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the eye

Constructing Columbia

an architectural history of the morningside campus

Interview by Benjamin Kurland and Raphael Pope-Sussman

love in translation \\\ a tale of two dance halls \\\ style on speed-dial

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Contact Us:
eye@columbiaspectator.com
eye.columbiaspectator.com
Editorial: (212) 854-9547
Advertising: (212) 854-9558

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CONSTRUCTING COLUMBIA

After 10 years of Lerner Hall, The Eye sat down with professor Andrew Dolkart to talk about the glorious (and sometimes not so glorious) architectural history of this campus. *pg. 07*

*interview by Benjamin Kurland
and Raphael Pope-Sussman*

cover photo by Vitaly Druker

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

In his book “Architecture and Disjunction,” Bernard Tschumi, the man who designed Lerner Hall, writes that “the definition of architecture may lie at the intersection of logic and pain, rationality and anguish, concept and pleasure.” I’ve read that sentence a few times now, and I can’t quite make sense of it. It has that familiar scholastic stink—it’s the kind of inscrutable academic mess that feels right at home at Columbia. It’s odd, then, that Lerner, a building borne of Tschumi’s philosophy, doesn’t quite seem to fit in with its surroundings.

For this week’s cover story, we

sat down with Andrew Dolkart, a professor at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, to talk about Lerner’s 10th birthday, why the building hasn’t aged so well, and how a campus intended to be a Neoclassical oasis came to house a deconstructionist eyesore. It turns out that Columbia has always flirted with the avant-garde and intellectually challenging, and that the buildings we associate with “old” Columbia—those big columnar edifices of stone and brick—once were as weird and new as Lerner seems today.

—**Thomas Rhiel**

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I was both surprised and disappointed to find that, in an otherwise insightful feature on the Columbia comedy scene (“It’s Kind of a Funny Story,” by Hillary Busis), the author neglected to mention the Columbia University Marching Band.

Any survey of the on-campus comedy scene should at least make reference to the band’s biannual Orgo Night performances, in which the band performs an hour’s worth of jokes and music for a crowd that regularly exceeds 300 people. These jokes don’t write themselves—they’re the product of a smart, clever, dedicated group of comedy writers. What’s more, the band has never had

a “start-and-stop” nature, and has performed its Orgo Night shows at the end of every semester since at least 1984, as well as performing pre-game and halftime shows at every Columbia football game since the early 1960s.

Columbia doesn’t have a fledgling comedy scene—it has a uniquely Columbian one. If you’re searching for a healthy dose of funny on campus, don’t just look for comedy groups that are similar to those you’d see at other schools. Look for the groups that are indigenous to Columbia. They won’t just make you laugh—they’ll also make you proud to be a part of a community that produced them.

—**Devon Grandy, CC ’11**

ASK A CRANKY GS STUDENT

SMOKING AND NORTH BY NORTHWEST

BY DOUG HILL

Q: What do you think about the smoking ban on campus?
A: Well, if Barnard’s attempt at a ban is any indication, rules preventing smoking on Columbia’s campus will be hard to enforce. In any case, if Columbia truly wants to protect public health, a campus-wide ban on children would be much more effective. Not only are toddlers crawling with bacteria, but the noise they make is abominable. I much prefer the smell of cigarette smoke to the obnoxious shrieks of some brat whose parents can’t control it, but maybe that’s just me. Another step Health Services should take if it wants to promote a more salubrious campus environment would be closing JJ’s. I have no problem with the

food served at JJ’s, but, as anyone who’s walked down 114th Street near Amsterdam knows, having a giant grease pit underneath John Jay seriously damages air quality.

Q: What do you think about the Northwest Corner Building?
A: The building is a monument to PrezBo’s lack of taste and the bureaucratic mismanagement that characterizes Columbia’s administration. Even if the rumors are not true that it blocks off a substantial portion of the viewing range of the telescope on top of Pupin and that its top two floors will not be finished because the project ran far over budget, anyone with a pair of eyes can judge whether such a monstrosity belongs on campus. The Northwest Corner makes Lerner look like Fallingwater house.

THREE QUESTIONS FOR...

ANNE SHAPIRO

BY KATELYN FOSSETT

Columbia students’ relationship with neighborhood businesses has been tumultuous to say the least: We had a noncommittal Empanada Joe’s experiment, and don’t get us started on our messy Tomo break-up. Fortunately, Book Culture, with its recent expansion to 115th and Broadway, promises a little stability the others just couldn’t give us. How has the place succeeded where others have not? Excellent management? Prime location? That warm, Columbia feeling of students who would feel more at home in a textbook store than in a restaurant or bar? I met up with Annie Shapiro, the executive manager of Book Culture, to talk more about the store’s plans.

Why was one Book Culture just not enough?
We’ve been wanting to expand, and we’ve been looking for an opportunity for a while. We’re really excited about the closeness of this location—we’re right in the thick of things.

What is the relationship with the old location? How will this one be distinct?
It’s the same store. Same owners and everything, just an additional selling space and more selection. I like to call this one more of a “fun store.” While the other location will continue to focus on academic books, we’ll have more general interest, the latest Jonathan Lethem, what you read about in Time Out last week. We’ll have a health and body section, crafts and knitting—stuff the other location doesn’t carry.

Some students I talked to were disappointed in the bookstore that was at this location before. Are you planning on making improvements to that selection?
All the books we carry will be new; we didn’t buy any of his stock. The point of this store is to be more cutting-edge. It is a small store, though, so we’re trying for a careful selection of the best. We want people to tell us what they want, and we’d be happy to carry it.

BURRITO GUIDE

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

BY JOE KAPLAN

Dos Toros, a much-hyped taquería in downtown Manhattan, has got me thinking about the quality of local burritos, or lack thereof. Below, a list of places, near and far, to get your tortilla fix.

- 1. Chipotle.** Good for a quick fix—sure. But true burrito enthusiasts scoff at the use of white rice, the burrito’s disproportionate girth and the lack of hole-in-the-wall ambiance.
- 2. Calexico Cart.** Gets credit for being served out of a truck by people from Southern California, which definitely adds authenticity.
- 3. Texas.** Supposed to be good.
- 4. Anywhere in Mexico.** A burrito is basically the KFC Famous Bowl of Mexican food. In Mexico they serve food on a plate; a burrito may have a few ingredients inside but rarely the entire meal. The American way is to wrap every Mexican dish ingredient into a single tortilla and wolf it down.
- 5. Taqueria La Bamba, Mountain View, CA.** You are probably saying to yourself: “I don’t have the time or money to fly round-trip to California just for a burrito, even if it is the BEST BURRITO I WILL EVER EAT IN MY ENTIRE LIFE... I’ll just go to Chipotle.” Well, the price of guacamole at Chipotle can get you at least half-way there. At that point you will probably start to smell the superior ingredients, and this desire will fuel you the rest of the way.

EDITORS’ TEN

WHAT WE’RE INTO THIS WEEK

1. The Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain: They cover pop songs using (almost) only ukuleles. There is one guy who plays bass out of necessity really. There’s just nothing better than a bunch of old British people in formal wear playing “Smells Like Teen Spirit” on ukuleles.
—Zach Dyer, interview editor

2. “2012”: With all these “prestige” award-season bait films being released these days, I’m glad there’s at least one special-effects dominated mindless thriller about the Mayan apocalypse. Bonus points for John Cusack!
—Peter Labuza, film editor

3. 40 Inspirational Speeches in 2 Minutes: You can find it on YouTube. I was feeling burnt-out until I watched this, and then I had the sudden urge to achieve my dreams, save the White House from aliens, and let them take my life because they could never take my freedom. Epic.
—Melanie Jones, managing editor, features

4. Ostrich burgers: These are like regular burgers but made from an animal you can ride across the Great American Desert.
—Raphael Pope-Sussman, deputy editor, features

5. Tintin: He’s my hero, my role model, and my obsession. Who could be more captivating than a dauntless, pure-hearted, eternally young journalist (with a delightful golden coiffure) who travels to practically every continent in the world to outmaneuver the bad guys? And the fact that his name bears an uncanny resemblance to mine is definitive proof that we were meant to be.
—Yin Yin Lu, books editor

