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WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE

Perfect match

A Valentine's Day story by Alexander McCall Smith



Wine: Sparkling romance from Italy | Waltzing fever in Vienna

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COVER, Illustration by Gary Kelley.

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EUROPE

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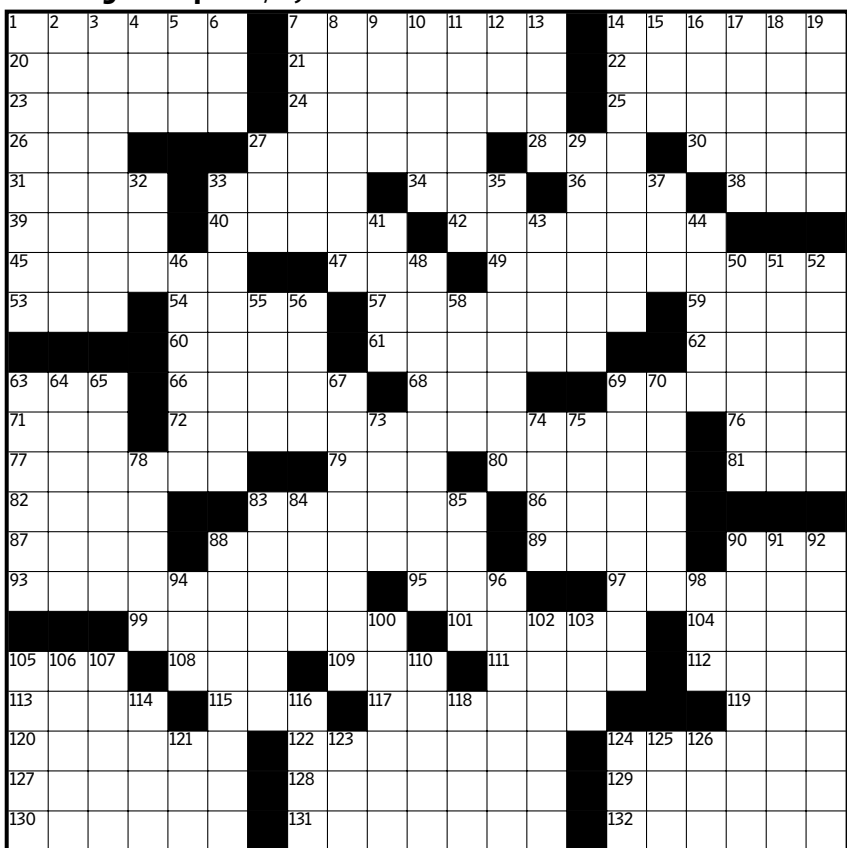
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Last Week's Solution



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Waltzing fever is afoot

In Austria, Carnival brings more than 800 balls—one for every obsession

BY PATTI MCCRACKEN

FOR HUNDREDS OF years, the Lippizaner horses have been escorted inside the Hofburg Imperial Palace in Vienna to train each winter day. Crystal chandeliers are lit above them, a host of marble columns stand around them, and portraits of Habsburg royalty stare out at these uppity horses clippety clopping on a sand-covered palace floor.

However, with ball season in full swing, the wing of the palace where the Lippizaners train in splendor is needed for dancing, not trotting. And the stallions will have to tough it out in the stalls for the time being because the waltzers have arrived.

From the New Year through the end of Carnival (or Fasching in German) on Feb. 16, Austria is hosting some 800 balls, hundreds of them in Vienna.

For every profession, every trade, every station, every obsession, there is a ball. Among them there is the Pharmacists Ball, the Doctors Ball, the Sports Journalists Ball, the Farmers Ball and the Realtors Ball. There is the Elvis Presley Ball (he never shows up, of course), the Sugar Bakers Ball, the Masked Ball, the Rainbow Ball, the Bon Bon Ball and the Blue Collar Ball.

The top three tickets in town are the Philharmonic (most prestigious), the Opera (most commercial), and the Coffeehouse Owners Ball, the biggest ball in town.

Tickets for the Vienna Opera Ball, which sells out months in advance, run for €16,000 per box seat. The other balls are more reasonably priced, coming in at around €100 or less per ticket.

It is bitter cold on a very re-

cent Friday morning and Christof Cremer is on a walk-through of the massive Hofburg complex, preparing for the Coffeehouse Owners Ball. Workers are fastening table cloths, ferrying bouquets, fitting frames, laying carpets. Mr. Cremer, the 40-year-old creative director of the ball, "is focused on beauty-to-be of the forthcoming night.

"The tables in this room will be lit from within," says Mr. Cremer, pointing to the tables on the other side of the room.

"These will be topped with mirrors, and the dance floor will have a muted mirror surface, as well." He waves toward the made-for-the-event tapestry on the far back wall, decked with 5,000 Swarovski crystals. He glides through halls and up stairways, noting the aromatic coffee-bean-encrusted vases, and the bowls and planters, all filled with coffee beans.

Coffeehouses are the marrow of Vienna's being. They are as Austrian as afternoon tea is British. And they are beloved. Which might be why the Coffeehouse Owners Ball is the most popular among the locals.

Balls and Fasching go together like beer and schnitzel in Austria, but the tradition stems from a stern mother hen. Empress Maria Theresa, who ruled in the 18th century, thought the masked parades of Carnival lead only to brawls and bedlam. She therefore forbid parades, but allowed the elite to have masked parties inside their mansions, while the rest of her subjects sat quietly at home. Her son Joseph was more liberal and during his rule in the 1780s, he allowed every-

one to celebrate inside their own homes, even masked. This newfound freedom, combined with the craze of the waltz, created the ball fever at Fasching that still thrives.

Back at the hall, a woman draped in a fur strides through, touching her fingers on newly laid bouquets as she makes her way across the Baroque horse training hall, which is transforming into a dance floor. She is Elisabeth Gürtler-Mauthner, managing director of the esteemed Hotel Sacher, and head of the Spanish Riding School (with all the Lippizaner horses). She mutters something to Mr. Cremer as she passes him, and he laughs heartily. "She says it looks better than it did at the Hunters Ball two weeks ago," he says.

With the ballroom readied for the Feb. 5 affair, some 6,300 patrons descend on the venue later that evening. The women are dressed in long gowns and long gloves; the men in handsome tails. Sixteen orchestras play in as many Hofburg halls and waltzing continues until 5 a.m.

"It was really great," says Stefan Cizek, a 40-year-old Vienna native who attended the ball for the first time. "It was totally beautiful. We went from room to room, from orchestra to orchestra. But the best part was the opening ceremony. We had this spectacular view. It was a night I will never forget."

When the waltzes finally stop, the glamorous throngs make their way to nearby cafés, including the famed Café Landtmann. Excited chatter spills like liquid through the old coffee house, awakening the town.

And planning for the next ball begins anew.

-Patti McCracken is a writer based in Vienna.



In Austria, waltz season is big business. Tickets for the Vienna Opera Ball, below, cost €16,000 per box seat.

the dance

The waltz started out as just a country dance, in three-quarter time, with the fellas and the fraus gliding across a farmer's courtyard or town square, revolving, revolving, together.

It is rooted in the Alpine lands of Austria and Bavaria in Germany, and gained momentum in the mid-1700s.

"Walzen" is an Old German word that essentially means "to rotate," and oh how those country folk did rotate. With sweeping strides and close embraces, it was a raunchy way to spend a Saturday night. The waltz was considered to be wicked, risqué, immoral and nothing but a dance with the devil himself. Which is why Austrian gentry ducked out of slow and boring minuets to gate crash the commoner's dances.

It wasn't long before this sinful strut made its way to the sophisticated city, where in the 1770s the dance was refined and finessed. This is where the pace quickened, and led to variations of the waltz, including the breathtaking galloping waltz.

Napoleon's love of the waltz carried the craze from Germany to France, where it made its way to Britain, and finally to America in the 19th century.



Top: © WienTourismus/Heinz Angermayr; © ullsteinbild / TopFoto

❖ Fashion

A sneak peek at fashion week

OUT WITH THE new, and in with the old.

An advance look at sketches for several collections to be unveiled in coming days at New York fashion week suggests that what's ahead, for many designers, evokes what's past. Designers are plumbing their archives and pop-culture sources to create an aura of heritage, tradition and other trust-

On Style

Christina Binkley

worthy characteristics. That's what they believe consumers want after 18 months of economic turmoil.

Thursday kicked off the marathon of fashion shows starting in New York, then moving to London, Milan and Paris that will set the tone for the fall clothes arriving in stores later this year. Designers' sketches—a closely guarded secret—provide a first look at the types of styles they plan to show.

Among the trends to look for, bronze and gold colors are appearing in a number of collections. Rebecca Taylor makes it clear that we'll continue to play fluttery dresses with sturdy tailored jackets. And both Ms. Taylor and Michelle Smith, of Milly, say they were inspired by chic Parisians. The idea of retreating to the historic heart of fashion is in tune with the recent revival of some deeply French brands like Rochas and Vionnet.

Design still starts, for most, with a paper and pencil or pen—sometimes scribbled just weeks or days before the shows, even in this technology-driven era. Norma Kamali sometimes "sketches" on her iPhone, while Zac Posen and Ralph Lauren don't sketch at all. Designers' staff then cut patterns and sew sample garments for the runway.

Only about 20% of these high-concept clothes will actually be produced and sold in stores next fall. But even those which are never made can influence the sprawling industry of lower-priced manufacturers who look to the runways for inspiration.

Amid the interest in tradition, "brands are going back to their heritages," says Sally Lohan, an analyst at WGSN, a fashion consulting group. Some labels are sticking close to their roots. Nanette Lepore says she explored new forms but made sure to keep the feminine, flirty elements her customers expect. Evoking age, Ms. Taylor is using washed fabrics for a "worn" look.

Others are linking to someone else's classic looks. This season, Elie Tahari cites Marlene Dietrich as the muse for his collection (which he'll be showing more dramatically than usual on a runway, rather than in a showroom presentation). Jason Wu turned to the work of iconic photographer Irving Penn for inspiration—harkening back to an era distant enough to seem safe. Ferragamo is backing an exhibit on Greta Garbo at Milan's Palazzo dell'Arte during Milan fashion week, which begins Feb. 24.

Both Garbo and Dietrich offer a blend of qualities required in 2010 fashion: elegance and serious survival skills. That combination is also present in Louis Vuitton's choice of dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov—right down to his bare, gnarled feet—for its latest ad campaign. We are respectful these days of people who have been toughened by life and adversity.

The most notable trend at the shows may be an invisible one: It's a tentative sense of optimism about fashion consumption after a long freeze. "I'm afraid to be optimistic, but I am," says Ms. Lepore, who will show her latest collection Wednesday. This contrasts with the sense of dread with which she designed her last collection, shown in September, when she thought, "Why design it? They won't buy it anyway."

As the collections unfold in the next week, look for designers who are incorporating new textiles to create more comfortable, practical or affordable clothes. Tracy Reese is using stretch faux suede—stretchable in four directions—in a pair of long stirrup pants. She's also using faux fur, which is popular these days because of its lower price point and nonlethal origins (although we're sure to see the real thing on the runways, too).

Some designers are exploring new products as they emerge from the recession. Sophie Theallet is adding knitwear to her finely sewn, travel-ready cotton dresses. Ms. Lepore, whose collection was inspired by a Renaissance portrait in a book (she incorporated tapestries in the prints), is launching her first handbag collection.

At the same time, the fashion business is contending with a world of new technologies. The list of designers live-streaming shows on the Web keeps growing. Rodarte and Alexander Wang said this week that they will join the crowd.

Norma Kamali, long known as innovative, is emerging as a leader in linking fashion with technology. Next week in New York, Ms. Kamali will host an interactive exhibition at her 56th street flagship store. Called "Style on Demand," it will incorporate applications for Blackberries and iPhones that scan bar codes and link to videos and other information, such as behind-the-scenes footage about a garment's manufacture.

