



Bottega Veneta offered subtlety (left) while Graeme Black went for ‘luxe’ (right).

mal grain of the Milan shows, where designers generally present a lot of wearable clothes. With the biggest economic challenge of their lifetimes facing them, these designers seemed to be trying to create clothes that would feel worth the investment. While this is an exciting approach, it’s also risky, and it remains to be seen which of these designers will have hits on their hands.

Brian Atwood’s designs for Bally included memorable shoes with elaborately carved metal heels. Mr. Atwood said he didn’t concern himself with keeping costs down for the “fashion collection” whose role is to draw attention. (Bally’s less showy “pre-collections” were created with costs kept in check, executives said.) “I think it’s what women wanted,” Mr. Atwood said. “Especially now, you really have to inspire.”

Designer Graeme Black, of his impossibly expensive eponymous label, said, “That’s my only weapon—luxe.” Mr. Black’s collection, pre-

sented at his Milan showroom, was half the size of his previous seasons, and he’s been working to cut his prices sharply. But there wasn’t a single item that didn’t attempt to deliver a knockout punch, including a \$3,976 black cocoon cape that was inspired by a visit to the mineral col-

lection at London’s Natural History Museum. Mr. Black created the cape with multiple uses in mind, pitching it as practical, to a certain point: “You can wear it with skinny jeans, you can wear it with an evening dress,” he said.

Another suit had been hand-painted to achieve the mineral-like look he desired. Mr. Black said he is braced for selling fewer items to his wealthy clients than before, so he wants each one to pack a wallop. “One of the sad things about this downturn is that ladies’ husbands have cut their budgets,” he said.

No matter who is picking up the bill, shoppers may balk at some of the 1980s looks on the runways. Quite a few Milan designers seemed to think that creating excitement required outlandish designs based on that decade’s exaggerated lines. We saw multiple takes on huge, wide shoulders. Ferré designers Tommaso Aquilano and Roberto Rimondi did them squared off with a fold of fabric wrapped from back to front—extraordinary tailoring. Gucci did them on cropped jackets, exaggerating the American football-player look. Dolce & Gabbana did them big and poofy—more Elizabethan than ’80s. Waists were often pinched under the huge shoulders. Pants were cropped at the ankle and pleated at the hip—not a flattering look on many women as it shortens and broadens their legs.

Investment dressing it was not. The fashion world has been toying with the 1980s for the past year, ever since Marc Jacobs sent out a playfully ’80s-inspired collection a year ago. But I can’t help thinking the clothes will look entirely out of date within a year, maybe two. That’s what happened with my own suits and jackets from the 1980s, which wilted like cut flowers when that era was over. The ’80s weren’t flattering to women’s figures, and many women later recalled them with a shudder.

“My clients won’t go for the literal translation of the ’80s looks on the runways,” says Kelly Golden, owner of the high-end Neapolitan boutique in Chicago. “They want something that they can wear now and in future seasons.”

To get a read on consumer response to the shows, I asked con-

sultants Zeta Interactive, based in New York City, to use their Zeta Buzz technology to measure the so-called buzz surrounding a handful of high-profile Milan shows on more than 100 million blogs, message boards, social media posts and other Internet outlets.

Prada had the highest overall volume of chatter, with Bottega Veneta coming in second, according to Zeta. When it came to the tone of the posts, though, Bottega Veneta had the most positive posts—98% were positive. Gucci had the worst tonal rating, with 61% positive.

And despite the inarguable skill involved in the design and tailoring of many of these garments, many store buyers were looking for alternatives to the ’80s look by week’s end. As a colleague and I left Versace’s early show on Monday night, Bloomingdale’s fashion director Stephanie Solomon was racing into the later show. “How was it?” she called. “Don’t tell me more ’80s!”

That might be why the Jil Sander collection, designed by Raf Simons, was well received. The first part of the collection was pure Jil Sander daywear to the core—minimal, strong lines on suits and dresses of fine melton wool and wool crepe—with flat shoes. What followed was an artist’s take, inspired by the late French ceramist Pol Chambost. The clothes curved like sculpture, some supported by whalebone hoops, using materials including starched wool, techno foams, scuba jerseys and a wool tweed coated with gold dust.

The patterns required such precision that Mr. Simons brought out his pattern cutter for a bow. For such elaborate work, Mr. Simons said, “We have to honor them.”

Ms. Golden, the boutique owner, agreed. “The beautiful tailoring seen at Prada and the luxurious fabrics at Jil Sander are great examples of the understated elegance that my clients will be seeking out during this challenging economic time,” she said.

Email Christina.Binkley@wsj.com

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On the catwalk
See more looks from
Milan fashion week, at
WSJ.com/OnStyle

Arbitrage

Hourly rate for a plumber to fix a leaky kitchen sink

City	Local currency	€
Singapore†	S\$60	€31
Rome	€35	€35
Frankfurt*	€40	€40
Brussels	€50	€50
Paris	€50	€50
New York	\$92	€73
London	£95	€106

Note: Prices, including taxes, as provided by plumbers in each city, averaged and converted into euros. *Doesn’t include a traveling fee †No hourly rate



A stylish celebration for grandmother

BY TERI AGINS
MY GRANDMOTHER is turning 90 this year, and we’re having a semiformal party for her in June. She is short (1.47 meters) and weighs about 56 kilograms. Can you recommend any looks that would make her feel like a queen for the day? Heels are not an option.

—L.M., Long Island, N.Y.

What a perfect way to celebrate your grandmother’s milestone birthday! Glam her up in a classic mother-of-the-bride ensemble that flatters all body types and isn’t too fussy. The two-piece outfit is typically pastel (consider peach or violet) with a long jacket that is beaded or spangled with

long or three-quarter sleeves. Try a matching flowing chiffon skirt that’s “tea length,” stopping well above the ankles. Bridal shops carry many versions of this style. Have the outfit altered to fit. Because your grandmother is short, the tailor may have to raise the neckline and shorten the sleeves.

Choose her footwear with care. Try gold or silvery shoes—sandals, if she’s amenable—with flat or inch-high, wedge heels. She should wear them around the house a few times so that they feel broken in. She would look more elegant without a corsage (though her wishes reign if she wants one). Don’t forget sparkly earrings.

Hire a pro to style her hair and



perhaps do light makeup and a manicure—quickly, to avoid tiring her out before the party. Don’t bother with a handbag; skirts with cocktail suits usually have hidden pockets.

Email askteri@wsj.com

❖ Top Picks

Portrait of the artist as interior designer

WOLFSBURG, GERMANY: "Interior/Exterior, Living in Art" at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg asks an interesting question: What happens when artists start designing objects and designers come up with works of art? This enormous and exciting show deals with the interaction between art and interior design from the 19th century to the present. Works by more than 70 artists and designers, including such icons as Henri Matisse, Marcel Breuer, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Zaha Hadid, make up the exhibition.

Strangely for a show that deals with interior design, the first work to confront museum visitors is Caspar David Friedrich's "Bohemian Landscape with Mount Mille-schauer" (1808). The idyllic landscape symbolizes man's reaching beyond the boundaries of the comfortable home toward the outer world. This 19th-century attempt to enlarge one's personal cosmos ultimately ends in the glass houses of the 21st century.

There are many more surprises ahead. From Sigmund Freud's couch (shown as a miniature model) to his "Psychotope," the cramped breeding ground of psychosis so keenly portrayed in Edvard Munch's "Scene from Ibsen's 'Ghosts'" (1906). Félix Vallotton's black-and-white woodcuts (1897-98) depict just such cramped interiors in his scenes of seduction and separation. A room from Viennese architect Adolf Loos' "Müller Villa" (1928-30) reveals the awakening of modernism and echoes his battle cry "ornament and crime," with which he sought to ban the decorative ostentation of Victorian interiors.

Interiors are recreated using authentic furniture and art. Donald Judd's minimalist Soho loft tells us more about the artist than a portrait could. Photographs show real interiors like designer Wolfgang Joop's red-and-white-striped bedroom (2002). In some cases room-sized photographs provide the background for real furniture like Henry van der Velde's Art Nouveau dining room. Piet Mondrian's studio is a full scale copy filled with original art.

The show's view of the future, Clouds-Nests-Soup Bubbles, includes Werner Sobek's house R 129, and Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec's room-sized Styrofoam sculpture "Clouds" (2002).

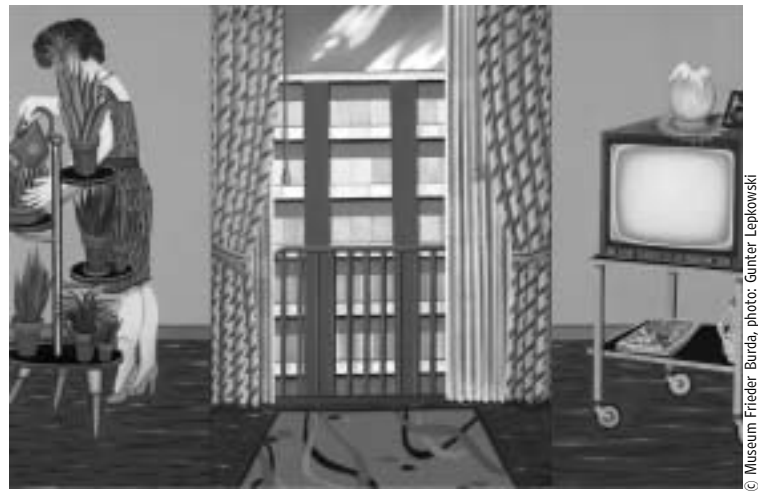
—Mariana Schroeder

Until April 13

www.kunstmuseum-wolfsburg.de



© Kunstmuseum Basel, photo: Martin P. Bühler



© Museum Frieder Burda, photo: Gunter Lepkowski

Left, 'Scene from Ibsen's "Ghosts"' (1906), by Edvard Munch; right, 'Living Room III' (1968), by Almut Heise, both on show in Wolfsburg.

Princess Margaret, larger than life

LONDON: Looking at Pietro Annigoni's 1957 portrait of the late Princess Margaret (1930-2002) you'd never guess how tiny the sitter was (only 1.55 meters). Of course all royal portraits have to impute some majesty to their subjects, but Annigoni's romantic painting of the queen's sister in a rose garden gives her the graceful, slender, long neck of a taller woman.

The rarely seen painting is being lent to the National Portrait Gallery by her son, Viscount Linley, and is displayed alongside some revealing photographs, starting with one taken in about 1939 by Marcus Adams. This shows a soulful nine-year-old child, with blunt, round features, holding a posy of flowers.

A color photograph taken by Dorothy Wilding in the summer of 1953 shows a woman with an unflatteringly severe hairstyle, sitting in a gilded chair.

Cecil Beaton's earlier 1950 black-and-white bromide print is much more romantic, but also makes his subject look like a taller, slimmer person by posing her against a soaring arch.

The truer image, it seems to me, is Norman Parkinson's 1978 portrait, with its sensuous eyes and generous mouth. This is a woman with a keen sense of humor, who enjoys a gin-and-tonic and would be fun to meet at a party. You look at the other pictures and wonder: Who said the camera never lies?

—Paul Levy
Until March 8
www.npg.org.uk



© Viscount Linley

'HRH The Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon' (1957), by Pietro Annigoni, on show through this weekend in London.

The nuclear opera: 'Dr. Atomic' aims for greatness

LONDON: John Adams's latest opera, "Dr. Atomic," based on the Faustian tale of how J. Robert Oppenheimer led the team that developed and tested the atomic bomb dropped on Japan in 1945, is more musically complex and satisfying than his "Nixon in China." And, like that show, it is certain to become part of the operatic canon.

As a composition, it has only a single obvious fault, which is Peter Sellars's thorny libretto, largely assembled from historic documents and from poetry associated with each of the characters. The opening, in which the chorus sings the text of a protest letter by Leo Szilard, is extremely difficult, and the opening

night ensemble was poor in this English National Opera production.

But even the libretto has its moments of greatness, as when Oppenheimer (the superb Canadian baritone Gerald Finley, who created the role) sings his beautiful aria based on John Donne's "Holy Sonnet XIV," asking for the destruction of the speaker's personality, in order for it to be reconstructed: "Batter my heart, three-person'd God."