6. Set: This card game is like a fun brain teaser, to play alone or with friends—getting a “set” will make you feel like a genius!
—Helen Werbe, style editor

7. “Mad Men” season finale: Possibly the most satisfying hour of television I watched all year. When Joan returned, I actually cheered out loud.
—Hillary Busis, managing editor, a & e

8. Unseasonably warm weather: Just when you think it’s time to haul out the sweaters and gloves, mother nature plays a trick on you and you get a day of blissful sun.
—Joe Daly, tv editor

9. “V”: It gives me a replacement for my Joss Whedon and “Lost” fixes while these shows are off the air.
—Haley Vecchiarelli, senior design editor

10. Yogurt Burst Cheerios: It’s a happy medium between boring Cheerios and Froot Loops because only about 1 in 5 Cheerios has a frosting coat.
—Catherine Rice, dance editor

COMPILED BY EVAN OMI

University Roundup

what you might have missed in the schools of journalism, business, and medicine

BY JIA AHMAD

Journalism

Magazines and newspapers have been wringing their hands in a state of existential despair for quite some time. But surprisingly, the Columbia School of Journalism might not share their concerns. A report published last month by Leonard Downie, Jr., former executive editor of the Washington Post, and Michael Schudson, a professor at the School of Journalism, presents an optimistic take on the challenges facing journalism. In “The Reconstruction of Journalism,” published in the Columbia Journalism Review with the support of the Charles H. Revson Foundation, Downie and Schudson argue that the very economic factors that some believe spell the demise of the newspaper industry can be turned into opportunities.

In a public letter, School of Journalism Dean Nicholas Lemann lauded the report for its focus on “accountability journalism,” in which newspapers appear only as “part of a much larger cast of featured players.” The report argues that news patronage that produces journalism in

the public interest is gone, and that other actors, such as foundations, universities, and journalists themselves, must take an interest in independent reporting.

It outlines six specific solutions for journalism’s current challenges: the congressional

authorization of tax breaks for nonprofit and low-profit news organizations; increased investment by philanthropists, foundations, and community organizations; the reorientation of public television and radio to provide news reporting; the creation of university platforms for independent news organizations and reporting; the creation of national funds for local reporting; and the engagement of nonprofits, journalists, and other actors to increase public awareness and recognition of various sources of reporting. The future that Downie and Schudson paint may not keep newspapers front and

center, but it does illustrate the continued possibility and necessity of independent reporting, regardless of the medium in which it appears.

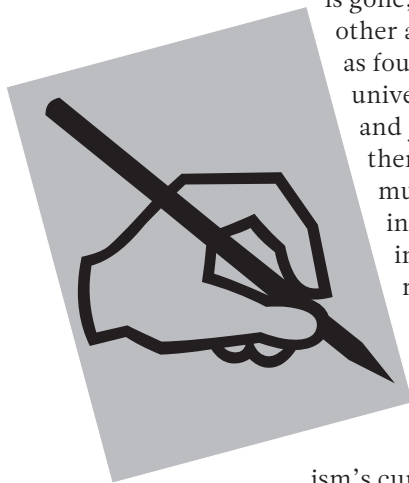
Business

Another corner of campus also recently tackled the challenges facing media organizations. Columbia Business School professors Jonathan Knee, Bruce Greenwald, and Ava Seave

recently published “The Curse of the Mogul: What’s Wrong with the World’s Leading Media Companies,” a book described by fellow professor Joseph Stiglitz as “the clearest, most valuable explanation of the evolving economic imperatives of the media industry” and “essential reading” for anyone interested in modern media.

An excerpt of the book in The Atlantic deconstructs four myths governing the conduct of the media industry: that growth is good, going global is desirable, content is king, and the convergence of various media outlets is the future. The authors argue that these misleading business principles have been guiding media moguls for the last two decades—that they predate the problems introduced by the Internet and the recent economic crisis, and are only exacerbated by the latter two conditions.

Two other Business School faculty members also published a prescription for current social and economic ills. In “The Aid Trap: Hard Truths About Ending Poverty,” Glenn Hubbard and William Duggan argue that aid for Africa should no longer be distributed to non-governmental organizations and governments, and should instead be invested in businesses to



“IT IS CRITICAL TO EXAMINE SUCH POTENTIAL FOR MORE EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION PRACTICES.”

support local growth. A direct challenge to the United Nations Millennium goals directed in part by Columbia’s celebrity professor Jeffrey Sachs, this proposal rejects microfinance in favor of a sort of Marshall plan of operation.

Medicine

Far uptown, a team of neurologists and psychiatrists at the Columbia University Medical Center identified a region in the hippocampus that is involved in the early development of schizophrenia and could help predict the onset of the disease. Published in the Sept. 7 issue of the Archives of General Psychiatry, an article written by Scott Schobel, Nicole Lewandowski, et al. reported the results of a two-year study of young adults chosen for their potential predisposition to schizophrenia. The implications of the study are of profound significance: There are currently no diagnostic tests for schizophrenia, but earlier identification and intervention could have dramatic results for patients by slowing down the progression of the mental disorder.

In the context of the current debate over health care, it is critical to examine such potential for more effective intervention practices early on in treatment. Another study at Columbia, spearheaded by Hannah Wunsch of CUMC and colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh and the British Intensive Care National Audit & Research Center, explored another realm of inquiry relevant to health care deliberations. Their article in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine compares health care systems in the United States and England, finding that in the former, over half of hospital deaths involve intensive care, while in the latter, only about 10 percent do. The study illuminates the differing practices related to end-of-life care: Across the Atlantic, intensive care isn’t often pursued as an option for the elderly. In the United States, as explained by primary author Derek Angus, intensive care is much more invasive, dangerous, and expensive. Most important, however, it sheds light on potential new fields of inquiry and research: the factors that produced such differing conditions themselves. ●



Love and Memoir

the eye interviews ellen graf

BY SARAH NGU

ILLUSTRATION BY CAREY DUNNE

Ellen Graf writes out of rural upstate New York where she lives with her husband Zhong-Hua Lu. She is a graduate of Bennington College Writing Seminars in non-fiction. Her first book, "The Natural Laws of Good Luck: A Memoir of an Unlikely Marriage," details her marriage to a man in China whom she barely knew. The book has been selected for the Barnes and Noble Discover New Authors promotion and the Borders Books Original Voices award. Graf is a recipient of both the Ludwig Vogelstein Writers Grant and of the New York Foundation for the Arts 2009 Fellowship in Nonfiction Literature.

Zhong-Hua and you were married within a few weeks of meeting each other. What was that like?

I knew his sister here—she was here in America. She thought, "Well, you know, maybe you'd like my brother." She actually offered to take me to China and see if I liked him. At first I thought it was very kind of an uncomfortable idea and I was taken aback. But then I just started to open my mind because I didn't really have a lot to lose, and also because someone was going to take me to China so if I didn't like this person that was OK.

Many times people are either attracted to someone because that person has something that they lack, or because of surface-reasons—how a person looks can be very magnetic—so this trip to China just kind of removed all of that. Once I got to China, being able to communicate without language and without expectation was a huge part of the experience. ... Both of us knew that we were coming from very different cultures, so that helped us put aside expecting the other person to act in a certain way or communicate in a certain way.

Of course I couldn't predict what hardships would befall us, but I didn't feel it was a risk. Especially after I saw him, I knew that it would be OK. Spending time with him, feeling how he was, how he gave so much space just to be whoever I am. So risk is really just what you don't know. What anyone has. What comes that you don't know that you can't predict. I guess you can say that is a risk. Anybody has risk. I didn't feel it a risk in choosing him.

So what prompted you to write about your experiences?

Zhong-Hua has a genetic illness and ... before he really had gotten a grip on English, he became very ill and underwent some major surgeries.

