FRIDAY-SUNDAY, MAY 28-30, 2010

WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE

STEVE! IS IT TRUE THIS FILM WAS INSPIRED BY A FRENCH COMIC BOOK?

THAT'S RIGHT, SUGAR!

Wine: A fine English sparkle | Golf: Teeing off with a crocodile

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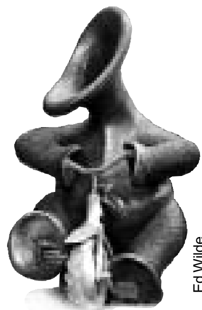

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WEEKEND JOURNAL.
EUROPE

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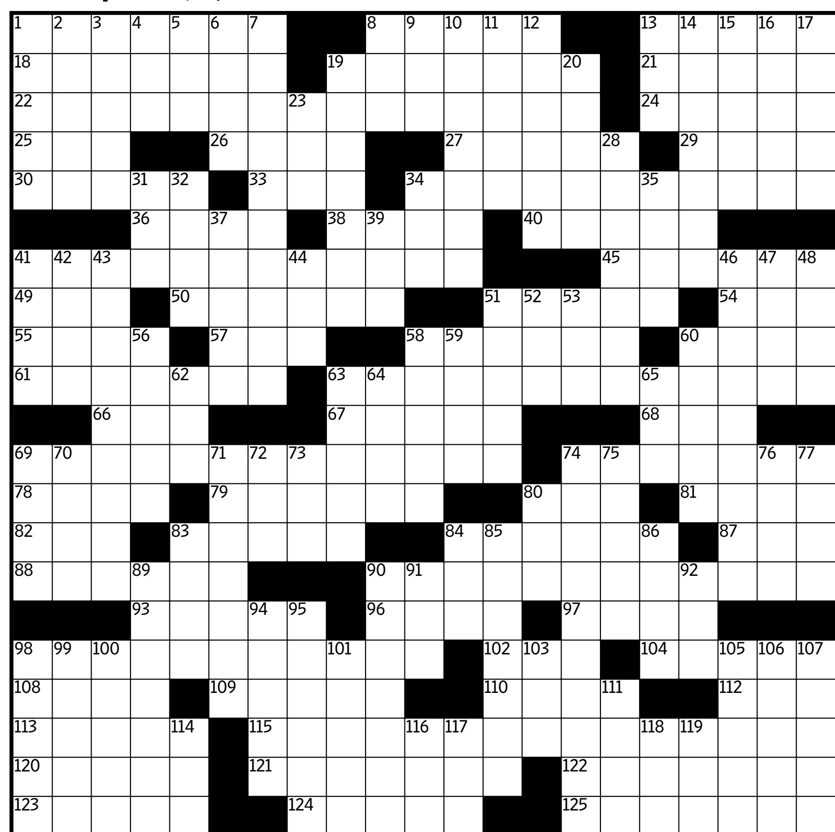

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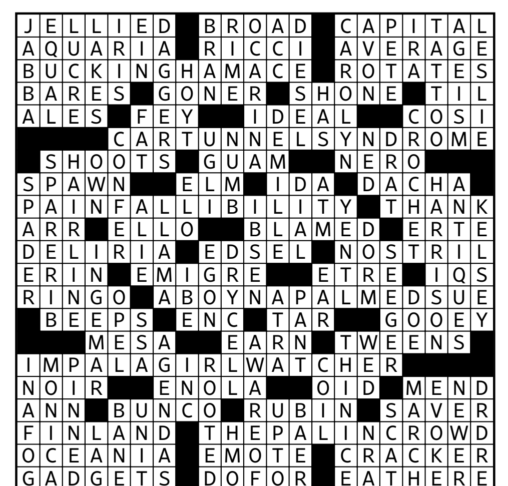
Last Week's Solution



❖ Profile

Platel's bold dance moves

By Sarah Frater

Ghent, Belgium

THE PARADOX OF contemporary dance is that while we want it to reflect modern themes, we prefer it to use conventional means. We expect choreographers to examine political chaos and psychological angst, but we'd rather their work looked orderly, with a clear choreographic narrative and dancers with recognizable skill. We also like them neatly groomed, and sets and costumes that are nicely designed. Even a dancemaker as uncompromising as the late Pina Bausch often tempered her challenging themes with production gloss.

In the latest piece for his troupe Les Ballets C de la B, Belgian director/dancemaker Alain Platel eschews even this. "Out of Context—for Pina" is a 70-minute pure dance work for nine performers on an empty stage. There are no sets, no costumes, no music and no narrative. Lighting is grungy and events random. The dancers emerge from the audience and strip to their underwear before moving in a style that evokes spasms, convulsions and tics. Even Platel fans may find it unpalatable, next to his richly genre-blending works like "Pitie" (2008), and "Wolf" (2003), which both mixed opera, dance, circus, Bach, Mozart and burlesque, and in the case of "Wolf," 14 dogs sniffing and roaming the stage.

"Out of Context" is halfway through an extensive European tour, and you wonder how audiences are responding. "Not all the critics like it," smiles Mr. Platel. "But the aim is not to shock. For me it's about dance, and dance is a language to express deeper feelings. It can be joy, or distress, or pain—the aim is to express these things in a language that isn't verbal."

But the language of "Out of Context" is unsettling. "It expresses sentiments in a particular way," says Mr. Platel. "It is not possible to show passions in the [same] way as 100 years ago. In art, you cannot paint a piece of fruit as it was in 1910. You have to find new means to express how we feel. I try to give a language to what is happening in the world."

The self-taught 50-something-year-old is sitting in an office in his company's new studio in southwestern Ghent, a picturesque town in Belgium. It is a modern structure surrounded by historic buildings, and you cannot avoid seeing the architectural contrast echoed in Mr. Platel's relationship to the dance establishment—bold intervention in a conventional realm.

Mr. Platel is currently busy rehearsing his next work "Gardenia." Featuring eight transvestites and transsexuals, it's described by the company as a "play about cherished or lost illusions" and opens in June in Ghent, a city that has long been Mr. Platel's home. It's where he started the grandly named Les Ballets de Contemporaine de la Belgique—soon shortened to C de la B—in 1984 almost by accident with his sister and a friend. Teaching by day, they created small theater productions in their spare time. The organizer of an arts festival saw one of their shows and asked them to take part. One small project led to the next, with the breakthrough coming in 1993, when Mr. Platel's troupe was performing in Amsterdam.

Mr. Platel is quick to acknowledge those who influenced him. "Pina Bausch is the mother of all contemporary choreography," he says of the German dance maker who died unexpectedly last June. "Even those [who] oppose her, are influenced by her. What she did was ask the dancers questions and use their answers as material for performance. Her mix of speech and gesture drawn from the dancers was a revelation."

Mr. Platel's emergence as a dancemaker in the 1980s coincided with a remarkably creative time in Belgian choreography. As well as Mr. Platel himself, there was also Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, Jan Fabre and Wim Wanderkeybus. Mr. Platel thinks part of the reason is that new theaters were being built and they needed new productions to program. "They asked young theater and dancemakers to work for them. There was no money, so if you wanted to do it, you had to be passionate. And we had no fathers to kill—[choreographer Maurice] Béjart had left, and we had to create our own style."

It is often remarked that the soft-spoken Mr. Platel is nothing like his on-stage creations, which can be a coruscating, seemingly chaotic mix of song, slapstick, and society's outsiders. Gentle in manner and neat in dress, he quietly explains his work while patting his dog, a silky-haired collie. "He stayed on after 'Wolf,'" Mr. Platel says.

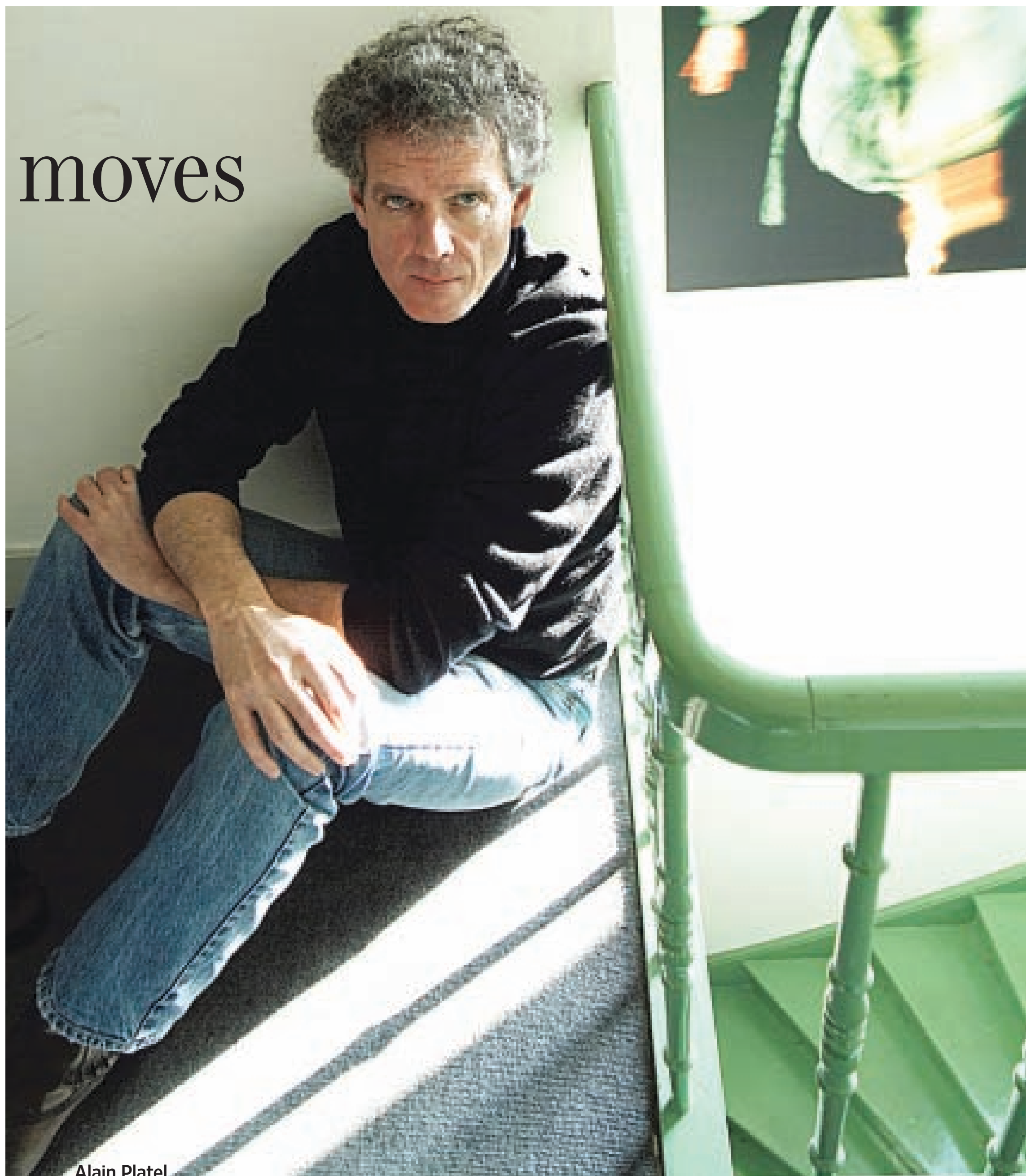
His method involves long rehearsals and open-ended improvisation sessions, although this isn't a feature of the staged work. "Everything is very set," explains Mr. Platel, confounding the impression of choreographic happenstance. "A complicated balance between all the elements—dance, song, speech, music, designs—and they have to be sorted out," he says. "At a certain point you see what you want in the studio, and you fix it for the stage. It's using things that are normally considered worthless. I call it bastard dance—extreme movements expressing emotional pain."

This approach has been widely emulated, not least by members of Mr. Platel's own company, which is run as a collective and encourages the dancers to create their own work, both on their own and within the troupe. Several have done so with considerable success, notably Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui whose "Zero Degrees" with Akram Khan has been universally praised. Mr. Platel himself has developed a loyal audience, although the critics haven't been as appreciative. In particular, the apparent lack of schooling in his dancers, his drawing on their ideas for steps rather than exclusively originating his own, and the use of a movement style that invokes physical disability, have riled many.