Mr. Sellars has done an artful job of capturing the dramatic tension of testing the first bomb. Will the timetable insisted upon by the military be messed up by the weather? Will "the Gadget" even detonate? Should the enemy be invited to surrender af-

ter witnessing the test, rather than have Japanese cities and civilians destroyed by using it?

Mr. Sellars and the production team manage, too, to portray the febrile atmosphere of Los Alamos, where Oppenheimer brought together the most distinguished collection of human intellects ever applied to the solution of a single problem.

Finally, Mr. Adams has written a ticking-clock dramatic finale, of Wagnerian length and Wagnerian bass-instrumental menace, ending in both bangs and whimpers.

—Paul Levy
Until March 20
www.eno.org

'Spring Awakening' is no garden variety high-school musical

LONDON: It's hard to think of a more unlikely subject for a musical than an 1891 German drama about the tortured psyches of adolescents growing up in a rigid bourgeois environment that leads them to act out on stage their sexual fantasies. From the desperation of a 14-year-old girl to know how babies are made, to the perverse desires of 15-year-olds, this is not your usual, easy-sing stuff.

However, with book and lyrics by Steven Sater and music by Duncan Sheik, this production of Frank Wedekind's "Spring Awakening" has arrived at the Lyric Hammer-smith, generously and justly garlanded with awards from New York.

Christine Jones's terrific Gymnasium bare set and Susan Hilferly's period costumes make possible the dichotomy between the historic matter of the play and the soft-rock music. In a sweetly Brechtian gesture of theatrical alienation, the kids reach into their 19th-century shirts or blouses to extract the hand-held mikes that signal 21st-century music.

While the score could be a good deal more daring, it serves its purpose, and is far more interesting than anything written recently by Andrew Lloyd Webber. When the full company let loose with "Totally F—," it's an utterly timeless rebellious schoolkid anthem. Of course the music kills off any hint of tragedy in the original play, though the musical version still deals with death from a botched abortion, the agonies of puberty and suicide.

The supremely distinguished choreography of Bill T. Jones leaves you with indelible, graceful images of young people scarcely bound by gravity, as they leap and frolic about the spacious stage. Moreover, the casting has resulted in some superb performances by director Michael Mayer's U.K. company, especially the two Welsh boys who play the leads, Aneurin Barnard and Iwan Rheon.

Anyway, who of my generation can dislike a teenage musical in which an entire scene consists of a recitation of the beginning of Virgil's Aeneid in Latin?

—Paul Levy
Until March 14
www.lyric.co.uk



Catherine Ashmore

Gerald Finley as J. Robert Oppenheimer in 'Dr. Atomic.'

Taking dance a few steps farther

BY SARAH FRATER

Special to The Wall Street Journal
BALLET IS OFTEN viewed as a classical, even old-fashioned dance form, yet a training in ballet can often be a springboard for the most innovative of artists.

Consider Jonathan Burrows. The experimental movement-maker trained at the Royal Ballet School, and danced with the Royal Ballet, but his collaborations with Italian composer Matteo Fargion have earned him a reputation as one of the most original and amusing choreographers of the past decade.

His works "Both Sitting Duet" (2002), "The Quiet Dance" (2005) and "Speaking Dance" (2006) feature Messrs. Burrows and Fargion sitting on chairs, talking nonsense and waving their arms around. They also walk across the stage and describe dance—without actually dancing. The hybrid pieces—part dance, part experimental theater, part tribute to music and dance—were made separately but are often performed together, and have been a considerable success. To date, the duo have given more than 150 performances in 36 countries and will be touring Europe and Australia this spring and summer, with coming dates in Maasmechelen, Belgium (March 17-19); Dartington, U.K. (April 22 and 23); Châlons-en-Champagne, France (May 12); and Istanbul (May 19 and 20).

Jonathan Burrows was born in 1960 in County Durham, England. After his time with the Royal Ballet, where he is remembered for his work with the renowned choreographer Kenneth MacMillan, he formed his own company in 1988 to present his own work. High-profile collaborations followed, including a film with Sylvie Guillem (1996), a piece for William Forsythe's Ballet Frankfurt (1997) and an associate directorship at the National Theatre, London (2008).

Mr. Burrows was recently appointed resident artist at the Kaai Theatre in Brussels, where he now lives. We talked to him at St. Pancras International in London as he waited for his train to the Belgian capital.

Q: How did you come to create work like "Speaking Dance"?

I used to think that artists choose the work they make. But the older I get the more I realize that artists don't choose what they want, but what they can.

Q: The work chooses them?
 Sort of.

Q: It's not what you expect from a ballet-trained dancer.

When you describe it, it's difficult to see how it would work. We're two middle-aged men sitting on chairs and waving our arms. The first duet we made, "Both Sitting Duet," came about because we wanted to translate a piece of music by the American composer Morton Feldman called "For John Cage" into gesture. Feldman's music is very gentle and quiet, but we somehow made something jolly and funny. If you work with rhythm you are dealing with time, and you create an expectation. If you don't deliver, it's doubly funny.

Q: Did you set out to make a trilogy?

No. After we made the first



Jonathan Burrows (left) and Matteo Fargion perform 'The Quiet Dance.'

duet, we didn't have anything to do, so we made a second one. We included all the things we did in the first duet, only with walking as well. Our only principle was that it mustn't be boring. With the third piece we included speech. And when we ran out of words, we continued by whatever means necessary, which included mouth organs, shouting, clapping, arm-waving.

Q: You perform at small venues.

It's not that I don't like large spectacle. I was a member of the Royal Ballet for 13 years, and enjoyed being part of and watching big theatrical effects. But my most powerful experiences in the theater have been in smaller spaces where I felt the performer was a hu-

man being and not a higher being in a remote place.

Q: How did your interest in different types of choreography come about?

When I was with the Royal Ballet I met the experimental choreographer Rosemary Butcher. I have a daughter, who I had very young, who I took to a play park. Rosemary took her son to the same park, and we got talking. One day she asked me if I'd perform in one of her works. And I said, "But you've never seen me dance," and she said, "No, but I like talking to you."

Q: Did your Royal Ballet School training help?

When I was there in the 1970s children were subjected to an inten-

sity of observation and pressure that was potentially damaging. Having said that, everything I do is built on the principles of coordination it taught me.

Q: Can you describe that?

The reason ballet works for audiences and will go on working is not because of its theatrical aspects, but because the coordination between arms and legs is so unexpected. You always want to know what happens next.

Q: What happened when you left the Royal Ballet?

I studied with the composer Kevin Volans. And then I formed my own company and worked with dancers, but I wasn't very good at looking after people. So I decided

to only work with one other artist. And that's what I do with Matteo. We have no infrastructure. No office. We make all our work in Matteo's kitchen. It's cheaper than hiring a studio, and we don't like working in studios anyway. And he is a very good cook, which helps the work enormously.

Q: You've just moved to Brussels.

It's the heart of contemporary dance in Europe. It's good to be where the work isn't questioned.

Q: What are you doing next?

I never know. It's a terrible weakness, but one I've had to accept.

Q: If no specific plans, what are your creative interests?

I'm fascinated by the relationship between the performer and the audience. And I want to know how to go forward as a performer as I get older. I love performing. I would carry a spear if that's all I could do.

Q: Can you describe being a performer?

Most performers are actually quite shy. It's not about projecting your larger-than-life personality. It's a self-investigation, and it's a high, especially when you can hear and feel the audience is alive to what you are doing.

Q: Some bodies look better on stage than others. Is that what audiences connect to?

One of the revolutions in contemporary dance is allowing different body types on stage, which is a huge relief to audiences. Instead of seeing a super-being, which reduces them to a lesser being, they see themselves. It's a quality that Matteo and I bring to our performances. An acceptance of failure. The more we fail, the funnier it gets.

Q: But audiences can tell you are a trained dancer. You have ease and speed, and an ability to connect steps that Matteo doesn't have.

I hope so!

Optimism ahead of Maastricht fair

TEFAP HASN'T BEEN hit by the economic gloom yet: The leading fine arts and antiques fair will see a record 239 international galleries offer art covering the an-

Collecting MARGARET STUDER

cient to the modern world next week. Objects, with an estimated combined value of more than \$1 billion, will spread over an area of roughly four football fields in the Dutch town of Maastricht from March 13 to 22.

Tefaf's enormous diversity of objects makes it a barometer for collector markets. Ben Janssens, the Tefaf chairman and London-based oriental art dealer, says that a few months ago he was careful about his expectations for the fair, but now he feels "very positive."

He notes that one-third of the pieces in his Maastricht catalog are already under reserve, up from last year. He also sees the success of last month's Yves Saint Laurent/Pierre Bergé auction, where 95.5% of lots sold for €373.9 million, as a good omen.

Welcoming visitors to the Janssens stand will be a pair of dramatic Chinese pottery figures from the Tang Dynasty (618-906), depicting warriors standing on bulls (price: in the region of €150,000).

For the first time, Tefaf will have a special section devoted entirely to modern design. Among the exhibitors will be Sebastian & Barquet of New York, a gallery which recently opened a second space in London and views Tefaf as an important part of its expansion into the European market. On the stand will be Japanese-American designer George Nakashima's

Conoid Studio walnut and hickory bench from the Rockefeller Japanese House, Pocantico Hills, N.Y., from circa 1974 (price: \$300,000).

International dealer Daniella Luxembourg has chosen a gripping topic for her first show at Tefaf: disasters. The art will include works about war and terrorist violence. Artists will include Pablo Picasso, Anselm Kiefer and Joseph Beuys, with prices ranging from \$100,000 up to the millions.

A baroque yet contemporary feel is evident at German jeweler Otto Jakob. "I only ever wanted to be at Maastricht where art and jewelry are together," says Mr. Jakob. Invited in 2007, he jumped at the chance: "We had great sales. But that was before the financial crisis. This year is an adventure." Among his pieces will be "Wolodja," exotic gold, diamond and enamel earrings with faces of Russian cadets, inspired by Sergei



Above, 'Wolodja' earrings by Otto Jakob; price: €57,600.

Eisenstein's silent film "The Battleship Potemkin" (price: €57,600).

Among the old master paintings on offer at Tefaf is "Black Stalion and His Groom" (1605) by Dutch master Roelandt Savery at Paris gallery De Jonckheere (price: around €600,000).

Comic-book-loving producer specializes

BY JAMIN BROPHY-WARREN

LATE IN THE AFTERNOON in Los Angeles, Thomas Tull, chief executive officer of Legendary Pictures, has snuck out of his office to read comic books.

"You want to know what's really cool?" says Mr. Tull as he walks through a comic-book store in the chic Silver Lake neighborhood. He points to titles that his company has made into movies. "Watchmen." "Dark Knight." "300." We made all of those," he says. He's read each of those comics a half-dozen times.

There's a name for people who, like Mr. Tull, are singularly devoted to comics or some other pop-cultural pursuit: fanboys. This week, as executive producer, he'll help bring to the big screen his favorite comic book: "Watchmen."

The 38-year-old Mr. Tull is part of a new generation of film and TV executives who were raised on videogames and comics and are now turning those childhood obsessions into big-budget realities. Last year's "The Dark Knight" is the second-highest grossing film ever in the U.S., bringing in more than \$500 million at the box office there and \$1 billion globally. Popular TV shows like "Heroes," "Lost," and "Smallville" draw heavily on the imagery and themes of comic-book culture. Directors such as Joss Whedon and writers like Brian K. Vaughan jump back and forth between comics, movies and other media and attract thousands of fans at entertainment conventions. Hollywood has embraced these executives because they have the inside track on a coveted audience: teenage boys.

"Watchmen" is the greatest professional challenge yet for Mr. Tull, who, among other things, used to be in the coin-laundry business before launching Legendary. The company, which has a production deal with Warner Bros., put up about half of the \$100 million budget for "Watchmen." Unlike "Dark Knight," which featured heroes and villains such as Batman and the Joker who are familiar to people who don't read comics, the new film doesn't rely on any well-known characters. And while "Dark Knight" starred Christian Bale and Heath Ledger, "Watchmen" doesn't feature any big-name actors.