What's more, consumers won't have to wait until fall to buy her collection: It'll be available next week in the store. "People want the new styles," the designer says. "That's it. They just do."

Jason Wu: This season is inspired by Irving Penn, his personal style and the scope of his work, Mr. Wu says. The collection consists of sharp masculine looks contrasted by softly veiled feminine pieces.



Nanette Lepore: The iridescent coppers and other colors were inspired by the movie 'Avatar,' but the collection was inspired by a Renaissance portrait of a woman, which shows in details such as floaty sleeves and bias-cut ruffles, Ms. Lepore says.

Sophie Theallet: "I was thinking about folklore and children's stories all around the world. I want to bring back the magic of when we fell in love with our first princess dress," Ms. Theallet says.

Rebecca Taylor: The designer says she was inspired by "a mixture of 70s Parisian attitude and an urban New York City girl... Fabrics are washed to provide a worn, overly loved appeal and are combined with cashmere wool suits, leopard faux furs and down quilted coats."

Arbitrage



A Tiffany diamond solitaire ring

City	Local currency	€
London	£8,696	€9,895
New York	\$16,100	€11,700
Frankfurt	€11,800	€11,800
Brussels	€12,200	€12,200
Paris	€15,205	€15,205
Rome	€16,085	€16,085

Note: Prices of a brilliant-cut, one-carat diamond (VS1-clarity, E-color) set in platinum, plus taxes, as provided by retailers in each city, averaged and converted into euros.

Clockwise from top: Jason Wu, Rebecca Taylor, Sophie Theallet, Nanette Lepore.

You are where you sit at the shows

Vying for that front-row runway seat in New York

BY RACHEL DODES

AT DESIGNER RICHARD Chai's fashion show, the front row was to be filled with the usual suspects: magazine editors, retailers, actresses, a few socialites—and Nina Koduru.

Dr. Koduru, a 30-year-old research fellow at New York's Cornell Medical School, isn't a member of the media-celebrity complex that dominates New York Fashion Week, the twice-a-year spectacle where designers unveil new collections and gin up brand buzz. She is, though, a member of "Noir," an invitation-only retail club for big spenders on the Web site Gilt.com, which sells designer clothes at a discount. She paid \$2,100 (€1,526) for a Fashion Week package, one of 14 that Gilt Groupe Inc. sold during the past two weeks. It comes with a dress and sweater of her choosing from the fall 2010 collection of Mr. Chai, known for his blouses and tailored feminine looks that mix different fabrics.

"I am excited to cross 'getting into the front row at New York Fashion Week' off my 'Impossible Things to Do' checklist," Dr. Koduru says.

For fashion fanatics without industry connections, an invitation to a Fashion Week show is, if not impossible, then very close to it. At New York Fashion Week's main venue, the Tents at Bryant Park, demand for seats usually exceeds supply. The "salon" tent seats about 500, and the main tent, where Michael Kors and Diane von Furstenberg are showing this week, seats about 1,200. Guest lists are carefully curated by the designer with a fashion public-relations firm. Seating is assigned, and it isn't negotiable. Invitations, which go out a few weeks before the show, are non-transferrable and often explicitly say so. Guests must show the invitation at the entryway; some of the biggest designers check I.D.'s.

Fashion shows—often over in all of 15 minutes—have their own seating conventions, especially in the front row. At Bryant Park, the catwalk comes out into the audience, with retail buyers, the press and celebrities sitting on either side, forming a kind of letter "U." Photographers, who can get rowdy, are crammed into a pit at the bottom of the "U," where they may shout to elicit a reaction from the models.

The worst seats are those adjacent to the back end of the runway... A seat in rows one to rows three means you are 'still in the game.'

Vogue editor-in-chief Anna Wintour and other V.I.P.s will almost always sit near the end of the front row in the section to the left of the runway—sometimes known as the "A" section. This is considered the best vantage point because it is the first place where the models turn. It is also close to the doors—ideal for making a quick exit and getting on to the next show. Celebrities usually sit in the middle of the front row, so the photographers can see them without creating a traffic jam. Retail executives usually are sprinkled between rival editors, to avoid awkward situations: Bergdorf's for example, doesn't want Saks knowing which

Clockwise from right: Taylor Swift (far left), Naomi Watts (second from right) and January Jones (right) watch the Tommy Hilfiger spring 2010 collection; Vogue Editor Anna Wintour (left) waits for the start of the Calvin Klein Spring 2010 show during New York Fashion Week; Madonna attends the Marc Jacobs Spring 2010 show.



Clockwise: AP Photo, Reuters (2)

looks it is circling in the program.

The worst seats are those adjacent to the back end of the runway—even though some are technically in the front row, says Kelly Cutrone, founder of People's Revolution, which produces shows for designers such as Davi Delfin and Toni Francese. "They are usually given to sponsors who don't really understand the language of seating," Ms. Cutrone says. A seat in rows one to rows three means you are "still in the game."

For celebrities seated in the front row at a Marc Jacobs show, it is considered good manners to wear a Marc Jacobs outfit. Wait until after the show to go through the gift bag tucked beneath the front row seats, Ms. Cutrone says. (The bags usually contain a lipstick or some hair product supplied by the show's sponsor, often a cosmetics company.)

During the show, front-row guests should keep their feet under their chairs to keep them out of photographs. Conversation of any kind is frowned upon; stray comments can land on a blog, especially now that some influential fashion bloggers are landing prime seats. Often, people assigned to a back row will creep forward to claim a better seat. The designer's publicists may encourage this practice so that all seats appear filled.

Paul Wilmot, a public relations executive who produces shows for designers such as Oscar de la Renta, says if he cannot accommodate a celebrity in the front row, he discourages them from coming so as to

avoid a perceived slight. "I've seen meltdowns, I've seen tears," Mr. Wilmot says. "It's just math. If there are only 100 front row seats, and 200 people who want to sit in the front row, it's not going to work."

Designers will reward a top-spending client with an invitation and sometimes a prime seat. Naem Khan, who gained attention for dressing Michelle Obama for the U.S. administration's first state dinner, reserves a front-row spot for Google executive Marissa Mayer and Houston fundraiser Becca Cason Thrash. Designer Yigal Azrouel invites the top 10 clients of his New York store but reserves his inventory of about 100 front-row seats for buyers, editors and celebrity clients, says Donata Minelli, the label's managing director. This season, the designer sold a few runway-show packages through Gilt Groupe, but none in the front row.

The industry is trying to fight invitation reselling. Some designers ask Internet auction sites to remove such sales. Still, on craigslist.com, a seller last week was offering "access and runway seats to all the fashion shows" for \$499. (It isn't clear if the offer was legitimate.) On eBay, an invitation to an unidentified designer's show recently had a \$50 starting bid. Auction-site sellers don't reveal their identities, and several contacted via email with requests for comment didn't respond.

A spokeswoman for IMG Worldwide, which organizes Fashion Week, says, "We actively research

and identify Web sites where activity is taking place and get our lawyers involved as needed." Some legitimate tickets are sold at charity auctions and through corporate sponsorships. Alexis Maybank, Gilt Groupe co-founder, says the Noir program's fashion-show tickets are "about giving our most loyal customers hard-to-access experiences." Consumers now consider fashion to be another form of theater. Runway extravaganzas are "entertaining, informative and glamorous," Mr. Wilmot says, and they have another big virtue: They are short. "This is not a Wagner opera," he adds.

Janelle Heiser, a 37-year-old wine consultant from Canton, Ohio, bought a seat to a Carolina Herrera show several seasons ago via an auction site for \$600. (A spokeswoman says the design house's fashion shows are by invitation only, and admission is never intended to be by resold invitations.) Nowadays, however, Ms. Heiser buys legitimate tickets to fashion shows through American Express Co., which has a skybox overlooking the tents as part of a sponsorship deal with IMG. The \$150-a-person packages also include drinks, hors d'oeuvres and a visit in the skybox with designers and fashion experts. American Express is donating proceeds to a fund for emerging designers, says Jessica Igoe, AmEx director of global sponsorship marketing. The skybox, is "like a cocoon away from the craziness," says Ms. Heiser. This season, she is taking her husband and 7-year-old daughter to see three shows.

A room with a chew

More top chefs are running hotels along with restaurants; 'good old-fashioned hospitality'

BY JEMIMA SISSONS

AFTER A STARTER of scallops with pumpkin molasses, followed by chicken liver parfait with gingerbread, and an entrée of woodcock served with pickled blackberry jelly, you may be forgiven for feeling a little sleepy. If you are able to finish off the chocolate sabayon and find more room for the Yorkshire rhubarb with tarragon and rocket granita that ends the meal, you may feel sleepier still. Fortunately, if you are eating at one-Michelin-star restaurant Sat Bains in Nottingham, U.K., a bed is a mere stumble away (www.satbains.com).

Billing itself as a "restaurant with rooms," Sat Bains—run by husband and wife team Amanda and Sat Bains—is one of a number of places that is the smart choice if you don't want to broach the "who's driving?" dilemma, or organize transport at the end of a delicious multicourse tasting menu. As chef Mr. Bains says: "Our customers often take their last glass of wine up to their rooms, where they can relax, unwind and watch a movie."

There has long been a tradition across Europe of family-owned hotels and inns providing a decent meal and a bed for the night to weary travelers. "The history started in the early 1930s with people driving down the National 7 road from Paris to Nice," says Jean-Luc Naret, director general of the Michelin Guide. "This is where you could find legendary places that provided lunch and rooms such as Pic in Valence." Both the Michelin and Relais and Châteaux guides are dedicated to places where you can dine and sleep in comfort throughout the world.

Now some top chefs are getting in on the act and have started to add hotels to their empires. Ferran Adrià of El Bulli restaurant has put his name to the El Bulli hotel in Seville, Spain, and in the U.S., Thomas Keller is looking into opening an inn in Yountville, Napa—where he already has something of a culinary kingdom. In the U.K., Gordon Ramsay opened his York and Albany hotel in north London in 2008, and later this year St. John chef Fergus Henderson is opening a 15-room hotel just behind Leicester Square in central London.

One colossus in the game is Alain Ducasse. Holder of an impressive 20 Michelin stars throughout the world, Mr. Ducasse has also added three hotels to his portfolio—two in France and one in Italy. His Italian hotel L'Andana, formerly the Duke of Tuscany's hunting lodge, was opened in 2004 (www.andana.it; reopens again for the season on March 6). Mr. Ducasse, who wants to open a *ryokan* [traditional inn] in Japan next, explains why he branched out: "These country inns bring an extra dimension to my job because my guests expect another sort of food: Rural cooking as opposed to urban cooking. Cooking in a country inn has its own unique style, probably because the kitchen is so directly exposed to nature."

Food in L'Andana's one-Michelin-star restaurant La Trattoria Toscana is crafted out of fresh local produce, such as herb-crusted veal chop and gnocchi sautéed in tarragon. There is a convivial rustic charm here. Each of the 33 rooms is fitted out with rich silk curtains, antiques and



Clockwise from top: Bras hotel and restaurant in Aubrac, France; gargouillou, a signature dish of chef Michel Bras; Michel Bras with son Sébastien.



offers views of the Tuscan countryside.

You can see the appeal of chef-owned hotels. The food, one would hope, is exemplary. You can expect the same levels of perfectionism and hospitality usually found in the chefs' restaurants; and, in some cases, it gives you access to a chef's food that would otherwise be trickier to come by, such as Mr. Adrià's at the opulent Hacienda Benazuza hotel in Seville, which bills itself the El Bulli hotel (www.elbulli-hotel.com; reopens March 17). Unless you are one of the lucky 8,000 people who manage to book a table at his Girona restaurant each year—out of an estimated million people who try—this is the nearest you'll get to ever eating Mr. Adrià's much-lauded creations (especially as he is closing the restaurant for two years in 2012). Although the hotel isn't actually owned by Mr. Adrià, he oversees the food, from the room-service to the cuisine in the two-Michelin-star restaurant La Alqueria. But he says it wasn't fancy food that beckoned him here in 2000: "I got involved because I always wanted to experience the only meal that I never cooked in El Bulli: the breakfast," Mr. Adrià says.