When I realized he wouldn't recover quickly, I realized I had to do something to pay the bills. I was still working as a sculptor and a mask-maker when he came. Writing was the last thing in my bag of tricks. So I said, "I need to do this, because I'm not a business person, I don't know how to make my art into something that can support both of us." So I just decided to do it because I knew that because I didn't have a work record, I didn't have a way to get a different kind of job that would pay what we needed. I knew that I needed to pull out the stops for us in order to support us. So a lot of our journey has been driven by necessity.

WRITING WAS THE LAST THING IN MY BAG OF TRICKS.

That seems like you were going into writing the novel with a lot of expectations and a lot riding on it.

I don't know if I expected something except that I knew I was doing my absolute best. And I hoped my absolute best was enough to make something that would mean something to other people that really wasn't just about us. It wasn't about two eccentric people in a novelty kind of way, but it was about the staggering effort that it takes to try to love another person. So I guess the unexpected thing was that that actually happened.

I learned that that was what people connected to—they were connecting to their own efforts to relate, and a lot of people who thought they were odd couples for different reasons or people that wanted to take a risk or had wanted to when they were young, you know old people that wanted to, or even people relating to just that idea of wanting to do something that they hadn't done. So, um, that's about as much as I can say.

And now you've been married for 10 years. What's the secret? Does it have anything to do with being able to write about and share your experiences?

I don't try to give people advice unless they ask me for advice. But from my experience I can say that I've experienced that to let go of your own expectations

of what you think another person owes you or that they should be for you ... is very useful. When you really care about someone you want it to work, you want to be with them; it just becomes more painful to cling, to think what you know and continue to judge them by your own framework. That was the secret for me. The more you judge someone, the more you can't perceive him. It is of great value to give another person a lot of space, to be who they need to be in relation to the world, to do what they need to do. My husband says that is "giving the used-car person space" (he often speaks in metaphors). He says if you go home and give them space, they think about it and give you a better price. It's the idea of letting someone's goodness motivate them in relation to what they do instead of pressuring them or making them feel guilty or bad. It's trusting that person. I think it's hard. I've had to learn it. It's hard to give space when you're not getting what you want right now. ●



The Hallows du Jour

halloween in paris, the morning after

TEXT AND PHOTO BY BETSY MORAIS

The magnificent eeriness envelops me as I walk up musty steps to the cemetery, and the light changes.

Everywhere, there is darkness, except for the flickers of candlelight that glow from within little houses of the dead. I can tell they're home because they've got their lights on. A rainy evening makes the air damp but doesn't put out those flames. There are a million flowers all over, as though this were a garden, but with no roots growing in the ground. The persistent "euuuh" sound echoes through cobblestone passageways—it's just the hum of the French in between thoughts—but it sounds like the hymn of phantoms.

Night falls, and I lose my way. I can't find the dead I'm looking for. I stumble upon Frédéric Chopin, whose grave is gilded with a shrine of candles, flowers, and written notes. His music is playing inside my head, and everything swells—the dark, the flickering, all the people staring at his tombstone, so still as if they are dead themselves—and then this imaginary concerto is interrupted. A bell tolls and sends a shiver down my spine. A remote voice calls out, "Le cimetière est fermé!" The cemetery is closed!

It would have been the best Halloween. I wasn't in costume, but I definitely wasn't myself.

For a treat, if not a trick, I walked among the dead at Le cimetière du Père Lachaise in Paris. But it was not Halloween, it was La Toussaint: All Saints' Day.

God was there, a spirit that doesn't haunt our American holiday. I saw Jesus's eyes poking out through the sepulcher window. I saw stone crosses blend into an ominous sky, as though the crucifixes had been set down on top of each tombstone from above.

This is supposed to be a religious experience. Following a tradition of honoring all saints together on the first Sunday after the Pentecost, All Saints' Day is rooted in the early fourth-century Catholic commemoration of "all the martyrs." Pope Boniface IV buried 28 wagonloads of bones beneath the Roman Pantheon in the early seventh century in order to ensure worship of all the saints collectively. Though dated in May, this feast of the "dedicatio Sanctae Mariae ad Martyres" became the precursor to the autumn celebration.

A century later, in the mid 700s, Pope St. Gregory III dedicated a chapel to all saints in the Basilica of St. Peter, marking the day of the feast on Nov. 1. About a century after that, Pope Gregory IV formally established this date by extending the holiday to the entire Church. The celebration rose to prominence later in the ninth century, when the departed wife of Byzantine

Emperor Leo VI was memorialized in a church named for All Saints' Day.

In France, the holiday was made a day of obligation during the reign of Charlemagne and his son Louis the Pious of the Frankish Empire. Today, it remains a preeminent celebration in the country. Children were given vacation from school from Oct. 23 to Nov. 5 this year. In the days ahead of La Toussaint, flower shops and grocery stores stocked up on flowers, which the French bring en masse to honor the dead—especially at Pere Lachaise.

I SAW JESUS'S EYES POKING OUT THROUGH THE SEPULCHRE WINDOW.

These flowers, delicate and organic, looked different in the storefronts of Paris than the "Slutty Sailor" costumes I passed by in Ricky's on Broadway and 114th Street before I made the trip. Yet when my friends, Martine and Patrick Guillon, picked me up at the airport, they explained to me that La Toussaint is not entirely unlike American Halloween in that "c'est bon pour l'économie." It's good for the economy.

Those days off from school are spent shopping, said Martine, who recently retired from decades as a teacher. Zoe Morrison, a junior at Harvard studying abroad in Paris, said, "I think it's just another school holiday." Morrison noted that La Toussaint has always been important in France, but now, like any holiday, it matters to the religious and not to others.

Meanwhile, Halloween barely seeps into French culture. Nobody stocks up on candy in anticipation of trick-or-treaters. No such trick-or-treaters walk the streets that night. But on Oct. 30, I found myself at a costume shop on Rue du Temple and Rue de Rivoli, where the line had extended so far that the storekeeper—who stood in the doorway, smoking a cigarette, of course—sent one of his employees to hand out des bonbons to patient customers. My friends and I refused to participate in this desperate exercise in commercialism—how American. We were in Paris, for Christ's sake.

The All Saints' vigil hearkens in faith, "Be our light in the darkness, God we pray, and in your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night." So it was on Nov. 1, the day after Halloween, when all the spooks and spirits were out in the cemetery, and I walked among them. A different kind of haunting than what I'm used to at home. But I never felt so alive. I guess it was a matter of contrast. ■





Constructing Columbia

an architectural history of the morningside campus

by Benjamin Kurland and Raphael Pope-Sussman

WITH THE 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY of Lerner Hall upon us, we wanted to reflect on the history of the building and on its architectural context. This week, we sat down with Andrew Dolkart, the James Marston Fitch Associate Professor of Historic Preservation at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, to discuss the origins of the Morningside campus, the dreariness of the Business School, and the future of architecture at Columbia. What follows is an edited transcript of the conversation.

Can you give us the Cliff Notes history of the Morningside campus? Why was the neighborhood so undeveloped when Columbia first purchased land up here?

This was the site of an insane asylum, and so that wasn't good neighbors. Real estate investors weren't going to invest if there was an insane asylum next door. That was one thing. Two, it's very isolated here—and most importantly, there was no mass transit. So there used to be els—elevated rail lines. When the el came up Columbus Avenue, instead of coming up here, when it got to 110th Street, it went up Eighth Avenue in Harlem. It led to the development of Harlem and the Upper West Side.

If you were a real estate developer, why would you develop here when you could develop in Harlem, and then you were close to the elevated? There are some row houses in the neighborhood that are pretty early that were a disaster and were mostly foreclosed on by the banks.

So Columbia buys the land here—I think it was in December of 1893—and Columbia had a new president, Seth Low, who was really intent on making Columbia into the great urban university. And Columbia was on a very constricted site in Midtown. He knew that the school needed to move, and he wanted to keep the school in New York, though a lot of the trustees did not. They wanted to move the school out of the city all together, so that it would become a typical American college on a big, landscaped lot. This was actually the closest available land in the developed city because New York Hospital, which owned the asylum, was moving it out to White Plains. So Columbia made a deal with New York Hospital to buy a small portion of the asylum property. Low got the trustees to go along, so they bought the land, and they had no idea what to do with it.