For the movie industry, "Watchmen" is the first big test of the year. Financing films has become increasingly difficult as the global credit-crunch has tightened wallets. But despite the recession, box office returns in 2008 were about even last year compared with the previous year, in part due to the success of "Dark Knight." So far this year, box office is up about 14%, according to Box Office Mojo.

Although Warner Bros. has marketed "Watchmen" heavily and it faces little competition upon its release, the film is not a sure thing. Doug Creutz, vice president of equity research at Cowen & Co., says the movie's R rating and graphic content could deter some moviegoers—and prevent the tar-



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get audience of teen boys from seeing it at all. The movie features a long scene of superhero sex and a number of violent scenes throughout, including some particularly bloody ones in a prison-escape sequence. It's also a long film, clocking in around 2½ hours. Mr. Creutz doesn't think the film will bomb, and notes that "300" faced similar hurdles. But he says that if "Watchmen" isn't a blockbuster, "I think Warner Bros. might be disappointed."

The comic-book version of "Watchmen," a dark tale about a world where superheroes are banned and must operate underground, was written by Alan Moore and illustrated by Dave Gibbons. First released as a series in 1986 and 1987, it was hailed for its subversion of comic-book clichés. Superhero tales typically focus on battles between good and evil. The characters in "Watchmen," however, are flawed and complex, and the moral choices they make are difficult and messy. The comic's serpentine story is laced with references to poetry, philosophy and music, and features numerous tangents, including a subplot about a sailor lost at sea. "We were doing things that hadn't been seen before in the superhero genre. I mean, we had a full-frontal nude male," says Mr. Gibbons.



Brad Swonez/Redux for The Wall Street Journal

Mr. Tull first read "Watchmen" in college. He loved the characters, particularly Rorschach, the book's dysfunctional antihero. "He's so violent and uncompromising," Mr. Tull says.

The comic has a tortured history in Hollywood. 20th Century Fox bought the rights in the 1980s for producer Lawrence Gordon ("Die Hard," "Field of Dreams") who oversaw the writing and re-writing of the script. Fox eventu-

ally abandoned its plans and Mr. Gordon took the project to multiple studios, including Universal and Paramount, before landing at Warner Bros. Last year, Fox alleged that Mr. Gordon failed to obtain the rights for the film from it and in December, a federal judge agreed to hear the case. With another delay looming in an already two-decade-long process and a Warner Bros. ad campaign in full swing, the two studios reached an agreement last month. Terms of the agreement weren't disclosed, but reports have said it involves a cash payment to Fox and a cut of the film's box-office gross. (Fox is a unit of News Corp., which also owns Dow Jones & Co., publisher of The Wall Street Journal.)

After years of stops and starts, many comic-book fans are eager for "Watchmen" to finally be released. Mr. Tull—who owns some 100 action-figure statuettes and stores hundreds of comic books in

his basement—has decided that catering to the fanboys makes business sense. Many of the same kind of fans that once flocked to "Star Wars" will be waiting on opening day for "Watchmen." Typically young and male (although growing numbers of females have joined their ranks), the fanboy set is omnivorous—consuming comics, TV, film and videogames. It's a notoriously fickle group—movies such as "The Spirit" have bombed when they failed to live up to fanboy expectations. "This is my group," says Mr. Tull. "They like stuff I like."

Legendary Pictures, which is housed on the Warner Bros. lot, started in 2004, when Mr. Tull signed a five-year, 25-picture agreement with Warner Bros. to finance feature films (the pact was subsequently extended to about 40 films). Similar to outfits like Village Roadshow Pictures ("The Matrix"), Legendary is an independent production company.

When he first began raising money for Legendary, Mr. Tull consulted financial models to see if he could make money creating films for fanboys. These models analyzed recent films, looking at dozens of factors like potential revenue lines and international success. "You look at these films—they've become consistent and have a very clear audience. You're not getting 'Under the Tuscan Sun.' It's not their business," says financial adviser Roy Salter, whose firm produced the data. Mr. Tull is quick to note that making films "is not the widget business" and doesn't solely rely on data.

Many studios are betting on superhero films. Last week, Marvel Entertainment's Marvel Studios (which focuses on the genre and released last year's hit superhero film "Iron Man") announced that its net income more than doubled in the fourth quarter after it began producing its own films instead of licensing them. Warner Bros. has started mining the catalog of DC Comics, which published "Watchmen." Coming Warner Bros. films based on DC Comics titles include "Green Lantern." "We



© Warner Bros. Entertainment (2)

in superheroes



have a basic overall philosophy of trying to make event films—large films for a broad-based audience,” says Barry Meyer, CEO of Warner Bros. Entertainment. “With comic characters, they have some of the greatest appeal for a moviegoing audience.”

Legendary suffered some early setbacks. The company’s 2006 movie “Superman Returns” underperformed. It funded two more flops back-to-back that year: “Ant Bully,” an animated film featuring Julia Roberts and Nicolas Cage, and “Lady in the Water,” a suspense title directed by M. Night Shyamalan. The Monday after “Lady” opened to poor reviews and slow sales, Alan Horn, operating chief of Warner Bros., called Mr. Tull to reassure him about the future of their partnership.

Legendary’s luck started to turn around when director Zack Snyder showed up at Mr. Tull’s office with an idea to make Frank Miller’s graphic novel “300,” violent historical fiction about the last stand of a band of Spartans against Persian invaders. Mr. Snyder had pitched the idea to a dozen studios, but executives had told him that “sword-and-sandal” flicks were passé—or that they had similar projects in the pipeline. Mr. Tull, a fan of Mr. Miller’s comics, signed on immediately. The film went on to have one of the biggest openings of 2007, grossing nearly \$500 million world-wide. “I think [Mr. Tull] understands whether it’ll make money, because he looks at it as a fan,” says Mr. Snyder.

In the wake of the success of “300,” Mr. Snyder approached Mr. Tull about making “Watchmen.” Mr. Tull was initially skeptical about the idea. “I looked at him and said ‘Really?’” Mr. Tull remembers. “I’m not saying it’s unfilmable, but it’s heady stuff.” But he gave the film the green light and stayed in contact with Mr. Snyder, tweaking the script and reviewing sketches of the characters. He was particularly concerned with making sure the costumes would work. “If someone’s running around in spandex that can get

silly real quick,” he says.

Mr. Tull lives in a quiet town called Calabasas about 25 minutes outside of Los Angeles and sometimes drives a Toyota Prius to work. Raised by a single mother in the small city of Binghamton, N.Y., Mr. Tull often watched two or three VHS movies a day (“Jaws” and “Close Encounters of the Third Kind” were favorites) while his mother worked as a dental hygienist. Abandoning plans to become a lawyer after college, he owned a chain of laundromats and car-repair centers, although he didn’t have a passion for either business. He later became president of Convex Group, a media investment company, where he oversaw projects like purchasing the Web site howstuffworks.com.

At a dinner in Los Angeles in 2003, an executive at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer piqued Mr. Tull’s interest in Hollywood after complaining about the difficulty involved in financing films. Mr. Tull, spurred by his love of movies, quit his job at Convex and spent a year on the road raising money largely from private-equity firms. Eventually, he raised about \$500 million in initial financing to launch Legendary. Mr. Tull pushed for the company to take a hands-on approach to its movies. “We treat each film like a start-up,” he says, because he regularly pores over scripts and consults with directors.

Legendary is currently developing a film version of the popular Gears of War videogame franchise; the company is also working on a remake of “Clash of the Titans,” and a film adaptation of “Where the Wild Things Are.”

Mr. Tull aims to branch out. He’s creating a digital department for future Web ventures, and the company will become more involved in videogames.

At the comic-book store in Silver Lake, however, Mr. Tull is still thinking about his coming movie. He eyes the store clerk. “So, let me ask you a question,” he says, placing his stack of comics on the checkout table. “What do you guys think about ‘Watchmen?’”



Above, Billy Crudup as Dr. Manhattan in ‘Watchmen’; below, Harrison Ford (foreground) and Jamison Haase in ‘Crossing Over.’

Extrasensory overload

‘WATCHMEN’ PRESENTS two great challenges—getting your mind around it, and getting your head out from under it. The first was to be expected. The source material, a graphic novel by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, is a work of unusual intricacy, visual power and narrative ambition. Doing full justice to such a classic in a single movie was clearly impossible, though hundreds of artists and technicians led by the director, Zack Snyder—his previous film was the violent Spartan morality saga “300”—have rev-

Film

JOE MORGENSTERN

erently moved great dollops of the book to the big screen.

The second is essential to sustaining sanity. Unless you’re heavily invested—as countless fans and fervent fanboys are—in the novel’s flawed superheroes, its jaundiced take on heroism and its alternate vision of American history, watching “Watchmen” is the spiritual equivalent of being whacked on the skull for 163 minutes. The reverence is inert, the violence noxious, the mythology murky, the tone grandiose, the texture glutinous. It’s an alternate version of “The Incredibles” minus the delight.

The story starts with the brutal murder of a brutish antihero called “The Comedian,” then quickly turns into a paranoid thriller as a crazed vigilante, Rorschach, searches for the killer and uncovers an apocalyptic plot. (Rorschach wears a mask with inkblots swirling beneath its surface, and narrates the voice-over, sounding like a nut-job Batman besotted by Raymond Chandler. He’s played by Jackie Earle Haley, who is genuinely frightening on the few occasions when he sheds his mask.) The film, like the novel, leaps back and forth in time and space—one dreamy interlude takes place on Mars—but the action is set mainly in the parallel universe of a 1980s America where the Cold War has reached the boiling point, the doomsday clock is approaching midnight and formerly prominent superheroes have woven themselves into everyday life.

That setting is amusing, up to a point. A Cyrano-nosed Richard Nixon is serving a third term in the White House. A Henry Kissinger growl-alike sports a Slavic accent. Yet an all-pervasive joylessness makes it impossible to care about the big costumed cheeses who will,



or will not, save the world from nuclear annihilation: Patrick Wilson’s Nite Owl (don’t blame Mr. Wilson, who actually does some acting); Malin Akerman’s statuesque Silk Spectre (“Omigod,” she exclaims during that interlude, “we’re on Mars!”); Matthew Goode’s Ozymandias (as the smartest person on earth, he gets smart-aleck lines like “I’m not a comic-book villain”) and Billy Crudup’s godlike Dr. Manhattan (the only one who possesses true superpowers).

Unlike “300,” which combined live-action characters with computer-generated sets, this film uses physical settings as well, and it’s all to the good; the production as a whole is impressive. So is the eclectic soundtrack, which ranges from Philip Glass and Leonard Cohen to Bob Dylan (performed by Jimi Hendrix) and Paul Simon (“The Sounds of Silence” plays over a haunting scene in a Brooklyn cemetery). At the same time, the martial arts, along with some crucial special effects, are inelegant to say the least. But then elegance isn’t Zack Snyder’s bag; a certain sort of impact is. “Watchmen” establishes him as Hollywood’s reigning master of psychic suffocation.

‘Crossing Over’

“Crossing Over” has its heart in umpteen places and its head stuffed with dramatic claptrap. Wayne Kramer’s interlocking saga of immigration in 21st-century America definitely crosses over, from workaday

mediocrity to distinctive dreadfulness. But how does it succeed in failing so fully? Many movies, after all, are afflicted with dim characters declaiming dumb dialogue, and Harrison Ford, who plays an immigration agent in this one, is no more morose than he was last year as Indiana Jones. The key is runaway connectivity. Never mind “The Curse of the Mummy’s Tomb.” What we have here is the curse of “Crash” and “Babel.”

The common denominator of those two overpraised but influential films was their jigsaw-puzzle structure—disparate lives tied together by tentacles of coincidence, or convenience, that reached across a sprawling city in the first case and across the whole world in the second. The meaning was clear—we’re all related, whether we know it or not—but the bloodless technique made a mockery of E.M. Forster’s humanist injunction “Only connect.” In the case of “Crossing Over,” which seems to have more strands than a fiber-optic cable, would-be immigrants are connected by their common desire to gain resident status in the U.S., whether legally or not. Beyond that, though, they’re hyperlinked in arbitrary ways—marriage, family, romance, adultery, professional partnership, a fender-bender in the spirit of “Crash”—that only serve to heighten the absurdity of their individual stories.