Mr. Platel's response is characteristically polite. "The intention was never to imitate handicapped people," says Mr. Platel, a former educationalist who worked with disabled children. "I use very skilled dancers, who've often had classical ballet training. It's very important to keep classical ballet as an art form, but I don't think it is the best way of expressing contemporary themes. Some people can, but I cannot. [Today's artists] have to invent a new dramaturgy and develop a language to express feelings."

"Out of Context" is on tour in Europe, go to www.lesballetscdelab.be for tour dates.

—Sarah Frater is a writer based in London.



Alain Platel

Ellen Goovaerts

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Neville Lockhart for The Wall Street Journal (T); The Grand (B)

Where to eat at the Cup

Cape Town's burgeoning restaurant scene reflects the city's many cultures

By Shivani Vora

Cape Town, South Africa

PEOPLE COME TO Cape Town for its fine beaches and waterfront—they have since the 1600s, when the Dutch established it as a watering stopover for ships trading with the East. They come for the sports: The city will host eight World Cup matches this June. They come for the history, to see Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela spent most of his imprisonment.

But few visitors come for the food.

Daniela Bonanno, who works here for New York-based custom-vacation company Absolute Travel, thinks that may change. A spurt of high-caliber restaurants has transformed the dining scene, she says. Where the top places once offered French cooking, often heavy and meat-based, now chefs are training abroad, offering a wide variety of international influences while keeping ingredients local.

As in places like London and New York, the dining landscape represents a confetti of global cuisines reflecting the many cultures of Cape Town's almost three million people. Given the oceanfront setting, seafood plays a big role in menus, as do local meats such as ostrich, karoo lamb and springbok, an antelope variety that's the national animal. Peri-peri, a piquant red chili, is also common as a side sauce or flavor addition.

Peak tourist season is during South Africa's summer from November through March, and although temperatures usually don't exceed around 30 degrees Celsius, there can be some exceptionally hot days, especially in January. The slow season is the winter months of May through August. The average daytime temperature is mild at around 13 degrees, but July and August are the height of rainy season, when many days can be wet and windy. Cape Town doesn't get big crowds during September, October, March and April, and the sunny days with temperatures around 18 degrees make these ideal visiting months.

Several weeks ago—Cape Town's fall—my husband and I tried five restaurants, many of them opened in the past few years, which Capetonians said would give us an idea of their hometown's cuisine.

Codfather

This place in the Camps Bay area, a chic South Beach equivalent full of trendy eateries and bars, got its start as a fish store in Johannesburg. "Customers began asking if the store could cook the fish they picked," says owner Skippy Shaked. Diners still get to select their fish from a large case—usually including several prawn types such as the prized tiger, crayfish, the South African version of lobster, and filets of the codlike kingklip and Cape salmon from the restaurant's own fisheries. The fish is grilled only with a touch of fish spice and served with sauces including peri-peri and sweet chili apricot on a bed of fries and Asian-style stir-fried vegetables. Make sure to see the sunset.

maze

Gordon Ramsay, the feisty task-master of reality-television show Hell's Kitchen, runs this year-old spot at the One&Only hotel. Each of the seven restaurants of this name around the world has a distinct menu—including, in Cape Town, Namibian oysters, Mozambican langoustines and grilled eland, another South African antelope. The towering space also has an open pastry kitchen turning out desserts such as malva pudding, a kind of caramelized cake dating back to the days of Dutch rule. The 5,000-bottle cellar claims to be one of the largest in the country—heavy on South African wines, of course.

Bizerca Bistro

After a decade in Australia's Blue Mountains, Cyrillia Deslandes returned home to South Africa and brought along her husband Laurent, from France's Loire Valley, as chef. In late 2007, the duo opened this restaurant. Mr. Deslandes applies French techniques to local ingredients. While some dishes, like the braised farm pig trotter, are always available, a half-dozen different starters and four entrees are added each day, usually new recipes. The white mus-

Top, beach seating at the Grand; above, the restaurant's shrimp tempura starter.

One & Only Cape Town (2)

Above, interior of restaurant maze; at right, marinated beetroot, buffalo ridge ricotta and pine nuts with a Cabernet Sauvignon dressing served at maze.

sels in a beurre-blanc sauce from Saldanha Bay on South Africa's west coast are so meaty they could be mistaken for scallops. A seared steak comes from a farm in the north, and a Provençal fish soup is rich with chunks of local crustaceans. Mr. Deslandes also regularly gives springbok filet, veal shoulder and karoo lamb stew a French treatment.

Bukhara

In the 19th century, Indians were brought to South Africa to work as indentured servants, and today they're one of the country's prominent ethnic groups. There are four Bukhara restaurants throughout South Africa; we visited the original in Cape Town's Central Business District, which has a long, glass-walled kitchen and offers all the standard North Indian dishes. Many Indian eateries don't do beef justice since it's forbidden in Hinduism, but here the beef pudina marinated in mint uses South African beef, often likened in quality to the highly regarded Argentine meat.

The Grand Café & Beach

In an airy converted beachfront warehouse overlooking Table Bay, the restaurant's seating spills out onto a large terrace and the beach itself. A chic set packs it every night. Owner Sue Main is a globetrotter and her menu reflects that: The prawn tempura is via Japan, the crispy pizzas topped with thin slices of local parma ham are inspired by Italy, steak béarnaise is from Paris, and the Waldorf salad comes from the U.S. As for the crayfish sandwich—Cape Town's answer to the New England lobster roll—Ms. Main cuts the meat into small pieces (it's almost always served whole), mixes it with homemade mayonnaise and tucks it into a soft bun.

—Shivani Vora is a writer based in New York.

▶ See a slideshow of the restaurants at **WSJ.com/Lifestyle**.

WHERE TO STAY:

One&Only Cape Town
This 131-room, supremely luxurious hotel with a contemporary style opened last year just off the waterfront. Rates per night start at €605.
www.oneandonlyresorts.com

Cape Grace
The 120-room grand dame of Cape Town's luxury accommodation, on the waterfront and decorated in a traditional Cape Malay style, was refashioned in December 2008. Rates start at €435.
www.capegrace.com

De Waterkant Village
Amid cobblestone streets in a historic neighborhood between the waterfront and center area, this collection of self-service cottages, apartments and bed-and-breakfast-style rooms has affordable, well-appointed accommodation.
Rates start at €100.
www.dewaterkant.com

THE FIVE RESTAURANTS:

Codfather
37 The Drive, Camps Bay.
About €40 a person.
☎ 27(0)21-438-0782

The Grand Café & Beach
Haul Road, off Beach Road, Granger Bay. About €30 a person.
☎ 27(0)21-425-0551
www.thegrand.co.za

maze
One&Only Cape Town, Dock Road, Victoria & Alfred Waterfront.
About €35 a person.
☎ 27(0)21-431-5222

Bizerca Bistro
Jetty Street, Foreshore.
About €30 for two-course meal.
☎ 27(0)21-418-0001
www.bizerca.com

Bukhara
33 Church Street.
About €25 a person.
☎ 27(0)21-424-0000
www.bukhara.com

A fine English sparkle

Wine
WILL LYONS

There are now more vineyards in England than at any time since the Romans withdrew from Britain at the beginning of the fifth century A.D.—416 of them to be precise. According to the English Wine Producers association, Britain now has 3,458 acres under vine, with 116 wineries producing on average two million bottles a year. Most of it is drunk in the U.K., with less than 5% making its way abroad. Ironically, Scandinavia is one of the largest export markets; I raise a smile as it was warring tribes from this part of the world that precipitated the collapse of England's fledging wine industry in the Dark Ages.

Admittedly, it's been a long wait, but there is a growing feeling that when it comes to wine production, England can once again take its seat among Europe's wine-producing elite. We aren't talking about red wine, or the majority of non-sparkling white wines, which are interesting but too often overpriced compared with their international counterparts. What has caught the wine community's eye is the standard of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier achieved in England.

Estates such as Denbies in Surrey, Chapel Down in Kent, Nyetimber and Ridgeview, both in Sussex, are producing bottle-fermented sparkling wine that is beginning to compete with its counterparts across the English Channel in Champagne.

At their best, these estates produce a clean, dry, cool-climate-style sparkling wine noticeable for its delicate fruitiness, lively acidity and floweriness. In short, these are wines that refresh and are best served as an aperitif. Most of the wine production is concentrated around the fruit-growing areas of Kent, Sussex, Essex and Suffolk, as well as the western counties such as Berkshire, Wiltshire, Somerset and Cornwall.

The present English revival started in the early 1950s, when figures such as Lieutenant-Colonel Robert and Mrs. Margaret Gore-Browne planted vineyards at Beaulieu in Hampshire.

But it wasn't until the past decade that the industry really took off on the back of a series of high profile blind-tasting competitions that compared English sparkling wine favorably with Champagne. The most recent one was in March, when Ridgeview's Blanc de Blancs Grosvenor 2006 was awarded a silver medal in Chardonnay du Monde 2010, a competition held in Burgundy that honors the best wines produced from Chardonnay.

Part of the secret lies in the fact that the South Downs of England share the same chalky limestone escarpment as Champagne. Anyone who has visited the hills of the Marne Valley will have been struck by its similarity with England's rolling downs. Given that, it wasn't surprising when a series of press articles emerged a few years back, linking major Champagne houses with vineyards in the south of England. Most notably, Frazer Thompson of Chapel Down Wines, who was reported to be in active discussions with a major Champagne house to sell some of his land in Kent. Nothing ever came of it.

Another factor is England's climate. At a latitude of 50/55 degrees north one could be forgiven for thinking it is too cold for the grapes to ripen. But England benefits firstly from the Gulf Stream, which helps raise the temperature, and the fact that it is surrounded by sea, which helps maintain and moderate temperatures into the autumn. Indeed, it is the weather at the crucial stages of the growing cycle, when the vines are flowering in late June and during the last stages of growth in the autumn, that really matters. Like tennis fans, English wine growers are praying for good weather during the Wimbledon fortnight as well as a dry September. Rain in July is usually welcomed, as it helps replenish much-needed moisture in the ground.

This is exactly what happened in 2009 when the growing season was boosted by a prolonged warm autumn, giving rise to grapes of the highest quality: ripe, very clean and free of botrytis rot.

It is rot and a propensity for early ripening that has influenced the choice of grapes grown, usually German varietals such as Müller-Thurgau, Schönburger, Reichensteiner and Huxelrebe. But as the industry has matured and become more self-confident it has started to plant more fashionable varieties such as Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.

Two estates stand out: Nyetimber and Ridgeview, with either one beating the other, depending on which vintage you choose. Nyetimber has won the approval of the queen, who served it at her golden jubilee celebrations in 2002, and Tony Blair, who served it at the jubilee dinner at Downing Street. What incoming Prime Minister David Cameron serves remains to be seen.

DRINKING NOW

Nyetimber Première Cuvée Blanc de Blancs

Sussex, England

Vintage: **2001**

Price: **about £30 or €35**

Alcohol content: **12%**

Nyetimber has for many vintages outperformed its rivals. The 2001 has plenty of zesty citrus notes, as well as a backbone of minerality and a little creamy extract that one expects from a 100% Chardonnay.

On the road to German auto museums

Rival brands offer roaring race cars, cutting-edge design, amusement-park-style attractions and occasional poetry slams

By J. S. Marcus

Stuttgart, Germany

THE HUSH SHATTERS as a mechanic revs up the engine of a champion 1984 Porsche 911 Carrera 4x4. It's earsplitting business as usual at Porsche's lavish new car museum. In 2009, the company became the latest of Germany's major auto makers to relaunch its headquarters as a tourist destination.

It's now possible to travel across Germany, the birthplace of the automobile, with nothing but cars on the brain and car museums and factory tours on the itinerary.

