

FILLING IN THE MAP

CONSIDERING THE NEW AFRICAN STUDIES PROGRAM

THE TRACHTENBURGS: A FAMILY AFFAIR
ONE EYE WRITER FLUNKS A PRESS JUNKET
MORE GOWNS, FEWER FROWNS

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A verifax collage by Wallace Berman, "Europain I," 1969

EYE TO EYE: DENA YAGO INTERVIEWS AMIR PARSA



Museum docents have it hard enough, relying on their own descriptive abilities to make artwork come alive for a motley crew of tourists, infants, and senior citizens. Imagine the challenge when one's target audience is partially blind—or suffering from Alzheimer's. One might even mistake this scenario for the prelude to some vaguely offensive joke. Amir Parsa, an acclaimed poet, writer, and educator at MoMA, has chosen just these tricky demographics for his guided tours. Parsa is the newly appointed program manager for MoMA's "Meet Me at MoMA" education program for Alzheimer's patients, which has received major grants and approval for nationwide expansion.

What initially got you interested in working for the Alzheimer program?

I was already working here as a lecturer and an educator. I was also here when we launched the program that works specifically with people with Alzheimer's. I really knew the education programs inside out—logistically and communication-wise—and I know the artwork and the collection very well.

What does it mean to be an educator at MoMA?

In general, it means to be a designer of ways of looking at the world—a designer of people, societies, ways of being and existing in the world. At MoMA it means the same thing I've always thought of education, as sort of a design of artistic and philosophical adventure. I never studied to be a teacher but I think it's a noble profession. I think of it as creating systems of thought. It's a form of intervention, a form of transformation, and

it's always about questioning frameworks, paradigms, and concepts.

What do you mainly focus on when leading tours for Alzheimer's groups?

I really focus on creating a great experience for them. I think of it as a community of interpreters. We really focus on looking and exchanging ideas about what's going on. It's not so necessary for people to learn historical information. It's really about enjoying the experience, living in the present, and engaging by describing and interpreting the works like any other group.

How do you adjust your tour to accommodate them?

We are very aware of the cognitive effects of Alzheimer's disease. We adjust in terms of individual strategies, like the way that we talk, the rhythm that we talk. There is a way to adapt the sessions. It does affect the tour but not in a radical way.

The other groups that you work with, like the tours for the partially sighted, must be very different then.

The structure of the programs is very similar—we must adjust the way that we talk and approach the works for the audience. We do a lot of visual description, and a lot of touching that no other audience does, and of course that transforms the experience for them. You are really engaged in a process where interpretations are suddenly very legitimate and add to our understanding of works. It's almost like a scientific experiment with a group of people. You get a range of really legitimate understandings that were impossible to get if it were just you sitting in front of the work doing your own analysis.

How do you begin to describe a piece of art to someone that's blind?

That is probably the hardest thing. I think that the visual descriptions are the most difficult, the most challenging, the most beautiful. What's really fascinating is that when you go through interpretive material, there is a lot of description that the authors don't necessarily realize that they're writing. So I take just those and transform them. I really methodically and coherently step by step go from one part of the painting to another. I start with what one initially perceives. From then on it's a very methodical process of description. I try to have a lot of words and descriptors ready, and try to explain it in a way that

really creates a mental image. What I really like is that it's not linked so much with historical or social context. If it's a painting it's a painting. It decontextualizes the work and I am very for that.

How is the Alzheimer's program expanding?

We want anybody interested from institutions, museums, and individuals to make the connection and have the experience of going to museums and showing artwork to people with Alzheimer's. It's also for their caregivers who are with them as a unit. We are partnering with Alzheimer's associations who are then in turn partnering with museums so it can come in any one of those directions. It is a great program and has very specific benefits based on cognitive and life experiences of the people with Alzheimer's. It is not terribly different from other educational programs offered by museums for other groups.

URBANITIES

LAST POET STANDING

BY GENEVIEVE DELEON
PHOTO BY MIRA JOHN



TAYLOR MEAD: WARHOL SUPERSTAR, POET, GYLLENHAAL FAN.

PUSHING BACK THE CURTAIN separating the Bowery Poetry Club's café from its barroom, I stumble into "The Taylor Mead Show" hoping to find Mead—the beatnik, "first underground film star," poet, artist, and comrade of countless idols from Warhol to Ginsberg—towering atop a fitting throne, engaging throngs of adoring fans.

This was, after all, how Ron Rice, director of Mead's first critically acclaimed underground film *The Flower Thief*, had discovered him in San Francisco in 1960. It was in this context, also, that Mead caught the attention of Henry Geldzahler, curator of contemporary art at the Metropolitan Museum. Geldzahler would later introduce Mead to Warhol and his mother. Warhol then invited Mead to take a road trip with him from New York to LA for the opening of his Elvis exhibit at Ferus Gallery (the gallery which also housed Warhol's first solo pop show featuring the Campbell's

soup cans). It was also during this stay in Los Angeles that Warhol shot the scenes for *Tarzan and Jane Regained... Sort of*, the film that would launch Mead into his five-year career as Warhol's superstar.

This film's all-star lineup—including superstar Naomi Levine, beats Wallace Ber- man and Dennis Hopper, and pop artist Claes Oldenburg—is indicative of the cohesion of the art scene in the '60s and '70s, which spanned genres and geographies. And Taylor Mead was often at the center of these collaborations. As Edie Sedgwick says in the 2002 documentary *Excavating Taylor Mead*, "There used to be a hundred Taylor-like creatures all fascinating and unusual, and half mad and half brilliant. In one moment, you'd think, 'Oh my God, this is the most intelligent, insightful person I've ever met,' and then the next moment, you're like, 'Oh my God, I'm talking to a complete lunatic.'"

Upon entering Bowery, I'd anticipated the original Taylor Mead, sporting the "flower thief uniform" that the *Village Voice*'s Ed Halter describes as the "tight hoodie, button down shirt, three-stripe tennis shoes, and beat-up jeans" that still continues to inspire L-riders today.

Instead, I find an old man, sinking into his folding chair, slightly elevated on a black stage, affront two columns of empty chairs and a desolate bar at the back. Despite appearances to the contrary, there were certainly glimpses of the old "elfin glee," as Halter called it. When I first walk in, he is holding up hastily made drawings that he had fished out at random from a paper-stuffed brown bag at his feet. He raises one childlike rendering of a princess with an impossibly tall crown and barked over the avant-garde jazz blasting from the boom box on the table in front of him. He informs us that "Princess for Rent" is a drawing that would be accompanied by his "Castle for Rent" picture—had he not lost it among the hundreds of similar drawings slowly forming mountains in his one-room apartment on the Lower East Side.

"Here's Princess Diana," he says, pointing to the figure made with blue highlighter ink: "May she rest in pieces. Pah! All over the papers... pieces all over the paper." After various musings on the royal family (including a declaration that he was in fact the father of Harry and William), he begins to elaborate on the political objectives of his most recent volume of poetry, *A Simple Country Girl*. Although he mentioned the Iraq war, women's rights, and global warming ("Fuck humans! Save the Polie Bears!") he screamed at one point), the book was more concerned with personal matters (see "It's My Party/ I'll die if I want to," "I need a handjob by Sunday," or the poem entitled "Andy Had a Big Gray Cock"). But he doesn't seem to mind whether or not his thoughts are coherent.