If you prefer a rural getaway to an urban

adventure, then the small family-run Bras in the Aubrac region of France is just the ticket, run by chef Michel Bras and his family (www.michel-bras.com; reopens April 4). Mr. Bras, who was captivated by this wild region from an early age and started Bras in 1992 after having worked at his parents' hotel and restaurant, believes in the importance of integrating all he does with the surrounding nature.

Everything is done with this in mind—the buildings are designed to blend into the scenery; walls in the 13 pure white bedrooms are partially made from iron (in homage to Michel Bras's father, who was an ironmonger, and also a reference to the famous knife factory in nearby Laguiole), and the bathrooms are made from granite, which is the local stone. Products in the bathroom are made especially for the hotel by Parisian perfumer Annick Goutal from local wildflowers including narcissus and anemone.

There is no spa or pool. Instead, guests are encouraged to discover the surrounding scenery and lose themselves in hazelnut groves and fields with garlic and sorrel. "Whereas other hotels leave a bottle of Cham-

pagne in the room, we leave a rucksack and map so our guests can explore the countryside," says Michel Bras's daughter-in-law, Véronique Bras.

Food in the three-Michelin-star restaurant is in keeping with their philosophy. Three to four times a week father and son chef duo Michel and Sébastien Bras leave at 4 a.m. to make the hour-long journey to the market in the nearest town, Rodez, where they choose the freshest available produce. Only then will the day's menu be decided, incorporating some of the 300 or so herbs and vegetables they grow or pick from the surrounding countryside.

For most visitors the draw is evidently the great food—however it is more than that. "People do come here for the food, but also the landscape—they love the perfume of the flowers, and most of all, the incredible silence," says Véronique Bras.

For Mr. Ducasse, however, the lure of his hotels is just good old-fashioned hospitality. He says, "When being an innkeeper, one welcomes a guest as if it was in his own home."

Jemima Sissons is a writer based in London.

Clockwise from top right: Julien Jourdes for The Wall Street Journal (2); Michel Bras.



Clockwise from top; Hotel L'Andana in Tuscany; the lunch buffet at the Villa restaurant; a room at the hotel.

Judith Edelmann (3)



Ferran Adria (2)

Above, the Hacienda Benazusa, or El Bulli, hotel in Seville; right, beetroot ravioli with green pistaccio sauce and raspberry offered at the hotel.



Other chefs & their hotels

De Librije

—The Netherlands

One of the only two three-Michelin-star restaurants in the Netherlands, De Librije is run by husband and wife team Jonnie and Thérèse Boer. The restaurant is housed in a former monastery, the 19-room hotel in an old prison (an exorcist was called in before the hotel opened to guests in 2008). Chef Jonnie uses local ingredients and even has his own cheese maker nearby. Expect food such as pigeon with macadamia and vanilla, and a choice of eight homemade breads at breakfast.

www.librije.com



De Librije

La Colline du Colombier

—France

Michel Troigros, who already runs legendary restaurant and hotel Maison Troigros in Roanne in the Loire region, opened this auberge and restaurant in 2008 in nearby Iguerande. Food is rustic and beautifully delivered; bedrooms are in the form of charming "cadoles"—modern day executions of rural farm shelters.

www.troigros.fr

Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons

—U.K.

Raymond Blanc has been hosting guests in this wonderful Oxfordshire manor since 1984. The two-Michelin-starred restaurant serves mouthwatering dishes such as roasted Anjou squab with celeriac chouroute; the rooms are opulently furnished. The place to propose or to spend your wedding night.

www.manoir.com

Italy's sparkling romance

AS A RULE I tend to avoid the clichéd wine column written around Valentine's Day. After all, even those with a modicum of wine knowledge cannot fail to get it right on Feb. 14. There are just some occasions when only fizz will do and this weekend is one of them. Vintage, pink, English, Californian, New Zealand, Champagne, Cava, wherever your chilled glass of sparkling wine comes from, it is sure to lift the mood of your loved one. Cue the usual 700 words on sparkling wines to accompany Valentine's Day.

Wine

WILL LYONS

But where, I hear you ask, is the romance in that? To really wow your loved one this Valentine's you need more than just a recommendation, you need a little knowledge, a back story, something to introduce the evening and get it off to a flyer.

Which brings me neatly to Prosecco, one of my favorite wines for celebrating Saint Valentine's day and conveniently a wine with a tantalizingly romantic story.

It begins in the hillsides around the small towns of Valdobbiadene and Conegliano in the DOC of Prosecco. There in the rugged landscape of Veneto, just a 45-minute drive north of Venice, lies one of Italy's prettiest corners. Medieval cities and ancient churches pepper a landscape of vineyards and farms producing Italy's delicate, light sparkling wine.

Sales of Prosecco have risen in recent years as cash strapped consumers look to trade down from other more expensive sparkling wines. But it hasn't always been such an easy ride. Its reputation suffers twofold: a comparison with Champagne and the production of large quantities of cheap Prosecco, not helped by the recent introduction of selling it in a can. Like the children's poem of the little girl who had a little curl, when Prosecco is bad, it can be very, very bad, but when it is good, it is exceptionally good. And also considerably cheaper than vintage Champagne.

But that is where the compari-

son with Champagne should end. Here's where the knowledge comes in. Unlike Champagne, the eponymously named Prosecco is made primarily from that grape variety, although in rare cases the Prosecco grape can be blended with a little (15%) Bianchetta, Perera and Verdiso.

Its production is a little different from Champagne too. Prosecco's sparkling bubbles come from the Charmat process, whereby the secondary fermentation takes place in pressurised stainless-steel tanks after the addition of yeast and cane sugar.

This is a very important distinction in the final flavor. Champagne undergoes a secondary fermentation in the bottle after which the liquid is left to lie on top of its lees, or dead yeast cells. As the yeast cells decompose, a process known as autolysis, they impart a creamy, bread-like aroma. The result, when the blend of grape varieties is made up of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, is a mouth-filling richness. Whereas a glass of Prosecco is characterized by light, clean flavors such as lemon, green apples, wild flowers and white peaches. Its lightness makes for a wonderful aperitif or, if you're sitting on the rooftop of the Hotel Danieli in Venice, a Bellini mixed with fresh peach juice.

Another, more loose distinction, is that Prosecco is usually sold relatively young, within 18 months of the harvest, and comes in three styles based on sweetness, Brut (dry); Extra Dry (medium) and Dry, which, just to confuse you, is (sweet).

One estate that towers over all others is Bisol, now in the hands of Gianluca Bisol, whose family has been making Prosecco in the region since the 16th century. His wines have a fresh, mineral character with plenty of racing acidity.

The best wine is made from Prosecco grapes grown in the small area or DOC called Conegliano Valdobbiadene. Within this area, the best vineyard is Cartizze, 107 hectares of vines planted on some of the steepest hills in Prosecco. The wines made from grapes grown on Cartizze are intense with a larger mouth feel. Walking up through the vineyards to the top of the hill of Cartizze on a clear day you can just make out the spires of Venice rising out of the clear blue waters of the Lagoon. A wonderfully romantic site, if it is a little clichéd.

DRINKING NOW

Prosecco Valdobbiadene Brut Jeio Bisol

Price: about £9 (€10)

Alcohol content: 11.5%

This wine was made from grapes grown on the hills of Valdobbiadene. Primarily a blend of Prosecco, it has a touch of Verdiso and Pinot Bianco. It is fine and delicate with a slightly sweet, fresh, apple character.



Perfect match

A Valentine's Day story by Alexander McCall Smith

"Is it important?" She asked the question of her editor, knowing what her answer would be, but asking it nonetheless. Some questions are designed to make a point rather than elicit a reply.

"Of course it's important. It's of great interest to our readers, and that makes it important. Remember we're a mag, Janey, a mag. We are not the Times or the Wall Street Journal—we're a women's interest mag. For intellectual women, of course, but women nonetheless."

Janey sighed. Since she had taken the job in the features department, she had found herself allocated to one human interest story after another, mostly about women with problems. Of course there were many women with problems, but there were also plenty of women who were entirely unproblematic. Herself, for instance: she could not think of any particularly difficult problems she had. There was her mortgage, it had to be admitted, but everyone had mortgage issues as far as she could make out.

There was no point in arguing, though. Unless she could come up with something more riveting—and she could not—then she would have to cover this story, whatever it was.

"I want you to interview a man," said the editor.

"A man? With problems?"

The editor ignored the barb. "Yes. I don't know whether you saw a piece that they ran ..." (they were the rivals) "on women with younger lovers. Did you?"

Janey shook her head. She did not read them.

"Well, they interviewed a woman of 40 who had a live-in man of 20. Quite a good piece, I must admit."

Janey asked whether the woman of 40 was happy, or whether she had a problem.

"She had no problems at all," the editor continued. "She was one of these high achievers. CEO of a medium-sized toxic waste disposal company. Doing well. And in the background this young man."

"Nice," said Janey.

The editor raised an eyebrow. "But naturally it was written from the woman's point of view. So I thought that we would interview a young man in that position—a young man with a much older lover. How about that?"

'Do you travel a lot?' asked Janey. It was a weak question, but she found that it often got people talking.

Janey shrugged. "It's a different angle, certainly." And it would be a bit of a change, she thought, from women with problems.

"So," said the editor, "take a look at this."

Janey took the press cutting handed her by the editor. It was from a glossy magazine and there was a photograph of an elegant-looking woman somewhere in her early 40s. On her arm, smiling into the camera, was a handsome young man. Underneath the photograph, the text explained that this was a well-known fashion designer with her boyfriend, Tim. They had been together for six months, the report went on, and they were described by friends as "blissfully happy."

The editor reached for the cutting. "As it happens," she said, "my hairdresser knows Tim. He's asked him whether he would give an interview, and he agreed. Here's his number. Set it up and let's have the whole story. What his friends think. Has he ever been

taken for her son? Do they listen to the same sort of music? That sort of thing."

Janey telephoned that day. Tim did not reply immediately, but returned her call a few hours later. Yes, he would be happy to see her. Tomorrow? There was a coffee house he liked to go to and he would see her there. How would they recognize each other?

She was about to say that she was about 35, brunette, and would be wearing ... She stopped herself. "I've seen your photograph," she said.

"Oh."

"We do our homework, you see."

He laughed. "Tomorrow then. Eleven."

She was early and spent the time watching the other customers in the coffee bar. It was not particularly busy—a few students from the nearby art college, a couple of businessmen involved in earnest discussion, and a few couples. One of the couples consisted of a man in his mid-50s with a woman who was clearly much younger. She looked at them—the woman had a brochure of some sort that she was showing to the man. Were they a couple, or was she trying to sell him something? If they were a couple, then she was probably wife number two—the younger model obtained when the older one became unexciting—the familiar, age-old story. And of course nobody thought twice about that situation, whereas when it came to a woman taking up with a younger man there was a very different reaction. She would have to say something about that in the article.

"Janey?"

She looked up. Tim was standing in front of her. Yes, she thought—I can see what the fashion designer means.

Her pointed to the bar. "Let me get you something. They do seriously good lattes, but all the others as well."

She took his suggestion of a latte, and watched him walk up to the bar. Oh yes, she thought. Oh yes.

Tim returned. She saw his teeth as he smiled—they were very regular—and she felt an absurd wish to start the interview off with a question about dental intervention. "Were your teeth straightened?" was not the sort of question one asked, even if one wanted to. He must have had something done, she thought; nobody had teeth like that without a bit of help. And the tan? Was that acquired abroad, or was he one of these people who slipped into tanning studios? He looked perfect, she decided—like some exotic feline pet; a kept man.

"It's very good of you to talk to me," she began. "Do you mind if I use this?"

She gestured to the small digital recorder she had taken out of her bag and placed on the table.

He looked at the recorder, and laughed. "I'm not going to say anything really significant," he said. "That's okay."

"It's just that it's easier than taking notes." And, she thought, I can watch you as we talk. You are very watchable.