The museum race began in earnest in 2006 with the opening of Stuttgart's Mercedes-Benz Museum. In buildings designed by leading architects, the museums signal a change in how cars are built and marketed, says Stefan Müller, chief executive officer of ADAC, Germany's century-old auto club. Technology today, he says, "can be copied by the competition rather quickly, so what is becoming more important for car companies is the heritage of the brand."

Wolfsburg, two hours' drive from Berlin, is Volkswagen's company town, and also home to Autostadt, the brand's auto-and-science museum complex. The city has become a magnet for German car buyers, who increasingly like to pick up their cars directly from the factory. Autostadt started out in 2000 resembling a theme park, and its ZeitHaus historical car museum displays about 100 cars (there are about a dozen buildings, including a Ritz-Carlton hotel, all told). This weekend, Autostadt fetes its 10th birthday with bands, acrobats and fireworks.

Last June, Autostadt unveiled Level Green, an exhibit on sustainable development designed by Berlin architect Jürgen Mayer H., who has created a shining-green jungle gym of user-friendly activities. Interactive sites show, for example, how traffic jams form. Autostadt also shows vintage Peugeots and Fords, along with a jewel-studded Beetle, the millionth VW, that rolled off the Wolfsburg assembly line in 1955. Beyond the Autostadt, train-like buses, which suggest an amusement-park ride, tour the vast factory complex.

Drive 500 kilometers south to Stuttgart (via German's high-speed Autobahn highway network, of course). The home to Daimler-Benz and Porsche may be Germany's answer to Detroit, but it feels more like a fairy-tale version of Silicon Valley, with high-tech office parks surrounded by hillside vineyards. In 2006, Daimler-Benz opened a museum in a silver-and-glass building that treats the company's cars, trucks and buses as giant sculptures. A floor shows off the company's fleet of vintage race cars. No detail is spared in the two-hour public tours of a largely robotized factory, including a disquisition on the site's new parking rules.

In the north of Stuttgart, at Porsche, there's hardly a robot in sight. Every Porsche is made to order, and the factory, with its own leather works, feels as collegial as a theater prop shop. Porsche's pavilion-like museum, whose façade reflects street traffic, may be the best of the museum fleet. Porsche had a very small museum before, says Porsche Chief Executive Michael Macht, but "it was more like a garage." The new venue shows 80 fully operational vintage vehicles, such as the Porsche 356 "No. 1," the 1948 prototype for all Porsche sports cars.

The race-car start-ups, a few times a day, require a mechanic to install special funnels, needed to catch the exhaust flames. Crowds gather, holding up their cellphone cameras to capture the spectacle. The roar of the engine is so strong that it makes your whole body shake.

Around 85% of Porsche buyers are men, and the in-house restaurant is an upmarket steakhouse, with beef and grills imported from Porsche's most important market, the U.S. For decades, Porsche has inspired makers and collectors of kitsch, and a memorabilia display shows off a toy pink Porsche designed for Barbie and a teapot in the shape of the classic 911 sports car.

Next, Munich's BMW-Welt (BMW World), 217 kilometers southeast. Opened in 2008, the brand's showroom now competes in popularity with Bavarian attractions like fairy-tale Neuschwanstein Castle. Inside the striking BMW-Welt building, designed by Vienna's Coop Himmelb(l)au, customers pick up cars on a dramatic ramp-like stage.

There are user-friendly exhibits about BMW's car technology. Visitors can sit in much of the current fleet, but there's not much else to do (other than wait around for the occa-

Mark Henderson; top, Porsche

© Marcus Buck Fotodesign (2)

Left page, top, Porsche museum in Stuttgart; bottom, the jewel-studded millionth Volkswagen on show at Autostadt; this page, above and at right, BMW World; bottom left, Mercedes-Benz Museum; bottom right, Porsche production in Zuffenhausen.

sional poetry slam, held in the building's premier showroom). Across the street, the recently revamped BMW Museum beautifully documents the brand's history, and the factory also offers tours.

The August Horch Museum, relaunched in 2004, gets its name from the car pioneer who built up Audi in the years before the First World War and is housed on the site of the original plant. It's in small Zwickau, 355 kilometers north of Munich in the former East Germany, hometown of the Trabant, the Iron Curtain's attempt to copy the VW Beetle. Here are early-20th-century touring cars, luxury Nazi-era sedans and prototypes from the communist years.

Finish up this tour in Leipzig, a 90-minute drive north. In 2005, BMW opened a state-of-the-art factory outside town, designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Zaha Hadid. One innovation: partly assembled cars, without a human in sight, moving on a line above managers' offices.

—J. S. Marcus is a writer based in Berlin.

▶ See a slideshow of car-museum exhibits at **WSJ.com/Autos**.

Guglielmo De Micheli

Special Ferrari models at the Galleria Ferrari.

A PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOME OF FERRARI

Every year, some 200,000 car lovers make a pilgrimage to Maranello, a small town near Modena, Italy, where Ferrari maintains its official museum, the Galleria Ferrari. Unlike Porsche or Mercedes-Benz, Ferrari didn't hold on to most of its early models, and the museum, housed in a serviceable but humble building, displays around 40 racing and sports vehicles, with vintage cars contributed by collectors and drivers. Although lacking a building that reflects the luxury of the brand, the Galleria Ferrari manages to recreate instead the actual atmosphere of a car collector's garage.

You can get very close to the racing cars and peer down right inside the cockpits. Unusual models currently on display include a rare 1956 Lancia-Ferrari D50, a Formula One racing car with external fuel tanks (www.galleria.ferrari.com).

The museum is for everybody, but the real glory of Maranello, the nearby Ferrari headquarters, is closed to all but a few, and may be the world's most exclusive car-lover's destination. In the past decade, while Germany's car companies commissioned shiny new buildings for the public-at-large, Ferrari decided to save the best for itself, turning its headquarters into an open-air museum of contemporary architecture. If you're lucky enough to get past the gate, take in the cool grandeur of Jean Nouvel's assembly plant, or the mysterious whimsy of Renzo Piano's wind tunnel.

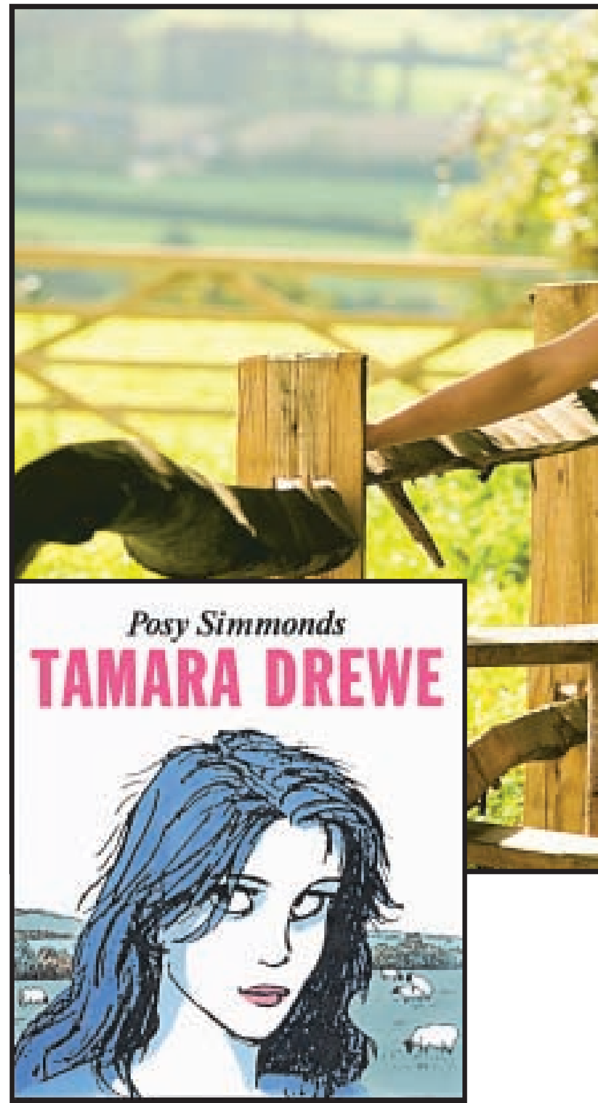
In the past few years, customers have been encouraged to visit Maranello and customize their cars in the new "Atelier," where—as long as you're willing to spend more than €180,000, about the lowest price for a new Ferrari—you can choose everything from the width of the upholstery stitching to the color of your break calipers. At the end of the production process, every car surface is examined by naked hands, which feel out any errors.

Ferrari's design department is overseen by Flavio Manzoni, the senior vice-president who arrived this year from the Volkswagen group. Mr. Manzoni, who went from designing VW Golfs to cars that cost 10 or 20 times as much, believes that a Ferrari represents the epitome of the Italian design tradition. "The beauty, the harmony, the shape, the sensuality—I can't imagine a cold Ferrari," he says, speaking from his office.

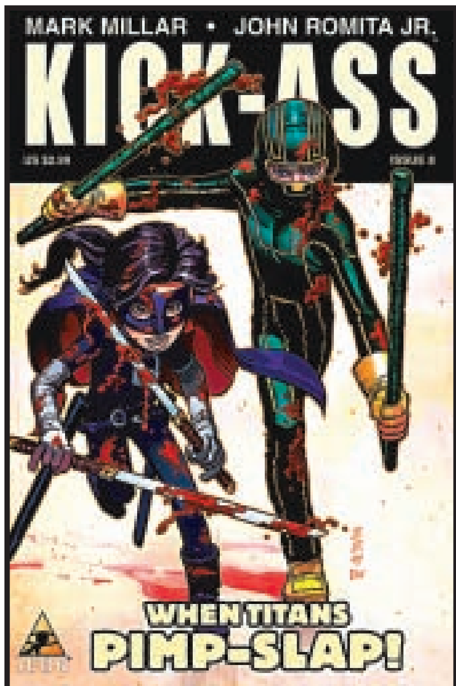
Founded in 1947 by Italian racing pioneer Enzo Ferrari, and now largely owned by the Fiat Group, the car maker still has a Ferrari family member on the premises—Enzo's son, Piero, who is vice-chairman. His Ferrari of choice these days? A blue 612 Scaglietti, the brand's only four-seater now in production, with a mammoth V-12 engine and an average Italian price of around €272.000. "It's my everyday car," he says. – *J. S. Marcus*

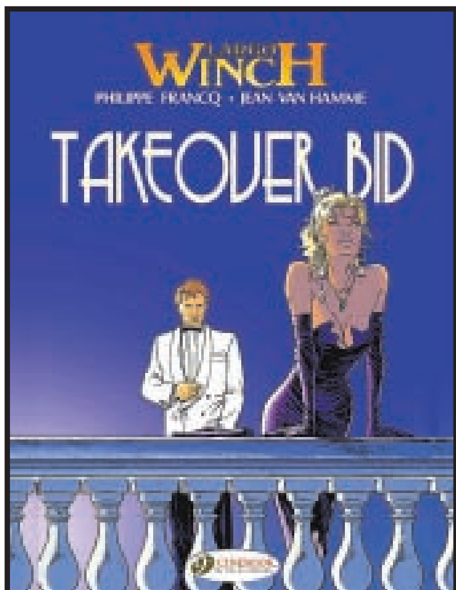
2010 Daimler AG

Porsche



Comic strip to film clip





European graphic novels are the inspiration for an increasing number of big-screen adaptations

By Tobias Grey

WITH HIS RATHER rumpled wardrobe and 68-year-old's seen-it-all smile, British film director Stephen Frears doesn't look like your average fanboy.

But that is exactly what Mr. Frears starts to sound like when he discusses the work of his compatriot, the cartoonist Posy Simmonds, whose cheeky, countryside-set graphic novel, "Tamara Drewe," he recently adapted for the cinema.

"I think she's one of the great women in Britain," gushes Mr. Frears, who has known Ms. Simmonds for roughly 40 years. "For me she's completely original: to be a graphic artist and ... write so beautifully seems to me to be quite unique."