The highlight of the performance is the enduring love ballad he sang to Jake Gyllenhaal, in honor of Ang Lee's newest film *Lust, Caution*, and presumably in reference to the director's film *Brokeback Mountain*. The ballad describes, in precise detail, how a long night of passion between them would unfold. Mead starts off innocently enough, as he sings in a feminine libretto: "The evening has come to a close. I've had my last dance with you, Jake Gyllenhaal." And it builds fairly slowly: "You're a man, I'm a man. You're a man, I'm a fucking fool ... Be mine, be mine, be mine," but then takes a drastic turn after the line: "Oh Jake, he liked to watch pigs get slaughtered." At this point, he turns up the

fast-paced jazz and begins to breathe heavily, gasping: "I want to lick his asshole. Suck his nipples. Round his nipples, under his arms, down the middle..." the rest of which, including the details of penetration and beyond, has been censored.

After he dismounts the stage, I follow him to the bar as he waddles determinedly toward the very last chair at the wrap-around counter. When he encounters a slim 20-something chatting loudly with her two friends in his chair, he turns back to me to roll his eyes emphatically. "Hey," he quacks at the bartender, "She's in my chair. Get her out of my chair."

The interview continues in the same vein. "How about my pro-abortion statement?" he asks me, referring to his poem, "My Father Divorced My Mother Before He Was Born," in which he states with resentment, "If your mother hates you, it's better not to be born." Before I can answer, he quickly interjects, "I should have never been born. I had a horrible life." When asked why, he replies, "Stabbings... I'm covered with stab wounds. Morocco and New York." He doesn't go into the details of these stabbings with me, but in past interviews he revealed that he was horribly beat up for his homosexuality, often in front of unconcerned onlookers. "The horrible indifference of my parents," he continues—perhaps a reference to his strained relationship with his father, who was the wealthy head of the national Democratic Party in Michigan. In fact, his new book, *Son of Andy Warhol*, supposedly details the parallels between his own father and Andy Warhol and their shared qualities as "cold cheap bastards."

I finally ask, "So, it wasn't worth it?" And he answers, "Life is not worth it."

Things do seem to be looking up for Mead—his book is coming out in the fall, his apartment contract has been renewed, he receives a weekly stipend from the Andy Warhol Foundation for his Friday night performances. And yet, many of his underground films have been forgotten or left behind. As he says of himself, "I'm the biggest star in the world, but I'm buried alive." Could this be a fulfillment of the legacy of Warhol's five-minutes-of-fame game? It's easy (and usually right), to assume that the icons of '60s and '70s burned out and died as poetically as they had been lit. But Mead is an example of what happens if you don't die—a live burial.

Maybe it isn't too late. Mead himself doesn't seem to think New York has changed all that much (except for rent prices). The conditions which fostered the brilliance of the '70s, in his mind at least, remain.

LOWER PRICE, JUST AS NICE

BY ALLISON DAVIS



GREENFLEA MARKET: A REASON TO SKIP SUNDAY BRUNCH

THE FIRST THING QUEENS RESIDENT Carolyn Ochs says to me is, “That would be \$1,500 at Bergdorf’s. I’ll give it to you for \$200.” I am perusing her vintage jewelry stand at GreenFlea Market on Columbus and 77th Street. Usually, there are very few things that can drag me out of bed on a Sunday morning other than post-hangover brunch. Although GreenFlea may not offer curative greasy fare, it does have one-of-a-kind finds like screen-printed T-shirts, organically grown vegetables, and an amazing collection of antique chandeliers, all of which help to make up for the throbbing headache.

The market, which was founded about 26 years ago, is held in the playground and cafeteria of the William J. O’Shea middle school. It offers an eclectic mix of fresh food, clothing, jewelry, art, and antique vendors on Sundays from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The only thing cooler than the eccentric collections on sale are the people who sell them.

Ms. Ochs, a grandmotherly vendor, may not speak to the capacity of most college students’ wallets, but she does attest to the high quality of the vintage jewelry and knick-knacks she collects and sells. Her top-selling items include a huge collection of Bakelite bracelets from the 1920s to the 1980s, and hand-painted Limoges boxes from 1920s France. I walked away with three pairs of clip-on earrings from 1953 for a steal at \$20 (“\$300 at Bergdorf’s!”). Don’t be fooled by the ‘Nana’-like demeanor—Ochs is a shrewd businesswoman. If you intend to haggle, make sure you can stand your ground. The prices range from \$25-\$400, but catch her before she migrates to her winter home in Boca Raton, where she hits the flea market circuit in a warmer climate.

Avalove, on the other hand, is a petite Sarah Lawrence alumna who makes the trek from Brooklyn each week to sell super-soft cotton T-shirts, dresses, and hoodies. All of the avian and botanical motifs are screen-printed by Ava and her business partner. Ava, who has a Master of Fine Arts in poetry, features a lot of her original poems on her T-shirts, and can talk shop for hours—her knowledge of contemporary poets is daunting. She was just written up in *Time Out New York*, so snap up her stuff before she becomes too trendy.

At Circa 20th Century, soft-spoken owner Robert J. Grano has put together an incredibly well-edited collection of vintage treasures. Not only does he have an amazing selection of vintage furs and dresses, but he also offers vintage housewares, like a

red glass cocktail set from the ’60s. He also offers furniture and handmade pottery. Each item is in mint condition and chosen with care. My personal favorite was the set of Technicolor daisy-printed luggage.

The indoor market, held in the cafeteria of the school, is a collection of oddities. The cafeteria is a much calmer environment, which allows for hours of sifting through odds and ends to find quirky treasures. After about half an hour of digging, I found a silver cigar box with an engraving of Donald Sutherland’s signature and discontinued makeup at the dollar makeup counter. You can also snap up incredibly cheap eyeglasses and watches. If you need to refuel, grab some Swiss Miss hot chocolate and a Twinkie from the concession stand run by the P.S. 81 Parent Teacher Association.

While we are on the topic of food, you may have no need for a shiny toaster from 1925, but after Toaster Central owner and antique kitchen appliance aficionado Michael Sheafe makes you a slice of (slightly burnt) toast, you’ll find a reason to buy one. An outpost of the small East Side store, Toaster Central boasts an extensive collection of functioning toasters from the 1920s to the 1960s. As if the toasters weren’t enough, there are also classic waffle irons, fryers, and popcorn poppers. Come for the toast and stay for the conversation, as Sheafe is one of the most interesting vendors to boot, and is always willing to chat about his cross-country toaster hunts.

If you own a record player but still have questionable taste in music, check out the record vendor on the far wall of the indoor market. The stand carries some of the worst records from the past four decades, but all of it will satisfy some guilty pleasures. It’s undeniable that your record collection has been missing *ABBA Greatest Hits*. Even if the taste is debatable, each of the records is in prime condition. This vendor’s collection is extensive, but if you aren’t looking to buy, don’t look at all. Window shoppers are not welcome.