So they had a very lengthy architectural process, where they hired three architects to come up with designs, and they could never decide what to do. Finally, they decided to choose Charles McKim as their architect, who was a partner at McKim, Meade, and White—which in the early 1890s was becoming the most prestigious firm in America. And eventually, McKim would become the most prestigious architect in America.

I always tell people how hard it is for us to remember that there was a time when the most avant-garde architecture was Classical and Renaissance design. And so, McKim really exemplified the most advanced design ideas in America. And he and Seth Low got along really well. And they came up with the master plan. It's basically McKim's master plan for the campus. And the key element was that it had to be built in pieces, because Columbia had no money. And it had no history of getting money from the alums. So it was very difficult. In order to buy the land they had to take out a mortgage and sell the Midtown property. And then once the plan was established, they didn't have the money to build.

Low himself gave one million dollars to build the library. He was an only child of a huge China trading fortune. He had inherited his father's money when his father died, and he gave the money for Low Library as a memorial to his father. So it's actually a memorial to Abiel Abbot Low.

Construction began at this [the north] end of the campus. The idea originally was they would build the library, they would build the gym and the power

plant, and they would build the science labs. And so Schermerhorn was the biology building, Havemeyer was for chemistry, Fayerweather was for physics, and what is now Mathematics was the engineering school.

And the liberal arts would be located in the asylum buildings, until they were needed for new construction. Which is why Buell still survives. That was an asylum building, and they just never built on that site, so it's still there.

So on Oct. 1, 1897, classes began here. And the library was finished, and at least those classroom buildings were finished. And then over the years, the master plan was filled in. Mostly under Seth Low's successor, Nicholas Murray Butler.

And McKim, Meade, and White remained the architects until the 1930s, when they basically were fired. They were trying to lure a donor for Butler Library, so they hired that donor's favorite architect. So everything was designed by McKim, Meade, and White on the historic campus, except that McKim's deal with Columbia was that if anybody donated money and specifically said, "We're giving you this money, but X has to design the building," then that would happen. And so the chapel and Lewisohn Hall were designed by other architects. But otherwise, the historic campus is basically Charles McKim's master plan.

What was the first building to break with the Neoclassical aesthetic?

The Neoclassical aesthetic remained in place through the 1930s, so that includes all of McKim, Meade, and White's buildings and it includes Butler Library too, which was designed by a different architect. I don't think it's a very good building, but it's certainly part of the aesthetic of the campus, so it fits in very well with the campus.

But in the post-war period, when new construction began, I think two things occurred: One was that the leadership at Columbia had no interest whatsoever in quality architecture. And two was, following the design ideas of the day, which was appropriate I think, they turned to modern design. The unfortunate thing was they turned to really third-rate architects to design Uris, or the engineering school, or Carman Hall. There's a lot of really pretty bad architecture from the '50s and '60s on the campus.

But they broke away with the original campus idea. I don't think designing in a Classical or Renaissance manner in the '50s or '60s would have been the right way to go. But at the same time, Columbia was hiring these not-very-good architects. You know, Harvard and Yale and Princeton were hiring Le Corbusier, and Mies van der Rohe, and Alvar Aalto, and Eero Saarinen, and all the great architects,



Lerner Hall, looking east from Broadway /// photo by Lauren Weiss



The southern face of Carman Hall /// photo by Angela Radulescu



The face of Low Library /// photo by Kristina Budelis

so that was a big difference.

Things changed later in the 20th century. Columbia got interested in higher-quality design on campus, and that's certainly true now, that there is an effort.

The new laboratory building by Rafael Moneo, and the fact that Renzo Piano is doing the new campus—I think there's more of an interest in returning to Columbia's roots as a patron of great architecture.

Can you talk a little more about what the Northwest Corner Building means for architecture at Columbia?

I think it is a statement about building high-quality architecture that's contemporary. It's a really sophisticated, contemporary building for the site. One that fits in with the campus but doesn't imitate the campus. From what I've seen so far—I haven't seen the interior—I think it's quite a wonderful building. I like the metal on the street façade and the transparency on the campus façade. It is somewhat open; it's going to have walls of glass in the library. It's a beautiful building.

In the 1960s, I.M. Pei proposed constructing two rather hulking towers on the South Lawn. Why did that plan ultimately fail?

Well, it's not clear that that was every really a serious project. It would have been huge structures on the campus. I don't think the campus could have held something quite so big. I don't know if you've seen Barry Bergdoll's book on the making of Columbia. He hypothesizes that it wasn't really a realistic plan. It was a reaction to the gym fiasco in the park, to show that Columbia was going to build on the campus and not in the neighborhood. It made a point, but it wasn't actually ever going to be built.

Speaking of disasters, can you talk a little about the planning behind the Amsterdam side of campus?

There was a master plan that McKim, Meade, and White did for the east campus, that included what's now the Faculty House and the president's house and the dormitory that I never remember the name of, that was originally Johnson Hall. And then there were supposed to be other buildings in that design idea that were to be on that whole section, but they were never done.

That was part of the post-war design. The plan—Harrison and Abramovitz were the architects—was a very interesting one to connect the east campus to the main campus. And since we're up on a terrace, the idea was, well they'd build the bridge and you could flow easily back and forth. And it was an interesting idea on paper, but it never really worked. Because people came to the Law School or the School of International Affairs from the subway, so they didn't come onto campus. They entered on Amsterdam Avenue, and then entered the Law School through the service entrance. I think it was an interesting idea, I think it was a failure—and it also creates that dark, bleak section of Amsterdam Avenue. There was a proposal in the 1990s to remove the plaza. But it's hard to get money to remove something; it's easier to get money to build something.

Ten years on, Lerner Hall is perhaps the most polarizing structure on campus. Can you talk about the origin of the building? How has it aged?

Lerner is an interesting puzzle because Lerner was going to be this incredibly contemporary, dynamic building, and it was going to make a

statement that Columbia was really interested in contemporary design, and they hired Bernard Tschumi, who was the dean here, another world-class architect.

But I think it suffers from two things: One was that here you have a very, very avant-garde contemporary architect, but he was forced in part of the building to work in a kind of contextual manner. So the brick sections next to the library—his heart was not in that, and I think it looks kind of phony. Whereas I love the wall, the glass wall. I think the glass wall is really beautiful. But the problem is that it was designed before e-mail and the idea was that everybody would be going to their mailboxes, and those ramps would be incredibly dynamic and you'd see this flow of people walking up and down the ramps all the time. Nobody goes and gets their mail anymore. And also, everybody knows the shortcuts, so they don't go on the ramps. You don't really see the dynamism that was planned. So in a sense, it became kind of anachronistic. People never used the ramps in the manner in which Tschumi had envisioned, which is kind of too bad. I always want to see a dance event, to see how dynamic those ramps could be.

How does the architecture of this campus reflect Columbia's philosophy as an institution?

I think that one of the key elements of the design here that McKim and especially Low were very, very strong on was that Columbia was to be a university in the city, and that the city was a classroom.

People have the image now that Columbia is very enclosed. But that actually was not the vision originally. The vision was that you would stand at the top of the stairs of Low Library and you could look out on the city. Now that's blocked by Butler Library. But actually it would have been blocked earlier because the image was that everything to the south was going to be filled with row houses. But once the subway opened in 1904, apartment houses appeared. So by the time you get the apartment houses, they were blocking the view anyway.

But that was the idea, that Columbia would be part of the city, of New York. In fact, Low renamed Columbia "Columbia University in the City of New York."

"THERE'S MORE OF AN INTEREST IN RETURNING TO COLUMBIA'S ROOTS AS A PATRON OF GREAT ARCHITECTURE."

That was very much a part of the educational philosophy. Low was opposed to dormitories. The dormitories weren't added until Nicholas Murray Butler, and they buy the campus south of 116th Street, and McKim, Meade, and White extends the master plan with dormitories. So I think that an idea that's still very potent at Columbia is that Columbia is part of a great urban center. And I think that Low believed that the one thing Columbia had that Harvard, Yale, and Princeton did not have was New York, and I think that that's still true.

If you had your druthers, what would change around here?