When "Tamara Drewe," which is scheduled to be released in the U.K. on Sept. 10, premiered at a Cannes Film Festival that was packed full of downbeat films earlier this month, it was hailed by critics from around the world as a triumph of wit over gloominess. But Mr. Frears, who became hooked on "Tamara Drewe" when it was initially published in 110 weekly installments starting in September 2005 in the British newspaper the Guardian, is at pains to point out that, where graphic novels are concerned, he isn't in the least bit knowledgeable.

His bemusement is therefore double when I suggest his adaptation (aided by Moira Buffini's accomplished script) has placed him at the forefront of a growing number of film directors who are turning toward European graphic novels for inspiration. "The material is comic and at the same time violent, with doses of meanness and triviality," says Mr. Frears. "There's this sexy cartoonish side which was like a breath of fresh air for me after directing two films ['The Queen' and 'Chéri'] with confined atmospheres."

The most expensive and high profile of these projects is Steven Spielberg's upcoming Tintin adaptation "Secret of the Unicorn," which comes out in some European countries in fall 2011 and in the U.S. on Dec. 23, 2011. Mr. Spielberg has shot the $130 million-budgeted film, which has been adapted from four of Belgian cartoonist Hergé's Tintin comic books, as a 3-D animated film using stop-motion capture.

New Zealand director Peter Jackson, whose company Weta Digital provided the special effects on "Secret of the Unicorn," is also planning to direct a sequel about the bequiffed cub reporter and his faithful dog, Snowy. Both films are being financed by Hollywood-based companies: Sony Pictures Entertainment and Paramount Pictures.

The "Tintin" films, though, are the exception. Other recent adaptations of European comic books are all based and financed out of Europe, including already released films like Matthew Vaughn's "Kick-Ass" (inspired by the British comic book of the same name by Mark Millar and John Romita Jr.) and Luc Besson's "The Extraordinary Adventures of Adèle Blanc-Sèc" (based on a series of comic books by French cartoonist Jacques Tardi).

> 'The material is comic and at the same time violent, with doses of meanness and triviality,' Stephen Frears says.

Upcoming films include sequels like "Largo Winch 2" (based on the Belgian comic book series by Jean Van Hamme and Philippe Francq about an orphan propelled to the head of a business empire), which comes out in France next February, and "Asterix 4" (from the series of comic books created by Albert Uderzo and René Goscinny about a defiant Gallic village that resists Roman invasion).

Ambitious reboots are also on the agenda, with shooting soon to start on a new film version of "Fantomas," based on Marcel Allain and Pierre Souvestre's set of novels about a mysterious masked thief. The novels, which began to appear in France in 1911, spawned a dozen movies and several popular comic strip spin-offs. A new film version of the futuristic comic strip "Judge Dredd" about a merciless law enforcer (which featured in the British anthology 2000 A.D.) has also been green-lit and will be shot in 3-D.

France-based graphic novelists like Marjane Satrapi, Vincent Paronnaud and Joann Sfar have also begun to adapt and direct their own work for the cinema. Ms. Satrapi and Mr. Paronnaud achieved noted critical success when they co-directed their first film "Persepolis" in 2007, a black-and-white animated version of Ms. Satrapi's award-winning autobiographical series of graphic novels about growing up in Iran during the Islamic revolution.

Their follow-up, "Chicken with Plums," which will start shooting this July at the Babelsberg film studios near Berlin, is a live-action adaptation of Ms. Satrapi's graphic novel of the same name about an Iranian tar-player who becomes disheartened and decides to die when his favorite tar, or long-necked Persian lute, gets snapped in half. Mr. Sfar is currently in post-production on his second feature, an animated adaptation of his delightful Algiers-set comic-book series "The Rabbi's Cat," co-directed by Antoine Delesvaux. Mr. Sfar, whose debut feature, the Serge Gainsbourg biopic "Gainsbourg (Vie Heroïque)," audaciously mixed cinematic and comic book tropes, hadn't considered adapting "The Rabbi's Cat" for the cinema until he was approached by a French producer who admired his work.

This kind of tapping up is by no means an isolated case, says Olivier Thierry, editor of popular French comics magazine Zoo. "There are a growing number of filmmakers, writers and producers in France and [other] European countries like Britain who have grown up comic book fans and are still in love with comic books," Mr. Thierry notes. "Reading comic books in France is much wider-spread

among adults than almost anywhere else. Take Luc Besson, who is a huge comic book fan: He's at the head of a drive to put comic books on the big screen."

In October 2008, Mr. Besson's film-production company EuropaCorp. signed a deal with Glénat, a major French independent comic-book label, creating new company Europa Glénat, which will produce film and television adaptations of Glénat comic books.

Nathalie Gastaldo, the French producer who shepherded both "Largo Winch" films (each budgeted at €25 million), feels that Europe's fragile economy has left everyone in the film industry seeking a safety net. "People don't want to do anything crazy at the moment, so things are slowing down in terms of big budgets," says Ms. Gastaldo, who saw the original "Largo Winch" gross more than €10 million in France after it was released in December 2008. "Comic-book adaptations are the exception because there is the guarantee of a pre-existing awareness factor."

Mr. Thierry notes that there is also a copycat effect coming into play. "Producers in Europe are looking at the huge amount of money that is being made in the U.S. from comic-book adaptations," he says. "More and more of them are thinking, 'Why not us as well?'"

In April, Mr. Besson's first stab at a comic-book adaptation was released in France. It might have happened earlier but Mr. Besson had to bide his time before acquiring the rights to French author Jacques Tardi's comic-book series "The Adventures of Adèle Blanc-Sec," about an intrepid female journalist who investigates a series of outlandish mysteries in Paris and Egypt on the eve of World War I. Mr. Besson first tried to buy the rights from Mr. Tardi 10 years ago but was rebuffed, according to Zoo magazine. It took six years of patient negotiation before Mr. Tardi was finally ready to let Mr. Besson write a script based on the first four comic books of his series.

Mr. Besson's €25 million-budgeted film has so far grossed about €10.5 million at the French box office, a fraction of the kind of money the "Asterix" films made, but still a reasonable score that is likely to be boosted when it is released in July in Japan, where Mr. Besson's films traditionally have a large following. Other European releases will then follow in Germany on Sept. 30 and Italy on Oct. 1.

Even when a comic-book adaptation flops, such as last year's €27 million-budgeted French-made adaptation of Maurice de Bevere's top-selling cowboy-themed comic book "Lucky Luke," it's never a complete wash-out. Criticized by audiences for turning a jokey comic book hero into a po-faced revenge seeker, "Lucky Luke" still grossed more than €10 million at the French box office.

Mr. Thierry believes that there's still a lot of room for improvement in France. "We are lacking top-rate comic-book film adaptations," he says. "It took the Americans a while to work out how to adapt comic books for the screen. Hopefully, we will also learn from our mistakes because the talent is there, but it's not always used well."

Ms. Gastaldo feels she learned vital lessons producing the original "Largo Winch" film that she was able to put into practice on the sequel. "We especially learned about production values and how a film can be made to look better without necessarily spending more money," she says. "That was one of the reasons we shot the second film in Thailand, because it's not very expensive as they are used to dealing with American shoots."

With "Largo Winch 2," Ms. Gastaldo will also target the global market more than she did with the first film. An international cast including Sharon Stone and German actor Ulrich Tukur was brought on board to star alongside French actor Tomer Sisley. In addition to a French version of "Largo Winch 2," there is an international version voiced in English. There will also be French and English-language versions of the €56 million-budgeted "Fantomas," which stars French actors Vincent Cassel and Jean Reno, both of whom have carved out a niche in English-language films.

By a similar token, Mr. Spielberg is being very careful with "Secret of the Unicorn" not to alienate European fans of Tintin. "There will be no cell phones, no TV sets, no modern cars," Mr. Spielberg told French newspaper Le Monde at the end of last year. Peter Jackson added that tone-wise "Secret of the Unicorn" will be a "very European film... very film noir."

Mr. Sfar says that cultural differences can often lead to confusion: "When people read 'The Rabbi's Cat' in France most of them were aware of the story's North African Jewish context. But when I was in New York most people thought I'd invented this charming idea of Jews living peacefully in an Arab country." Nonetheless, Mr. Sfar was determined that the animated film version of "The Rabbi's Cat" shouldn't get watered down in any way: "It's essentially a children's story, but it deals with some tricky issues like religion and sexuality, which I didn't want to soften."

Perhaps what is so striking about accomplished European comic-book adaptations like "Persepolis," "Kick-Ass" and "Tamara Drewe" is how full-blooded and unapologetic about it they are. All the adults in "Persepolis" appear to thrive on a diet of coffee and cigarettes; "Kick-Ass" is notable for the sight of an 11-year-old-girl with super-hero pretensions killing people with a flick knife; and "Tamara Drewe" is surely the first film ever to have a heroine proudly sport a nose job.

"That's why I feel comic books, certainly European comic books, can help movies tackle more unusual subjects," says Mr. Sfar. "If you go to a producer with a script like 'Kick-Ass' he would never normally bite, but if you say that it's based on a comic book that has some fans, then you have the beginning of a discussion."

—Tobias Grey is a writer based in Paris.

Clockwise from bottom left; covers of graphic novels 'Largo Winch' and 'Kick-Ass'; Tintin and Snowy; Gemma Arterton as Tamara Drewe with the cover of the graphic novel; Louise Bourgoin in 'The Extraordinary Adventures of Adèle Blanc-Sec' and cover of the graphic novel; cover and inside page of 'The Rabbi's Cat'; pages from the graphic novel Judge Dredd.

Clockwise from bottom left; Cinebook Ltd; Marvel Comics; Hergé; Peter Mountain; ©2010 Houghton Mifflin Company; Everett Collection/Rex Features; © Casterman; Dargaud(2); © Judge Dredd & Rebellion A/S; Chris Weston

❖ Golf

The wilder side of the golf range

When crocodiles, lions, hippos and bears make the course a precarious place to be

An alligator suns near a fairway at the Innisbrook Resort and Golf Club in Palm Harbor, Florida.

WHEN RONEL DE BRUTO, the clubhouse manager at the Skukuza Golf Course in South Africa, says, "Players here don't just concentrate on their golf game, they pay attention to the natural world around them," she isn't bragging that golfers at Skukuza

Golf
JOHN PAUL NEWPORT

somehow have a more enlightened, smell-the-roses attitude toward golf than players elsewhere. She is merely stating the obvious: golfers at Skukuza hope to survive their round.

The unfenced nine-hole course at Skukuza sits smack in the middle of the 19,000 square kilometer Kruger National Park, home to all of the big five (lions, elephants, leopards, rhinoceroses and Cape Buffaloes), plus innumerable other alarming critters like the warthog and poisonous puff adder snake. Built in the early 1970s to give permanent residents of the small Skukuza restcamp community a little R&R, the course soon proved popular to safari-going park visitors eager to spice up their golf games.

The first tee, for instance, abuts Lake Panic, which teems with crocodiles and hippopotamuses. "It's funny, but the crocodiles like to lounge near the tee box and a lot of golfers don't see them until after they tee off. Only a meter or two away sometimes. The golfers about have a heart attack when they find out," Ms. de Bruto said via telephone.

The hippos, among the most dangerous animals in Africa when aroused (they can weigh 2,722 kilograms, run 32 kilometers per hour and have teeth the size of industrial drills), tend to be more reclusive during the day. Usually, all golfers see is an eyeball or two poking above the waterline. But depending on the season one or two dozen hippos may inhabit Lake Panic, a hazard that golfers must hit over on the par-three ninth hole.

The information sheet that visiting golfers must read before signing an indemnity form offers sensible advice for dealing with the wildlife. Regarding the big five, it says "Do not run away!!!" If you do, the lions, leopards, et al may believe they have the "Moral Advantage"—that is to say, believe that you are afraid of them—and try to eat you for lunch. If you hit your ball into the lake, above all do not retrieve it. "Crocodiles are not dangerous unless you get into the water," the information sheet says. "We have an arrangement with them—we don't get into their water and they don't come into our pub!"