The GreenFlea is more than worth the pain of waking up early on a Sunday. With the holidays right around the corner, capitalize on the fact that you no longer have to spend so much money at over-priced Bergdorf’s. All of the proceeds go to enriching New York’s public schools. And if the perk of helping out a few thousand school-aged children doesn’t get you, at least you’ve finally found something for the Donald Sutherland enthusiast in your life.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GREENFLEA

STYLE

H&Mmm

BY DASHA CHIRKOV AND MOIRA LYNCH

WHEN ROBERTO CAVALLI, KING OF \$2,000-snakeskin dresses and even more indulgent python trenches, launched a line for H&M last Thursday consisting of jersey dresses and coats with three-digit price tags, the public went wild—and for good reason.

The leopard print was flawless and the fabrics were of good quality, while the cocktail and evening ensembles meant to be paired with metallic heels and serpentine jewelry impressed many eager Cavalli fans, who had lined up since seven in the morning for these steals.

Cavalli isn't the first designer to lower his price point and simplify his design aesthetic for a mass market. Previously, fashion king Karl Lagerfeld, eco-chic Stella McCartney, and daring duo Viktor & Rolf all stepped up to the H&M cheap-and-chic challenge, while retail giant Target aimed for younger, edgier designers with their GO International line, including "It" boys Proenza Schouler, and London's punk darling, Luella Bartley.

For a style-savvy college student on a budget, high-low collaborations undoubtedly make that \$2,000 dress they've been eyeing in the magazines somewhat of a reality. "As a whole, they can't afford a lot of the designer pieces but they want to emulate that style, so [the collaborations] are a really good thing," Shirley Chen, CC '10, said. Madeleine Colby, BC '09, believes that collaboration lines must be faithful to the aesthetic of the high-end designers because "otherwise, they wouldn't put their name on it."

However, many people pointed out that the collaboration pieces are not always the solution to a college student's budget woes. Some things are just worth the money—namely shoes, coats, and purses. Chen said she tries "to save up and buy two or three big pieces a year" that she knows will be high quality. Sierra Hills, CC '11, said, "If you do shoes, save up. Buy quality over quantity."

Most agreed that the quality of the collaboration pieces is respectable, but Hills pointed out that "there are little finishing details they don't have, so it's fashion, but not with a capital 'F.'" Another downfall to buying a collaboration piece, as Nicole Rahmanan, CC '11, pointed out, may be that "everyone has the same thing, which makes it less special because it's cheaper." After all, many people remember the Kate Moss for Top-Shop one-shoulder dress that came out this past summer and was seen on every stylish 20-something from Manhattan to

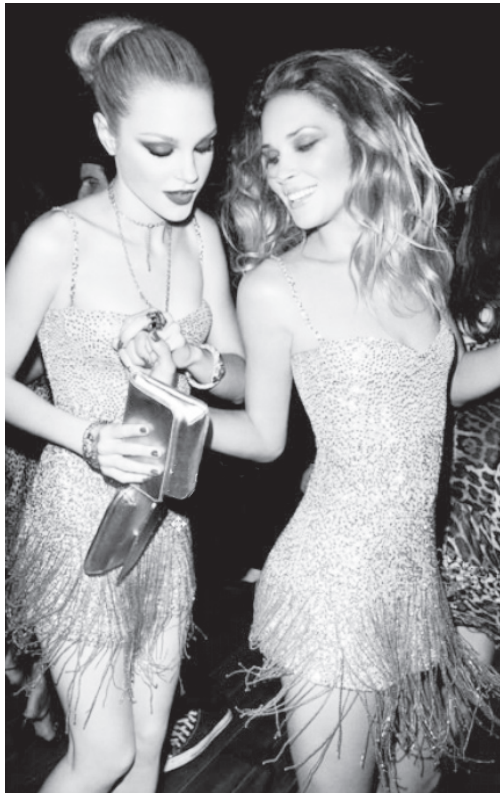
Queens. Nevertheless, Chen said, "With a lot of things, with more trendy pieces, I am totally fine with going H&M." She says she spends around "\$500 a year" on collaboration pieces (her favorite so far has been Victor & Rolf).

While H&M's designer names still prove to be favorites on campus, many have also cited Target's collaborations with Isaac Mizrahi (which has now branched out into everything from make-up to furniture), Paul and Joe, and Proenza Schouler as stylish steals. Certainly, the lack of Targets in Manhattan makes getting the pieces that much harder.

But that doesn't mean many aren't willing to make the trek. When Erin Fetherston, a widely popular up-and-coming designer who crafts airy dresses and blouses, debuts her collection for GO this coming Sunday, Nov. 18, you can be sure that a portion of Manhattan will be ready with wallet in hand outside.

One eager shopper includes BC '10 student Samantha Child, who said, "I ... like that the collection is a more practical, everyday version of what she sends down the runway. Her aesthetic really appeals to me, as well—I'm all about the Lolita-esque dresses and balloon blouses and coats. I feel like she's doing a lot of things that seem like they've been done before, but really haven't, like the heart accessories (which start at a mere \$15). They're clever but still cute and simple without being cliché." Target smartly aims these accessories at the holiday shopper, who can snatch up \$30 heart purses and \$15 scarves for young and trendy friends and family.

Despite some of the lingering stigma surrounding high-low collaborations—cheap materials, greater ubiquity, shorter shelf-life—designers and students alike agree, for the most part, that they're worth it. Young Israeli designer Yigal Azrouel, who crafts wool coats with four-digit price tags, also admits that he would consider doing a collaboration for the "good publicity." And as Jane Lau, CC '10, puts it, fast and cheap fashion is great "because everyone loves to be young and have fun stuff to wear but they can't always afford it. So, it's nice to be able to."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF H&M



INTER-DISCIPLINARY ACTION

TEXT: LAURA BRUNTS

PHOTOS COURTESY: LAURA BRUNTS, TERRA HOLMAN, KATIE CRONIN, AND MAX FRADEN

IT'S A HOT, STICKY DAY IN EARLY SEPTEMBER AND THE KENT LECTURE HALL is much too small for the growing crowd inside. Anthropology professor Mahmood Mamdani's undergraduate course, Major Debates in the Study of Africa, is meeting for the first time and every seat is filled. People without seats crouch or lean against all four walls of the room.

You could dismiss the huge turnout as part of the course shopping rush. But Mamdani's class isn't the only popular course on Africa. History professor Gregory Mann, who teaches Main Currents in African History and sections of the African Civilization seminar, estimates that 250 students enrolled in introductory Africa-related courses last year, compared with 152 in the 2001-2002 academic year.

Assistant Vice President for Global Programs Kathleen McDermott has seen a similar increase in students studying abroad in developing countries. Last year, 20 Columbia College and SEAS students studied abroad in Africa, compared with 11 in the 2002-2003 school year.

A big draw for studying Africa at Columbia is its Earth Institute, one of the world's leading academic centers for the study of sustainable development. The institute brings a new, more holistic approach to poverty-related problems.

Mann also points to increasing numbers of students at Columbia who are children of African immigrants. "[We're seeing] more and more students who are American Africans—first-generation, second-generation Americans. So there's the coming into being of a new African diaspora, which brings a new intellectual and academic strand to it [African studies]."

Still, Columbia has struggled to keep pace with the growing interest in African studies. The hunger strikers who have been stationed on South Lawn since Nov. 7 are calling for more professors of African and African-American studies. Katie Cronin, CC '08 and a political science major, came to Columbia with an interest in studying Africa, but wasn't happy with what she found. "You look at how many courses there are on Europe, and then you look at how many there are on Africa. It's like one fourth of that. And how many times bigger is Africa?"