Mr. Ford’s immigration agent, Max Brogan, is a good guy caught in bad circumstances. (The helpful script tells us that he’s a good guy in the very first scene, when he tries to protect a comely young Latina worker during a raid on a Los Angeles garment factory and a fellow agent says testily, “Everything is a humanitarian crisis with you.”) Another crisis involves an Australian actress’s attempt to score a green card and the efforts of her agnostic boyfriend, a British musician, to pass himself off as a religious Jew.

His story provides the first and only whiff of intentional humor: La Migra requires the boyfriend to recite the Kaddish in the sternly judgmental presence of an orthodox rabbi. For the rest, the film relies on silly happenstance, superheated banalities and a frenzied, cross-cutting climax that plays like a parody of “The Godfather.” Some immigrants make it while others don’t, some are deserving while others are not, but that’s the extent of the script’s wisdom. Confronted by one of the central dramas of our time, “Crossing Over” has nothing to declare.

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Opening this week in Europe

- Confessions of a Shopaholic Germany, Netherlands
- Gran Torino Italy, Netherlands
- He’s Just Not That Into You Sweden
- Marley and Me Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, U.K.
- Slumdog Millionaire Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Romania
- The International Belgium, France

Source: IMDb

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Building a new look

By Isis Almeida

FASHION IS architecture," Coco Chanel once said. "It is a matter of proportions."

Top fashion designers have often taken inspiration from architecture, bringing to their catwalks techniques, materials and structures used in cutting-edge building design. The works of British-Turkish designer Hussein Chalayan (who once created a collection in which chairs and tables became garments), Belgian Martin Margiela (who uses elements of deconstructivism in his avant-garde collections) and Japanese Issey Miyake (whose pleats and cantilevers practically quote architecture) are just a few examples.

Until recently architects have dabbled in the fashion world only by designing stores for luxury brands looking to make a distinctive statement. Zaha Hadid created Neil Barrett's flagship store in Tokyo; Rem Koolhaas and his nephew Rem D. Koolhaas designed the Prada store in New York; Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron the Prada store in Tokyo; and Kazuyo Sejima the Christian Dior shop in Tokyo.

But now "starchitects" are taking the trend a step further, making the move into designing fashion themselves, bringing some characteristics of their work to a new discipline. The latest to do so is Frank Gehry, Pritzker Prize-winning architect and celebrated designer of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and the Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles. Invited by French luxury shoe company J.M. Weston, Mr. Gehry partnered with his son Alejandro, an artist, to create two pairs of an-

kle-high leather boots. The shoes—one pair black, the other black-and-white, with buttons running down the side—sell in J.M. Weston boutiques for €1,400.

"As a young architect, I was fascinated by fashion," Mr. Gehry says. "The J.M. Weston project was a great opportunity not only to explore something new and that I was interested in, but also to work in partnership with my son."

For the French luxury shoemaker, Mr. Gehry was an obvious choice since his style matches the brand's own design emphasis on contemporary and pure shapes, said Michael Blanchard, a spokesperson for J.M. Weston.

"We feel there is a close synergy between the worlds of architecture and shoe design," Mr. Blanchard says. "They share similar qualities through technique, design and shape."

Mr. Gehry's boot design is not the first collaboration between a fashion house and an architect. The Iraq-born Ms. Hadid, whose distinctive building designs include the Bridge Pavilion in Zaragoza, Spain, and the Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art in Cincinnati, Ohio, is already a veteran in the field. Known for her swooping buildings, she designed an iconic bag for Louis Vuitton (though it wasn't meant to be sold), a necklace for Swarovski and a pair of shoes for Brazilian shoemaker company Melissa that will be available in stores this autumn. Her latest fashion design is a pair of slip-on leather shoes for Lacoste, inspired by a series of landscapes that have been embossed onto the leather.

"I have always been interested in the concepts of abstraction and explosion and the dynamic fluid grids of the Lacoste design are direct evolution of these ideas," Ms. Hadid says. "The grids expand and



Big-name architects start designing fashion

contract when wrapped around the foot to create the fluid forms that follow the contours of the foot."

The shoe's ergonomic shape emphasizes utility, a characteristic the architect believes is essential to both fashion and architecture.

American architect and Pritzker Prize-winner Richard Meier also highlights the functionality aspect of both disciplines. "Both architecture and fashion serve a function and that is their first responsibility," he says. "If they don't function, then no one wants to use them, no matter what they look like."

Mr. Meier, the architect behind the Getty Center in Los Angeles and the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art, was a guest designer for the 2008 spring collection of New York-based luxury knitwear brand Lutz & Patmos. He designed two cardigans—one for men and one for women—in partnership with his daughter Ana, a fashion designer. The achromatic sweaters reflect



Right, Frank Gehry's leather boot for J.M. Weston; below, Rem D. Koolhaas's Möbius shoe.

United Nude



Designs by Zaha Hadid (from far left): leather shoes for Melissa; the Icone bag for Louis Vuitton; the Chanel Mobile Art container.

From left: David Grandage; Werner Hutmacher; Marc Gerritsen



his architectural style: clean, light, minimalist and functional.

"Architecture has always been an important discipline for Lutz & Patmos, since our collections are inspired in architectural shapes," says Tina Lutz, the label's founder. "Moreover, our idea of fashion is not the ephemeral designs that come and go every season. For us, fashion, like architecture, has to last."

Another designer whose signature style features prominently in his fashion collaborations is Ron Arad. The Israeli-born, London-based industrial designer and architect's most recent fashion creation—an ergonomic, elliptical shoulder bag for the French label Notify Jeans—is based on his futuristic armchair designs. (The bag, along with Mr. Arad's other fashion collaborations, can be seen in an exhibition entitled "No Discipline" at the Centre Pompidou in Paris until March 16, and at the Museum of Modern Art in New York from Aug. 2-Oct. 19. It will go on sale during the MOMA show.)

"I was invited to create a bag for Notify Jeans about two years ago, but the first ideas didn't really take off," Mr. Arad says. "It was only when [fashion model] Linda Evangelista told me that she'd would wear one of my armchairs under her arm that the right idea really flourished."

The bag features a button that, when pressed, makes a round opaque panel in the center of the bag turn transparent. "This mechanism will allow you to see what's inside when you are searching for something," the designer says. "It's functional."

Another product that mirrors Mr. Arad's irreverent style is the limited edition perfume bottle he created for Kenzo. The bottle will be available only in Paris, Marseille, Brussels and New York starting next week for €188. Playing with ergonomics and targeting a generation that grew up on video games and iPods, the architect designed a bottle that fits perfectly in the palm of the hand and has a spray mechanism that is pressed with the thumb instead of



Jair Sfez

Fabienne Nury



Far left, Ron Arad with his Kenzo perfume bottle; left, the designer's sometimes-see-through bag for Notify Jeans.

completely different concepts," she says. "We've developed projects that we wouldn't have otherwise because they were created by a guest designer."

Ms. Hadid also stresses the role architects play in introducing new ways of thinking into the universe of fashion. "There is a lot of fluidity now between art, design and architecture—a lot more cross-pollination in the disciplines," she says. "It is essential to find key collaborators to work on new discoveries and push them into the mainstream."

Pushing new architectural designs into the mainstream is just what Dutch architect Rem D. Koolhaas has been trying to do. His first design, the Möbius shoe, was inspired by Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe's Barcelona chair created in 1929.

"After inventing the Möbius, I traveled around trying to sell my designs to some of the most prestigious fashion houses, but without luck," the Hong Kong-based Mr. Koolhaas says. "Then I was introduced to Galahad Clark, a seventh-generation shoemaker who was young and naïve enough to take the chance of starting a new brand with me."

In 2003, the two men founded the footwear label United Nude. Each of the shoes they produce is a reinterpretation of an architectural object, a transformation of shapes and a play with the forces of gravity. The Möbius, for instance, defies conventional geometry: a single strip forms the sole, heel, foot-bed and upper. The Cosmo challenges the force of gravity by placing its 11-centimeter heel in the central part of the shoe. It looks as if it might not support the wearer, but like one of his or his uncle's building designs, its engineering functions perfectly.

the forefinger.

"We invited Ron Arad to develop this product because he had never designed a perfume before and his work fitted in well with the Kenzo universe: a world of curves, with a mineral, ergonomic, emotional, warm dimension," said Patrick Guedj, creative director of Kenzo Perfumes. "We wanted a different design concept, outside regular codes."



Alan Karchner/Esto



Richard Meier and his daughter Ana Meier wearing the cardigans they designed (detail at far left); left, the architect's Jubilee Church in Rome.

Wolfgang Ludes

A difficult love affair with Barolo

WE RECENTLY VISITED our favorite secret-hideaway, cash-only, little Italian joint, where the owner sometimes sells wine cheap from his special cellar and you pour your own darn bottle. The special that night was a 1997 Barolo for \$60. This was a deal we found impossible to refuse. We ordered the wine and it was terrific—earthy, soulful, powerful and proud. Even with our spicy chicken dishes, the wine seemed a masterful match. We lingered over it forever, but nei-

Tastings

DOROTHY J. GAITER
AND JOHN BRECHER

ther of us took a single sip for granted. The wine kept telling us, “Attention must be paid,” and we did. The Barolo made the entire meal special, transporting us not only to the hills of Piedmont, but to a different time. It made us realize how much we miss Barolo.

We love Barolo, the great wine from Italy made from the Nebbiolo grape, and we always have. Because it ages so well for so long, we used to collect many vintages of it. We enjoyed Barolo so often that we even stored some at our favorite restaurant in Coral Gables, Fla., so we could drink it with dinner there and share it with the owner. This restaurant was the first place we took our daughter Media. She was two months old, sitting in her carrier on the table, and we opened one of our Barolos in her honor. We have often said that, if stranded on a desert island with one bottle of wine, we’d want Barolo. It is so soulful and life-affirming that, with one glass, we’d just know we’d be rescued—and we wouldn’t care if we were.

But we haven’t drunk much Barolo in a while. Somehow, it became a special occasion wine to us. Partly it’s the price—it’s hard to find one for less than \$50 and it’s possible to pay far more. But it’s more than that. Barolo is so regal, so serious, so powerful that it’s hard to make time—and an appropriate meal—for it in a busy world. Yes, it happens to us, too.

The ‘97 reminded us what we were missing. A few days later, we took a 1964 Ceretto Barolo to our favorite “bring-your-own-bottle” place. When we opened the wine at 6:40 p.m., it was slightly dusty and seemed tired. Two hours later, though, it had pulled itself together into an ephemeral, soft treat, still with a core of intact, sweet fruit and rich earth. It sang both with Dottie’s duck and John’s mango chicken.

Naturally, those two yummy experiences nudged us to conduct a broad blind tasting. The good news is that the well-regarded 2004 vintage has recently arrived, but we figured that might be the bad news, too: We assumed that these wines, never inexpensive, would be crazy expensive for such a good vintage, especially considering that just about the entire 2002 vintage was ruined by bad weather, including hail. As we looked around, though, we found that the economic mess is clearly keeping demand for Barolo, and therefore prices, down. We even saw sales on the 2004s. Not that the wines are inexpensive, but it’s possible they could still be good values if they are transcendent.



Shira Kronzon for The Wall Street Journal

We set a price limit at \$70 to see if we could find 50 at that price, and we had no trouble doing that. The wines included so many old friends, from Silvio Grasso to Pio Cesare. We had not conducted a Barolo tasting in four years and we looked forward to this with unusual anticipation. Dottie cooked a special meal each night—including, of course, her own version of beef Barolo, which we first enjoyed with Bruno and Marcello Ceretto more than two decades ago at Marcello’s home in Piedmont.

We tasted the wines in blind flights over several nights and....