There could be better maintenance on the campus. South Court, the big court in front of Low Library. The concrete's really shabby. It needs major work. The stairs are cracked and their alignment is coming off. It's a very expensive project, but it really needs to be done. It's Columbia's front yard. And then there are smaller things like restoring the bronze lamps, restoring the iron. I think that there needs to be a little bit more attention paid to the conditions on the campus. I think Columbia's done a spectacular job in the manner in which it treats apartment houses. The staff that deals with buildings really has a feel now for the older architecture. But it means an investment. And money is always hard to find. I find it sad that the first thing you see when you come in is the crumbling concrete.

Since I've been here, since the late 1970s as a graduate student, I think that the key change that I have seen—besides the interest in hiring talented architects—is the landscaping. There was no landscaping, practically, on the campus. There was a



Uris Hall, viewed from above /// photo by Mira John

master-planning study that was done in the 1990s. And one of the suggestions that came out of it was how important it was to do landscaping. And so all of the gardens you see on the campus, the gardens that are just south of 116th Street, along the walls, these gardens that are out here, these garden plots—all of the planting has been a result of that. And the trees have been trimmed. Trees are cared for now. It's just been an amazing change. That's been fantastic. And I'd like to see that continue.

Are there particular features of this campus that you think students don't notice?

Everything is very carefully planned. The fact that Low Library is the only building that's all stone, so that's the primary building. And the classroom buildings are mostly brick, which was a sort of secondary material. Nobody has any reason to go into Low Library. But its magnificent interior, it's very richly detailed. It's always worth taking a detour into Low Library. Also, the interior of the chapel is one of the great masterpieces of American design. It's all structural; it's all clay, various clay materials. It's very beautiful, and it was considered a masterpiece when it was done, and I think it is one of the great buildings. But people on campus don't ever think to go in.

There's a lot of subtle little things, like the bronze lamps—they need restoration—but they are really beautifully done. All the buildings look like they're the same. And on your initial view, you say, "Oh, they're all the same." But actually, each one is different. The proportions are a little different, the porticos are different. The cornices are magnificent. They're all these copper cornices, and they're really elaborate. And if you look up, or if you're in a classroom on a high floor and you look out the window, they're really spectacular.

Do you have a favorite building on campus?

I guess the chapel is my favorite building on campus. It really is a masterpiece. And Low also is really spectacular. The other thing I really love is the old science lecture hall in Havemeyer. That's still there, that gets used for movies. It's a terrific space.

A least favorite?

Now there's a tough one: between Uris and the engineering school—I'm not sure which I'd vote for. I'm not talking about the Uris addition, which is the front, but the original Uris, visible up above. It's just a really dull '50s building. I think coming close is Schapiro Hall, a more recent building. Really clumsy attempt at trying to be McKim, without the finesse of McKim. And it has too much stone on it. The architects missed the notion that this [Low] is supposed to be the stone building.

Favorite building in New York?

I always like to tell people that it's the New York Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church because it's a building nobody's ever heard of, which is a fantastic church in Crown Heights in Brooklyn. But in Manhattan, my favorite building is 1 Wall Street, which is the old Irving Trust Company. And it's a 1929 skyscraper that's just spectacularly beautiful.

Looking to the future, what do you think about the plans for Manhattanville?

It's premature to comment on the quality of the architecture, but Renzo Piano is one of the world's great architects, so I'm optimistic. But there are a lot of really interesting ideas about creating a sense of transparency on the lower floors of the buildings. So we'll see. I've been in favor of Manhattanville because a great institution is going to expand. And if it's not in Manhattanville, it's going to be on Morningside Heights. And it would lead to the demolition of a lot of really important buildings—the residential buildings in the neighborhood. There isn't really much that will be lost of note in Manhattanville. Columbia's going to be keeping a couple of the major buildings there. I think it's a good place for Columbia to expand.

So has Columbia abandoned its Neoclassical roots for good?

I think so. I think when McKim designed this campus, that was the avant-garde architecture of the day. And I don't think we should be designing buildings that look like McKim's designs. We should be designing for the 21st century. I believe that as a preservationist, that every era has its architecture. And I'm in favor of new buildings that reflect our time. And I think that there's the potential for the new campus to be quite spectacular. So we'll see. ●

BYE BYE, NY

a look at nyc's small screen fall from grace

BY JOE DALY

ILLUSTRATION BY MATTEO MALINVEMO

Once upon a time, in the days when we thought Y2K would end the world and Britney ruled, ladies everywhere pored over the puns and partying of their four favorite girlfriends on “Sex and the City.” If you had asked any of those viewers who their favorite character was, they may have pointed to the show’s secret fifth protagonist: New York City.

Sure, everyone loved Carrie’s wit and Samantha’s libido, but “Sex and the City” really gained traction when it indulged in its love for New York. Whether the foursome was sharing an autumn walk through Central Park, a gab session over Tasti D-Lite, or perfume spritzing at Takashimaya, the show was infused with both gritty truisms of life in New York and over-the-top fantasies of a perfect city. This combination of the rats in Carrie’s apartment and the abundant Manolos filling her closet made “Sex and the City”’s depiction of New York both relatable and aspirational.

“Sex” was hardly alone in its love for New York. Everyone remembers the skewed version of city

life presented on “Friends”: Monica and Rachel’s unrealistically large apartment, the gang hanging out at Central Perk instead of ever going to work, and Phoebe’s wacky bohemian pursuits. “Will and Grace,” “Dharma and Greg,” and basically every other sitcom that premiered in the ’90s and early 2000s also starred 20-somethings trying to make it in Manhattan.

But a look at the TV shows that have followed New York’s small screen golden age suggest that New York may no longer work as TV’s default setting.

Shows that tried to ride the “Sex and the City” wave by imitating it, like “Lipstick Jungle” and “Cashmere Mafia,” tanked after only one or two embarrassing seasons. And “Ugly Betty,” a series that used to be popular, has now been relegated to airing at 9 on Friday nights.

The CW’s “Gossip Girl” and MTV’s “The City,” are both partially to blame for New York’s small screen decline. “Gossip Girl” was once a guilty pleasure because it was fun to guess what real-life school “Constance Billard,” the fake academy attended by the show’s main characters, was supposed to be. Now NYU has become the show’s new setting—and while the downtown university is a major part of New York, watching Blair’s futile attempts at

maintaining social superiority over hipsters toting textbooks is a painful indication that “Gossip Girl” has lost its mojo.

Similarly, MTV’s “The City” began as a sort of guide to downtown restaurants and clubs. Viewers could hang on the name of every last Meatpacking District lounge Whitney visited. But “The City” has now abandoned the delicious rivalry between the “uptown Olivia” and “downtown Whitney,” focusing instead on workplace tiffs and Greenwich banker beaus. As with “Gossip Girl,” this shift has been accompanied by dropping ratings and less buzz.

This fall’s most popular and critically acclaimed series are set in places far away from New York City. Shows like “Community,” “The Office,” and “Modern Family” actually play up their middle-of-nowhere locales, which are self-consciously unsophisticated and unrefined—nothing like the glamorous TV New York of years past.

TODAY, THE “TV NEW YORK” LIFESTYLE SEEMS LIKE A RELIC OF AN EARLIER TIME.

Perhaps viewers have come to find these left-of-center settings more appealing because that old, “Sex and the City” version of a New York filled with excess is no longer interesting in our current economic climate. New York on TV is home to characters decked out in Dior, running between benefits, obsessed with college admissions or table service at clubs. While such a setting once gave viewers an escape from their humdrum lives, now it just seems like a relic of an earlier, recklessly overindulgent time. Those of us who aren’t Blair, Whitney, or even Carrie would rather see cubicle workers making the best of what they’ve got than watch trust fund babies spending their inheritances and dancing on tables.

There are some important exceptions to the TV-New-York-is-dead hypothesis. “Mad Men” takes place on Madison Avenue, a location as iconically New York as it gets. And “30 Rock,” NBC’s critical hit about the workings of a comedy sketch show, takes place in New York’s Rockefeller Center, one of the Big Apple’s classic landmarks. But even these series don’t use New York like TV shows used to. “Mad Men,” set in the booze-soaked 1960s, presents a fantasy of New York, but it’s a different one than that of “Sex and the City” because it’s not one we can live vicariously through. By contrast, “30 Rock” is set in New York in name only, since its characters hardly ever leave the confines of their studio.