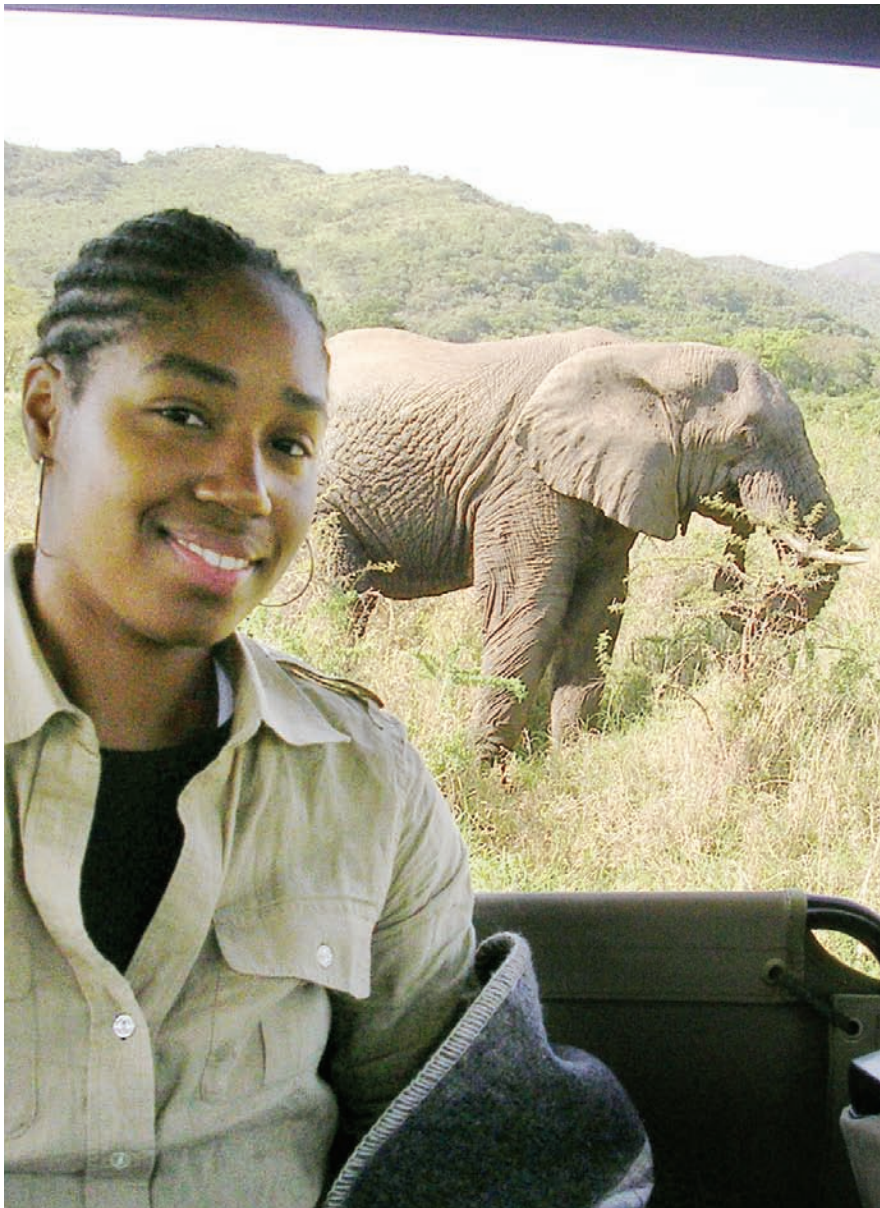
Mamdani, surveying his classroom, echoes Cronin's sentiment. The professor, a prominent Africa scholar and former director of Columbia's Institute of African Studies, looks at the crowd in the undersized lecture hall. Smiling, he quips, "So this is the University's estimation of the interest in Africa."

As a first-year, my academic interest in Africa was sparked in Main Currents in African History, in which I was exposed to literature, history, and politics in a whole new way. Buchi Emecheta's heart-breaking novel, *The Joys of Motherhood*, in particular, drew me into the story of a continent undergoing rapid change. Wishing to pursue my interests further, I asked my academic adviser about a major called "regional studies," which I had noticed in the online course catalog. He looked at me quizzically. He had never heard of it.

Hardly anyone knows about regional studies, an undergraduate major offered in conjunction with three different institutes in the School of International and Public Affairs—the Institute of African Studies, the East Central European Center, and the Institute of Latin American Studies. Mann, the faculty adviser for the African regional studies major, says he knows of only one student currently pursuing it.

This is as close as Columbia College gets to an African studies major, though Barnard has a rapidly growing Africana studies program. Other on-campus academic opportunities can be found in Teachers College, the School of Public Health, SIPA's newly reopened Institute for African Studies, and the Earth Institute. But these leave few options for undergraduates—even Earth Institute interns are largely graduate students.

Instead, many undergraduates look outside Columbia's gates for academic fulfillment,



finding it in various study abroad programs or outside the academic context altogether.

The good news is that current first-years and sophomores may not have to look as far to find Africa-related academic opportunities. Between the Institute of African Studies and more faculty appointments on the horizon, course offerings should begin to expand to match the rise in student interest. More professors who study Africa would allow more seminar-style Major Cultures classes, one component of the strikers' demands surrounding the Core. Africa has now been officially incorporated into the department of Middle East and Asian languages and cultures and a new interdisciplinary Columbia College major is in the works.

Barnard students, on the other hand, already have a major. Barnard's Africana studies program has been around for 15 years. Its popularity has increased in recent years—14 juniors and seniors are currently declared majors.

But the program has a rocky history. No director has stayed on more than a year or two and course offerings tend to be limited. "There's a problem of how one supports interdisciplinary programs," explains English professor Kim Hall, the program's current head. "Since we're a program, not a department, we don't have what they call core faculty. The faculty all have home departments that they are primarily responsible to."

This means professors end up with double advising duties, a particular burden for young faculty who need to get tenure. But things are turning around. Hall plans to stay for her full five-year term and senior Africana studies majors say they have never seen so many courses offered.

Terra Holman, BC '08, switched her major at the beginning of the year from economics to Africana studies and says she's much happier. "I never knew my professors in the economics department," she says. "Africana studies is a much smaller department, so there is very much a one-on-one connection. I feel so much more a part of the program."

When asked what she would add to the program, Holman speaks about more recognition from Barnard College as a whole. Hall echoes this sentiment, saying that the most important gain for Africana studies would be increased attention from other parts of the college.

"What really needs to happen is that the study of Africa and the study of the diaspora need to be integrated into the other departments," she says. "You shouldn't be able to be a history major and not know anything about Africa. You shouldn't be able to be an English major and not know anything about

African-American literature."

The Earth Institute, famous for Jeffrey Sachs and the Millennium Development Project, is another recent Columbia-based academic opportunity. Max Fraden, CC '09 and an economics major, has had a rare chance to study through the Institute as an underclassman, working on the Institute's Millennium Village Project. The Villages, community-led development projects scattered across 10 African countries and launched in 2004, work to achieve the U.N. Millennium Development goals—a set of targets ranging from increasing primary education to stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Fraden supports the project's priorities. "I think its [the Earth Institute's] vision is the right one. What you need to do is allocate a decent amount of money, over a long time, for agriculture, health—all these sectors."