He took a sip of his coffee. "I come here most days. This is a nice time to come because it gets quite busy at lunchtime."

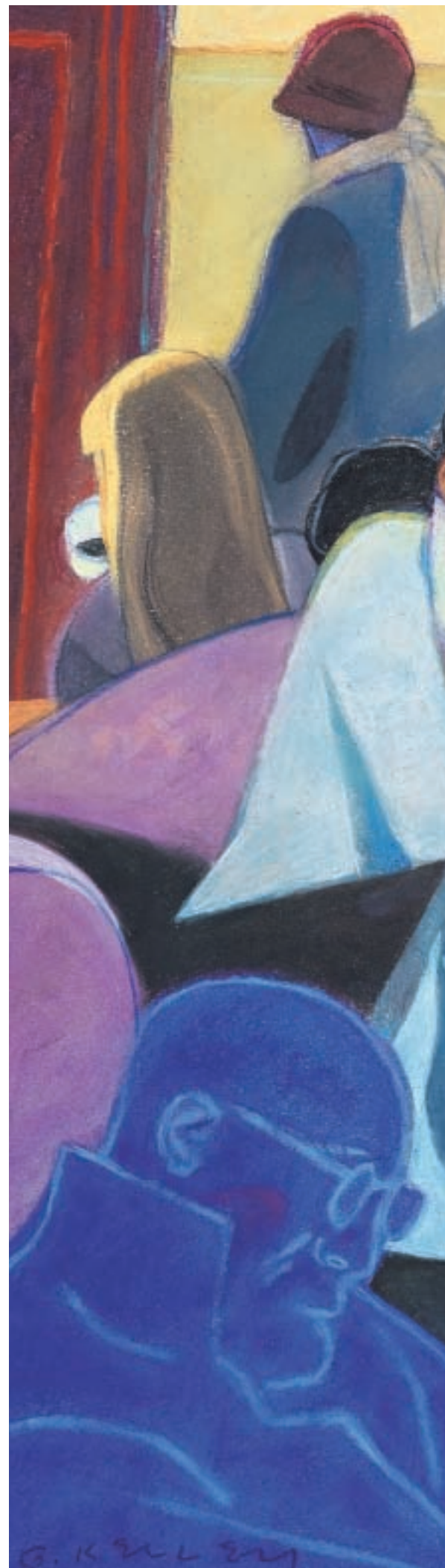
She nodded. "It's nice to be able to hear what people are saying. There are so many places where you can't hear a word."

"New York has very noisy restaurants," he said. "Great choice, but really noisy."

She agreed. "You've been to New York with ..." She had forgotten the name of the fashion designer.

"Charlotte." He paused. "Yes, several times. We were there about two months ago."

"Do you travel a lot?" asked Janey. It was a weak question, but she found that it



often got people talking.

"A bit," said Tim. "I'm doing a Ph.D. actually, and that means that I need to stay around here."

She looked appreciative. What was his Ph.D.?

"It's in the right of humanitarian intervention in international law. All about the circumstances in which one state can interfere in another state's affairs in order to save life. The rescue at Entebbe in Uganda, for example."

"A tricky issue."

"Yes. Surely there must be such a right, because if not then ... then we would have been able to do nothing about Hitler, or people like him. And yet, can you have people barging in left, right and centre?"

"You can't," said Janey. She was looking at his eyes now. They were grey, she decided, most unusual, but very easy to look at.

He smiled, and became silent.

"I wanted to ask you about your ...



Illustration by Gary Kelley

your relationship with Charlotte. Where did you meet?”

He looked at the ceiling. “Where did we meet? At a party, I think. Yes. There was a party given by somebody we both knew. Nothing to do with the fashion world. He’s an antique dealer. He knows all about French furniture. I met him because I had worked in his shop as a student—the occasional Saturday morning, that sort of thing.”

“And you just hit it off?”

“Yes. She asked me out, actually. She was quite upfront. She asked me whether I would go to a screening of a film with her. She moves in that sort of circle—some film director she knows. Then we went out to dinner afterwards. We got on well.”

“Did the fact that she was, what ...”

“41.”

“Yes, did that make any difference in your mind?”

He shook his head. “No, not at all. I

don’t judge people on their age. Why should you? She was just a really interesting, intelligent woman who seemed friendly towards me. That was all.”

“So you like intelligence in a woman?”

The question clearly engaged him. “Of course I do. I like women who have something to say about the world. I’d hate to be in a relationship with somebody who had nothing to say.”

“Yes, I can see that. It can’t be very interesting. But tell me: do you think that a young guy—you, for instance—has a better chance of finding that ... that intellectual stimulation if he looks for a slightly older woman?”

He listened carefully to the question.

“Yes, I do, I suppose. When I was 16 I had a girlfriend—my first girlfriend, actually. She was 18. Maybe it set a pattern.”

Janey nodded. “Of course some people say that men are always looking for their mother—or a mother, perhaps. What do

you think of that?”

Tim laughed. “I’ve never been a great one for the Freudian explanation.”

“Fair enough.”

There was a brief silence. He picked up his latte and took another sip. “Of course, you do know it’s over, don’t you?” he said.

It took Janey a moment or two to absorb this news. “With Charlotte?”

“Yes. We split up a month ago.”

“I’m very sorry to hear that.” She was not.

“Thanks. I don’t like short-term relationships, but there we are. We started to argue. Her views were a bit different from mine, you see.”

Janey probed gently. “In what way?”

“Oh, on material things. She was very keen on money. I’m not really all that bothered about it. We also found out that we didn’t like the same sort of music. I like choral music—you know, Morley and so on.”

“Love him.”

“You do? And also minimalism. Arvo Pärt.”

“Adams,” she said.

“Yes!”

He looked into his latte. “I’m sorry that it didn’t work out. But it was amicable enough—and we’re still friends.”

Janey said that it was better that way. “There’s a lovely poem that Craig Raine wrote about going for a walk with a former wife. It talks about being divorced, but friends at last. It’s rather moving.”

“Yes. It sounds it.”

He looked at his watch. She noticed; she did not want the interview to end.

“I have to ...” he began.

“I understand.” She reached for the recorder.

He looked at her. “We’ve talked about me,” he said. “But what about you? Are you ... with anybody?”

She shook her head. “I was. But no longer.”

“Like me,” he said.

“Yes. Like you.”

He touched the rim of his coffee cup, gently; an odd gesture.

“I was wondering ...”

“Yes?”

“Are you free this evening? You know what day it is?”

She felt a sudden rush of excitement. Me? Me?

“I think so.”

“It’s February 14th.”

She had forgotten. Nobody had sent her a card; had somebody done that, then she would have known. “Oh,” she said. “I suppose it is.”

“Can I cook something for you?” he asked. She said that she would love that.

“And tomorrow,” he went on, “there’s a concert you might enjoy. They’re student singers, but they’re very good.”

“I’d love that. I really would.”

They made the arrangements for that evening. He would come to her flat, bringing the ingredients for the dinner. Then he said, “Fine. And give my love to Ginny.”

Ginny was the name of her editor. “Yes. Of course.”

He reached into his pocket and took out a small, heart-shaped chocolate wrapped in silver paper. “Here,” he said. “From me.”

He left. She thought—it’s as if he had come prepared. She stopped. He knew Ginny. She smiled to herself. What a sensitive employer.

The Double Comfort Safari Club by Alexander McCall Smith (the 11th book in *The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency series*) is published on March 4, 2010.



A few of Taiwan's hot spots for butterflies.

Kingdom of the butterfly

Each year, Taiwan's valleys play host to the magnificent migration of millions of purple crows

By Robert Kelly

THE NARROW AND ragged one-lane road into southern Taiwan's Yellow Butterfly Valley becomes simply impassible to cars not long past a small temple whose outer columns and front parapet are lined with meter-high butterfly cutouts.

On a visit last May, I left my car in a clearing under a longan tree, and headed up the remaining path on foot. A few hundred meters' walk brought me to a section of open, nearly dry streambed and adjacent woodland. I heard and saw the birds first: twittering swallows and Chinese bulbuls in the hundreds. Then the butterflies appeared, capering not in the hundreds but the hundreds of thousands.

A hundred species co-exist in the valley, but the area gets its name from one in particular: the lemon emigrant (*Catopsilia pomona*), a midsize butterfly with a restless nature and wings the color of light butter. And that's the butterfly I had come to see—though as one expert later told me, it wouldn't advance my goal of observing all the migratory patterns of Taiwan's butterflies. Its name notwithstanding, *Catopsilia pomona* isn't actually a migratory species in Taiwan.

"The English name is probably just a bad translation," explained Ping-shih Yang, a former dean of the Department of Entomology at National Taiwan University. While the lemons do disperse from the

valley in late summer, this behavior isn't considered by Taiwanese researchers to be a true migration. (The definition can vary, though generally a migration would have to occur regularly and follow a fairly defined route.)

What about the chestnut tiger? Another potential candidate for a migratory species, the chestnut tiger (a name used for one of three species of the genus *Parantica*) flourishes in the misty mountain valleys of northern Taiwan. In the summer of 2000, a chestnut tiger that researchers had marked in Yangmingshan National Park was found two weeks later on Kyushu,

dispersal pattern—which involves netting and marking several thousand chestnut tigers every year—has established with reasonable certainty that the more typical route is a late-June dispersal to higher and cooler mountains on Taiwan's east coast.

But is it possible Japan is being reached by many butterflies that aren't marked as originating in Taiwan? After all, Taiwan is a rugged island, with dense forest cover over half the territory and a mountainous central spine that reaches almost 4,000 meters high. It's home to 423 species of butterfly but fewer than a dozen profes-

The beauty of the overwintering scene is almost supernatural.

southernmost of Japan's four main islands. In the years since, 10 more marked chestnut tigers have turned up in Japan. Making a 1,200-kilometer journey over open ocean on wings no wider than a human hand may qualify as a miracle of nature, but to the experts it isn't a migration.

"Oh, I think *Parantica* can fly to Japan," Professor Yang said. "But only a very small part of the population does this. It's more of an individual phenomenon and not really migration." The research into the butterflies'

sional butterfly researchers.

The genial Mr. Yang dismissed my theory with amusement. Devoted to his subject, he clearly delighted in helping clear up my many misconceptions—and in pointing me to a genuine, and quite magnificent, butterfly migration in Taiwan.

The journey is made by four species of the genus *Euploea*, known commonly as purple crows or purple milkweed butterflies. It's massive—some years estimated to involve as many as 15 million butterflies—and very directed, following

the same pattern year after year. In September, bands of purple crows leave their mountain homes in north and central Taiwan and begin to fly south, taking advantage of the seasonal winds that flow down from Mongolia and China. By November, they've reached a series of warm sheltered valleys where they settle for the season.

In essence, the butterflies (which cannot bear temperatures lower than four degrees Celsius) are escaping the northern winter. Though Taiwan has a subtropical climate and is less than 400 kilometers long, the differences between northern and southern winters is typically stark. One is damp and chilly; the other balmy.

Five months later, the butterflies begin the return trip, again relying on prevailing seasonal winds, which in spring blow up from the Philippines.