Darn it. They really just weren’t

that impressive. You can’t imagine our shock and disappointment. Flight after flight left us cold. They weren’t bad. They were pleasant enough. But with wine after wine, we used a word that should never be used to describe Barolo: simple. It’s not that they were made in more of an “international” style, with softer tannins and a smoother taste, though that was sometimes the case. It’s that the bar, overall, seemed lower than it has been. The wines lacked soul and intensity. We expect greatness, or at least a reach for greatness, from Barolo. Yes, they were very young, and fine, Barolo

The 2004 Barolo index

In a broad blind tasting of Barolo from the 2004 vintage, these were our favorites, all of which are made in small quantities. Some Barolo producers have relationships with small importers or local stores, so distribution is haphazard. Specific labels can be hard to find, but good merchants will have at least some Barolo from 2004. These will age well for many years. Barolo is good with roasts and other special meals. These are powerful wines, especially in their youth, but not overly alcoholic. Every wine in our tasting was 14.5% alcohol or less.

VINEYARD	PRICE	RATING	COMMENTS
Giacomo Grimaldi 'Sotto Castello di Novello'	\$53*	Very Good/Delicious	Best of tasting and best value. This is Barolo—intense, serious, powerful. Chocolate, raisins, some dried cherries and marvelous earthiness. Worth every penny and more. We also liked the regular Grimaldi (\$40).
Attilio Ghisolfi	\$35.99	Very Good	Real focus and nice edges. Highly personal, with huge fruit that’s so pure and real it’s easy to drink despite its size. Quite a wine.
Corino 'Vigna Giachini'	\$65*	Very Good	Lovely flavors, with cherry-chocolate tastes and a lingering, mouth-coating finish. Maintains its tight fruit from beginning to end.
Marcarini 'La Serra'	\$55*	Good/Very Good	More relaxed than most, more elegant, with some complexity and food-friendly acidity. Earthy, with chocolate, cherries and minerals. Longtime favorite.
Mauro Veglio 'Vigneto Arborina'	\$58*	Good/Very Good	Nicely balanced and confident. Real guts, with rich, dark-fruit tastes. Meaty.

Note: Wines are rated on a scale that ranges: Yech, OK, Good, Very Good, Delicious and Delicious! *We paid \$59.99 for Grimaldi, \$69.99 for Corino, \$48 and \$67 for Marcarini and \$55 for Veglio, but these prices appear to be more representative. Prices vary widely.

can become more and more majestic with time, but these generally are not majestic wines, and they will never be. “If you don’t pay attention with every sip, it’s not Barolo,” John said at one point—and too many of these were not worthy of much attention. Too many tasted diluted—thin around the edges; overly grapey; soft; and even, in some cases, creamy. While it’s possible that we set our price limit too low, we expect wines from a fine vintage to show well, generally. Consider the inexpensive red Bordeaux from 2005, for instance, which we found impressive at \$20 and less.

Fortunately, we tasted a few that reminded us how wonderful Barolo can be. “Powerful, with great fruit, plenty of earth, dried cherries and chocolate. Dry and raisiny, with face-slapping intensity. Serious stuff,” we wrote of one, which turned out to be Giacomo Grimaldi. Other good ones reminded us of black olives and very ripe though very tight fruit, the kind of fruit that seems to explode in our mouths and make our toes tingle. The finish on the good ones was long, dry and earthy, with a lovely balance of dark fruit and acidity that lingers. There were various tastes from basil to chocolate, not to mention mouth-puckering tannins, that made the wines complex, interesting and substantial, with muscularity and depth.

Would we rush out and buy a 2004 Barolo? No. But all love affairs hit rough patches. We have no desire to divorce Barolo and we’re not going to. If anything, all of this reminded us how very special those good bottles can be. But before we’d spend that kind of money, we’d make sure we had a merchant we trusted who has a good selection of Italian wines.

And, most certainly, before laying any down—and that is what most Barolo lovers do—we would taste them to make sure we liked them even in their infancy so we wouldn’t be disappointed as they mature.

Wine Notes: Is ‘Old Tokay’ OK?

WHEN WE WENT into my grandfather’s house many years ago we found a bottle of “Old Tokay” from the Sierra Madre Vintage Co. in Lamanda, Calif. The bottle is sealed in wax and has been stored on its side at least for the last 20 years. We guess that it’s around 80 years old. What can you tell us about it?

—Daniel Harris, Fayetteville, N.Y.

We are often asked questions like this. One good place to research old wineries is the book “A Companion to California Wine” by Charles L. Sullivan. In it, he writes that Southern California produced high-quality wines

more than a hundred years ago and “Sierra Madre Winery, at Lamanda Park, today part of Pasadena, is the best example. The first vineyards were planted in 1871 and the winery built in 1885 by Albert Brigdon and J.F. Clark. The red table wines produced here won numerous awards, including a gold medal in Paris in 1900. An 1895 Zinfandel tasted in 1976 was ‘Still fruity and complete, old but still alive,’ according to the tasters.” He says the winery closed in 1923. By the way, in “A History of Wine in America,” Thomas Pinney notes that “Los Angeles County, the place where California winegrowing originated, still had some 4,700 acres of vineyard as late as 1940,” but

only 175 by 1956.

John Melville wrote in the 1960 edition of “Guide to California Wines” that California Tokay is “a hybrid of little charm unrelated in any way to the renowned Tokay wines of Hungary. California Tokay, amber pink in color, is a blend of angelica or other neutral wine, sherry to give a slightly nutty taste, and port to lend it color. Occasionally, the Flame Tokay grape, which makes such a brilliant display of its foliage in autumn around Lodi, is used in the wine’s production.”

Our guess is that this “Old Tokay” was a sweet wine and sweet wines can age well, so it’s always possible that this still tastes something like wine.

WSJ.com

The Italian job
Watch John and Dottie taste and talk about 2004 Barolo, at
WSJ.com/Tastings

What sibling rivalry has wrought

Less than cordial relations between brothers produce two exceptional small-batch liqueurs

OCCASIONALLY, A NEW liqueur will come along that gets a boost from being used in a fashionable cocktail. Where would Galliano be if not for the Harvey Wallbanger? Whither Kahlúa without the Black and White Russians? But rare is the new liqueur that becomes a go-to ingredient for bartenders creating a host of new drinks, the sort of versatile essential that Cointreau

How's Your Drink?

ERIC FELTEN

became in the 1920s, when it was used in every third or fourth cocktail. And yet, in the past two years, two new liqueurs have been widely adopted by the demanding bartenders who call themselves "cocktailians."

St-Germain elderflower liqueur hit the scene in 2007 and quickly gained near-ubiquity in high-end bars, finding its way into a flock of original modern cocktails; Domaine de Canton ginger liqueur got going in earnest last year and is on a similar trajectory.

Both liqueurs are made in small batches in France, both are presented in elegantly executed trophy bottles, and both have been enthusiastically praised (in 2007, St-Germain was judged best liqueur at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition; in 2008, Domaine de Canton took the prize). Remarkably, these back-to-back successes were executed by a pair of brothers, John and Robert Cooper. More remarkable still, they didn't do it together. Each has his own liqueur company, and their triumphs seem to be born of a sibling rivalry that isn't always cordial.

The Cooper brothers grew up in the liqueur business. After Prohibition, their grandfather bought the rights to a venerable American liqueur brand, Charles Jacquinet Cie. Their father, Norton J. "Sky" Cooper, kept the brand going but made his real fortune introducing Chambord, a French raspberry liqueur, to the U.S.

Both of the brothers worked for years marketing that liqueur, in its distinctive globe-shaped bottle; both were left to figure out what to do next when, in 2006, their father sold Chambord to Brown-Forman—the liquor behemoth behind Jack Daniel's—for about \$250 million.

The brothers were well positioned to make their own go at selling liqueurs—they had experience in the production and marketing of cordials; connections with distributors, retailers, bars and bartenders; and no little capital from their shares of the Chambord sale.

"You do what you know," says John Cooper, who is 34. But he wasn't eager to do what he knew as part of the family company, partly because, as he puts it, when you grow up you don't necessarily want to keep sharing a house with your siblings. "I wish my brother well," he says, before giving a simple explanation of why a partnership wouldn't have worked: "We don't get along."



Dylan Cross for The Wall Street Journal

For his part, Robert Cooper, 32, says that "I thought we should all climb to the top of the mountain together." But once it became clear that his brother was going to start his own company, Robert says, he also decided to stop working for his father. "If I continued to work in the family business, someday my brother would have

half of whatever I built."

It's our good fortune that Robert struck out on his own, because his excellent elderflower liqueur might never have seen the light of day as a Jacquinet product. In 2001, promoting Chambord in Britain, Robert went to a London bar that was making cocktails with a syrup made from fresh elderflowers and

Cooper Brothers Cocktail

45 ml bourbon

15 ml St-Germain elderflower liqueur

7 ml Domaine de Canton ginger liqueur

Stir, stir, stir with ice and then strain into a stemmed cocktail glass. Twist a piece of orange peel over the top of the drink. Garnish with a fresh orange twist.

was wowed by the exotic taste. Elderflower syrup proved to be a trend—first with London's elite bartenders, and then with many in New York and San Francisco—and Robert Cooper thought it would be a natural as a liqueur. (The flavors in sugar syrups can deteriorate quickly, but the alcohol in a liqueur acts as a preservative.)

While still at the family company, he worked at developing the liqueur for several years without much encouragement. "My father would come along and say, 'Are you still working on that flower s—?'" Now, Robert says, "My dad's eating a little crow."

"He's proven me wrong," says Sky Cooper. "I didn't realize how good it would be."

And it did take some time to develop. Batches made from frozen flowers weren't any good. But even when using fresh blossoms, Robert couldn't capture the elusive fruitiness he had tasted in the London bar's homemade elderflower syrup. He finally discovered that the bitter flavor wrecking his prototypes was coming from the stems of the flowers. He found that if the elderflower bunches were pressed ever so slightly, the petals would give up their flavor but the bitter juice in the stems would stay put.

John Cooper's ginger liqueur also took time to develop. His father had imported a Chinese ginger liqueur, Canton, for a few years in the 1990s, and it never found a following. But given the number of bartenders making fresh ginger syrups for use in original cocktails in the past few years, and the trend in pan-Asian cuisine, John recognized that the time for a fancy ginger liqueur had finally arrived. The challenge was to get a true ginger flavor that would be stable. After plenty of experimentation, he found the right formula in a maceration of both fresh and caramelized ginger.

For all that St-Germain and Domaine de Canton have in common, they are very different liqueurs. St-Germain is only lightly sugared, and its delicate flavors are friendly and easily accessible to casual drinkers. Domaine de Canton, by contrast, is intensely spiced with ginger and then honeyed heavily enough to keep the ginger heat from scorching.

Sky Cooper says he's proud of both sons, but adds that there is a downside to their success. "You have two sons you love" who are competing with each other, which "from a standpoint of family isn't always great." He's planning to convene a family meeting to see if there is a way to reunite the enterprises.

In the spirit of bringing families together, I tried my hand at creating a cocktail using both liqueurs. After playing around with various base spirits, I settled on bourbon as the drink's backbone. In adding the two liqueurs, I used Domaine de Canton sparingly, given its more aggressive flavor. The result I call a Cooper Brothers Cocktail.

Robert and John may be locked in vigorous competition with one another, but their liqueurs make good partners.

Email Eric Felten at eric.felten@wsj.com.

Wind power

Singer-songwriter Neko Case on her new album 'Middle Cyclone'

Neko Case didn't want to appear on the cover of her new album, but her record label was adamant. So she compromised—by going over the top. In a photo, the flame-haired singer brandishes a sword while crouching barefoot on the hood of a 1967 Mercury Cougar. Ms. Case's tongue-in-cheek attitude creeps through the cryptic love songs and transcribed dreams on the album, "Middle Cyclone," which builds on her roots in the alternative country movement and her collaborations with the rock collective New Pornographers. Writing the album, "I got really into weather and nature, not even metaphorically, but literally," says Ms. Case, who is moving to a farm in Vermont. The singer discussed songs from "Cyclone."

—John Jurgensen



Jason Crepps

'This Tornado Loves You'

A guitar sets a twitchy pace for sweeping piano and choir as Ms. Case gives voice to a force of nature. The song "came from a dream I had that I met a tornado. I was very scared of it. The tornado wanted me to read a book. It couldn't read or hold the book," she says. In the song, the tornado's violence—"smashed every transformer with every trailer 'til nothing was standing," Ms. Case sings—seems to be the result of unrequited love.