Sachs's revolutionary, holistic approach to economic development is what supporters like Fraden find so attractive about the Earth Institute. But studying Africa through the lens of development can be problematic for humanities professors. As Mann says, "I'm not interested in sending students to fix problems." Most agree, however, that Earth Institute scholars are an important element of the academic discussion on Africa.

"I think there is a place for the Earth Institute, so long as there is a People Institute," Mamdani says with a smile. "So long as you also study what people do and think, their history, their perceptions, capacities, visions, and choices—all those questions."

Though the changes may come too late for the class of 2008, African studies at Columbia is set to grow far beyond the Earth Institute. The discipline is finally acquiring the financial and institutional support it needs for expansion. The IAS's new director, Mamadou Diouf, is the face of these revitalization efforts.

Diouf is a busy man. Apart from teaching responsibilities, he has been charged with rethinking the study of Africa at Columbia. He is jointly appointed in history and MEALAC in addition to his SIPA post and has two different offices—one in the International Affairs Building where the IAS is housed and another with MEALAC in Kent.

After several years of instability and interim directors, the IAS collapsed last fall. Since then, Columbia administrators, professors, and students have worked hard to breathe new life into the study of Africa. Christabel Dadzie, SIPA '07 and then-president of the student-run SIPA Pan-African Network,

was the central figure in organizing the student response, which included students in the business and law schools, SIPA, Teachers College, and undergraduates.

"I spoke with a lot of undergraduates who were shocked and appalled and more than willing to put their names on petitions, come out to the town hall meetings, and really confront the administration," says Adoma Adjei-Brenyah, CC '08.

As president of the African Students Association, Adjei-Brenyah became the undergraduate representative during meetings in the spring semester, at which Vice Provost of Arts and Sciences Nicholas Dirks and other administrators spoke with students about the future of the IAS and African studies at Columbia.

The fruit of those discussions was the appointment of Diouf and the official reopening of the IAS—with \$200,000 of additional funding—in July. Diouf is focused on hiring a staff and programming events like last week's African Diplomatic Forum, which involved panel discussions with eight African ambassadors.

"The institute is back on the Columbia stage," Diouf says. "What I am trying to do is engage in conversations about the curriculum."

Diouf sees the undergraduate curriculum as very different from the approach used in SIPA or the Earth Institute. "SIPA is recruiting graduate students who are more interested in policy than in a kind of academic discussion," he says. "We [classical departments] study the cultural, social, and political environment in which people are operating. Such approaches are much more nuanced, and they are also more academic. But I profoundly believe that what is important is respecting the pluralism of approaches."

But even if the IAS does not directly offer undergraduate classes, it plays an important role in coordinating events and speakers and offers an academic touchstone for students throughout the University.

"I think of it like MEALAC," Adjei-Brenyah says of the IAS. "The way that MEALAC is an area-studies department, but also a go-to point at Columbia for the Middle East for undergrads, post-docs, Ph.D. students. I feel like the Institute of African Studies needs to be that source for African studies."

Diouf, a charismatic speaker and prominent scholar in the field, has received much praise for his leadership. "He's an amazing presence," Hall says of Diouf. "Having a scholar like him at the head of this will attract so many incredible speakers and other faculty and will be a big support for our



junior faculty. You can already sense a kind of excitement around here.”

Administrators announced last year that Africa is being incorporated into the MEALAC department, the title of which Diouf hopes to change to include Africa. This integration is part of a larger rethinking of MEALAC itself, professors say. Space concerns also influenced the decision to integrate the departments.

When the decision was first announced last year, many students objected, saying the combination was short-changing Africa by lumping it in with the Middle East and South Asia. Indeed, as Mamdani jokes, “You have nearly half the population of the world in MEALAC.”

On the other hand, the combination offers several advantages, including the incorporation of African language courses run previously through the Language Resource Center. Mariame Sy, who teaches the West African languages Wolof and Pulaar, and Swahili teacher Elson Khambule, are now affiliated with MEALAC.

Diouf is excited for Africa’s inclusion in MEALAC. “It’s an interesting site to discuss issues related to globalization, to religion and secularism. So we can share not only resources, but also methodologies.”

Mamdani points out that much of pre-colonial literature on Africa is written in Arabic or in Arabic script, so having Arabic scholars and Africanists in the same department makes sense. The combination also benefits the study of North Africa, an area on the margins in Middle Eastern studies and often ignored in African studies programs focused on the sub-Saharan region.

The study of Africa within MEALAC may take several years to mature. In the meantime, Diouf and Mann are developing a more immediate option for undergraduates—a new interdisciplinary major.

“This is going to be key to the revival of African studies,” Diouf predicts. The major will likely comprise some combination of introductory courses, two years of an African language, a study abroad requirement, and a senior thesis.

The next step is to gather professors from different departments and discuss what the academic foundation for the major should be. Mann says, “We need to sit down with the faculty and decide, ‘What is the core?’ There has to be some discipline or method that we are teaching.”

Many Columbia students studying Africa cite study abroad programs as an essential part of their education. My

own semester in Ghana gave me a grounding for what had been, until then, a textbook-based education on Africa. Nothing in a classroom can replace the experience of talking politics with a Nigerian cab driver or negotiating with a council of elders to climb the nearest mountain.

Holman’s study abroad experience transformed her academic focus. When she left for South Africa, she had been a declared economics major and had been planning to write a thesis on post-segregation development in South Africa and the American South. But while she was in South Africa, she changed her mind.

“I became far more interested in the people rather than the economic situation. I feel like before, I had put economics above the culture and the people, but when I was there I kind of flipped the two.”

Mann says many undergraduates who come to him with an interest in the continent do so after they have traveled or studied there. Cronin’s semester abroad was a classic cultural immersion experience. For four months, she became part of a large Muslim household in Mali, mastering the art of the bucket shower. Like many students who live with host families, she formed a strong bond with hers.

“I find that talking to the people I went abroad with, talking to people in Mali—because I still call all the time—is the best way to stay connected to that experience,” Cronin says.

One of the advantages of living in New York City is that elements of such experiences are never far—immigrant communities like Little Senegal exist just a few blocks from Columbia. For American students returning from Africa, such neighborhoods can serve as much-needed extensions of their experiences abroad.

When Cronin returned with her djembe, a Malian drum, she was looking for a teacher. Now she makes the trek out to a Brooklyn dance studio once or twice a month to take lessons from Guinean drummer Mangué Sylla, who she met through a Barnard African dance course.

Fraden took a different approach to studying abroad. Instead of opting for an overseas academic program, he took the second semester of his junior year off and spent nine consecutive months working for the Millennium Village Project of Rwanda after spending the previous summer there. He worked on agriculture and public health issues, combining fertilizer loans with registration for health insurance systems.

“Coming back has been a really strange experience,” Fraden says. “When I left I was really sad and I was not too

keen on starting classes again. I think every day I’m getting more and more frustrated.”