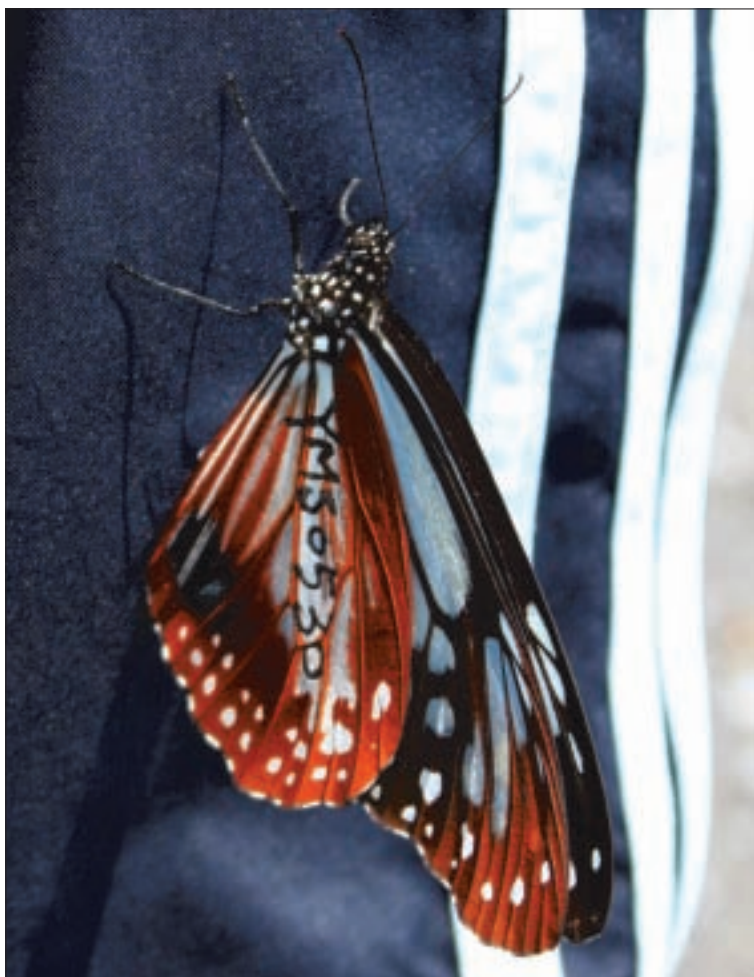
In all the world, only one other species of butterfly engages in a mass overwintering: North America's monarch, which famously travels vast distances to reach the forests of Mexico. (It's entirely coincidental, but both the Taiwan and Mexico wintering sites were discovered in the 1970s, though in the case of Taiwan it's more accurate to say that's when the site became known to scientists. The first amateur entomologist to see the purple butterfly valleys was taken there by local Rukai aborigines.)

It wasn't until the mid-1980s,

however, that a north-south migration route for the purple crows was suspected, and just five years ago that the 400-kilometer western route was mapped out. Since then a second migration path along the east coast and a connecting path joining the two have been discovered.

The beauty of the overwintering scene is almost supernatural. In the valleys of the Maolin National Scenic Area, purple crows hang like garlands in the trees. Roused by a warm morning sun, they swarm the plants and pools for nectar and water; a space no larger than a small van may hold a thousand fluttering violet wings. And while years of media focus—the migration is a major event in Taiwan—have left the impression that Maolin is the overwintering epicenter, Mr. Yang says there are valleys farther east, rarely visited by anyone but researchers and Butterfly Conservation Society volunteers, where the butterflies are even more abundant.

Of course, nature comes without guarantees. Last year, after an exceptionally warm winter, migration back from the south was early and diffuse: not a timely mass exodus but a slow leak, lacking drama and visual appeal. I saw it for myself one hazy mid-March morning, when I planted myself on the running track of the local school in the little ridge-top village of Pingding, a well-known converging point for millions of purple crows as they



Left page, a purple crow and a tiger taking a break. Clockwise from above, a chestnut tiger marked by a researcher; purple crows migrate down to Maolin each winter; a friendly chocolate tiger; a red-base jezebel; a blue pansy; a butterfly-themed temple is one signal that you're not far from the aptly named Yellow Butterfly Valley.



make their way north.

In a good year, as many as 10,000 butterflies a minute have been recorded flying over the grounds. But last year's numbers were down so much locals speculated the problem was bigger than one warm winter. Global warming? Pollution? Habitat destruction? Butterfly researcher Chieh-chin Chen thinks these concerns are unwarranted. For a start, conservation efforts in Taiwan are well entrenched, and many prime butterfly habitats lie within national parks or protected forestry land.

"I think what is happening now is just part of a cycle," Mr. Chen said. Butterfly populations were certainly down in 2009, but they were down in 2007 as well, while in 2008 "they were very high everywhere." When it comes to butterfly numbers, Mr. Chen is the man to ask. An associate professor in the graduate program for environmental education and resources at Taipei Municipal University of Education, he leads teams of students that catch, mark and release thousands of butterflies every year.

I met one of his teams on a high mountain saddle called Tatajia (elevation 2,610 meters) in Yushan National Park; hikers know it as the start of the trail to Yushan, the highest mountain in Taiwan. It's a "special area" Mr. Chen said, where masses of butterflies "fly overhead like clouds." And indeed, as I watched, a steady flow of butterflies was being swept up by strong winds from the broad valley below.

The saddle functioned like the end of a funnel and when the butterflies hit the crosswinds at the narrow top they literally bounced and spun in the turbulence. Most took just a few seconds to cross the parking lot at whose edge the team was stationed. Chasing them with long nets was a dizzying experience.

The butterflies were largely from the hundred high-mountain species common to the park. But some were also chestnut tigers and purple crows coming from afar. How afar? Mr. Chen had told me he suspected that during the spring migration, purple crows were being blown back here by countervailing winds (or maybe making a detour for food) from Puli, a hundred kilometers to the north.

A few minutes after I arrived one of Mr. Chen's students caught a chestnut tiger: *Parantica sita niponica*, the species that sometimes rides the winds over the sea to Japan. After folding the wings gently between his fingers, he measured the span of one, and then marked the other with a black felt pen.

Asked if he could guess where the butterfly had come from, the student just shook his head. As he released the butterfly with a tap to the back of his hand I asked if he knew where it would fly to now.

"We don't have any idea," he answered.

In the Kingdom of the Butterfly it's tough to be a census taker.

—Robert Kelly is a writer based in Taipei.



Maolin National Scenic Area (1)

Having a flutter

Places to spot butterflies in Europe

Belgium

The Butterfly Garden: Located in Knokke-Heist, this large tropically heated greenhouse houses more than 300 butterflies. The butterflies come from a wide range of countries, and include passion-flower butterflies, tropical butterflies, owl moths and red admirals. Open from the Easter holidays to the first weekend in October

Admission: Adult, €4.80; child (under 12) €3

www.vlindertuin-knokke.be



England

Butterfly World: This butterfly enclosure in Newport lets visitors see hundreds of butterflies flying in a natural environment and study the egg-caterpillar-chrysalis-imago life cycle. Open from Easter to Oct. 31.

Admission: Adult, £5.95; child £3.95

www.butterfly-world-iow.co.uk



Italy

Butterfly Arc: This place, which is located in Monte Grotto, Pavoda, has reconstructed natural spaces that house butterflies based on their origin. Visitors can find the Idea butterflies, large and graceful white-and-black butterflies, which display the lightest known mode of flying, among other species. Open from March until the first week of November.

Admission: Adult €8; child (4 to 12 years) €6

www.butterflyarc.it

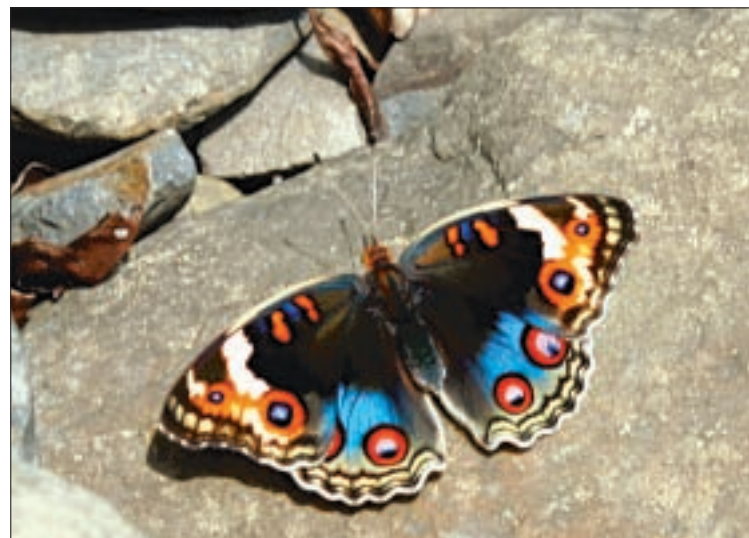
Spain

Mariposario del Drago: Located on the island of Tenerife, part of the Canary Islands, this butterfly garden houses more than 800 butterflies from tropical countries like Costa Rica and Malaysia. Open every day.

Admission: Adult €7.50; child (2-12 years) €4

www.mariposario.com

—Javier Espinoza



Robert Kelly for The Wall Street Journal (6)

❖ Theater

BY PAUL SHARMA

WITH HIS CURRENT work at London's Barbican Theatre, director Peter Brook returns to West Africa and examines a conflict in Mali, which, fueled by French colonialism and religious arguments, reached its peak in the 1940s.

Adapted by Marie-Hélène Estienne and Mr. Brook from the book "The Sage of Bandiagara" by African writer Amadou Hampaté Bâ, the play "11 and 12" tells how teacher Tierno Bokar is drawn steadily into a dispute over whether a certain prayer should be recited 11 or 12 times, which leads inexorably to hatred and massacres.

Like Mr. Brook's 1985 theater production "Mahabharata," the work has undergone a number of revisions and has slowly evolved into its present form. This version was first performed in Paris last November, while earlier versions were performed in the U.S. and Europe under the name of the main character "Tierno Bokar."

As he prepares to turn 85 next month, Peter Brook's recent work can be viewed in a line of lifetime work that explores spiritual themes within a multicultural context, including the Indian epic "Mahabharata," and his film based on G. I. Gurdjieff's book "Meetings With Remarkable Men."

So while on the surface, "11 and 12" seems far removed from some of his earlier productions—not least the famous "A Midsummer's Night Dream"



Peter Brook and Marie-Hélène Estienne.

Pascal Victor (3)

A play on tolerance and reason

Nearly 85, director Peter Brook continues to explore spiritual themes within a multicultural context

of 1970—it continues to explore the idea that theater has a unique language between thought and gesture—by telling the story as a set of in-

terweaving parables.

We caught up with Mr. Brook's long-term collaborator and the play's writer, Marie-Hélène Estienne, in Paris by phone as the Bouffes du Nord group was preparing to come to London for their four-week residency. Mr. Brook founded the International Centre for Theatre Research in Paris in 1971 and it moved to its permanent base in the Bouffes du Nord Theatre in 1974.

"The project has taken at least 30 years and started around the same time as when we worked on 'The Conference of the Birds,' which is also a Sufi text, so the two pieces are connected," Ms. Estienne said.

"After agreeing to the rights to 'Tierno Bokar,' we adapted the play seven years ago and the first version in French was produced around five years ago. Even 'The Conference of the Birds' was done in English and French. We were satisfied, but not 100%, with the French version. It's like that with some pieces. For us, it's a bit like the 'Mahabharata,' which was worked on for 20 years," Ms. Estienne continued. "When we came to do the English version we made some changes to the cast: The piece now has fewer actors—seven and one musician—and only has men, as the women's roles didn't work that well in the French version. And now, the cast has two Palestinian actors and less of an African presence. Overall, we call it a 'carpet show' rather than a chamber piece and we feel it is more alive than the previous versions."

The play's central story concerns a disagreement over how many times a prayer should be repeated, which is given additional importance due to the focus on prayer and *zikr* (remembrance) in Sufism, which is often characterized as emphasizing the more mystical side of Islam and has its own distinctive aspects in West Africa.

The play is linked to a Sufi order called Tidjania, which first recited "The Pearl of Perfection" prayer 11 times and then later shifted to 12 times, Ms. Estienne explains. "Many, many years later Sheikh

Lakdhar from Algeria traveled to West Africa to return the order back to the original 11 times, which he viewed as more serious and sacred practice," she says.

While the play's central character Tierno Bokar follows the now established orthodox practice of 12 times, 11 is the insurrectionary figure used by a younger teacher, Cherif Hamallah. And it is Tierno Bokar's adoption of Hamallah's view, as both an act of reconciliation and spiritual conversion, which leads to his downfall, followed in time by Hamallah's.