'Don't Forget Me'

On her version of this 1974 Harry Nilsson ballad, Ms. Case didn't attempt to replicate the songwriter's lush instrumentation. Instead she created her own "low-fi orchestra" using free pianos from Craigslist. Of the eight

'People Got a Lotta Nerve'

Featuring an elephant in a concrete cage and a killer whale that takes half of someone's leg, this upbeat song explores what Ms. Case calls a double standard for wild animals: People admire their power but act dismayed when they lash out. "People expect them to have the same moral codes as us. I like to celebrate nature's ups and downs," she says. She sings on the chorus, "I'm a maneater, but you're surprised when I eat ya."

pianos delivered to her Vermont barn, only six could be properly tuned ("There's no such thing as a free piano," she says), so the recordings were looped and layered for an effect that she calls "clumsy and ambling."

Listen to clips from Neko Case's 'Middle Cyclone,' at WSJ.com/Lifestyle.

An unsung Florida getaway

BY LAURA LANDRO

SINGER GLORIA ESTEFAN made her first foray into Florida hotels in 1992, when she bought the landmark Cardozo on sizzling South Beach's Ocean Drive. She's opened her latest resort on an Ocean Drive as well—in an unlikely outpost about 240 kilometers north: sleepy Vero Beach, with little sizzle but plenty of old-style Florida charm.

Far from the bustle of overbuilt South Florida, Vero Beach lies on a stretch of Atlantic turf aptly dubbed the Treasure Coast, in a transitional climate zone where oak trees and pine forests thrive alongside the palms and colorful tropical flora of balmier points south. Indian River Lagoon divides the city into sections on the mainland and a barrier island. It all makes for spectacular fishing, kayaking, bird-watching and boating, as well as kilometers of white sand beaches where you can walk for a long time and encounter no one.

But one can also dive into a Mickey Mouse-shaped pool and have pancakes with Goofy and friends at a Victorian-style Disney time-share resort a few kilometers out of town. (It's on a real beach, as opposed to the ersatz ones at the Orlando flagship.) Closer to town, Ms. Estefan's new Costa d'Este Beach Resort, with its whitewashed façade and elegant cascading entry fountain, sits next door to the quirky, historic Driftwood Inn, a time-share resort known for its weathered timbers and antique artifacts, some salvaged from old mansions and hotels. Elsewhere on the island, the Vero Beach Hotel features West Indian décor in a more low-key upscale hotel-condo managed by Kimpton Hotels.

The nearest major airports in Orlando and West Palm Beach are more than an hour and a half's drive away, but Vero is no backwater. There's an art museum and regional theater. In Vero, two very distinct and yet interdependent communities, linked by bridges over the lagoon, co-exist: on the mainland, the historic town center surrounded by working citrus groves, farms, sprawling housing developments and trailer parks, and on the barrier island, a wealthy enclave. Vero's dual communities make for an interesting mix; there are biker bars, seafood joints and kitschy surf shops alongside chi-chi restaurants and designer boutiques.

Monied snowbirds and retired CEOs, many of whom arrive at a nearby municipal airstrip in private planes, have flocked to gated communities. One, John's Island, broke ground in 1969 and now has 1,362 homes. The newer, and considerably younger, Windsor Club features a new-urbanist style with a village-like setting. Controlled by tight zoning rules, the "beachside" part of Vero is so exclusive that a recently launched local weekly newspaper aimed at the high-end market is named after its postal code: Vero Beach 32963. (A mainland resident, in a letter to the editor, accused the paper of "pandering to the beach crowd...without so much as a gesture to a mainland which makes their lives possible.")

Ms. Estefan and her husband, producer Emilio Estefan Jr., live in Miami but own a second home in Vero, and in 2004 decided to purchase and renovate an old hotel on



Clockwise from left: the Costa d'Este Beach Resort; a pelican; the pool at the Costa d'Este; the resort's restaurant, Oriente.

the beach. But after back-to-back hurricanes pulverized it, they decided to start from scratch, spending \$50 million to build a modern 94-room resort with an Art Deco flair. The couple, who also own seven restaurants in Florida and Mexico, were drawn to the area by its natural beauty, conservationist ethos and small-town feel.

"This reminds me of the way Miami used to be when I grew up," before parts of the beach were already

in shadows from the buildings by 2 p.m., Ms. Estefan says. When she was set to open last June, some locals feared that "we'd come in here bringing that 'come on, shake your body baby, do the conga' thing to this quiet community," she says, referring to her hit "Conga." "But we just want to enhance all the great things they already have in Vero," she adds.

Besides guests from out of state and overseas, Ms. Estefan hopes to

attract Floridians who want a "staycation" getaway at reasonable rates and within driving distance. Though the clientele isn't the fashionable, soignée crowd you might see in South Beach, the scene was pleasant and low key on a Sunday afternoon, and the hotel's Oriente restaurant, overseen by Cuban-American chef David Rodriguez, already has a local following.

By far the best way to spend time in Vero is in and around the water,

plying your way through the islands and bird refuges of the lagoon, which is part of the Intracoastal Waterway and is described by the oceanographic institute at Florida Atlantic University as the most biologically diverse estuary in North America. You can rent canoes, kayaks or paddle boards to stand on. But it's worth spending a little extra to go out solo or in a group with a knowledgeable guide like Kayaks Etc.'s Kristen Beck, a naturalist with a degree in marine science.

On a recent outing, she provided my friend Nancy and me with solo kayaks and paddled alongside us in her own, pointing out great blue herons, snowy egrets and the big thrill: a trio of roseate spoonbills flamingo-pink as they soared overhead. Ms. Beck knows how to spot dolphins from afar and find the massive manatees off Round Island. When we came close to one, I was a little freaked out by its sheer size, but Ms. Beck promised me it wouldn't capsize my kayak.

For those who don't want to get in the water, there's the 11-kilometer Jungle Trail along the lagoon, a boardwalk over a tidal mangrove habitat and a chance to stand a few meters from pelicans hoping to steal a meal away from the fishermen at Riverside Park.

The Kennedy Space Center, the Navy Seal Museum in Fort Pierce and the McKee Botanical Garden are in reasonable driving distance. Sebastian and other towns in Indian River County offer fishing, water sports and camping. Hardy day-trippers can even tackle Disney World, about a two-hour drive away.

The region's attractions have led many visitors to put down roots for at least part of the year. Besides the art museum and Riverside Theater, wealthy residents have supported new hospitals, environmental-protection groups and relief programs to rebuild homes that were damaged in the 2004 hurricane season, says Bob Gibb, president of John's Island Real Estate Co. They like the anonymity, the privacy and the light traffic when it comes to eating out.

Trip planner: Beaches and manatees

Where to stay: Rooms at Costa d'Este, which has a spa, start at \$289 for a studio, \$329 for an oceanfront double through April. At the Vero Beach Hotel, guests have privileges at the private Indian River Golf Club; room packages begin at \$220. For a budget beachfront stay, The Driftwood's sea-view rooms start at \$140.

What to do: Kayaks Etc.'s canoe and kayak trips start at \$35 per adult and \$10 per child, private tours at \$50 per adult and \$35 per child (772-794-9900 or kayaksetc.com). For a faster and more adventurous ride—and possible alligator sightings—try an airboat tour with airboatadventuretours.com or stumpknocker.com, \$40 per person.

The Verobeach.com Web site has information on fishing, including charters, and other recre-

ational activities, including diving and snorkeling spots. Attention art buffs: The Vero Beach Museum of Art has a show of Italian landscapes with paintings on loan from the Uffizi Gallery in Florence until March 15.

Where to eat: Oriente at Costa d'Este features tapas and specialties like fried Cuban-style corn tamales and cod fritters; the "Chef for a Day" package (from \$387 per room) includes cooking lessons with Chef David Rodriguez. The Ocean Grill on the beach, in a weathered wood building circa-1941, features seafood, steaks and appetizers like bubbling crab dip; entrees from \$20.95.

Other options: Indigo at the Vero Beach Hotel, Maison Martini at the Caribbean Court Hotel, and The Tides; Bobby's for sports fans.



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A sunshine state
See more photos from
Vero Beach in an audio slideshow, at
WSJ.com/Travel

❖ Books

Translating the Holocaust

BY JEFFREY A. TRACHTENBERG

PUBLISHING A BOOK in translation can be difficult, but Jonathan Littell's "The Kindly Ones," a brutally graphic novel about the Holocaust narrated by Max Aue, a former Nazi officer, presents a particularly daunting challenge in the U.S.

Although the novel, Mr. Littell's second, won two major French literary awards after it was published in 2006, it has already been the subject of harsh reviews in American publications. The fact that Mr. Littell, the 41-year-old son of thriller writer Robert Littell, lives in Barcelona and isn't expected to visit the U.S. to promote the work will make it that much harder for the book to find an audience. Harper, an imprint owned by News Corp.'s HarperCollins Publishers, paid an estimated \$1 million for the book. News Corp. also owns The Wall Street Journal.

Mr. Littell's novel, like David Foster Wallace's "Infinite Jest" (1996) and Jonathan Franzen's "The Corrections" (2001), is meant to appeal to readers who are drawn to weighty, controversial titles. "There's a vast audience looking for intellectual fare, for a voice that captures the world in a way that hasn't been captured before," says Michael Pietsch, publisher of Little, Brown, the imprint

owned by Lagardere SCA's Hachette Book Group that published "Infinite Jest."

The American-born Mr. Littell, who has served as an aid worker in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Bosnia, wrote the book in longhand in French. (It was translated by Charlotte Mandell.) Both major bookstore chains in the U.S.—Borders Group and Barnes & Noble—say that they are supporting the novel, which will likely have to sell at least 150,000 copies for Harper to turn a profit. Mr. Littell was interviewed by phone.

Q: Why pick this topic?

It evolved slowly. I wanted to write about the war initially and then the emphasis focused on the genocide. I knew I wanted to do it first person. I didn't have any hesitation. I've been in dark places a good part of my life.

Q: What was the process?

I started on this full time in 2001, but I'd been thinking about it for a dozen years. The research was done very systematically. I drew up a long reading list. I then divided it thematically and read chunk after chunk. Along the way you find out about new books and one topic leads to another. I also fit in trips along the way, including Jewish commu-

nities in the Caucasus.

Q: How difficult was it to focus on the death squads in the Ukraine and various concentration camps?

When you write, you don't think about the content, you think about the sentences, the grammar, the syntax, the rhythm. It's like a painter. Hieronymus Bosch was able to paint Hell by thinking how this black would go with that red. It's the same with writing.

Q: Do you interview any former Nazis?

No, I didn't try. I didn't think a former Nazi would tell me anything interesting. Also, I don't speak German, so that's a problem. I wasn't set up for tracking people down. I didn't have the contacts or resources.

Q: Whom did you interview?

In the Ukraine I found two survivors of Babi Yar, one of whom was 13 at the time, so he had a very good memory. He was literally in the massacre. He survived by hiding in a culvert. He hid, and everyone marched over his head, including his parents.

Q: How did you prepare to get inside Max's head?



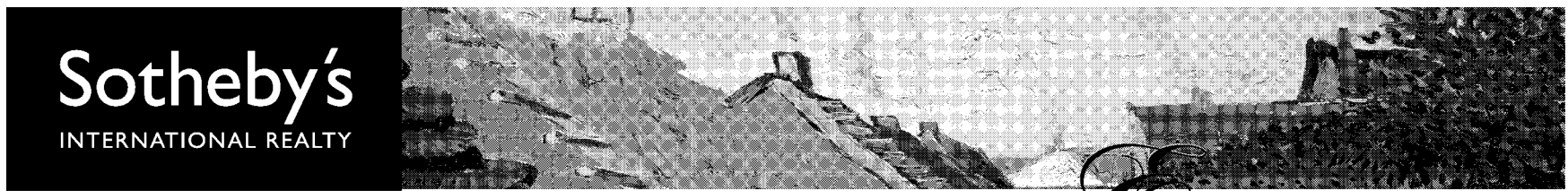
Author Jonathan Littell's nearly 1,000-page novel "The Kindly Ones" was first published in French.

I drew on my own way of seeing things. I based him mostly on myself, not anybody else.

Q: Will you travel to the U.S. to promote your book?

No. I don't do that kind of thing. I don't consider it my job.