The immediate future for African studies at Columbia is looking strong. Diouf hopes to have the new interdisciplinary major approved by the end of the semester, and Hall says Barnard students “are clamoring for a minor” to join the school’s major. Diouf hopes to hire five additional professors for the MEALAC department in the next few years, and Hall will search for two more professors of African studies at Barnard.

The long-term fate of African studies is less certain. Despite recent improvements, Hall still worries there is not enough widespread support. “There’s just been this kind of ongoing denigration, that the study of Africa is not serious, and is too attached to identity interests and politics.”

It is also unclear whether Africa will remain a part of the MEALAC department in five or 10 years and if so, what will become of the interdisciplinary major now under construction. Some feel placing Africa in its own department would leave the field underfunded and isolated from other parts of the academy. Diouf sees this as a potential problem but is more concerned with the program’s academics.

“For me, the institutional discussion is not the most important. The most important is the intellectual discussion, the possibility of coming up with a common intellectual program, and then finding ways to support it institutionally, financially.”

With graduation in six months, future plans for seniors are also uncertain. Cronin is considering graduate school, but not until she completes at least two years with the Peace Corps. In July, she will start teaching English in a francophone African country, though she doesn’t know her assignment yet. Aid work may also be in Cronin’s future, but she isn’t sure. “I feel like something on a very grassroots level will really clarify some issues for me,” she says.

Holman’s travel plans are less concrete, though she would like to see more of Africa. “That is my passion now: to discover new cultures and allow them to discover me.”

For Fraden, the return will serve as motivation for many more years of education. “Understanding the key determinants in this persistent poverty affects how you go about designing systems to end poverty,” he says. “When I go to medical school after working in a rural health care system, I know what tools I’ll be able to bring back to a place like Bugesera District in Rwanda.”

MUSIC MENOMENA'S RENAISSANCE MAN BY ALEXANDRIA SYMONDS



THE BAND THAT BATHES TOGETHER STAYS TOGETHER: MENOMENA, (TOP PHOTO L-R: BRENT KNOPF, DANNY SEIM, AND JUSTIN HARRIS), IN A TUB AND ON A RUG.

THE PHONE CUTS OUT HALFWAY THROUGH MY interview with Brent Knopf, one-third of Portland indie-rock darling group Menomena. When I call back, he feigns indignation. “Oh, no worries. I was just saying something really important, which I’ll never be able to remember.”

From anyone else, this would come off as arrogant faux-disgruntlement. From Knopf, though, I’m inclined to believe it—he probably *was* saying something really important. Knopf is a man with a certain shy intensity—he’s unusually committed to his own fits of inspiration. He asks himself the same kinds of questions we all do: *What if I got to join that band I like? What if I wrote a software program we could use to do our own looping?* Once Knopf has his mind set on a project, he fully devotes himself to it, usually for months on end. And he talks with such a level of specificity about such disparate topics—computer programming, film production—that you start to get the sense Brent Knopf might be a secret genius.

Knopf’s biggest success may be that he’s a member of Menomena in the first place. He was a fan of bandmate Danny Seim’s solo work, under the name Lackthereof, and through sheer persistence convinced Seim and the band’s other member, Justin Harris, to let him join. Menomena, though, didn’t come about until four years after the *idea* of Menomena did—the project was put on hold while Knopf attended Dartmouth.

He’s hardly the only one on the indie scene sporting Ivy credentials these days. Harvard alone boasts both Bishop Allen and The Main Drag, two Salon-certified up-and-comers. Not to mention a certain Afropop-influenced quartet that hails from our own Hudson shores, Vampire Weekend. It’s a bona fide trend at this point—whether Brent Knopf knows it or not. “Are you saying Ivy, as in the Ivy League?”

When I answer in the affirmative, Knopf seems genuinely stumped. “Oh, wow. That’s something I’ve never given any thought to. I don’t usually volunteer that I went to an Ivy League school. Did you, too?” I remind him where, exactly, our interview will be printed. “Oh! It all makes sense now. See, I’m not too bright, which is I guess is why I went to Dartmouth and not Columbia.”

Brent Knopf’s other great project is a tricky subject, precisely because he’d prefer the press didn’t define it that way. Knopf wrote a program called the Digital Looping Recorder (Deeler for short) in 1999, and the band has used the program to record its three albums. It’s unorthodox but certainly not without its merits—the overlay of bass, guitar, piano, and various other instruments on drums, in a somehow equalized continuum, gives Menomena a distinctive, readily identifiable sound. I ask, straight up, whether he’s sick of discussing it yet.

“A little bit. Because it’s such a simple thing, and it’s just something we use, and it’s not a big deal, but then it gets a lot of press, and I worry that it has overshadowed our songs ... but I don’t really blame anyone, because it’s an interesting thing to talk about.”

Good. Asked whether he modified the program between Menomena’s first two albums and this year’s *Friend and Foe*, that peculiar Knopf dedication peeks out. “I spent the better part of a year,” he says, “redesigning it to be this be-all-end-all, incredible application that I was going to try to market and release publicly with all these amazing

features. Fancy!”

Sounds good, right? Well, that’s the other thing about Brent Knopf—some of his stories feel like a study in human tragedy. After all that work, “it ended up being so complicated—I was trying to basically take Frankenstein and patch his arms together with his torso and legs—and something happened where I couldn’t quite trace problems. ... So, I spent all this time doing this second version of Deeler, it took like months and months, and then we kind of ran out of money and I had to move, so that whole project basically died.” Knopf did a quick, rudimentary rewrite of the program in about three hours one evening, and the band’s been using that version ever since.

There’s another event in Knopf’s life a lot like the Deeler situation, where he threw himself into a project for months on end with less-than-satisfying results. It concerns the video for the band’s song “Evil Bee,” and he introduces it as a parallel story.

“I had storyboarded this video, and I spent months and months building a camera structure, which is all these different telescoping cylindrical pipes hooked up with special joints and rotational axes.” (I’m lost already, but I love hearing Knopf describe it. He goes on explaining his schema for at least a few minutes.) “It was the story of the birds and the bees, basically, and I had to spend months and months on this. And I was pretty much ready to shoot it ... and then my wife got really sick, and then I totally ran out of money and lost the lease on the animation studio that I had rented, and all the stuff went into boxes. And then we left on our first tour.”

That couldn’t have been all bad, though, right? He could tour and return to the video afterward? Apparently not. “It was just kind of a debacle in terms of me having any time or any extra money because all of our money basically went into keeping the van running. So anyway, I basically went completely broke, lost all of my available time, this whole project that I had spent money on went into boxes. And I put it into my parents’ barn, and I was convinced that the idea was dead, you know? And that was probably even more heartbreaking to me than the second version of Deeler.”

Thankfully, the “Evil Bee” story has a happier ending: when the time came for Menomena to film another music video, the band enlisted the help of director Stefan Nadelman, who won the Short Filmmaking Award at Sundance for his 2003 film *Terminal Bar*. Nadelman was into Knopf’s concept, and “fleshed these ideas out, and these animatics, and we just kind of collaborated together. And he just took these ideas a million times farther than I would’ve been able to and also added a depth to the story line that only he could add.” The result, for the record, is brilliant—it’s that rare music video that both complements the strain of the music perfectly and functions as a complete short film in its own right.