Then again, less airtime might actually be a welcome break for New Yorkers. Chuck Bass and Whitney Port aren’t really the best mascots for a city that insiders know is about much more than PR and club openings. It was annoying enough when the line at Magnolia grew to be blocks long because Carrie and Miranda shared one cupcake there in 1998—if fantasy and reality kept getting blurred together, the city might actually begin resembling TV’s lie more and more. At least now we hopefully won’t have to deal with freshmen coming to Columbia and thinking it’s cool to go clubbing in the Meatpacking District. ●



JUST DANSE

frederick wiseman's new film looks into the inner workings of the paris opera ballet

BY HANNA OLDSMAN
PHOTO COURTESY OF ZIPPORAH FILMS

There is a line at which two mirrors come together. If you stand in front of it, your reflection almost disappears into the crack.

In “La Danse,” Frederick Wiseman’s new documentary about the Paris Opera Ballet, mirrors play nearly as important a role as the dancers themselves. In one scene, two dancers are filmed from the back of the studio as they rehearse a pas de deux from choreographer Wayne McGregor’s “Genus.” We see their backs, McGregor pacing at the front of the studio, and their reflections in the mirror. In another scene, a barefoot dancer with a long skirt flirting about her ankles works through an earthy solo variation. We watch her use the mirror to hone her technique, then gaze into the mirror as her image wanders away.

We also see a dancer practicing his adagio where two mirrors meet, knees slowly bending, legs unfurling towards the ceiling. Only his reflection is filmed—his image, projected onto the mirror, expands and slims with his every movement, deleting the middle of his body.

As might be expected from someone so entranced by mirrors and images, Wiseman’s main interest deviates from that of most dance filmmakers. His film observes the Paris Opera Ballet as a many-sided institution, highlighting often unseen facets of the company. There are, of course, numerous scenes in which we see dancers, choreographers, and teachers at work, and these are beautifully executed. Wiseman’s cameras record them as they work through technical difficulties and take classes. Ballet masters squabble over how a variation ought to look; a young dancer looks doubtfully at a prop gun he must hold as a soldier in “The Nutcracker.”

WISEMAN IS CAREFUL NOT TO CUT OFF FAR-FLUNG LIMBS WITH HIS CAMERA.

There are also long ribbons of film in which Wiseman records the dancers dancing, both in rehearsal and in performance. He films parts of “Paquita,” the snow scene from “The Nutcracker,” Mats Ek’s “The House of Bernarda Alba,” Sasha Waltz’s “Romeo and Juliet,” Pina Bausch’s “Orpheus and Eurydice,” and Angelin Preljocaj’s “Medea.” He is careful not to cut off far-flung limbs with his camera. As Wiseman comments in an interview at the Film Forum, where La Danse is currently playing, “I had seen a lot of dance films that I didn’t like because there were a lot of

close-ups of heads and arms and legs ... I wanted to show in all of the dance sequences the complete body of the dancer because that’s what was producing the performance.”

But Wiseman is determined to make clear that he is interested in more than the art of dance. His film also shows the hands of costume workers sewing steadily, a woman dyeing white cloth blue, the artistic director Brigitte Lefèvre finalizing casting, and meetings among administrators on how best to woo donors. Men sweep the studio floors and tidy the grand theater. A beekeeper harvests honey on the Opera’s roof; in a stray piece of glass, we see his reflection, too. These elements form a rhythm of their own, just as vital to the working of the company as the strains of Tchaikovsky’s “Nutcracker” that waft from the studio doors.

This is Wiseman’s second dance film. 1995’s “Ballet,” his first, is a documentary that follows the American Ballet Theatre in rehearsal and performance. Wiseman’s portrayals draw much of their individual identities from the cities in which they were filmed.

Wiseman says that his most recent film was inspired by the years he spent in Paris. He focuses on the Paris Opera Ballet as a uniquely French institution, recording the ballet’s administrators as they worry about mundane matters like strikes and the retirement age of Opera workers. In one scene, Lefèvre and other directors speak to the company about their attempts to change the retirement age for POB dancers to 40.

The companies’ structures are also noticeably different. Until recently, with the founding of the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School of Ballet, American Ballet Theatre did not have a school. The company therefore had to import its dancers from other dance schools in the United States and abroad. Consequently, there is less unity in style at ABT than there is at the Paris Opera Ballet. At the POB, Lefèvre emphasizes, the school is the heart of the company: it is here that young children are molded into dancers.

There is also strict hierarchy at the Paris Opera Ballet that is not as apparent in Wiseman’s film about ABT. In a discussion between a young choreographer and Lefèvre, for example, the latter tries to impress upon the former that company’s hierarchy must be upheld: he cannot simply assume that principal dancers like Aurelie Dupont or Laetitia Pujol will dance any work made for them. To give them something less than superb, she says, would be like driving a race car at six miles per hour.

Yet despite the differences in the companies, Wiseman’s artistic philosophy is reflected in both of the two films. Both are stridently unsentimental; the filmmaker retains a distance between himself and his subject. Wiseman has no real presence in his documentaries. The lens of his camera

sometimes seems like a one-way mirror. We can see into the inner workings of this place, but no one acknowledges us—dancers never talk directly to the camera.

Wiseman’s is a style entirely different from that of most other dance documentarians. In a film made in 1999, “Etoiles: Dancers of the Paris Opera Ballet,” director Nils Tavernier talks to dancers and teachers about everything from growing up in the ballet school to the competition within the company to raising a family. We see blistered toes,

dancers struggling for breath in the wings, corps de ballet members laughing and snapping photos backstage, and young dancers in class who wonder whether they have a future in the company.

WE CAN SEE THE INNER WORKINGS OF THE BALLET, BUT NOBODY ACKNOWLEDGES US.

“Etoiles” does a lot of work for the viewer—and it does it well. Tavernier’s film sequences suggest the timelessness of the company: rich, colorful dance scenes and interviews are interspersed with still photos, black and white, over which his camera roams. The beautifully shot ballets mix camera angles effortlessly, and while the focus is not al-

ways on the dancer’s whole body—something that Wiseman tries to remedy in his documentaries—close-ups of the dancers are nevertheless successful in their own way.

Here, discussions of love, passion and inspiration do not feel out of place or contrived, and the dancers are remarkably eloquent and candid: “I think I love it [ballet],” one ventures, then pauses before adding, “I don’t know what love is.” It is beyond love, most seem to agree, “something that devours you.” When one dancer describes changing roles as changing skins, it is easy to believe him. The beauty of ballet retains its mystery and the dancers their other-worldliness, but we are also reminded that these dancers are not merely vessels for choreography: they are people who experience love and loneliness.

In “La Danse,” choreographer Angelin Preljocaj cites Jean Cocteau while coaching dancer Emilie Cozette, saying, “It is up to the audience to figure

it out.” This statement could easily be applied to Wiseman’s film, too. Often, such an approach works brilliantly. But the director’s distance from his subject and focus on ballet as an institution can, at times, eliminate the magic and passion for the art seen in “Etoiles.” Wiseman’s camera travels the tunnels beneath the theater, thunderously silent and relentlessly illumined by fluorescent light bulbs; it pauses at stairwells and is blinded by stage lights, ponders wound ropes and wires, climbs to the roof to peer at Parisian cityscapes.

Yet for all this depth and scope—despite, literally, exploring the foundations of the theater and the streets of Paris—the film sometimes feels stagnant, lacking the layers of the opera house itself. And so while Wiseman lets us figure out the connections between the images he presents, the film as a whole sometimes seems to be missing something, like the image of the dancer reflected onto a one-way mirror. ●

THE BEST DANCE FILMS OF ALL TIME

Interested in more dance flicks? Try one of these must-see classics. No dancer—or dancer at heart—should go without seeing any of these films, whether they’re training to join the business themselves, dancing in the mirror, or simply admiring those who have the guts to do so. Great choreography, exquisite dancers and real world storylines make these the four best dance films of all time.