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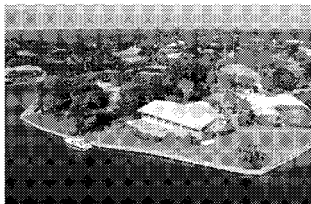
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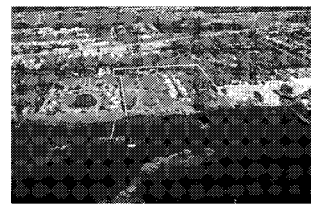
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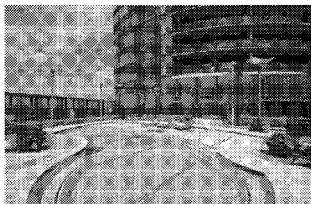
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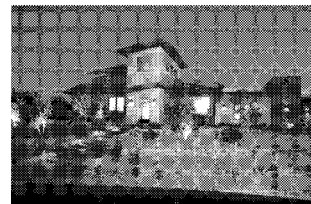
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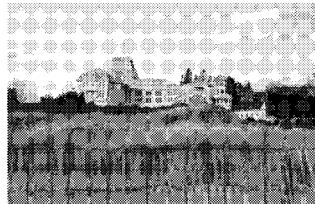
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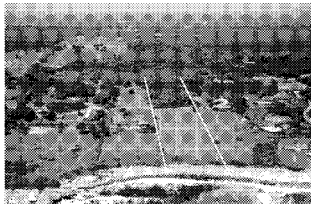
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No entertaining, please—it's golf

NORMALLY, A POSTING by the celebrity Web site TMZ and the state of the economy have few points of connection. But last week they collided to create a golf-related scandal of sorts.

The TMZ posting last Tuesday, concerning the title sponsorship of the Northern Trust Open at the Riviera Country Club near Los Angeles, read to me like a parody in the *Onion* satire magazine of a local news outlet pouncing on a supposed outrage. "We're told Northern Trust paid millions to sponsor the PGA event which ended Sun-

Golf Journal

JOHN PAUL NEWPORT

day, but what happened off the golf course is even more shocking," TMZ said.

Northern Trust wasn't just treating clients to Diet Cokes while they walked around the course. It staged "lavish parties," "a fancy dinner" and concerts for clients "with famous singers" such as Sheryl Crow and Earth, Wind and Fire. TMZ's reporters spotted courtesy cars (standard at PGA Tour events) driving onto and off the Riviera property with people inside. Guests were reported to have left various functions with goodie bags.

Building up business by developing closer relationships with clients is, of course, the main reason many companies sponsor golf tournaments. Northern Trust's agenda also included seminars for clients, such as one on the credit crunch. In undertaking such commitments, sponsors tend to be rigorous in their analysis of the substantial costs versus the benefits, just as they are for all marketing and advertising layouts. As business propositions, underwriting tournaments can make sense on many levels, especially for companies like Northern Trust, which cater to high-net-worth individuals and for whom personal relationships are central.

But never mind all that, because last year Northern Trust accepted \$1.6 billion from the U.S. Troubled Asset Relief Program, despite record profits of \$795 million and a solid balance sheet. The bank, in a letter to shareholders last week, said it didn't seek the funds but accepted them to accommodate "the government's goal of gaining the participation of all major banks in the United States."

Whatever the reason, taking the money changed everything. It turned all of the bank's business practices, especially those that smack of cultural excess, into red meat for politicians and others looking to direct public outrage about the state of the economy.

Within hours of the TMZ report, Rep. Barney Frank of Massachusetts wrote a letter to Northern Trust, co-signed by 17 others, demanding that it return to the federal government all the money it "frittered away on these lavish events" at the golf tournament. The *New York Times* op-ed columnist Maureen Dowd wrote a sarcastic column the next day headlined "I Ponied Up for Sheryl Crow?" Fox News commentator Bill



Left, Scott McCarron at the Northern Trust Open; above, singer Sheryl Crow in another performance.

Fargo, a \$25 billion TARP fundee which took over sponsorship of a PGA Tour event at the end of April when it acquired Wachovia, said it would seriously cut back spending at that event.

Golf, with its traditional fat-cat image, is an easy target for abuse, some of it deserved. I'm one who has long believed the game skews too fancy for its own good. But the trouble with the rabble-rousing, apart from whatever damage it does to the effective business practices of banks and other troubled companies, such as the auto makers, is the chill it casts over the entire microeconomy of golf, and of sports in general.

A few weeks ago I wrote about

O'Reilly hopped on the bandwagon last Thursday, commending Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts (an unlikely bedfellow) for proposing legislation that "would prevent any recipient of TARP funds from hosting, sponsoring, or paying for conferences, holiday parties and

entertainment events."

Understandably spooked, Morgan Stanley, which received \$10 billion in TARP funds, quickly announced that while it would continue to sponsor the Memorial tournament in June, it would not entertain clients there. Wells

In Austria, the sound of one finger pulling

BY PATTI MCCrackEN

Special to *The Wall Street Journal*

THREE Lederhosened Salzburgers stand outside in the quiet of a tiny Alpine hamlet in Austria. One of the men folds his arms across his sturdy belly, sure and strong. His son next to him mimics his father's stance, and both seem aware of the imposing power they possess. The third man, his head topped with a traditional Tyrolean hat, breaks the winter quiet with the cracking of a joke involving something to do with schnapps. After some hearty laughter that shakes off the sleepiness of the place, they all three lumber down into a damp cellar to practice pitching each other across a wooden table using the strength of one single finger.

The men are training to become champions of finger wrestling, or *fingerhakeln*, a little-known, ancient Alpine sport with a long and robust history. This is not thumb wrestling, arm wrestling, wife carrying or log rolling, but a sport that Austrians and Bavarians take quite seriously.

Tournaments are held frequently, with the next one coming up on March 29.

Georg Baumann has turned part of the cellar in his family home into a makeshift fingerhakeln gym. Next to the stairwell,



Fingerhaklers Leo Enthammer (left) and Johann Spitzwieser (right) face off, with referee Georg Wimmer in the middle.

the 53-year-old machinist keeps an orange metal recipe box jammed tight with handwritten records of every Austrian fingerhakeln battle that has gone down during the last 30-plus years.

He flips to 1977. "Here's Georg Wimmer's records," says Mr. Baumann. "He won more than 1,000 competitions. One of our all-time champions."

Mr. Baumann takes out the worn, ink-smudged card, which has been painstakingly filled in with dates of Mr. Wimmer's wins and losses.

Mr. Baumann brought his son into the fingerhakeln fold as a small boy. Now at 18, Georg Jr., is accumulating his own win/loss record, with a card in the orange box to prove it.

A fingerhakeln match goes something like this: Two opponents, usually clad in lederhosen (or dirndls, for the damen fingerhaklers), sit across from each other at a wooden table.

The wrestlers each lock a finger (usually the middle one) through a leather band roughly the size of a bracelet and start to

how the drying up of corporate outings to golf resorts, mostly for fear of projecting the wrong image in the current economic environment, was creating travel bargains for the rest of us. But it is also devastating the golf resort and hospitality industry. The same holds true for the drying up of client entertainment at golf and other sports events.

"It's not the clients and company executives who suffer if companies cancel their events. They'll find other fun things to do that weekend. It's the 20 guys who valet-park cars for minimum wage plus tips, the 15 cooks in the kitchen, the six dishwashers, the rigging guys who put up the stage, the housekeepers who make up the hotel rooms where people stay," said David Israel, a TV producer who is involved in the sports economy as vice chairman of the California Horse Racing Commission and past president of the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum Commission.

Mr. Israel was a guest at the Sheryl Crow concert and noted that it was not particularly lavish: decent but not great food, room to stand but not sit as Ms. Crow sang, and a crowd that consisted largely of volunteers and guests of the nonprofit organizations for which the tournament has raised \$3 million in the past two years.

"It seems to me that if the goal is to get the financial system working normally again, you've got to let businesses do what they know how to do best to make money," Mr. Israel said.

Email me at golfjournal@wsj.com.

pull. The table is marked with black lines showing how far the wrestler has to pull his opponent before he can be considered the winner.

The loser is sometimes yanked entirely across the table, landing noisily in a heap on the other side.

Villages lend space in their town halls for training, and bars have been known to be particularly accommodating, but Mr. Baumann gets a crowd of about a dozen who meet weekly at his house, and more often in the days before a match. Some get busy crushing tennis balls with their hands. Others do finger pull-ups, or heave ridiculously heavy stones hoisted with a pulley.

"It's also good mental training," says Gottfried Eder, a 63-year-old chemical plant retiree. Mr. Eder, whose wife, son and grandson are also fingerhaklers, has outfitted his own garage with a 90-kilo stone that the fingerwrestling family likes to take turns pulling.

All that pulling can make a finger massive, and some get to nearly twice their normal size. Injuries are a danger, even in a sport that requires the use of only one digit.

"Torn tendons and fractures are not uncommon," says Mr. Eder. "Fingers do get bloody."

U2's Latest Experiment in Sound

By Jim Fusilli

As its new album, "No Line on the Horizon" (Universal), demonstrates, U2 is the only rock band of its stature and authority that is so willing to toy with its formula for success.

By the standards of today's iPod shuffle mentality, "No Line" is a great album, though it has no consistent flow and no musical arc. Rather than presenting a cohesive statement, it's a collection of songs held together by an effective and slightly experimental sound. It tops the band's most recent recordings, "How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb" (2004) and "All That You Can't Leave Behind" (2000). But, like them, it features memorable performances alongside others that fall a bit short.

"No Line" also fits in the continuum of U2's recorded work, which stretches back three decades. The band has always experimented—sometimes tweaking its approach to pop music, other times just about discarding it altogether.

The album "The Unforgettable Fire" (1984), best remembered for the stirring "Pride (In the Name of Love)," is characterized by a brooding underpinning. Opening with three monster rock hits, "The Joshua Tree" (1987) also contains songs that seem to borrow from South African mbaqanga and the music of the American West.

U2 adds dance beats to fatten the groove on "Achtung Baby" (1991), home to the masterpiece "One," a simmering down-tempo ballad. It marries rock and electronica on "Zooropa" (1993) and "Pop" (1997), and with "Rattle and Hum" (1988) takes on the Beatles, Bob Dylan, gospel and the blues.

All this is accomplished with one of rock's most inventive rhythm sections: bassist Adam Clayton, drummer Larry Mullen Jr., and the guitarist known as the Edge—a distinctive musician capable of playing exactly what the performance requires. Bono's soaring voice and tenacious personality give the band its operatic qualities and superstar status.



Bono

Working again with longtime collaborators Brian Eno and Daniel Lanois—and with Steve Lillywhite contributing to three songs—U2 on "No Line" has a new sound that is dense, almost cluttered at times with the bottom bleeding into the mid-range, yet thoroughly appealing. The band's customary chiming brightness appears infrequently, most notably on "I'll Go Crazy if I Don't Go Crazy Tonight" and "Un-

known Caller." In some songs, the most prominent lines are played on synthesizers rather than on the Edge's guitar or Mr. Clayton's bass, and at times Bono seems like he's fighting the tumult rather than gliding through a cleared, shining path. It's controlled chaos, and when all the pieces fit—as in the extraordinary "Magnificent"—it's exhilarating.

The title track, which opens the album, is a charging piece of rock that explodes rather than develops, and "Get On Your Boots" and "Stand Up Comedy" place the band in context: During the verses of the former, the melody mimics Mr. Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues" and Elvis Costello's "Pump It Up" until it slides into a slinky chant-along; on the latter, the Edge seems to draw inspiration from the Beatles' late-period guitar sound. A powerhouse rocker, "Breathe," kicks off with heavy percussion and metal-like guitars; Mr. Clayton, who excels throughout the disc, gives it a formidable spine.

Ballads provide the CD's high points. In "Moment of Surrender," a cello yields to a bubbling synth riff and a choir formed by Bono's voice and the Edge's sus-

tained guitar. "Unknown Caller" develops patiently to a big chorus, as Bono sings over raw, echoing guitars and a syncopated percussion pattern. "Cedars of Lebanon" is whispered and spoken by Bono over snappy drumming by Mr. Mullen and whistling strings.