The video for Menomena’s single “Wet and Rusting” briefly shows Brent Knopf demonstrating, science-fair style, a posterboard layout for a perpetual-motion machine. It’s a cute gag in the video, but I’m not entirely sure he hasn’t covertly been working on something like that for several months now. I wouldn’t put it past him.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BARSUK RECORDS

NOT JUST SIDESHOW PLAYERS

BY JENNIE ROSE HALPERIN
PHOTOS BY DIANA WONG



JASON, RACHEL, AND TINA TRACHTENBURG ARE A TIGHT-KNIT FAMILY.

IN THE COURSE OF THE HOUR I STAY with the Trachtenburgs in their tiny, two-room East Village apartment, the phone rings no fewer than four times and a neighbor comes knocking to deliver hot chestnuts. The third time the phone rings, Jason Trachtenburg, family patriarch, says, "It's like Penn Station in here!"

A sort of modern-day vaudeville troupe, the Trachtenburgs have a repertoire that includes puppets, performance art, and their famous slideshows.

I first met the loopy Trachtenburgs this summer when I went to see them at a show in Brooklyn. I immediately fell in love with Jason's onstage rambling, the way Rachel looked so tiny behind a huge drum set, and Tina's costumes, arts and crafts, and slide projections. Their songs about America's love of sofas, Liberia, and squirrels were silly, fun, and completely different.

After the show, I sent them an e-mail, and Jason invited me over to their house for coffee. I knocked on a door covered in activist bumper stickers, stayed for hours, and was invited to dinner. Soon, I was enlisted to do arts and crafts and fold programs with the family before they left for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. I began to see that the Trachtenburgs represent an out-of-the-mainstream approach to family, art, and music that resonates with their fans and their community.

"We really want to give people something special, in a memory or in that present experience to take away from the show," Jason says. "We want to give something original and unique."

The band, which also includes Rachel and Tina Trachtenburg (Jason's daughter and wife, respectively) formed in 2000 in

Seattle, Wash. He had grown tired of the usual "guy band" dynamics and wanted to bring something fresh to the industry. They began to perform as the Trachtenburg Family Slideshow Players.

"Once we started doing the slide concept, someone had to run the slide projector, so Tina did that, and we got Rachel involved on harmonica, and then quickly switched to drums," Jason says. "We want to all play a part of it, to be a part of it."

When Tina found a vintage slide projector and a roll of slides at a garage sale, they knew they had hit upon something. They decided to bring their unconventional family dynamic to the limelight. "There aren't too many bands who live together and are together all the time," Jason says. "It's kind of an extension of what we did before the band. We had Rachel involved in all of our activities, and we were around constantly, in terms of her alternative schooling, and our alternative lines of employment, so we weren't parents off at other jobs. We were always with our daughter, and so having the band was a natural extension of that continuation."

Soon the family moved to New York and found a home in the East Village, where Jason and Tina originally met. "Where else would we be, if not here?"

Since then, multiple documentaries have featured them. They've collected hundreds of new slides, released three full-length albums, sold songs to companies, and done hundreds of arts-and-crafts projects, including the recent *Rachel Trachtenburg Morning Show*. It's a new live show of "life lessons, artistic, crafty sessions, and common sense expression" for children that employs puppets to represent a day in Rachel's life.

As the Trachtenburgs work to cut waste and encourage community, they live their music, which has a vintage, irreverent, and off-kilter sound.

"Our presentation is a complete multimedia experience for the senses," Jason says. "Visual, auditory, and physical art for the audience—of comedy, drama, and of course music."

He and Tina enlisted their daughter, then seven years old, to play the drums. The bizarre combination of traditional family values, vegetarianism, and vehement anti-consumerism struck a chord for the Trachtenburgs' audiences, who flocked to see them at open-mic nights and on tour. "We received overwhelming critical and popular response from both the business side and the public of entertainment. It's something that we've been looking for for a long time. It was almost like Beatlemania," Jason says.

Jason Trachtenburg claims that as per-

formers, the family has to be "the sharpest people in the room." In practice, this translates to an old-fashioned showbiz attitude that is refreshing in the sometimes excessive music industry.

"Along with the band is the message of using the resources around you, not to be wasteful," Jason says. "The music industry is falling over on the weight of its overwhelming wastefulness." In this vein, Jason Trachtenburg says that all of his family's songs, even if they seem on the surface to be simply silly, are actually "about overconsumption and the effects of humanity on the environment and each other."

As part of the anti-folk and art-star scenes, the Trachtenburgs often attend open-mic nights to develop as performers. These movements, both based in the East Village, are like the Trachtenburgs' community and family dynamic—open to everyone who wants to take part.

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FILM

A VERY BLOODY CHRISTMAS

BY PETER LABUZA



JOHNNY DEPP AND HELENA BONHAM CARTER IN *SWEENEY TODD* (LEFT) AND JAVIER BARDEM IN *NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN* (RIGHT)

IN LAST WEEK'S RELEASE OF *NO Country for Old Men*, dead bodies amassed almost as quickly as countrified Texan idioms. And while this may not be the most violent film of the year, the villain's uncomfortably intimate murder weapon certainly made audiences cringe—a tendency that has grown increasingly frequent in films within the past few years.

These aren't the casually violent blockbusters that typically fill the summer. Collateral damage has become overshadowed by deaths shown so seriously and unflinchingly that they seem to be nudging America to face its infatuation with violence. More than glorification, this is dissertation.

Although the Coen brothers have enjoyed success with lighter fare like *The Big Lebowski* and *O Brother Where Art Thou?*, their biggest critical hit was the Academy Award-nominated *Fargo*—*No Country for Old Men* is very much a return to that tone of murder and mayhem. The film is a cat-and-mouse game between a hunter (Josh Brolin), who has stolen a satchel of money, and the strange incarnation of evil, Anton Chigurh (Javier Bardem), who tries to kill him.

Instead of following a traditional, shoot-'em-up formula, though, the film—which is based on a Cormac McCarthy novel—focuses instead of the nature of violence. The Coen brothers emphasize the pointlessness of these incomprehensible crimes and create a morbid sort of respect for Chigurh's unique method of killing, which necessitates that he be close, almost

face-to-face, with his victims. There's no anonymity in these murders—he virtually shakes the victim's hand to introduce himself.

That's almost a comforting thought in today's world of masked hold-ups, drive-by shootings, and roadside bombs—although the brothers downplayed this significance at a recent press conference for the movie.

"I don't think any of us read it as political commentary or as addressing current events," Ethan Coen said, and Joel Coen agreed, saying, "I think the ideas were more outside that." Of course, the mere fact that a particular film was able to be made at a particular time in history usually suggests that there must be at least some cultural significance. The impersonality of our world—wars, and violence in particular—makes these connections undeniably appealing and interesting, despite their ultimately macabre ends.

How else to explain the Christmas release date for a movie about a throat-slitting serial killer? Perhaps no other film will so vividly connect the holiday season with violence than the upcoming re-adaptation, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Directed by Tim Burton, creator of *Edward Scissorhands* and *Big Fish*, the musical reunites him with Johnny Depp, who plays the titular singing barber and human-meat-pie maker. The Broadway musical had notably been made into a film in 1982 with Angela Lansbury, but the translation from theater to film was much more direct, appealing to the musical theater crowd more

than Burton's characteristically black-clad fans. Today's audiences seem more shocked by the fact that Depp is singing than that he is playing a character who kills people and then feeds their flesh to unsuspecting patrons.