"This religious disagreement which started around 1910, eventually developed into a tribal conflict that reached a peak at the start of the Second World War, with thousands being killed, with the French and the Vichy government siding with the 12. Of course after the play ends, we saw the end of the Vichy regime, Charles de Gaulle and then Algeria," Ms. Estienne said. "The aim of Hampaté Bâ's book was to reconcile the two groups and now the relations between the two groups is much better, nothing like it was during the '40s and the war."

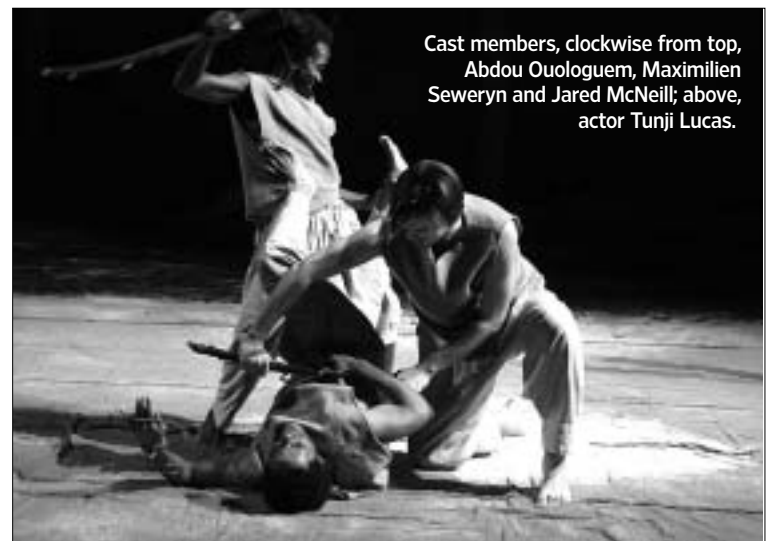
Perhaps the key lines in the text come from Tiero Bokar: "There are three truths, my truth, your truth, and the truth ... Our truths are crescent moons situated on one side or another

of the perfect circle of the full moon. Most of the time, when we argue and only listen to ourselves, our crescent moons turn their backs on one another. First we must turn them back toward one another, then our two crescent moons will be face to face, they will gradually come closer and closer and perhaps in the end meet one another in the great circle of truth."

The play "11 and 12" is at the Barbican Theatre in London until Feb. 27, accompanied by a season of films by Peter Brook.



Cast members, clockwise from top, Abdou Ouologuem, Maximilien Seweryn and Jared McNeill; above, actor Tunji Lucas.



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❖ Top Picks

Rich, messy mix of Modernism in Berlin

BERLIN: In revolutionary France, a small group of artists belonging to the circle of neoclassical painter Jacques-Louis David decided to practice what they preached. After decrying David for his lack of classical purity, they were expelled from his studio around 1800 and retreated to a former convent outside Paris. They lived a communal vegetarian life, grew long beards, and wore outlandish ritualistic outfits. Known as the Primitives, or even the Bearded Ones (“Les Barbus”), the group created a scandal but very little lasting art. Two centuries later, the Guggenheim museum franchise has installed the Primitives as the very first in a long line of artistic visionaries, leading all the way to the lions of 20th-century Modernism. The Primitives’ best-known painting—an ethereal rendering of the death of Hyacinthus, painted in 1801 by a presumably bearded Jean Broc—serves as an inaugural work in an ambitious show at Berlin’s Deutsche Guggenheim called “Utopia Matters: From Brotherhoods to Bauhaus.”

The curators have selected several artistic movements from the 19th and 20th centuries, including everyone from the so-called “Neo-Impressionists,” who practiced pointillism, and the Constructivists of early Soviet Russia to the De Stijl movement of World War I Holland.



Vassily Kandinsky's 'Blue Painting' (1924).

As evidence of the various movements’ shared utopian instinct, the show brings together an astonishing range of fine and applied art.

Visually rich, but intellectually muddled, the exhibition has a nomenclature problem. “Utopian” isn’t necessarily the word that

comes to mind when comparing the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, made up of seven like-minded artists and writers in Victorian England, with Weimar Germany’s unwieldy Bauhaus school, where a large collective of teachers, students and hangers-on disagreed on everything.

In tying various movements together, the curators inadvertently let everything fall apart, creating a fascinating jumble. We turn a corner and find a mid-Victorian Arts and Crafts chair, associated with the English textile designer and social visionary William Morris; later, looking up, we find Mondrian’s black-and-white 1930 painting, “Composition No. 1: Lozenge with Four Lines”—included, apparently, because of Mondrian’s crucial connection to the De Stijl movement years before the work was painted.

The exhibition—rich in imaginative sources, but devoid of any larger historical or political context—cannot seem to distinguish between the utopian and the merely idealistic. But museumgoers can relish the chance to see compelling works of European Modernism in a larger visual context. —J.S. Marcus

Until April 11

From May 1–July 25 at Venice’s Peggy Guggenheim Collection.

www.deutsch-guggenheim.de

The tragic life and exquisite art of Gorky

LONDON: The tale of the painter Arshile Gorky’s life (c. 1904–48) was a tragedy. Fleeing the 1915 Armenian massacres, he arrived in America in 1920 and falsely reinvented himself as the cousin of the Russian writer, Maxim Gorky. In 120 paintings and works on paper, Tate Modern’s “Arshile Gorky: A Retrospective” tracks the rise and premature fall of a great artist. The exhibition is the first major one in Europe for 20 years, and the most moving show I have seen in a long time.

There is an entire room of the flat, large portraits for which this Abstract Expressionist is, paradoxically, best known. These include two versions of the 9-year-old, dark-

eyed boy with the head-scarf-wearing, blankly staring woman, “The Artist and his Mother,” that use his characteristic palette of chocolate brown, petrol blue, Chinese orange, and pink-mauve.

But as he was finishing these in the late 1930s and ’40s he was also making his exquisitely complicated drawings and painting abstract biomorphic forms, sometimes hard-edged, sometimes rendered with thinned washes of paint. Some of them look as though he’s spread a veil of color over the picture plane and cut shapes in it, through which are revealed the odd things going on underneath. Strange, that a single artist was painting these accom-

plished realist works and such radical abstracts at the same time.

There was a brief blissful period—starting in 1941 with his marriage to Agnes Magruder (“Mougouch”) and then the birth of his two daughters—when he flirted with Surrealism but worked outside, in the landscape. The epitome of this is the Tate’s own 1943 masterpiece, “Waterfall.”

But in 1948, this giant personality was overwhelmed by cancer, clinical depression and serious injuries in a car crash; and with a scrawled note “Goodbye My Loveds,” Gorky hanged himself. —Paul Levy

Until May 3

www.tate.org.uk



Arshile Gorky's 'Waterfall' (1943).

‘Jerusalem’ brings out England’s warrior spirits



The cast of ‘Jerusalem.’

LONDON: In the opening scene of “Jerusalem,” a young woman sings the hymn bearing the same name, her sweet voice urging the founding of a kind of heaven on earth, or Jerusalem, in England’s “green and pleasant land.”

Her rendition of England’s unofficial anthem is broken by the deafening blast of dance music from a mobile home in the woods, where the rabble-rousing Johnny “Rooster” Byron is throwing a late-night rave for his misfit friends.

This is a play about England, and Byron is its hero—a middle-aged drug dealer and drunk who has been living in the woods illegally for 27 years. When two council officials arrive the next morning to paste a final eviction notice on his door, Byron and his woodland tribe are set on a collision course with petty officialdom.

Mark Rylance is breathtaking as Byron, evincing a kind of ancient tribal spirit as he swigs vodka, spins fantasies and plots his revolt against the 1,800 homeowners who’ve signed a petition supporting his eviction. Their suburban sprawl is encroaching on his wild idyll, and he rails against their dull, paved order, charging his ragtag band to run riot until the “whole plain of Wiltshire dances to our misguided rule.”

The production more than lives up to the rave reviews it won after opening at the Royal Court last summer. The playwright, Jez Butterworth, has skewered the tedium of suburbia in past plays, and takes the theme further here, enlisting a wild man of the woods to summon the misty glades and warrior spirits still lurking in the heart of modern England. —Jeanne Whalen

Until April 24

www.apollo-theatre.co.uk

A tribute to man’s best friend

BRITAIN LEADS the pack in Bonhams’s dog sale in New York on Tuesday, a collector event dedicated each year to man’s best friend.

A special attraction this time around will be a leather and brass dog collar that belonged to Victorian author Charles Dickens (1812–70). Dickens kept a colony of well-loved dogs at his summer house, Gad’s Hill Place in Kent.

Collecting

MARGARET STUDER

In a letter from 1868, Dickens is quoted in the catalog as writing affectionately of his doggy return from America, “When I drove into the stableyard, Linda (the St. Bernard) was greatly excited, weeping profusely, and throwing herself on her back that she might caress my foot with her great forepaws.” The large collar, which is inscribed “C. Dickens Esq.,” is set to fetch \$4,000–\$6,000 (€2,902–€4,352).

Otherwise, 19th-century and early-20th-century paintings dominate the sale—a Golden Age for British animal painting. “Particularly in the 19th century, painting dogs was a very British thing,” says Peter Rees, Bonhams director of 19th-century painting.

Queen Victoria, a dog lover, was a major influence in setting that century’s dog-art fashion. One of her famous canines was a King Charles spaniel called “Dash.” As a present for Queen Victoria’s 17th birthday, her mother commissioned a portrait of the spaniel by famed animal painter Edwin Landseer. In the sale will be a portrait of a spaniel with a bushy, wagging tail by Landseer (1802–73) which is estimated at \$40,000–\$60,000.

The lead painting in the sale will be “The Bitchpack of the Meath Foxhounds” (1896), a large painting of relaxing foxhounds by Britain’s John Emms (estimate \$500,000–\$700,000). Emms holds the record for a dog painting at \$842,250 in February 2006 for his “The New Forest Hounds” (1898).

There are 201 lots in the sale as Bonhams strives for a cross-section of buyer interest. “Buyers like pictures of their breed,” Mr. Rees says. So there are pictures ranging from Greyhounds to Pekingese.

At the preview Sunday, a doggie brunch known as “Barkfest” will allow dogs to view the pictures with their masters. Bonhams spokeswoman Staci Smith says, “little doggie treats” will be served.



A dog collar owned by British author Charles Dickens. Estimate: \$4,000–\$6,000.

Courtesy of Bonhams

Sailing against conventional wisdom

Author Gavin Menzies is determined to prove that Minoans discovered the New World 4,000 years ago

BY DALYA ALBERGE

IT TAKES A brave soul to rewrite history by sailing against current thought. More than 500 years after Christopher Columbus “discovered” America, another seaman is doing just that, entering previously uncharted academic waters with claims that other “Europeans”—the Minoans—got there first, thousands of years earlier.

Gavin Menzies, 72 years old, is drawing on his experience as a former British Royal Navy submarine commander to prove in a book he is writing that the Minoans were such supreme seafarers that they crossed an ocean and discovered the New World 4,000 years ago.

Eight years after he made controversial headlines with his first American history book, “1421: The Year China Discovered America,” which sold more than a million copies in 130 countries, he may spark debate anew by claiming that the Bronze Age civilization of Crete, which built magnificent palaces, devised systems of writing and developed a trading empire, got rich on vast quantities of copper mined in America.

Transworld Publishers undertook his first book, in which he claimed that a Chinese eunuch led a fleet of junks to America 71 years before Columbus. The book led to invitations to lecture at universities including Harvard, to an honorary professorship at Yunnan University in China, to the sale of film rights to Sky Motion Pictures and to HarperCollins snapping up the sequel in 2008, “1434: The Year a Magnificent Chinese Fleet Sailed to Italy and Ignited the Renaissance.”