It's easy to comb the lyrics of "No Line" for allusions to Bono's globetrotting political adventures. They're there in small doses and as often as not are self-deprecating. When the subject of "No Line" isn't love, lust and assorted other good times—still the meat of the rock 'n' roll vocabulary—it's not geopolitics. It's spiritual exploration, even if the song's subject is derived from a geopolitical event, as in "Cedars of Lebanon" and "White as Snow." Throughout the band's career, U2's songs have referenced a spiritual journey inspired by its members' Christianity.

Here, the exploration continues. In "White as Snow," based on a hymn inspired by Isaiah 1:18 and with new lyrics by Bono, Mr. Eno and Mr. Lanois, Bono sings: "Once I knew there was a love divine/Then came a time I thought it knew me not/Who can forgive

forgiveness where forgiveness is not/Only the lamb as white as snow." Said to be the thoughts of a dying soldier in Afghanistan, the song concludes with "If only a heart could be as white as snow." In "Breathe," he writes: "Sing your heart out, sing my heart out/I've found grace inside a sound."

Even when the reference isn't explicit, the words can be interpreted as spiritually minded. In "I'll Go Crazy," whose lyrics open as a standard slice of rock rebellion, Bono asks, "Is it true that perfect love drives out all fear?" "Moment of Surrender" may be about romantic love, or about man's eternal link to God, or a tribute by Bono to his late father, who was a singer: "I was born to sing for you/I didn't have a choice but to lift you up/And sing whatever song you wanted me to/I give you back my voice/From the womb's first cry, it was a joyful noise." Is the "3:33" mentioned in "Unknown Caller" a reference to a Bible verse or merely the time on a clock?

A dozen albums into its career, U2 shows no signs of complacency. With an abiding commitment to substance and an admirable taste for adventure, the band provides a new work that offers much to enjoy and deliberate over.

Mr. Fusilli is the Journal's rock and pop music critic. Email him at jfusilli@wsj.com.

When the subject of 'No Line on the Horizon' isn't assorted good times, it's spiritual exploration.

How I Spent a Few Days in Palladio's World

By Hugh Pearman

I am standing on a moderately grand porch, complete with columns, capitals and pediment. It's a kind of outdoor room, properly called a *loggia*, poised at the top of a flight of steps. I'm looking outward, and I can see precisely nothing—nothing but thick, swirling fog. And it is quite wonderful.

I am in the damp fen country of the Veneto region of Northern Italy, the stamping ground of master Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio, who designed this villa

Andrea Palladio: His Life and Legacy

Royal Academy of Arts
Through April 13

nearly half a millennium ago. Behind me, its lamps are shining yellow through the fog. Merry voices ring out. I turn and stroll back into the big hall with its colorful frescoes. I can hardly believe it. For a few days, at the invitation of a friend, I am staying here. (The house is rentable through The Landmark Trust, www.landmarktrust.org.uk.)

The next day, the sun breaks through, and our awestruck house party, gathered here to celebrate a birthday, strolls around the building. And this is where Palladio becomes endearing, because this early house—the Villa Saraceno, near Vicenza, from the 1540s—is relatively humble, little more than a large extension to an existing farmhouse. Its proportions are excellent, but its details are plain to the point of crudeness. It's a working building, too:

above the habitable rooms are great attic granaries; below the raised ground floor are storage cellars. Later, Palladio was to become the most famous, most influential architect in the world. But at the time he designed this house for a local landowner, he was still close to his roots as a talented stonemason with a love of Ancient Greece and Rome. That youthful vigor is apparent.

A few weeks later, and I'm at the press preview of a 500th-anniversary exhibition of Palladio at London's Royal Academy, a unique gallery where art and architecture have coexisted since the 18th century. It's a Palladian building, originally the town house of the Earl of Burlington, a fervent disciple. Few architects indeed have styles or movements named after them, and fewer still make it into everyday language. But "Palladian" is the dictionary definition of a style of refined classical architecture that was adopted all over the world and is still alive today.

Palladio lived from 1508 to 1580, and some believe that he represents architecture's high point. Not just through his own surviving buildings, but because his teachings—enshrined in a series of coveted volumes called "The Four Books of Architecture," first published in 1570—came to be regarded almost as Holy Writ by architects all over Europe.

The Palladian movement accelerated until, in the late 18th century, the architect was the presiding spirit behind the golden age of both American and British country-house building and much else besides. Without Palladio's silent guidance, Thomas Jefferson

would have designed Monticello and the University of Virginia, and directed the extension of the White House, very differently.

The original drawings and later models in the Royal Academy exhibition make it clear why Palladio was such a Protean talent, someone who could both study and explain the architecture of the past, and apply it in novel ways, developing his own signature style. In his "Four Books" he interspersed his own buildings with those of the ancient world, and set out the mathematical principles of proportion that governed both.

The exhibition feels like an old-fashioned museum gallery. It makes few concessions to modern technology or populism. The hand drawing, the wooden model and the oil painting are deployed in a decidedly academic manner, and even the audio guides are scholarly in tone. This is an exhibition for devotees, then, yet it is made accessible by the wonderful large cutaway models, showing key buildings inside and out. Who needs computer wizardry?

Palladio designed and built many religious and civic buildings, especially in Vicenza and Venice—but arguably his greatest contribution to the history of architecture was the country villas he built for

the wealthy landowners of the Veneto. In these he reached a peak with the Villa Capra (also known as La Rotonda) of 1566-70 outside Vicenza. Cruciform in plan, with a central two-story hall capped with a dome, it has four identical Ionic porticoes (Ionic being the classical order with "rams-horn" capitals to the fluted columns). Each portico has a noble flight of steps leading up to it, facing the four points of the compass. This was a rich man's summer retreat. Palladio had come a long way from farmhouse extensions.



A model of Villa Capra, representing the peak of the architect's country-villa designs.

Neither the Ancient Greeks nor Romans had ever built houses remotely like this—indeed, Palladio was mistaken in thinking that they ever applied temple-like porticoes to their houses at all. That does not matter. He understood the underlying principle of "harmonic proportion." To this day, the best classical architecture is the most inventive. Though as one of today's Palladians, the English architect Francis Terry, notes, once Palladio had established his style, he essentially stopped inventing,

and repeated the same designs with variations everywhere. It was his later followers, particularly in the 18th and early 19th centuries, who elevated Palladianism to the heights.

Something of that rustic plainness of the Veneto is paradoxically apparent in one of the most lavish and successful 18th-century English country houses, Holkham Hall outside Wells-next-the-Sea in Norfolk. It was designed by Burlington's pupil, William Kent, and it is one of my favorites of the period—Palladio inflated to palace scale, but retaining a certain austerity. Kent also designed the delightful Horse Guards building in Whitehall and was one of those who worked on Burlington House itself.

Palladianism reached near-perfection around the time of the American Revolution, which is why it graces such important buildings on both sides of the Atlantic. So, happy 500th birthday year, Andrea di Pietro della Gondola, dubbed Palladio, meaning "Wise One." As monickers go, his was spot-on.

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

time off



Leo Potma

Aachen

art
"The Great Virtuoso from Amsterdam: Jacob Adriaensz Backer (1608/09-1651)" shows about 40 paintings and 20 drawings by the Dutch painter.
Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum
March 12-June 7
☎ 49-241-4798-00
www.jacob-backer.de

Amsterdam

design
"Animal-Inspired Bags" presents bag designs based on animals, including work by Beverly Feldman and Corine Haacke.
Museum for Bags and Purses—Tassenmuseum Hendrikje
March 16-Aug. 23
☎ 31-20-5246-452
www.tassenmuseum.nl

Antwerp

art
"Goya, Redon, Ensor—Grotesque Paintings and Drawings" shows a selection of works by the three painters.
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten
March 14-June 14
☎ 32-3-2387-809
www.kmska.be

fashion

"Paper Fashion" showcases a collection of 1960s paper dresses from the Atopos collection.
Modemuseum
Until Aug. 16
☎ 32-3-4702-770
www.momu.be

Berlin

art
"The Art of Interpretation—Italian Reproductive Prints from Mantegna to Carracci" shows drawings, paintings, printing plates and faience works.
Kupferstichkabinett
Until June 14
☎ 49-30-2662-951
www.smb.museum

art

"Picturing America: Photorealism in the 70s" presents 32 large-scale realist paintings by 17 artists.
Deutsche Guggenheim
Until May 10
☎ 49-30-2020-930
www.deutsche-guggenheim.de

Bonn

photography
"Czech Photography of the 20th Century" exhibits photographs by Czech artists, ranging from avant-garde to photojournalism.
Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle
March 13-July 26
☎ 49-228-9171-0
www.kah-bonn.de

Budapest

art
"A Land of Myths—The Art of Gustave Moreau" displays 120 works by the French symbolist painter (1826-1898) depicting mythological figures.
Museum of Fine Arts
Until May 3
☎ 36-1-4697-100
www.szepmuveszeti.hu

Dublin

art
"James Coleman" shows a selection of



Private collection, photo: Lars Engelhardt/Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde

'Karin and Esbjörn' (1909), by Carl Larsson, in Stockholm; above, leopard skin handbag made in Botswana, 1962, by an unknown designer, on show in Amsterdam.

works by Irish artist James Coleman (born 1941), featuring works from the 1970s up to the early 2000s.
Irish Museum of Modern Art
March 7-April 26
☎ 353-1-6129-900
www.modernart.ie

www.ok-centrum.at

Ljubljana

archaeology
"Pre-Columbian Mexico: Eternal Life" brings together some of the most important archaeological finds recently discovered in Mexico.
Cankarjev dom Cultural and Congress Centre
March 10-July 24
☎ 386-1241-7299
www.cd-cc.si

London

art
"Gerhard Richter Portraits" shows portraits by the German artist Gerhard Richter (born 1932) from the 1960s to the present.
National Portrait Gallery
Until May 31
☎ 44-20-7306-0055
www.npg.org.uk

Maastricht

art
"Jordaens—The Making of a Masterpiece" exhibits the restored masterpiece 'The Tribute Money: Peter Finding the Silver Coin in the Mouth of the Fish' by Flemish Baroque painter Jacob Jordaens (1593-1678).
Bonnefanten Museum
March 13-June 14
☎ 31-43-3290-190
www.bonnefanten.nl

Madrid

art
"Francis Bacon" presents 78 paintings

by the Irish born painter (1909-1992).
Museo Nacional del Prado
Until April 19
☎ 34-91-3302-800
www.museodelprado.es

Paris

archaeology
"The Gates of Heaven—Visions of the World in Ancient Egypt" is a major exhibition of 350 ancient Egyptian artifacts in their social, religious and artistic context.
Musée du Louvre
Until June 29
☎ 33-1-4020-5050
www.louvre.fr

art

"Italian Primitives" displays 50 works by Italian masters of the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries.
Musée Jacquemart-André
March 11-June 21
☎ 33-1-4562-1159
www.musee-jacquemart-andre.com

Sofia

film
"Sofia International Film Festival 2009" shows more than 100 feature films, 30 documentaries and two programs of short films.
Sofia International Film Festival
March 5-March 15
☎ 359-2952-6467
www.cinema.bg/sff/2009/eng

Stockholm

photography
"Stockholm—Tokyo and in between"

exhibits photography by Swedish photographer Bengt Wanselius (born 1944).
Dansmuseet
Until April 19
☎ 46-8-4417-650
www.dansmuseet.nu

art

"Carl Larsson" presents 100 works by the Swedish artist Carl Larsson (1853-1919).
Prince Eugens Waldemarsudde
Until May 31
☎ 46-08-5458-3700
www.waldemarsudde.se

Turin

film
"Rodolfo Valentino: The Seduction of the Myth" pays tribute to the Italian-American actor (1895-1926).
Museo Nazionale del Cinema
Until May 24
☎ 39-011-8138-564
www.museonazionalecinema.org

Vienna

design
"Jean Prouvé: The Poetics of the Technical Object" presents furniture and architecture by the French designer.
Hofmobiliendepot
March 11-June 21
☎ 43-1-5243-357
www.hofmobiliendepot.at

Source: ArtBase Global Arts News Service, WSJE research.