“**White Nights**” features two of the most renowned figured in the history of dance, Mikhail Baryshnikov and Gregory Hines. It’s got plenty of highlights, like the scene in which Baryshnikov performs his famous modern dance in a pair of Reebok sneakers or the part where Baryshnikov executes an amazing eleven pirouettes in order to win 11 Soviet rubles from Hines, who has bet he couldn’t do it.

“**Center Stage**” is jam-packed with upbeat dance scenes. It takes place in New York City, at a dance school based on the School of American Ballet and follows young dancers who struggle to navigate friendship, romance, and winning a place in the company. At the end of the movie, classical ballet is turned upside down with a piece choreographed to Michael Jackson’s “The Way You Make Me Feel.”

“**Dirty Dancing**,” set in the early ’60s, tells the romantic tale of a teenage girl (Jennifer Grey) falling for ballroom dance and her sexy instructor, played by Patrick Swayze. Dancers and non-dancers alike will love watching the film’s titular sultry moves: hip gyrations, fast footwork and breathtaking lifts.

“**The Company**” seeks to show the blood, sweat and tears that go into becoming a dancer and maintaining a company. This movie is full of intense dance scenes and features the Joffrey Ballet Company, Neve Campbell, and Columbia’s own James Franco—one of the few prominent characters with a non-dance role.



FASHION GOES MOBILE

designers on your iphones and in your pockets

BY ANNA COOPERBERG GONZALEZ

ILLUSTRATION BY IGOR SIMICK

Are you a fan of Chanel on Facebook? Or have you downloaded the Dolce & Gabbana iPhone app? For the first time, designers are eschewing the traditional hauteur of their brands and attempting to reach out to their customers through technology. While most labels are now tech-savvy enough to have a Facebook Fan page or a Twitter account, some go the extra mile and get closer to consumers via the iPhone. "It's a great marketing strategy," says Rachael Elliott, a Columbia College sophomore. "With the economy being what it is, established fashion houses are realizing that they need to branch out."

For Columbia students, this new marketing ploy is good news. Even though we live in one of the world's fashion capitals, we don't always have time to zip out to boutiques. With shopping opportunities at our fingertips, we can buy our winter wardrobe on the way to class without wasting a minute.

A variety of high- and low-end designers have harnessed the power of the iPhone app in an effort to reach out to the college-age market. I took it upon myself to test the free apps of three fashion favorites—Gucci, Norma Kamali, and Ralph Lauren Rugby—and assess the effectiveness of their new marketing strategies.

The Gucci app—the first true luxury lifestyle application," according to its slogan—was my

first download. It boasts a multitude of features, like GUCCI Beats, which allows users to create their own music mix to share on Facebook—a quirky idea for a fashion app, but a fun game for the musically inclined. Another special feature is the "Exclusive Product" area, a virtual store with items only available for app users. However, the feature falls short because customers must order products via phone, a process that recalls catalog shopping rather than the online future. Perhaps Gucci is simply looking to introduce youth into the fashion house by gaining followers who may buy later on.

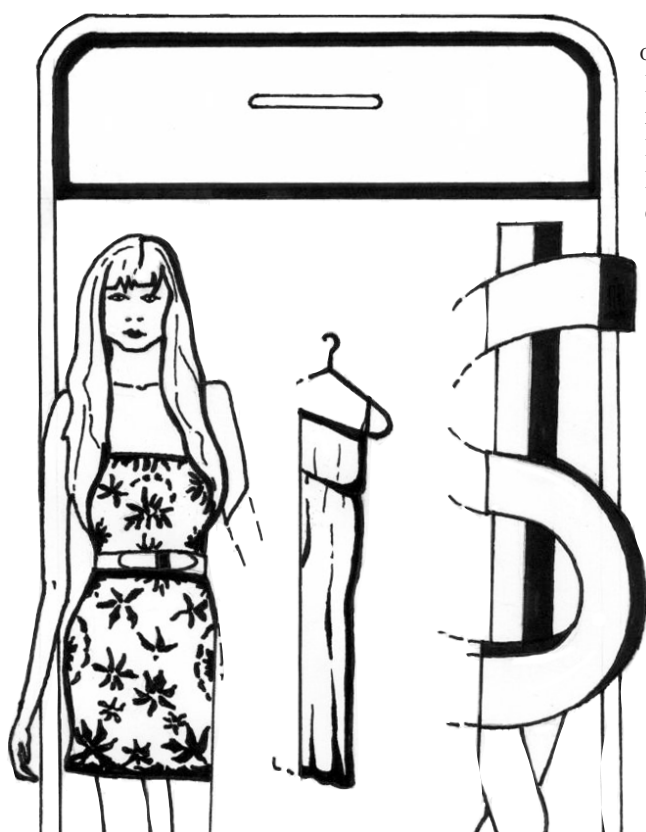
FASHION APPS LET YOU BUY YOUR WINTER WARDROBE ON YOUR WAY TO CLASS.

With her new bubbly orange app, Norma Kamali avoids Gucci's faux-pas. The designer already has a history of successfully using technology to democratize her designs. Her website offers a one-of-a-kind "Try Before You Buy" service that allows customers to try on their online buys at home before they pay; they can also video chat with a personal shopper for pointers on how to wear the product.

The app is just as accessible. In addition to offering videos, press clippings, and a link to Norma's blog, it lets customers view looks from three distinct collections: the Norma Kamali Collection as well as her lines for Ebay and Walmart, which are affordable but don't skimp on style. Buying couldn't be easier: users can tap an outfit and select what to purchase right from their iPhone.

The Rugby Ralph Lauren "Make Your Own" app appeals to the college crowd most inventively. Marketed towards busy students looking to customize their wardrobe, it allows users to upload a photo and customize a Rugby polo with colors, icons, or letter patches. Next, users can share their creation on the online Rugby Gallery or post it on Facebook. They can also purchase their customized top through the app itself.

Ralph Lauren has high hopes for "Make Your Own"—sales of luxury clothing are expected to decrease by 11 percent this year, but web sales are expected to grow by 20 percent, according to consulting firm Bain & Co.



SAVING WHILE SPENDING

Who says the CUID is good for only CUArts and Flex? Popular stores around the city offer special discounts to college students. "It's important to put ourselves out there and give college students a break. We like to call the 15 percent discount our own form of financial aid," chuckles Kate Kring, a sales associate at the Madewell store in SoHo (486 Broadway). Here are other spots where students can use their ID cards to attain discounts.

Club Monaco, 6 W 57th St.

Known for stocking glamorous and sophisticated clothes without the gaudy glitz, Club Monaco is perfect for the budget-conscious student who needs to find clubbing gear and office wear in one place. The store's hefty 20 percent discount is unmatched by its competitors.

Topshop, 478 Broadway

This British import offers a 10 percent discount in addition to a complimentary by-appointment-only Style Advisor service, which entails fashion advice and outfit recommendations.

Charlotte Russe, 1275 Broadway

This high school knock-off clothing favorite appeals to the discerning college student with its 10 percent discount. As Herise Broadbelt, one of the New York City store's managers, remarks, "We stopped using the discount for a while, but now it's back with better publicity. We're doing very well so far with the younger crowd."

J.Crew, 10 Columbus Circle

Both teachers and students get 15 percent off full-price merchandise at J.Crew, the go-to store for argyle sweaters and preppy dresses—closet staples for achieving that Ivy League look.

— Noel Duan

What does this mean for the future of mobile fashion? According to Steven Kolb, Executive Director of the Council of Fashion Designers of America, it's "just a matter of time before all the big American brands are doing apps." Why? As Kamali says, having an app is "an easy way to communicate with ... customers." A new phase in the industry is being introduced, one in which accessibility is prized over aloofness.