Amazingly, no golfers at Skukuza have ever been killed or seriously injured, Ms. de Bruto said, although several staff members have had brushes with danger. Just last month, she herself was charged by a hippo. She surprised it early one morning while commuting to work across the golf course in her personal cart, and escaped only because the cart doesn't have the speed-limiting governor that most golf carts do. "If I'd been on foot, I wouldn't have had a chance," she said.

Generally speaking, however, golfers cherish the frequent wildlife sightings. It's the main reason many come to Skukuza to play. Last week, several golfers saw a wild dog give chase to an impala. Two months ago, a leopard lolled around the first green in the middle of the day and was much photographed. Last year, during happy hour after a regular Wednesday afternoon competition for locals, a small herd of impalas came pounding down the first fairway at full tilt, pursued by a pair of female lions. The commotion caused by 50 people at the clubhouse overturning chairs in a mad scramble for safety called the lions off their hunt, and a couple of game wardens, who happened to be present, chased them away. "But it was quite exciting there for a little bit, believe me," Ms. de Bruto said.

Skukuza is far from the only African golf course offering wildlife encounters. The superb course at the Hans Merensky resort north of Kruger National Park, rife with baboons, monkeys and water bucks, is only partially fenced; greenkeepers keep track of dangerous animals that enter the enclave and remove them when necessary. Even so a woman, albeit not a golfer, was reportedly trampled to death there several years ago by an elephant she was trying to photograph. At the Gary Player-designed Elephant Hills Resort course in Zimbabwe, giraffes and zebras are regular members of the gallery.

By comparison, most American and European courses, with their neat flowerbeds and harmless squirrels scampering about, seem rather prim. But not all of them are. Last year, an alligator chomped off the arm of a 77-year-old golfer in South Carolina poking around a water hazard looking for a ball. In 2007, a 335-centimeter gator attacked another golfer in Florida. According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, one of 10 gator attacks in that state involve golfers trying to retrieve balls.

Courses on the fringe of wilderness areas, from Maine to the Canadian Rockies, are no strangers to bears, moose, elk, wolves, coyotes, cougars and other large, potentially risky mammals. In fact, such courses are typically havens for wildlife because hunting nearby is prohibited and the grazing options are five-star. "Any animal you can find in Banff National Park will find its way to the golf course at one time or another," said Lori Cote, a spokesman for the Fairmont Banff Springs resort in mountainous British Columbia and its famous Stanley Thompson course dating back to 1928.

The standing policy at Banff Springs, as at its sister course at Jasper Park Lodge to the north, is that the animals have the right of way. When elk clog a fairway, golfers have to wait. When a grizzly bear with her cubs passes through, wardens may close several holes of the course for a while. "We don't just tolerate these interruptions, we celebrate them," said Steven Young, the director of golf at Banff Springs. "If someone comes off the course angry here, they've missed the point of the experience."

In his five years at Banff, Mr. Young said he has become most intrigued by the coyotes. "We have a couple of dens of coyotes and when you watch them hunt, usually ground squirrels, you can tell they are very smart animals. I always thought of them as scrawny, not especially attractive, but they are quite beautiful when they move. And when they howl, and then their babies start howling next to them, I always have to chuckle," he said.

The most sublime animal encounter during his tenure, however, involved a solitary black bear taking a swim in the greenside pond on the course's most famous hole, the downhill, par-three fourth, called the Devil's Cauldron. "It was like he was having a picnic, just playing," Mr. Young said. "He jumped in, swam around, climbed out, shook himself off, lay down for a while, then jumped back in and swam some more. We had marshals there, and a couple of groups, after having their own little picnic on the tee watching, went ahead and hit their tee shots over the bear and putted out. Finally the bear wandered off.

"It was such a great experience, not having to call in the wardens or close the hole," Mr. Young said. "The animals were here first. We're just sharing their home."

Arbitrage

Scullcandy headphones

City	Local currency	€
New York	$58	€46
London	£51	€59
Hong Kong	HK$599	€61
Rome	€68	€68
Paris	€80	€80
Frankfurt	€80	€80
Brussels	€84	€84

Note: Prices of HF88SKC11 Gi Headphones Red, plus taxes, as provided by retailers in each city, averaged and converted into euros.

Sculptures to furnish a landscape

By Emma Crichton-Miller
Edinburgh, Scotland

"THIS IS NOT a sculpture park," Robert Wilson, chairman of Nelson's homeopathic remedies, declared last year when opening Jupiter Artland, the beautiful 32-hectare landscape with contemporary sculptures that he and his wife, Nicky, have created around their Jacobean manor, Bonnington House, on the outskirts of Edinburgh.

"If you are commissioning work and the landscape is at the heart of the artwork, thaen you are doing something quite different from just buying something and plonking it here," explains Mrs. Wilson, an artist herself.

During the past 20 years, the idea of experiencing sculpture within the landscape has caught fire in Britain. From a handful of private gardens, opportunities to see large-scale contemporary sculpture in landscape have spread with accelerating speed to stately homes and royal parks, sumptuous formal gardens and ancient forests. It isn't just that hard-pressed rural attractions have seized on contemporary sculpture to draw in new audiences, but that the artists too have relished the opportunity to create work in Britain's many historic landscapes.

The Wilsons were inspired by late artist-poet Ian Hamilton-Finlay's garden at Little Sparta, a coherent unity of art works and environment less than 50 kilometers south of Bonnington, and architect Charles Jencks's Garden of Cosmic Speculation in Dumfries, both Scottish examples of artist-made landscapes, where, as Ms. Wilson puts it, "the whole geomancy of that particular space" comes into play. Hamilton-Finlay visited Bonnington in late 2005, shortly before he died, to choose the sites for four of his pieces, including the pastoral "Beehives." Mr. Jencks more drastically sent in diggers and carved out an entire landscape within a landscape, with eight stepped land forms and four lakes, and curving concrete seats embracing stone models of cells—the whole intended to celebrate the fundamental idea of cell-division in all organic life.

Mr. Jenck's work is joined by 20 other equally thought-provoking works carefully placed, including Laura Ford's five stone girls, like ghosts in the woods, and Antony Gormley's "Firmament," a vast mesh outline of a kneeling man on a hill. The sum is a complex dialogue of sculpture and landscape.

In the 1950s, Henry Moore declared, "Sculpture is an art of the open air. Daylight, sunlight is necessary to it, and for me its best setting and complement is nature." But for many years, it was only a handful of artists and enlightened private collectors who shared Moore's vision.

In 1977, however, Peter Murray, then a lecturer in arts education at Bretton Hall College, near Wakefield, in Yorkshire, persuaded the college's principal to open the college grounds to a public sculpture park. "The idea of people walking in landscape and looking at sculpture is part of the heritage of English landscape design," says Mr. Murray, now director of Yorkshire Sculpture Park. "But the development of a permanent space for contemporary sculpture is, relatively speaking, new."

This summer, Yorkshire Sculpture Park is celebrating the 40-year career of David Nash, one of Britain's most distinguished sculptors. The 200 hectares of historic landscape, which dips dramatically between hills and now boasts three indoor gallery spaces, will host works from all periods of his life. Mr. Murray hopes that, though not chronologically displayed, "David's journey over 40 years will be reflected in the individual visitor's journey through the landscape." Mr. Nash, who lives in a small town in North Wales, has been working with wood since the 1970s, sometimes using chainsaw and blow torch to create vast totemic structures. Nature has always been a fundamental inspiration for him.

At Chatsworth House, just to the south in Derbyshire, home of the Dukes of Devonshire, the magnificently landscaped grounds are dotted with antique sculptures, fragments and vases. In 1992, however, a friendship between the Duchess, Deborah Cavendish, and Dame Elisabeth Frink, led to the installation of Frink's War Horse (1991) in the grounds, marking the first contemporary sculpture to grace the landscape for 150 years. Since then, the current Duke of Devonshire has been an enthusiastic supporter of contemporary sculpture, buying, commissioning and more recently hosting Sotheby's Beyond Limits selling exhibitions of large-scale, outdoor sculpture. Broadening its repertoire beyond the monumental, Chatsworth last year invited young basket weaver Laura Ellen Bacon to create Woven Space, a large twisting cocoon woven from willow among Yew trees in the garden.

In 1992, recognizing a need for more concerted support of large-scale, outdoor sculpture, Sir Wilfred Cass, a businessman of proven energy and shrewdness, established the Cass Sculpture Foundation, which commissions around 20 monumental works a year, predominantly from British sculptors. Sir Wilfred scatters these poetically through 26 acres of ancient woodland on the Sussex Downs at Goodwood, where visitors may stroll, and buy the art. To date the Foundation has commissioned 160 monumental works from more than 120 leading artists.

So persuasive has been the Foundation's argument for the benefit to both sculpture and the landscape of marrying the two that the Foundation's scope and ambition have grown. In 2012, London is expected to be enhanced with Sir Wilfred's commissions. While the exact locations and final list of artists is yet to be confirmed, the Olympic list is likely to include pieces by leading sculptors Tony Cragg, Philip King, Stephen Cox and Eilis O'Connell.

However, Sir Wilfred says the idea of permanent sculpture parks makes him nervous. "The pieces just get older and older and less and less relevant," he argues. His latest scheme is to offer to loan works to collectors, who will rent a piece for as long as it continues to excite them.

Contributing to the growing appreciation of sculpture in landscapes are Madeleine Bessborough, who in 1994 moved her commercial gallery, the New Art Centre, from London to Roche Court in Wiltshire, and the Jerwood Charitable Foundation, which launched its outdoor sculpture prize in 2001 and adopted Ragley Hall in 2004 as the ideal landscape in which to display the resulting commissions. Lady Bessborough's lyrical landscape of hills and woods near Salisbury, Wiltshire, may house at any one time a vast Antony Caro, a joyous Barry Flanagan, an emphatic arrangement of stones by Richard Long, and, this summer, a group show of young London artists. In February, the Jerwood installed its largest commission at Ragley Hall, Peter Randall-Page's Green Fuse. Over six meters tall, made of solid granite from Bodmin Moor, Green Fuse stands at the summit of the main avenue in Ragley's "Capability" Brown-designed park deep in Warwickshire.

For many visitors, contemporary art is less intimidating encountered in these agreeable surroundings. Each piece, in turn, discovers an extra dimension in relation to the specific living context it inhabits. These benefits haven't gone unnoticed by the Arts Council of England, English Heritage and the National Trust. Since 1996, Judith King, co-funded by the Arts Council and English Heritage, has been curating shows of contemporary art, fashion and design within the magical surroundings of Belsay Hall in Northumberland. And the National Trust's Tatton Park is this year mounting its second Biennial, on the theme "Framing Identity"—carrying the notion of art in the landscape far beyond the limits of carved stone.

In the end, admiring Cornelia Parker's new "Landscape with Gun and Tree" at Bonnington House—a nine-meter-high model of a gun propped against a tree—you feel the Wilsons may be right. Sculpture park is too narrow a term to enfold the range of interventions contemporary art is making into Britain's historic landscapes.

—Emma Crichton-Miller is a writer based in Gloucestershire, England.

Allan Pollok-Morris

Ed Wilde

Top, 'Life Mounds' (2005) by Charles Jencks at Jupiter Artland; left, 'Fallen Deodar' (2009) by Jilly Sutton, shown at Cass Sculpture Foundation.