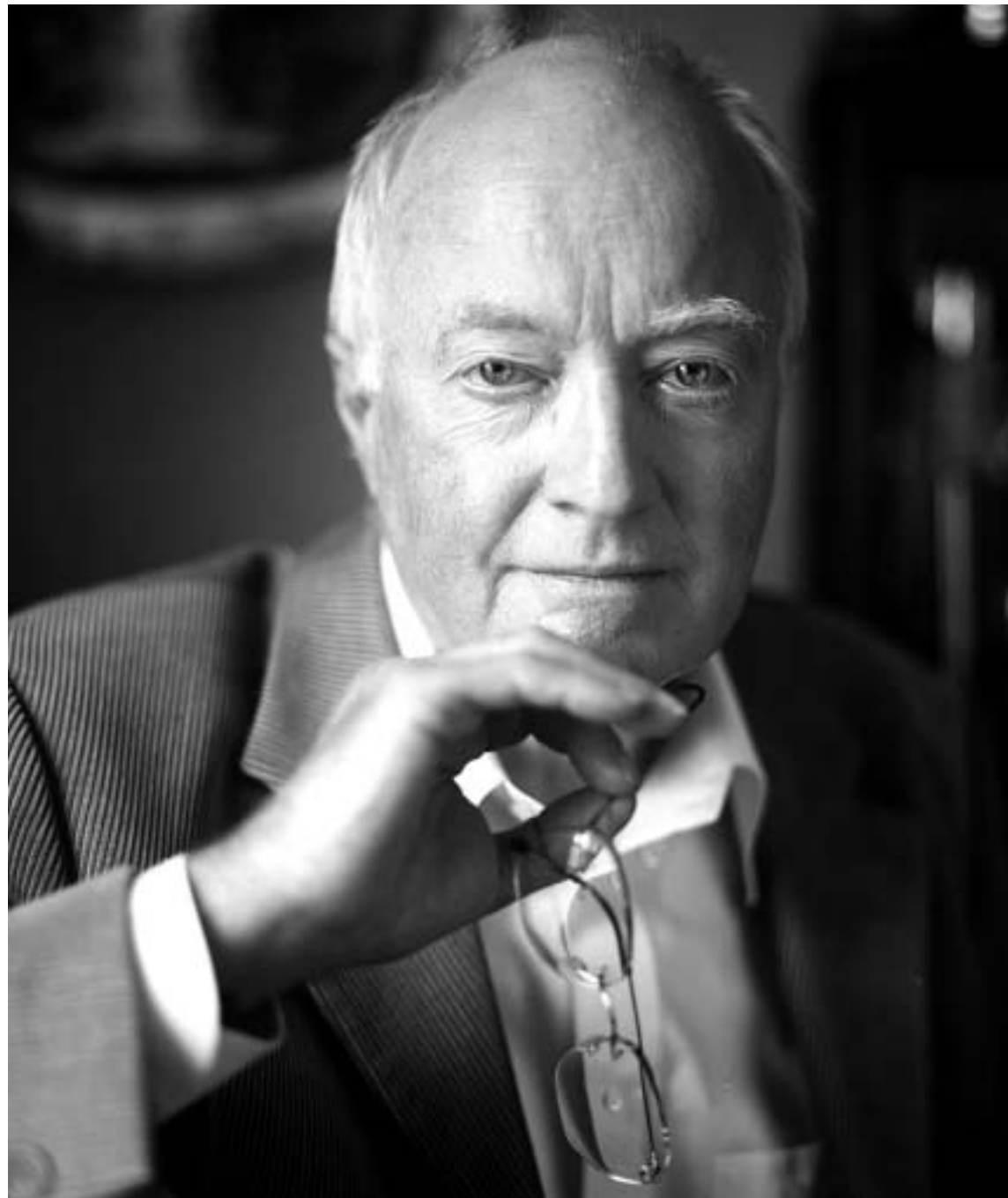
“Revisionist history tends to sell exceptionally well,” says Luigi Bonomi, a leading literary agent who represents Mr. Menzies. “There is a huge audience eager to read new things about history.”

Criticism ensued, with several academics dismissing Mr. Menzies’ earlier books as fiction masquerading as history.

As he did back then, Mr. Menzies remains unwavering from his beliefs. He claims his latest evidence for his book, which doesn’t have a publishing date or a title yet, solves the mystery of which ancient civilization mined thousands of copper mines around Lake Superior on the Canadian-American border as early as 2,200 B.C., leaving behind thousands of knives, harpoons and other objects.

Vessels depicted in Minoan frescoes and the remains of one of them—the Uluburun wreck found on the Mediterranean seabed in 1982 with a cargo of copper ingots and artifacts from seven different civilizations—have convinced him that their ships were advanced enough for ocean travel. The frescoes and the wreck’s surviving fragments, he claims, gave him enough detail to work out the number of rowers, the type and efficiency of sails and the sailing capacity.

“We can make accurate esti-



Above, Gavin Menzies at home in London; left, a Bronze Age wall painting of Minoan ships at Akrotiri on Thera, an island off the coast of Greece.

mates of the length, width and draught of the ships and hence their seagoing capability,” he explains in a phone interview from his home in central London, sounding resolute. “The ships could sail into the wind as well as before it, and lower sail very quickly in the event of an unexpected squall.”

He also claims to have DNA proof that the Minoans carried a

rare gene found today among Native Americans around Lake Superior and scientific tests matching the region’s “uniquely pure” copper to the Uluburun ingots. Pointing to evidence of indigenous American plants being transported to other civilizations—including nicotine traces found in ancient Egyptian mummies and maize-cobs carved on their temples—he says that the

Egyptians with their flimsy vessels weren’t great seafarers and that only the Minoans, with whom they traded, could have undertaken trans-Atlantic travel.

One would expect that if the Minoans carried tobacco from the Americas to Egypt, evidence of American tobacco should exist around Crete. “There is such evidence in the form of a tobacco bee-

tle found buried beneath the 1450 B.C. volcanic ash of a merchant’s house in Akrotiri, the Minoan town...This tobacco beetle, *Lasioderma Serricornis*, was indigenous to the Americas. It should be remembered tobacco didn’t grow in Europe in 1450 B.C.,” Mr. Menzies says.

Despite his confidence, Mr. Menzies is bracing himself for ill-winds and a storm over his new theories. Although he has yet to finish his Minoan book, some academics are again skeptical ahead of having a chance to read the evidence.

Although Professor Carl Johannessen, professor emeritus at the University of Oregon and co-author of “World Trade and Biological Exchanges before 1492,” is intrigued by Mr. Menzies’ latest research and applauds his previous efforts as “a powerful search for ancient knowledge,” he says, “I am convinced that the Minoans were not the first or the only sailors crossing the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.”

Meanwhile, Susan Martin, an associate professor of archaeology at Michigan State University who specializes in Lake Superior’s prehistoric archaeology, says, “There is no evidence of any exploration or exploitation of the mineral resources by anyone other than Native American users.”

Professor John Bennet, a Minoan expert at the University of Sheffield, argues that, while it is theoretically possible that Minoans reached America, their ships were too small to carry sufficient supplies and cargo for regular long voyages. And Cemal Pulak, an associate professor at Texas A&M University who led the Uluburun excavation, says that such ambitious seafaring wouldn’t have been feasible. Although the vessels were sturdy, they didn’t have decks to endure storms and rough seas, he explains, adding that the Uluburun copper came from Cyprus.

Undeterred, Mr. Menzies counters that the Minoan ships were three times the size of Columbus’s, that ancient artifacts found at Lake Superior match those from the Uluburun wreck, and that indigenous Americans had no knowledge of mining or smelting copper artifacts.

Rewriting history is easier said than done. Only dictators and Hollywood films do it with ease.

Certainly, Mr. Menzies isn’t the first person to challenge America’s earliest history. The Mormons have claimed that the Jaredite people from the Middle East discovered America 4,000 years ago, and others have argued that Leif Eriksson, the Norse explorer, got there first, half a millennium before Columbus.

Every year since 1934, America has set aside a public holiday to remember Columbus. The Minoans are likely to have to wait a while for their own remembrance day.

—Dalya Alberge is a writer based in London.

Homer Revisited

The tradition of reworking Homer is older than Homer himself. His Iliad and Odyssey were the culmination of an oral-poetry form whose practitioners, using a toolkit of narrative patterns and metrically convenient phrases, tweaked and shuffled the stories in the course of retelling them. Many translators since Homer have also adjusted the tales. Now, taking the practice another step, two novels boldly rewrite stories from the Iliad and the Odyssey and reflect on the nature of storytelling along the way.

Zachary Mason's marvelous "The Lost Books of the Odyssey" purports to be a translation of a "pre-Ptolemaic papyrus" discovered in the Egyptian town of Oxyrhynchus, the real-life site of an ancient trash dump that has yielded many valuable papyri. Mr. Mason says in his preface that the papyrus contains "concise variations on Odysseus's story that omit stock epic formulae in favor of honing a single trope or image down to an extreme of clarity."

Thus the novel unfolds as a constellation of 44 discrete sections, averaging only a few pages each, that revise and recombine images, characters and

episodes from the original. The result is one of the most idiosyncratic versions yet of Odysseus's 10-year journey home to the island of Ithaca after the Trojan War, an epic voyage that—in the traditional telling—sees him plunged into countless adventures while his wife, Penelope, fends off dozens of suitors, refusing to believe that her beloved is dead.

Mr. Mason's philological conceit about the papyrus discovery largely recedes, except in footnotes that gloss minor characters with scholarly caution ("the narrator of this story is apparently Eumaios . . ."), but a game-playing self-consciousness about form persists. Sometimes the games

are literal: One chapter explains that the Iliad and the Odyssey are manuals of chess strategy, the original significance of their texts having been obscured by stylistic flourishes and elaboration. Elsewhere we're informed that the Odyssey is a story, studied with troubles for its hero, that the wounded cyclops told himself after a bloody run-in with Odysseus.

Mr. Mason's clean and engaging prose ensures that his variations on the Odyssey never feel

like sterile experiments. He shifts tone nimbly, as in this comic and solemn description of Achilles, frantically reckless with the knowledge of his invulnerability:

"When he was drunk Achilles would take his knife and try to pierce his hand or, if he was very drunk, his heart, and thereby were the delicate blades of many daggers broken."

As the tales from "the lost books" accumulate, the effect is both poignant and unsettling—there is a repetitive fever-dream

The Lost Books of the Odyssey

By Zachary Mason
(Jonathan Cape, 240 pages, £12.99)

Ransom

By David Malouf
(Chatto & Windus, 240 pages, £14)

effect as Odysseus returns home over and over, sometimes greeted by Penelope, sometimes not. The stories' wonderful variety reflects the cunning, resourceful character of Odysseus himself; it is no coincidence that his signature epithet in Greek, "polytropos"—"much-turning, versatile, wily"—shares a root with the English "trope."

Where Mr. Mason's approach is kaleidoscopic, David Malouf's in "Ransom" is microscopic. Zooming in on a few dozen lines from the Iliad, he expands on a climactic scene during the siege

of Troy: the meeting between Priam, King of Troy, and Achilles, the killer of Priam's favorite son, Hector. Each of the preceding nine days, Achilles, inconsolable over the death in battle of his closest friend, Patroclus, has dragged Hector's body behind his chariot around Patroclus's tomb. Priam goes to the Greek camp hoping to buy back the corpse so that it can be properly buried. Swayed by Priam's invocations of filial love, Achilles relents.

The novel builds to their encounter with vivid scenes of the principals' childhoods and of Priam's long journey to the enemy camp. Mr. Malouf, in his sharpest departure from

Homer, introduces a wholly new character, a mule driver named Somax, as Priam's chauffeur. (In the canonical version Priam travels alone.) On their trip, Somax schools the king—who seems as "innocent of the world as a naked newborn babe"—in humble pleasures, coaxing him to shed royal formality enough to dip his feet in a cold stream and to try humble fare such as griddlecakes. These snapshots give Priam's character a warmth and immediacy that reflects Mr. Mal-

ouf's skill for animating historical figures—his eight earlier novels include one narrated by Ovid. But the addition of the earthy episode with Somax is not entirely successful: It diminishes somewhat the stark pathos of Priam's body-retrieval mission.