This is all well and good, but as Barnard sophomore Danielle Dodo comments, "I don't really have time [to use iPhone apps]." Despite the simplicity and accessibility of apps, it looks like some Columbia students won't be downloading them after all. ●

INDEPENDENTS' WEEK

local bookstores still have a place in new york city

BY NORA LEWONTIN-ROJAS
ILLUSTRATION BY REBEKAH KIM

The words “local” and “independent” conjure images of quaint storefronts set in sharp relief against a sea of corporate façades. Preserving these unique spaces in the face of the pristine uniformity of chain stores and the cyber marketplace seems reason enough to choose independent booksellers over Barnes & Noble or Amazon.

But patronizing local bookshops is much more than a nostalgic gesture—it offers real economic and cultural advantages, and, as one group hopes, represents the way of the future.

This month, the Independent Bookstores of New York City is coordinating the first Independent Bookstore Week—a celebration that will include author events at bookshops all over the city. Running from November 15 to the 21st, Independent Bookstore Week is the IBNYC's first large-scale effort to rouse public enthusiasm for these local stores.

Book Culture Executive Manager Annie Shapiro, who is organizing the kickoff party at the Powerhouse Arena in Brooklyn, hopes that the week's events will generate excitement and participation. “We want to remind people of the vital importance of independent bookstores and that only by shopping at these stores will they stick around,” she says.

The IBNYC first met in May 2008. Conceived by Shapiro and Chris Doeblin, the owner of Book Culture, the IBNYC comprises an enthusiastic group of 20 independent booksellers including Doeblin, Sarah McNally of McNally-Jackson, Henry Zook of Book Court, and Beth Puffer, general manager and book buyer at Bank Street Bookstore. Its aim is simple: to publicize the city's local bookshops and redirect business toward smaller neighborhood stores.

“THE MORE BOOKSTORES THERE ARE, THE MORE VOICES ULTIMATELY GET HEARD.”

“We've watched a lot of children grow up over the years,” says Puffer, who began working at Bank Street when it was only a small space in the lobby of the Bank Street College of Education. In 1990 the specialty children's bookstore moved to its present location on the corner of Broadway and 112th. In his 23 years at Bank Street Bookstore, Puffer has seen a decline in the number of both small publishers and independent bookstores. But she remains optimistic: “People are opening new stores and I think that might be a sign of the future. We're very hopeful.”

Puffer, who also sits on the board of directors of the American Booksellers Association, notes that the aims of these kinds of organizations align with the current interests of American consumers. “There is a feeling among consumers that local is good and we are very much a part of that movement,” she says.

Doeblin, who has worked as an independent bookseller in New York City for over 25 years, is emphatic about the economic benefits of shopping at independents. “We make a greater contribution in the sense that all of our expenses and all of the tax dollars generated by every ounce of payroll go right back into our local community,” he explains. “By contrast, a lot of the money that's made by them [big chain stores] goes to shareholders who may live in Japan, or Latin America, or Chicago.”

Since opening its doors in 1997 as Labyrinth Books, Book Culture has been integral to Columbia and Morningside Heights. For students and professors, purchasing books from Book Culture instead of the Barnes & Noble-run Columbia bookstore constitutes an act of participation in the growth and vitality of Columbia's neighborhood.

Besides sustaining the local economy, Doeblin explains that indies offer variety and access to alternative books that is necessary for a healthy exchange of ideas. He cites a recent incident in which Amazon temporarily removed rankings for LGBT-themed titles. Amazon first justified the change as a response to the “adult” content of these books, then later claimed that it was the result of a glitch.

“Whether or not it was the accident, it points up the danger of having choices about what's available go through just a couple of channels,” says Doeblin.

Similarly, he recalls that when Salman Rushdie's “Satanic Versus” was first published in 1988, it created so much controversy that Barnes & Noble refused to carry it.

But many of the independents defiantly stocked up: “We had a pile of those books as tall as I am [at Book Forum, an independent bookstore], and we

sold every single one,” Doeblin says.

Shapiro, who is in charge of purchasing trade books for Book Culture, agrees: “The more bookstores there are, the more buyers you have choosing books to be sold, the more voices ultimately get heard. A greater diversity of bookstores is good for authors and for readers.”

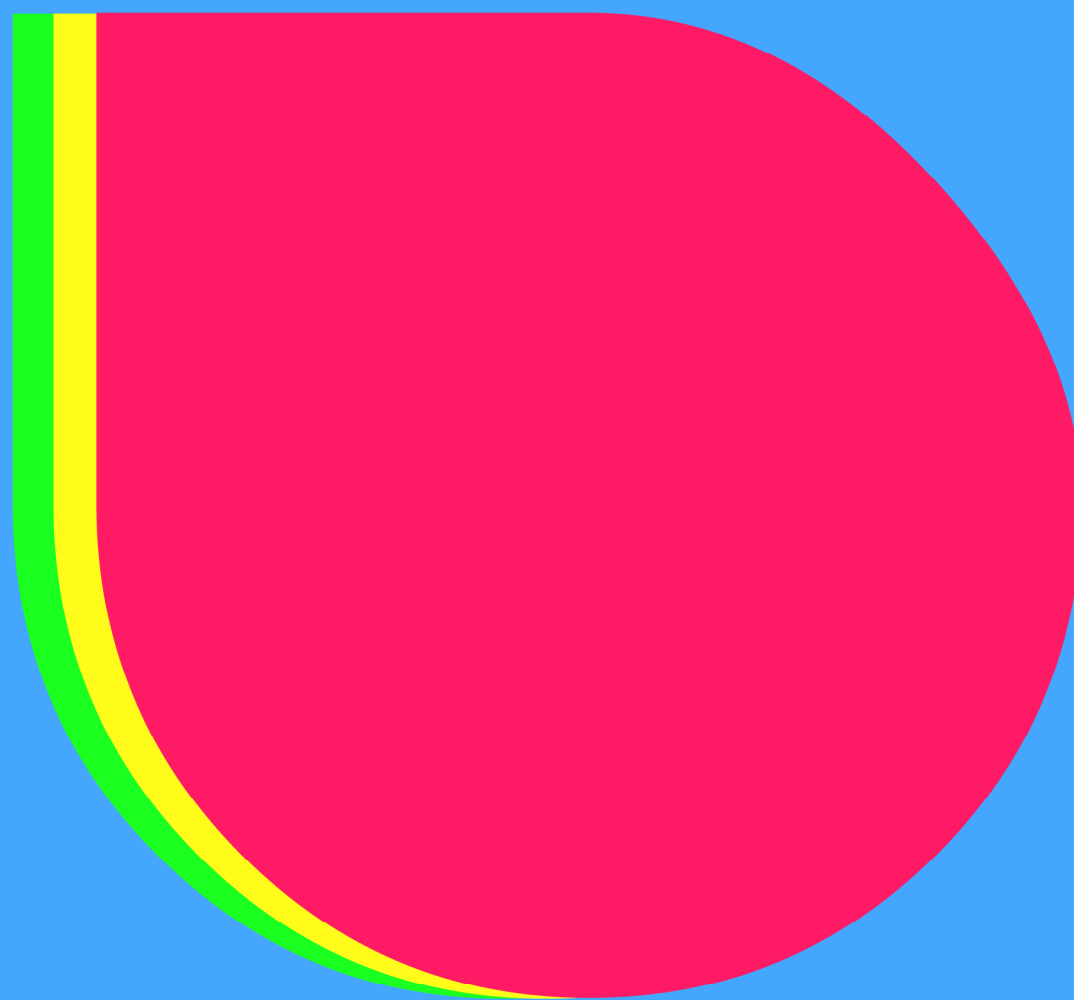
The IBNYC's endeavor is an affirmation of Doeblin's notion that “we are not out on a limb by ourselves. Publishers, readers, media, city planners and communarians of all kinds are behind what we do.”

And what they do is increasingly relevant. While browsing the shelves and tables at the Bank Street Bookstore or Book Culture, there is a sense of coherence that a centralized computer server cannot duplicate. Here, each book reflects the tastes and sensibilities of booksellers who are intimately acquainted with every title and with their patrons.

Shopping at independents provides meaningful, reciprocal contact with people who love books. It represents, in Doeblin's words, “a better way to live.”

To view the full schedule of IBNYC events, visit www.ibnyc.org. ●





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