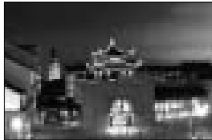
Distinctive Properties & Estates

GLOBAL OFFERINGS

Heritage (Restoration / Conservation) Category

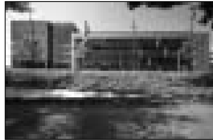
Loft-quarter "Danilovskaya manufacture 1867", 1st Stage
Moscow, Russia

Hotel Category



Pan Pacific Suzhou
Suzhou, China

Industrial Category



Chemical Research Building
Budapest, Hungary

Master Plan Category

Greater Springfield
Queensland, Australia

Office Category

Central
Singapore

Public Infrastructure / Amenities Category

Slum Upgrading Program
São Paulo, Brazil

Prix d'Excellence
Awards
2010
WINNERS

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
USA • EUROPE • ASIA
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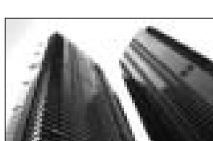
Residential (High Rise) Category



The Sail @ Marina Bay
Singapore

Residential (Low Rise) Category

Adiva Parkhomes, Courtyard Terraces & Apartments
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Retail Category

Park Lane by CMP
Taichung, Taiwan

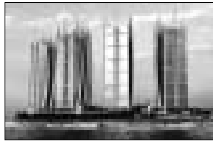
Specialised Project (Purpose Built) Category

Vörösmarty No. 1
Budapest, Hungary

Sustainable Development Category

Northern Taiwan Solar City
Taipei, Taiwan

Bali Congress Award



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Reduced heights

Stilettos—so yesterday; the 'kitten' heel returns

By Ray A. Smith

ARE HIGH HEELS an economic indicator?

The last boom saw heels on women's shoes pushed to new heights. As the luxury-goods boom turned accessories into coveted "it" items, designers seemed to be engaged in an arms race. Manolo Blahnik added a 15-centimeter style to his line in 2008 after years of topping out at 13; Christian Louboutin pumped out red-soled 15-centimeter and 17-centimeter heels and dared to make a 20-centimeter platform. Two models fell during Prada's spring 2009 runway show while tottering in the fashion house's extremely high strappy platforms. The fetish for expensive high heels was also helped by the popularity of the show "Sex and the City," where characters wore towering stilettos and introduced millions of viewers to Jimmy Choo and Manolo Blahnik.

Now, amid considerable economic uncertainty, lower-heeled styles—particularly tapered "kitten" heels—are back with a vengeance. Karl Lagerfeld showed several kitten heels in his Chanel cruise show in Saint-Tropez earlier this month. Marc Jacobs, Roberto Cavalli and Marni—even Jimmy Choo, famous for its sky-high stilettos—are all now adding more kitten heels, four centimeters or lower, to their collections. "It's a return to ladylike chic" after vampy or girly shoe styles, says Sally Lohan, a trend expert at fashion-consulting service WGSN, which had forecast a kitten-heel comeback in 2009. Kitten heels are "pretty but more grounded." It doesn't hurt that Michelle Obama and Carla Bruni also sport kitten heels, she adds.

Designer Giambattista Valli, who is known for doing very high platform shoes, says while working on his fall 2010 collection, "I decided I wanted to ground my woman to the earth and emphasize the clothes through a kitten, lower-heel shoe that would allow my clients a ... smoother and softer walk. The pointy and elongated shape of the shoes would give them an easier and wider wearability."

The trend for lower heels leads some to speculate whether there's a relationship between a sinking heel and the stock market. Gary Loveman, CEO of Harrah's Entertainment Inc., was reported saying earlier this year that he likes seeing women wearing stilettos in his casinos because he believes it means guests are more likely to spend more.

But not everyone thinks the kitten heel means bad times. Shorter shoes might be "an indication of the recession we've just been through, not that we're headed for a recession," suggests Jeffrey Hirsch, editor of the Stock Trader's Almanac. But he cautions that with consumers increasingly following their own fashion rules, such correlations have "not so much" validity anymore.

▶ See a slideshow of low-heeled styles and a graphic that offers an unscientific look at the rise and decline of designer heel heights at **WSJ.com/Lifestyle**.

©Brooks Kraft/Corbis

Michelle Obama and Carla Bruni-Sarkozy in 'kitten' heels.

❖ Top Picks

Jacques Imbrailo as Billy Budd.

Alastair Muir

‘Billy Budd’ lacks sizzle

Glyndebourne: Though the Sussex, England-based company has staged six other operas by the greatest British composer of the 20th century, Glyndebourne has never before performed Benjamin Britten’s “Billy Budd.” The adaptation from Herman Melville’s novella by E.M. Forster and Eric Crozier also marks Michael Grandage’s debut directing opera.

This is the first production I’ve seen that takes the naval setting seriously. Mr. Grandage, who runs the Donmar Warehouse theater, and his designer, Christopher Oram, give us a set that is a credible replica of the interior of an 18th-century British man-of-war, and the stage business for the chorus of sailors is equally convincing, as they swab decks, hoist sails and tie knots. Indeed, the most moving scene in the piece is when the old salt, Dansker, expertly makes the hangman’s noose from which his unjustly convicted friend, Billy, will hang from the yardarm.

But Mr. Grandage seems to have eliminated the homosexual theme from the piece. As Billy, who is so good-looking that he is nicknamed “Beauty,” Jacques Imbrailo radiates goodness and innocence. Most productions rely on the dramatic tension created by the feelings both Captain Vere and the Master-at-Arms, Claggart, have for the handsome able seaman, Billy, who has been press-ganged from his passing merchant ship, Rights o’ Man. Neither John Mark Ainsley’s Vere nor Phillip Ens’s Claggart seems to have any sexual desire for Billy. Though it feels deliberate, this could, of course, simply be a failing in their performances.

In any case, it exposes a real weakness in the work’s first half, in which Billy, unjustly accused by Claggart of inciting mutiny, stammeringly fails to defend himself, and in frustration strikes him dead with a single blow. The only witness is the unfailingly just Captain Vere. As he wrote to literary critic Lionel Trilling, Forster was more interested in Vere’s lapse from goodness than in Claggart’s “natural depravity.” The novelist thought he’d written Claggart’s monologue along the lines of Iago’s in Verdi’s “Otello,” but in the absence of the sexual chemistry that usually conceals the poverty of the text, Claggart’s Act I aria is just a statement of an inexplicable hatred for Billy. Forster’s words don’t even support a Coleridgean analysis of Iago and Claggart’s characters as pure, unmotivated evil.

And Forster’s feeble lines seem to affect and coarsen Britten’s music here. After this dispiriting passage near the end of Act I, the listener is unprepared for the soaring glory of the Act II score—Britten at his best, as conductor Mark Elder vigorously demonstrates. —*Paul Levy*

Until June 27
www.glyndebourne.com

The art of eternal cheer

Vienna: The title of this new show at the Museum of Applied Arts, “Flowers for Kim Il Sung,” is taken literally here. Rows of blooming Kimilsungia and Kimjongilia—the orchid and begonia species named for the president of North Korea and his son, respectively—are planted at the entrance to the gallery. Above the flowers hangs a large panorama of Pyongyang, all green squares and gleaming skyscrapers. Even further up is a painting of the two leaders themselves. This is one of more than a dozen official portraits in the exhibition, shown for the first time outside of North Korea.

But the show never gets any more accessible, partly due to agreements made between the museum and the North Korean lenders, the Pyongyang Art Gallery and Paektusan Academy of Architecture: Neither the usual explanatory wall comments nor critical catalog essays were allowed. So the two leaders, the late Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, remain distant and unreadable despite their near-to-the-people depictions; they are permanently surrounded by chickens, hordes of adoring children, and circles of smiling followers. In these official works, produced by state-run artist collectives, the entire country is always lit in buoyant colors as if it is in an eternal, inexplicable good mood.

'The day breaks' (1978) by Kim Yong Gu.

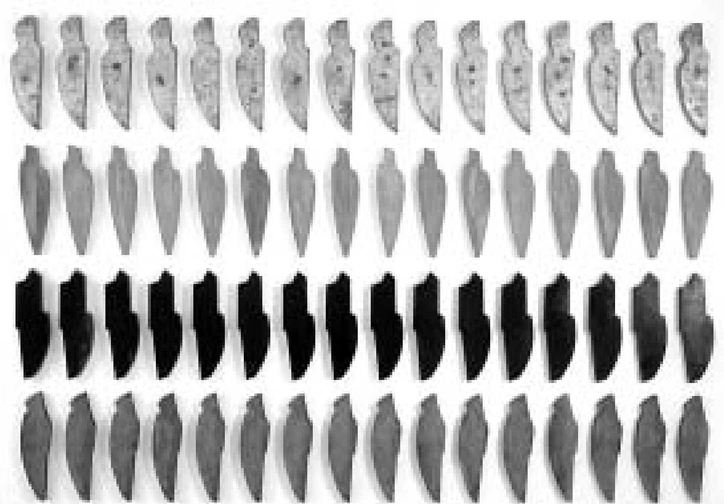
© Korean Art Gallery, Pyongyang

More revealing are the posters that tackle current issues. Some themes are downright familiar to a Western audience—health care, the development of a high-tech economy—but the imagery strikingly anachronistic. In North Korea, nurses still don caps with red crosses, as illustrated on the poster “Let people enjoy more free medical care, free education and other welfare measures of the state!” and compact discs still represent the future (“Those who develop high technology shall dominate the future!”) The exhortatory tone, however, never changes. A poster from 1978 cheerily addresses shortages: “Even with small quantities: Save, save, save!” Pictured are a short bit of thread, a screw and a lump of coal.

Much has been made of whether this exhibition should have been allowed at all. But the fact that the North Korean minister of culture allowed this poster out of the country seems a coup. The images of totalitarian propaganda speak for themselves. —*Helen Chang*

Until Sept. 5
www.mak.at

Latest additions to IMMA’s permanent collection provoke thought


'Other Voices' (1993) by Catherine Lee.

Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art

Dublin: The Irish Museum of Modern Art is for the first time exhibiting 45 works collected since 2005 as part of its permanent collection. “Collecting the New” focuses mainly on living artists’ works with a look at perception versus reality.

In one, a 35mm DVD installation entitled “Robert Towne” (2006), the legendary American screenwriter discusses his part in the creation of hit films such as “Chinatown” and “Shampoo.” Awkwardly edited, Mr. Towne’s talking head is boldly projected onto the wall of a darkened gallery. Created by British-American artist Sarah Morris, the work’s documentary style plays with the pretenses of cinema.

William McKeown’s “Hope Painting (Going Through the Looking Glass)” (2005) conjures up a peaceful harmony with its soothing creamy beige oil paint spread over the square canvas’s center, with dark-brown fraying at the edges.

Devotees of Patrick Hall will be pleased to see 11 of the artist’s works on display, including his striking ink, watercolor and pastel “Sprinkle Ochre into my Eyes” (2004); two eyes peep over a wall while particles of yellow ochre color fall into them.

Meanwhile, Samuel Beckett inspires the most intriguing work. In Alexandra do Carmo’s “A Willow (Or Without Godot)” (2006), iPods lie next to two mattresses on a bed of stones. The viewer is invited to listen to the upbeat lines of Vladimir and Estragon in “Waiting for Godot.”

Weaving through the exhibition’s labyrinth of rooms, nothing is quite as it seems in this thought-provoking collection. —*Elizabeth Fitzherbert*

Until Aug. 8
www.imma.ie

A custom-made bass guitar with flame design by Paul Cook (circa 1976) for John Entwistle of The Who. Estimate: £15,000-£20,000.

Christie's Images

Memorabilia of the stars

Memorabilia sales in June will relive legendary moments in popular culture.

Collecting
MARGARET STUDER

On June 24, Christie’s South Kensington will offer memorabilia from the greats of rock and pop. Included in the 307-lot sale will be guitars, recordings, posters, manuscripts, clothing and jewelry.

“We usually only have two or three famous guitars, but in this sale there will be around 10,” says Christie’s specialist Neil Roberts.

On offer is an acoustic Yamaha FG-340 played by Beatle George Harrison when on holiday in Goa in 1984. With it will be a photo of Harrison signing the guitar and a tape of a jam session in which he sings “A Hard Day’s Night” (estimate: £50,000-£60,000).

A custom-made bass guitar designed as a flame by Paul Cook for John Entwistle of The Who is estimated at £15,000-£20,000. The guitar is part of an ensemble of more than 65 items of The Who memorabilia offered by American collector Brad Rodgers.

Meanwhile, a caricature drawn by Beatle John Lennon during his famous “Bed-In for Peace” with Yoko Ono at Montreal’s Queen Elizabeth Hotel in 1969 shows a double portrait of the couple in the sky with a sun and four clouds, with “Love and Peace” written beside the signature (estimate: £30,000-£50,000).