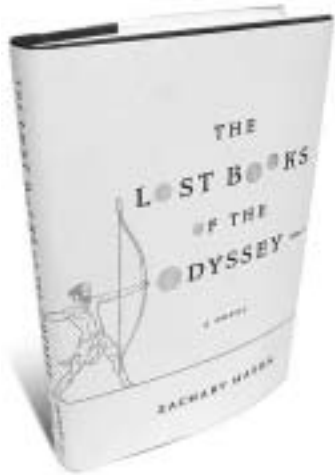
Still, the final scenes nicely capture the volatile intimacy that

develops between Achilles and Priam. They share a meal, and "though all their talk was of peace," Priam sees "the whole terrible machinery of the man" in the working of Achilles' "tight jaw."

In the Iliad, Priam's ransoming of his son's corpse is presented as the fulfillment of Zeus's plans. Mr.

Malouf recasts the undertaking as essentially Priam's idea, a "chance to break free of the obligation of being always the hero." But there are limits, Mr. Malouf suggests, to how much narrative novelty will be tolerated: When Somax recounts how he was the king's companion for a day, nobody believes him. "Great kings," after all, surely wouldn't "dabble their feet in icy streams."

Mr. Farrington is on the editorial staff of *The New Yorker*.



A Bank on the Brink

Once upon time, there was a regional bank that took deposits and offered checking accounts. Over the years it grew into a financial-services giant. Then, to juice earnings, it traded the firm's own money—"proprietary trading as it was called." Trouble ensues.

That of-the-moment story—U.S. President Barack Obama recently proposed a ban on banks' proprietary-trading operations—propels "Union Atlantic," Adam Haslett's debut novel about an overleveraged banking

Union Atlantic

By Adam Haslett
(Nan A. Talese, 304 pages, \$26)

behemoth struggling to stay afloat. But "Union Atlantic" is more than a financial page-turner. It is an ambitious literary work, filled with compelling characters, evocative prose and finely drawn social portraiture.

At the heart of the story are four characters whose lives intertwine—and sometimes collide spectacularly. There is Doug Fanning, a hard-charging financier with a crooked moral compass; his neighbor Charlotte Graves, a lonely intellectual descending into dementia; her brother, Henry

Graves, the president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York; and Nate Fuller, a slacker teen exploring his sexual leanings.

Befitting an early 21st-century novel, there is also a McMansion. Located in a leafy Boston suburb, the house is a mammoth bachelor pad filled with little more than flat-screen televisions and empty beer bottles. It is occupied, of course, by Fanning, the handsome nouveau-riche banker. After serving as a Navy officer in the Persian Gulf, Fanning lands a job at Union Atlantic bank and hustles his way to the top. Living next door is Charlotte, a retired history teacher whose dilapidated house is crammed with overstuffed bookcases. With "an aesthetic revulsion," she detests Fanning and his "steroidal offense" of a house, which sits on land that her grandfather had donated to the town. She files a lawsuit to oust him.

Her brother, the New York Fed chief, finds himself in a peculiar position: Henry is wrestling with the effects of Charlotte's mental decline—most prominently her obsession with the Fanning house—even as he is trying to save Fanning's bank from an implosion that might do untold damage on Wall Street. Not that Henry has much sympathy for fat-cat bankers. While putting out a smaller

financial fire early in the book, he describes an executive as "the kind of Business Roundtable chump who spent his lunchtime decrying government intrusion and now found himself on a cell phone in the middle of the night pleading with the government to save him."

Such passages give "Union Atlantic" a ripped-from-the-headlines feel, though Mr. Haslett clearly cares as much about the interactions of his characters as the machinations of the banking system.

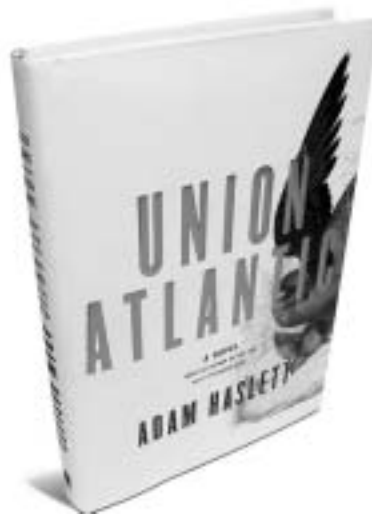
In the case of Union Atlantic, the cause of its vulnerability is a big wrong-way bet made on the Japanese stock market. Mr. Haslett paints an amusing caricature of the rogue trader responsible for the ill-fated trade: "A Holy Cross grad, McTeague had grown up in Worcester and learned the business with a specialist on the floor of the NYSE. A rabid Bruins fan,

his conversation didn't extend much beyond hockey and derivatives. Twenty-eight and itching to make a killing."

Die-hard literary realists might yearn for problems caused by subprime mortgages instead

of Asian equities, but the ultimate problem is the same. "Let me start by saying," Henry Graves tells the bank's chairman, "that if you or your board is under the impression that Union Atlantic is too big to fail, you're mistaken."

The novel is not without its weak moments. There are contrived plot points, as when Nate, the troubled high-school student, emerges as both Charlotte's pupil and Fanning's boy toy. And the ending feels hurried in its rush to tie up all the sprawling narratives. That's disappointing, because Mr. Haslett, whose 2002 short-story collection, "You Are



Not a Stranger Here," was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, knows how to hold a reader's attention.

In "Union Atlantic" he riffs skillfully on New England society, for instance, in which a wedding is "all high tents and high Episcopal good form, from the Bloody Marys to the starched collars to the understated, almost humble self-satisfaction of the father's toast." The currency behind routine credit-card purchases, Mr. Haslett notes, involves money that "until that moment had never appeared on a balance sheet or been deposited with a bank, that was nothing but a permission for indebtedness, the final improvisation in a long chain of governed promises."

Nightstands are already stacked with nonfiction accounts of our recent gilded age and the financial crisis that ended it. "Union Atlantic" is the first serious fictional portrait of the bailout era—in which the unbridled risk-taking of our banking institutions bumped up against powerful government officials trying to keep the system afloat. Decades from now, this fine novel will help readers understand the period we've just been through.

Mr. Lattman covers private equity for *The Journal*.

time off

Amsterdam

art

"Paul Gauguin: The Breakthrough into Modernity" examines 11 lithographs printed on brilliant yellow paper, the first set of prints by the French artist.

Van Gogh Museum
Feb. 19-June 6
☎ 31-20-5705-200
www.vangoghmuseum.nl

Basel

art

"Albert Müller—Drawings, Paintings, Sculptures and Prints" shows work by the artist, a major figure in the Swiss Expressionist movement.

Kunstmuseum Basel
Until May 9
☎ 41-61-206-6262
www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch

Barcelona

art

"Murals" presents work by 10 artists from West Africa, Mexico, the U.S. and Europe, who paint directly onto walls, including graffiti by UTRcrew and murals by Lothar Götz.

Fundació Joan Miró
Feb. 19-June 6
☎ 34-934 439 470
fundacionmiro-bcn.org

Berlin

art

"Caricatures from the Cold War: OS-KAR vs. Erich Schmitt" examines the work of two German artists illustrating the East-West confrontation and its influences on everyday life in Berlin.

Märkisches Museum
Until March 14
☎ 49-30-24-0021-62
www.stadtmuseum.de

Brussels

art

"El Greco—Domenikos Theotokopoulos 1900" displays more than 40 works by the architect, painter and sculptor, including his final series of 'Apostles,' 'The Disrobing of Christ' and 'The Tears of Saint Peter.'

Palais des Beaux Arts
Until May 9
☎ 32-2-5078-200
www.bozar.be

Dusseldorf

photography

"Robert Mapplethorpe" offers a retrospective of 150 photographs by the American photographer, including early Polaroids.

NRW-Forum Düsseldorf
Until Aug. 15
☎ 49-2118-9266-90
www.nrw-forum.de

Florence

art

"Gerhard Richter and the Disappearance of the Image in Contemporary Art" showcases works by the German artist, alongside art by other contemporary artists.

Centro di Cultura Contemporanea Palazzo Strozzi
☎ 39-055-2776-461
Feb. 20-April 25
www.palazzostrozzi.org

Frankfurt

art

"Georges Seurat: Figure in Space" presents 60 paintings, oil studies and drawings by the French Neo-Impres-



Toledo, Museo de Santa Cruz (deposito de la Parroquia de San Nicola de Bari)

sionist, examining his approach to the human figure in landscapes.

Schirn Kunsthalle
Until May 9
☎ 49-6929-9882-0
www.schirn-kunsthalle.de

Geneva

ceramics

"An Ocean Odyssey, the Adventure of Chinese Ceramics" exhibits a selection of Chinese ceramics alongside navigational instruments, engravings, sculptures and models of boats.

Fondation Baur Musée des Arts d'Extreme-Orient
Feb. 19-Aug. 1
☎ 41-22-7043-282
www.fondation-baur.ch

Glasgow

art

"Amber Treasures from Poland" features a selection of amber artefacts from the Polish national collection, showcasing both natural history and European craftsmanship.

The Hunterian Art Gallery
Until April 17
☎ 44-141-3305-431
www.hunterian.gla.ac.uk

London

festival

"Chinese New Year Festival"—London's West End will welcome the year of the tiger with celebratory firecrackers, music, acrobats and dragons.

Trafalgar Square

Feb. 21
☎ 44-20-7851-6686
www.chinatownchinese.co.uk

art

"Brit Insurance Designs Awards of the Year" showcases projects nominated by industry experts in seven categories: architecture, fashion, furniture, graphics, interactive, product and transport.

Design Museum
Until June 6
☎ 44-87-0833-9955
www.designmuseum.org

photography

"Irving Penn Portraits" shows more than 120 prints by the American photographer, including images of Truman Capote, Christian Dior, Duke Ellington, Alfred Hitchcock, Al Pacino, Edith Piaf and Pablo Picasso.

National Portrait Gallery
Feb. 18-June 6
☎ 44-20-7306-0055
www.npg.org.uk

Madrid

art

"Thomas Schütte: Hindsight" is a retrospective of work by the German contemporary sculptor and architectural designer.

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia
☎ 34-91-7741-000
Feb. 17-May 17
www.museoreinasofia.es

Manchester

art

"Facing East: Recent Works from China, India and Japan" exhibits provocative contemporary paintings and sculptures, including a lifesize baby elephant with skin made entirely of bindis and a large fiberglass head by Ravinder Reddy.

Manchester Art Gallery
Until April 11
☎ 44-161 235 8888
www.manchestergalleries.org

Paris

art

"Elaine Sturtevant: The Razzle Dazzle of Thinking" highlights the career of the American conceptual artist.

Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris
Until April 25
☎ 33-1-5367-4000
www.paris.fr

art

"From Watteau to De-gas" presents 30 French 18th- to 19th-century drawings from Dutch collector Frederik Johannes Lugt.

Instituut Neerlandais
Until April 11
☎ 33-1-5359-1240
www.instituut-neerlandais.com

Rotterdam

art

"Ritsue Mishima, Frozen Garden/Fruits of Fire" displays more than 30 glass objects created by the Japanese artist, presented in a specially constructed winter garden within the museum's walls.

Museum Boijmans van Beuningen
Until May 30
☎ 31-10-4419-400
www.boijmans.nl

Vienna

art

"Prince Eugene—General Philosopher and Art Lover" presents the art collection of Prince Eugene of Savoy, including paintings, copper engravings, incunabula, illuminated manuscripts and books.

Lower Belvedere and Orangery
Until June 6
☎ 43-1-7955-70
www.belvedere.at

Zurich

ethnology

"Mexiko-Teotihuacan: The Mysterious City of Pyramids" shows artefacts from the Aztec civilization, including murals, clay vessels, stone sculptures and jewelry.

Museum Rietberg
Feb. 21-May 30
☎ 41-44-2063-131
www.stadt-zuerich.ch

Source: ArtBase Global Arts News Service, WSJE research.



Chen Lei. Courtesy the Frank Cohen Collection