The earliest known recording of the band Oasis in concert (1992) with seven song titles including “Take Me” is expected to fetch £4,000-£6,000.

The Rock and Pop auction will be preceded on June 23 by a 250-lot film poster sale, featuring icons such as Steve McQueen, Sean Connery and Marilyn Monroe (estimates ranging from around £300-£6,000).

Separately, on June 8, London auctioneer Kerry Taylor will sell the black taffeta gown with plunging décolletage that catapulted Princess Diana to fashion fame at the age of 19 (estimate: £30,000-£50,000).

The Language of Globalization

By Paul Levy

As a military power England threatens no one, not even the French, with whom she was perpetually at war until fairly recent times. Since the 1707 Act of Union, England's political identity has been subsumed into that of Britain, and lately the fashion is to refer to the "United Kingdom." Though two of the four constituent nations are now devolved, with Welsh and Scottish Assemblies, there is almost no English nationalist sentiment.

Yet, argues Robert McCrum in "Globish: How the English Language became the World's Language," the political and cultural prestige of England has never stood higher. "English language and culture," he claims, "are rapidly becoming decoupled from their contentious past and disassociated from postcolonial trauma. At the same time, thanks to Microsoft, Vodafone, Orange and Apple, this rejuvenated lingua franca has acquired the capacity to zoom through space and time at unprecedented speeds, reaching unprecedented new audiences. An evolving technology is changing the rules of the game faster than the match itself can be played."

But this new lingua franca, awkwardly christened "Globish" in 1995 by amateur linguistics scholar Jean-Paul Nerrière, is not the language of England and the English. It is, unsurprisingly, that of America and Americans. There are reasons of history and economics for this, of course; but its most practical manifestation is the IT revolution, what Mr. McCrum calls the "Windows-driven IBM PC of 1990" Internet boom, and the fact that "the Highway Code of this teeming information freeway was written in American English."

"Globish" presents a terrifically interesting prism through which to view the history of English. It is at its most fascinating and amusing in the early chapters, such as that dealing with how the concrete, unsubtle Anglo-Saxon language profited from the introduction of Christianity and Latin, which gave it "the capacity to articulate abstract thought." Prior to St. Augustine's mission to England, for example, Old English had a good vocabulary for what Mr. McCrum calls "the common experience of everyday life—*sun* and *moon*, *hand* and *heart*, *heat* and *cold*, *sea* and *land*." But an abstract idea such as "creation" required "an elaborate German-style" portmanteau word, *frumweorc*, "from *fruma*, beginning, and *weorc*, work."

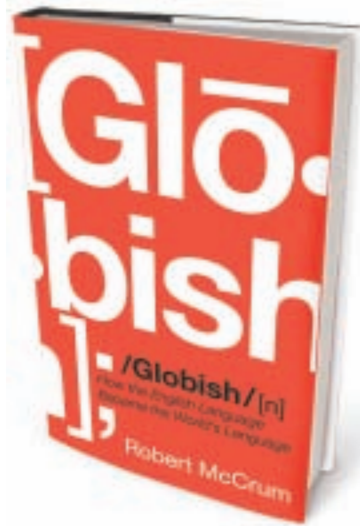
Globish
By Robert McCrum
(Viking, 310 pages, £20)

Mr. McCrum's rapid journey through the Conquest, Domesday Book, Magna Carta, the Peasant Revolt, translations of the Bible, voyages of exploration, Caxton, Chaucer, Defoe, Shakespeare, Pope, all seen from the vantage point of their effect on the development of the language, makes entertaining reading. I can't, though, see what his argument is for saying of the Plague that "the direct result of this inexplicable horror was the near annihilation of the French language in England."

Mr. McCrum, who is the biographer of P.G. Wodehouse and was until recently a distinguished literary editor of the world's oldest Sunday newspaper, the Observer, has a good deal of interest to say about the development of English during the 19th century: "To this day the accents of Australian, New Zealand and South African English have a distinct family resemblance, derived from the shared experience of class emigration." This is slightly puzzling though, as those who went to the Cape Colony or New Zealand did not share the convict origins of the Australian First Fleeters, and one would expect British regional differences to be at least as important as class in determining their descendents' accents.

He is superb on early American history and literature, especially on Mark Twain and Joel Chandler Harris's rendering (and sometimes invention) of black people's dialects. Mr. McCrum's wide reading shows in a passage in which he describes John Adams's prophecy of American language hegemony, and proposes founding a United States Academy: "England will never have any more honor," Adams wrote, "excepting now and then imitating the Americans."

Mr. McCrum is good, too, at reconciling the contradiction between the novelty of so much American English and its "distinctly archaic flavour, derived from its 17th century beginnings." This is reflected in its "language fossils," such as using *"mad* for 'angry', as Shakespeare did; *platter* for 'dish'; and *fall* for 'autumn.' The typically American use of 'I guess' goes further back, to Chaucer."



He insists that America's language is the motor of its politics, so that Obama is a master-orator as well as deal-maker. But one striking omission is that Mr. McCrum nowhere mentions the influence of Yiddish on the American language. But Yiddish, after all, had an effect on the syntax of American English; in what other languages can you ask a question with a declarative sentence, or make a negative statement with two positive terms? (See philosopher Sidney Morganbesser's celebrated "Yeah, yeah.") Indeed, without the input of Yiddish, would we find it so easy to understand the translation of the first line Hamlet's soliloquy into Globish, "2b?N2b=?"

Mr. McCrum does not think "world English" will develop as Latin did when it split into the Romance languages, partly because "once the Cold War ended, the nature of American power became transformed" and because "the colossal financial underpinning of Globish (many trillions of dollars) must insure its viability, at least for now." So it looks as though Chinese and Indian prosperity will not benefit their ancient languages, but that as they become economic superpowers, we will at least have the satisfaction of knowing that the hard deals they strike with us will be done in the language we best understand.

Mr. Levy is a writer based in Oxfordshire.

Wagnerian Marketing

By Conor Farrington

Princess Metternich once asked the great composer and pianist Franz Liszt if he had done "good business" on a recent concert tour, to which Liszt replied, "Princess, I make music, not business."

Liszt's personal charisma and extreme virtuosity would have ensured his success in any case, but he was being disingenuous about the extent of his self-promoting activities, which included newspaper and journal articles, spectacular public appearances, and (his detractors alleged) the employment of female claqueurs who fainted upon demand. Musicians did do business; and some of them were supremely good at it.

Richard Wagner: Self-Promotion and the Making of a Brand
By Nicholas Vazsonyi
(Cambridge UP, 234 pages, £55)

Nicholas Vazsonyi's book "Richard Wagner: Self-Promotion and the Making of a Brand," focuses on perhaps the greatest self-promoting musician in history, whose astonishing success in public relations secured him world-wide fame not just in his own lifetime but to the present day. Through a careful exploration of Wagner's life and work, Mr. Vazsonyi promotes the idea that Wagner's rise to celebrity was the outcome of a 40-year marketing campaign rather than the inexorable operations of artistic providence. By Mr. Vazsonyi's account, Wagner drew upon an innate flair for advertising and Selbstinszenierung ("self-staging") to promote himself as the most quintessentially German composer in history and "the executor of Beethoven's musical will." For Wagner it was not enough merely to be a great composer; it was also imperative that the world should acknowledge Wagner's significance and accord him due recognition, according to Mr. Vazsonyi.

In order to guarantee this outcome, Wagner employed a wide range of marketing techniques: short stories (featuring himself as protagonist), journal and press articles, creative advertising, constantly rewritten autobiographies, and extensive concert notes, in addition to his own colorful life and its enduring apotheosis in the Wagner Festival at Bayreuth.

From around 1840 until his death in Venice in 1883, Wagner's considerable literary output was devoted to a number of core marketing tasks: disparaging his competitors, creating a widespread appetite for a new kind of operatic composition, and explaining how his own operas, especially those of the Ring Cycle, would satisfy this demand.

Mr. Vazsonyi argues compellingly that Wagner's earlier operas, such as "Tristan und Isolde" and "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg" also played an important part in this campaign, serving as "trailers" to entice consumers to invest in the ultimate package deal—the Ring Cycle, performed at the Wagner Festival in Bayreuth. The success of this campaign is attested by the willingness of major cultural figures—most notably Liszt, his father in law—to act as publicity agents on Wagner's behalf, although it was entirely characteristic of Wagner that he should subsequently ridicule their efforts.

While Mr. Vazsonyi paints a vivid picture of Wagner's energetic self-promotional campaign, he is equally attentive to the complex historical and cultural dimensions of Wagner's artistic worldview. Wagner's universe was underpinned by a central opposition between "Germanness," which he saw as natural, pure, vigorous, and non-commercial, and "the Other"—French, English, and particularly Jewish—which he characterized as unnatural, decadent, weak, and excessively commercial. (The German-born Jewish composer Giacomo Meyerbeer, who was reviled by Wagner because of his commercial success, served as a focal point for much of Wagner's vitriol.)

Getty Images / DEA / A. Dagli Orti
German composer Richard Wagner

This core dichotomy informed Wagner's aesthetic goals, which centered upon the reconciliation of music and poetry in the Gesamtkunstwerk ("Universal Artwork"), a new form of opera that would be simultaneously Germanic and universal, avant-garde and popular, intellectual yet accessible.

By ceaselessly expounding this worldview in his extensive literary and musical output, Wagner at once carved out and filled completely a cultural niche that still remains entirely in his possession.

Mr. Vazsonyi highlights the contradictions inherent in a marketing exercise premised entirely upon a public disavowal of commercialism, and in a form of art whose intelligibility required copious concert notes despite its supposedly universal relevance and accessibility. It was Wagner's particular genius, in marketing terms, to conceal such paradoxes in the context of an overwhelmingly powerful promotional campaign.

Yet while Mr. Vazsonyi conveys Wagner's success in drawing upon and combining dominant cultural discourses of the time, he does not shrink from emphasizing the increasingly ominous nature of Wagner's frequently intemperate, even anti-Semitic, language and ethos. Mr. Vazsonyi examines these in texts such as "Das Judenthum in der Musik" ("Jewishness in Music"), and in the comparisons that could be drawn with later Germanic figures who also emphasized their status as victim-hero and as extraordinary savior of the German Volk.

As the first scholarly text to take seriously Wagner's incessant self-promotional activity, Mr. Vazsonyi's book assumes considerable importance not only in musicology but also in the history of marketing. Occasional stylistic infelicities aside, the book is written with panache and élan, conveying with refreshing brevity a palpable sense of Wagner's indefatigable industry as he prepared not only to compose but also to promote the Ring Cycle.

My only quibble with the book is the lack of an epilogue dealing with the contemporary Wagner industry, surely a fascinating case-study of a family business selling one of the most exclusive products in the world. This lacuna notwithstanding, it is Mr. Vazsonyi's achievement to have traced with such assiduity the paradoxical yet powerful roots of a marketing campaign that placed Wagner firmly and unassailably at the heart of Western art-music.

Mr. Farrington is a research associate at the Judge Business School, University of Cambridge, and a college research associate at Jesus College, Cambridge.

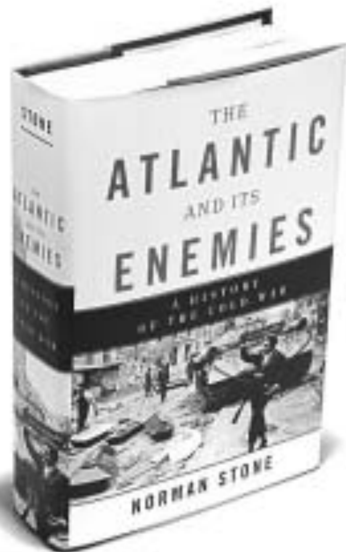
How the West Won

By William Anthony Hay

The outcome of the Cold War may seem inevitable in retrospect, but it hardly appeared that way during the four decades of high-stakes conflict. In the West and in the developing world of former European colonies, many perfectly intelligent people, without any great ideological investment in either side of the debate, concluded that the Soviet Union offered a successful path to modernity while the U.S. and its allies faced crisis or decline. The Soviets had seemed to master the basic delivery system of a vast welfare-state apparatus—health care, literacy, housing and even, it was said, basic consumer goods—while the West was subject to the vagaries of free-market boom and bust, with widening inequalities in the private realm and evidence everywhere of public squalor. Only during the mid-1980s did reality shatter the illusion. Communism and then the Soviet Union itself collapsed from within. The totality of the Western victory prompts an interesting question: How could so many have gotten so much so wrong?

The Atlantic and Its Enemies
By Norman Stone
(Allen Lane, 712 pages, £30)

Norman Stone's answer, in "The Atlantic and Its Enemies," is that those who doubted the West failed to grasp the deep resilience of its societies and "the extraordinary vigor of the capitalist world." The ability of the U.S. and Great Britain to regenerate themselves after sustaining the damage of stagflation and industrial strife in the 1970s brought dividends in the 1980s. France and Germany, for their part, became pillars of the Atlantic world by overcoming structural defects that had plagued them for years—e.g., a sectarian political culture that denied center-right parties a stable majority.



Mr. Stone, a former Oxford history professor who now lives (and teaches) in Ankara, Turkey, has in the past written a general history of Europe and a study of the Eastern Front during World War I, bringing to his accounts an idiosyncratic verve that is much in evidence in "The Atlantic and Its Enemies." He paints on a broad canvas, showing how the Cold War unfolded, but that does not keep him from weaving in personal anecdotes, like one about the time in the 1960s when he was traveling in Eastern Europe and ended up being jailed for several weeks in Slovakia, suspected of being a spy.

Mr. Stone contends that the Soviet Union's technological achievements in the 1950s masked the truth that it depended for its survival on an inheritance from czarist Russia. Without the men and women formed by the old regime's educational system, he says, neither Soviet science nor Soviet culture would have come to much. The communist system itself stifled initiative—which presented the Kremlin with a dilemma: The oppression required to quell potential unrest was so costly that it meant keeping the country poor and backward. Liberalizing the system risked losing control, as its rulers knew, and the Soviets lacked the capacity to find a third way. Much of communism's apparent success lay in the missteps and failings of the West—as when divisive conflicts in Vietnam and Algeria devastated the U.S. and France while Britain slid into economic decline.

The end of World War II was a hinge point. Just as that conflict was in part rooted in the imperial struggle between Germany and the Soviet Union to control Central and Eastern Europe, so an important element of the Cold War grew out of the vacuum left by the decline of the British Empire. Mr. Stone at one point refers to the Cold War as "the war of the British succession," a war that asked which power would prevail, the U.S. or the Soviets.

The terrible winter of 1946-47—"a catastrophe of ice and snow"—paralyzed Britain and showed the limits of its power. Britain barely had the resources to meet its own needs, much less fulfill its commitments in Europe and elsewhere. Suddenly the possibility seemed very real that Stalin would seize the chance to spread communism into Western Europe, especially when Britain abandoned a proxy struggle with the Soviets in Greece, where a communist insurgency was gaining ground. The U.S. filled the gap with security guarantees for Greece and other countries threatened by communism.

The American initiative, Mr. Stone notes, marked the debut of the Truman Doctrine and helped spur the formation in 1949 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It was the nations of the Atlantic region—a dozen at first, including the U.S., Britain, France and Canada, a roster later much expanded—that formed the bulwark of the Western defense against the Soviet Union.

Mr. Stone calls Greece the pebble announcing the avalanche: The country was a case study in the postwar vulnerability of half-developed regions, without social cohesion or stable institutions. As Britain and other European countries surrendered their imperial sway, the Soviets saw in such places an opportunity to extend their influence and undermine the West.

It fell to the U.S.—in Greece and many other places—to repel communism's overtures in what amounted to a grim world-wide game of whack-a-mole. Peasant societies especially—with a small and divided middle class and underemployed intellectuals ready for anti-imperialist mischief—turned into the pawns of Cold War conflict. Cuba fell into the Soviet orbit; Vietnam, for a while, become a Chinese project.

The Granger Collection

A cartoon from 1949, soon after formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as a counter to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Stone emphasizes the effect of decisions in forcing events. The Soviets' brutal takeover of Eastern Europe pushed Germany and other countries toward Washington just as other provocations, such as the Berlin Blockade in 1948, drew the U.S. into efforts to guarantee Europe's security. Prudent choices in the West avoided the mistakes of the interwar period, like competing tariff blocs and currency devaluations, and instead revived trade, spurring an economic miracle. NATO provided a military shield that made recovery possible, but economic growth underwrote the general security— from producing weapons to stationing large forces along the Iron Curtain.

Of course, the Cold War always threatened to turn hot, despite attempts to find an equilibrium. Mr. Stone explores various high-profile mistakes, such as Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev's badly judged gamble in 1962, when he attempted to install nuclear missiles in Cuba. But Mr. Stone also delves into less obvious topics for a Cold War book: how American monetary policy in the 1970s sapped its economic strength and how the shallow expansion of university education in Europe wrecked the study of the humanities while gradually poisoning the wider culture.

The 1970s, Mr. Stone emphasizes, were a dire period in the Cold War. The U.S., incapacitated by stagflation, seemed adrift in a post-Vietnam hangover, and Europe appeared awash with terror, from the havoc wreaked by the Red Brigades and the Baader-Meinhof gang to the murders by IRA bombers in London and by Palestinian terrorists at the Munich Olympics. By contrast, the Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev at least seemed to work passably well.

Appearances misled. The Soviet Union was being hollowed out from within, failing its citizens in nearly every way and revealing its ideology to be bankrupt. As for America and its allies, according to Mr. Stone, the world simply failed to appreciate the West's capacity for recovery, though some of its leaders did understand capitalism's regenerative power: "The West, in the summer of 1979, was in poor condition, and Europe was not producing the answers. Creativity would have to come from the Atlantic again, and it did. Margaret Thatcher emerged in May, and Ronald Reagan was elected President in 1980."

Mrs. Thatcher, the author writes, "knew when to be Circe and when to be the nanny from hell." As for President Reagan, Mr. Stone wisely quotes the man himself. "If it moves, tax it," Reagan said, summing up the liberal outlook to which he was adamantly opposed; "if it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it." The story of the 1980s, in Mr. Stone's bracing account, is one of the West finding its true self after years of wandering in the wilderness, while the Soviet experiment at long last revealed itself to be the sham it had been from the beginning.

Does the Atlantic world still have the regenerative capacity that Mr. Stone claims for it? The West is currently engaged in a new sort of war, with radical Islam, and just as some intellectuals and policy makers in Europe and the U.S. during the Cold War felt a strange tenderness for those who would subjugate them, so now do some Westerners fail to understand the menace we face—and what is at stake. Meanwhile, the economy of the developed world is more precarious than it was in the darkest hours of the 1970s. Mr. Stone doesn't stop to address the contemporary crisis, but "The Atlantic and Its Enemies" is an inspiring reminder that the West has risen to meet such challenges before, helped at crucial moments by bold leaders.

Mr. Hay, a historian at Mississippi State University, is the author of "The Whig Revival, 1808-1830."

time off

Sandro Zanzinger

Amsterdam
festival
"Holland Festival 2010" offers dance, literature, visual arts, theater, film, opera and music, including Shakespeare directed by Sam Mendes and dance by Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker.
At various locations
From June 1-23
☎ 31-20-7882-100
www.hollandfestival.nl

Barcelona
art
"Picasso versus Rusiñol" examines the influence of Catalan artist Santiago Rusiñol on the young Picasso, with a presentation of works by both artists.
Museu Picasso
Until Sept. 5
☎ 34-93-2563-000
www.museupicasso.bcn.es

Berlin
art
"Bruce Nauman: Dream Passage" showcases 30 sculptures and installations alongside 20 drawings and sketches in a retrospective of work by the American artist.
Hamburger Bahnhof—
Museum für Gegenwart
Until Oct. 10
☎ 49-30-3978-3439
www.smb.museum

Brussels
art
"Rehabilitation" exhibits works by contemporary artists exploring refurbishment in respect to modernist architecture and design, including Manfred Pernice, Falke Pisano, Tobias Putrih and Pia Rönicke.
Wiels
May 29-Aug. 15
☎ 32-2340-0050
www.wiels.org

Chichester
art
"Surrealism in Sussex" shows works by British surrealist artists Lee Miller and Roland Penrose, alongside pieces by Salvador Dalí, Max Ernst, René Magritte, Man Ray and Leonora Carrington.
Pallant House Gallery
May 29-Sept. 12
☎ 44-1243-7745-57
www.pallant.org.uk

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'Nigel Kennedy's Polish Weekend' at the Southbank Centre in London; top, '50 years of dance' by Boris Charmatz, performed in Amsterdam.

Edinburgh
art
"Johan Grimonprez" explores work by the Belgian artist best know for the art films "Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y" and "Double Take."
Fruitmarket
Until July 11
☎ 44-1312-2523-83
www.fruitmarket.co.uk

Florence
art
"Caravaggio and the Caravaggio-esque Painters in Florence" shows more than 100 paintings by Caravaggio and his Florentine followers and collectors.
Galleria degli Uffizi
☎ 39-55-2388-651
Until Oct. 17
www.uffizi.firenze.it

Helsinki
design
"Oiva Toikka—Moments of Ingenuity" presents works by the Finnish glass designer, from ceramic sculptures of the 1950s to present-day objects.
Designmuseo
May 30-Sept. 19
☎ 358-9622-0540
www.designmuseo.fi

Liverpool
art
"Dürer and Italy" exhibits 11 prints by the German artist alongside 13 Italian works by his contemporaries.
Lady Lever Art Gallery
Until Sept. 26
☎ 44-151-4784-136
www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk

London
music
"Nigel Kennedy's Polish Weekend" offers music performed by the violinist himself, a number of Polish musicians and Kennedy's own Orchestra of Life.
Royal Festival Hall
May 29-31
☎ 44-20-7960-4200
www.southbankcentre.co.uk

art
"Exposed: Voyeurism, Surveillance and the Camera" shows 250 works by celebrated artists and photographers including Brassaï, Weegee and Nick Ut.
Tate Modern
Until Oct. 3
☎ 44-20-7887-8888
www.tate.org.uk

art
"Caravaggio's Friends and Foes" showcases paintings by enemies of the Italian painter, including Giovanni Baglione, by his friends Louis Finson and Prospero Orsi, and followers such as Lo Spadarino and Simon Vouet.
Whitfield Fine Art
Until July 23
☎ 44-20-7355-0040
www.whitfieldfineart.com

Madrid
music
"Bon Jovi—The Circle Tour" takes the American rock band on their biggest tour since the late 1980s, performing 135 shows in 30 countries.
June 4, Rock in Rio, Madrid
June 5, Royal Beach, Scheveningen
June 7-13, The O2, London
June 16, Bercy, Paris
June 17-26, The O2, London
www.bonjovi.com

Rotterdam
art
"Atelier Van Lieshout—Infernopolis" introduces an installation by the Dutch artist group in the city's submarine wharf featuring medical instruments, silos, skulls, skeletons, and other sculptures.
Museum Boijmans van Beuningen
May 29-Sept. 26
☎ 31-10-4419-400
www.boijmans.nl

Stockholm
art
"Ed Ruscha: Fifty Years of Painting at Moderna Museet" displays more than 70 paintings by the American artist, spanning from 1958 to the present day.
Moderna Museet
May 29 - Sept. 5
☎ 46-8-5195-5200
www.modernamuseet.se

Vienna
film
"Vienna in Film—A century of city images" showcase 80 scenes from Austrian and international feature films depicting Vienna over the years.
Wien Museum Karlsplatz
Until Sept. 19
☎ 43-1-5058-7470
www.museum.vienna.at

art
"Alex Katz: Prints" exhibits 150 prints, cut-outs and artist books by the American artist with works from the 1960s to present day.
Albertina
Until Aug. 29
☎ 43-1-5348-30
www.albertina.at

Source: WSJE research