In addition to this intimate violence, extreme moral ambiguity is a theme with which box-office champion *American Gangster*, directed by Ridley Scott, is quite familiar. With a title that implies the themes of American exceptionalism, one might expect that real-life drug lord Frank Lucas, as played by Denzel Washington, would be the hero—a new, modernized version of *Scarface*, perhaps. But instead, Lucas is depicted as a criminal, and the damage he's done to families is condemned. Even the mostly honest undercover cop Richie Roberts (Russell Crowe), who turns in \$1 million in unmarked bills, cheats on his wife. Nobody, it seems, can get away clean—a fitting portrayal in a world where CEOs are arrested for embezzlement, priests stalk late-night talk show hosts, and boys-next-door must kill to fight for a better life.

Films spanning the genres are also beginning to deal with more explicit war themes. Robert Redford's political drama *Lions for Lambs* features troops fighting in Afghanistan. Richard Kelly (*Donnie Darko*) creates a musical-comedic dystopia where the world is on the brink of destruction in *Southland Tales*. In Brian De Palma's experimental *Redacted*, an army unit must come to terms with a crime they committed while stationed in Iraq. Joe Wright and

Keira Knightley, the team behind *Pride & Prejudice*, bring Ian McEwan's war drama novel *Atonement* to life. Even a Mike Nichols (*The Graduate*) comedy with Tom Hanks and Julia Roberts, *Charlie Wilson's War*, follows the congressman who started the covert war in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union in 1980.

These depictions of violence, immorality, and war may reflect back to our nation's growing distrust of uncontrollable violence. As images of violence from wars and genocide flood televisions and computer screens, filmmakers must now question why it even exists. In fact, this type of filmmaking—which accuses by means of depiction—recalls the 1970s in terms of cynicism and disillusionment, when filmmakers like Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, and Sidney Lumet created films that questioned the state of the world and applied a moral ambiguity to their characters in a time of uncertainty.

Considering the ideology of our day, we should not be surprised at the amount of violence on screen, nor at the moral ambiguity it reflects. Violence appears in cinemas because it's what we see in everyday life, and we've become so desensitized that it must be particularly shocking to even register. Think cheek ruptures in *Pan's Labyrinth*, or the surprise shot-to-the head near the end of *The Departed*—or an air gun to the forehead. In order for the violence to take effect now, the audience must feel it themselves.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MIRAMAX FILMS AND PARAMOUNT PICTURES

REDACTING THE *REDACTED*

BY MARK KROTOV



STILL SHOTS FROM VIDEOS CREATED BY BRIAN DE PALMA FOR HIS FICTIONALIZED DOCUMENTARY

CAN A FILM END A WAR? AND IF IT CAN, should it? Is agitprop (otherwise known as insidious, left-wing propaganda) an artistically legitimate exercise, or is it permanently tarnished, as meaningless as a crumpled-up leaflet? Can the totality of President Bush's foreign policy failures truly be addressed in a 90-minute dramatic film?

Brian De Palma's *Redacted* asks—and forced me to ask—these questions, and I went into the *Redacted* press junket hoping to ask them. I was going to interrogate De Palma about his cinematic appropriation of “new media” techniques, about the possibility of authenticity, and about a propagandistic film that seemed far too aware of its own limitations to be actually ideological, much less convincing. The film critic from the *Columbia Spectator* would become The Most Important Interviewer Of All Time, and De Palma and I would tour the land with a giant speaking/asking tour. We would end the war by Christmas.

However, I did not ask a single question during the 20-minute junket at the Regency Hotel. I wanted to introduce De Palma to my succinct brilliance, but I was repeatedly thwarted by formidable opponents. There was the eager young guy who sat next to the director and interrupted every time De Palma paused for a breath. And the old guy whose loud pomposity belied his humble *raison d'être* (he is a film critic for a very minor New York-based Web site, unlike the respected journalism of the *Columbia Specta-*

tor). And the Japanese reporter whose broken English was far more confident than my fluent silence. And on. And on.

Why was I afraid to speak? Or rather, why wasn't I ready to interrupt one of the major living American directors for a choice quote? I was wrong to stay silent, and I should have overcome my temporary absence of voice instead of stewing and brewing—miserably descending into nothingness until the end, when I ran out as quickly as possible.

But there was a silver lining to my journalistically unethical silence! I could critique the other journalists as if I were a mere passive observer, as if I had not had the ability to shift the conversation into more profound territory.

Redacted deserves serious reflection because it is far more confused (and confusing) than it seems. Ostensibly, it is a film based on a true story about a group of soldiers that raped an Iraqi girl and then killed her and her family. De Palma creates a hodgepodge of different media: footage shot by one of the soldiers, security-camera tapes, scenes from a French documentary, YouTube videos posted by soldiers' wives and anti-war activists, and clips of terrorist speeches. The result is jumbled, chaotic, and perhaps doctrinaire.

In spite of the one-dimensional characterization (soldiers are fucked-up and evil), stilted dialogue, and general bombast, the film is not merely a *Crash* about Iraq. More than any mainstream movie I've seen, *Redacted* constantly interrogates itself. Angel Salazar's cam-

era provides the film's central point of view, but the soldier/amateur filmmaker constantly roams and pans, suggesting the limitations of any cinematic perspective. In stark contrast, the documentary scenes seem comical in their aestheticization of an ugly, boring conflict. And yet the faux-YouTube videos are so intimate and personal that they suggest an angle that could not be any narrower: there is no room for context in a frame that small.

If *Redacted* is agitprop, then it is a most peculiar, postmodern kind of agitprop. Agitprop attacks (or confirms) your convictions with a hammer, but *Redacted* forces you to ask the hammer questions about the nature of being a hammer.

It was thus reasonable to assume that, at the junket, reporters would ask about the validity of what they saw and would question De Palma about the artificiality of his images.

Instead, they asked about sequels. One reporter mastered the art of the segue with, “Speaking of remakes and sequels, what are your opinions on everyone coming back and making your films?” Earlier, someone said, “Speaking of things that are great, you've made some of the greatest films of all time.” Interrogating authenticity, indeed.

Throughout the discussion, De Palma was as polite and bored as one can be when sitting with a roomful of redundant mouthpieces. He talked about his embrace of new media, saying, “We have exhausted the dramatic form, pretty much,” and his inability to use any factually accurate information because he “can only say it was inspired by

an incident.”

On how to make a movie about reality, he says, “You have to fictionalize it. All the stuff we see in the movie is inspired by a real incident, but it seems that if you use a real incident, a lawyer will come in and say, ‘You can't use that. It actually happened.’”

There was no in-depth questioning—no one was interested in the problematic or the confusing when the press release suggested so many prefabricated story ideas like, “De Palma takes on Iraq,” or “De Palma embraces digital video,” or “*Redacted*: telling the truth about a terrible conflict.”

We almost got to talk about the good stuff. At the end of the film, there is a montage of real photos of dead and injured Iraqis. Earlier this fall, De Palma publicly criticized HDNet Films for “redacting” the photos. Because of the impossibility of getting clearance from the victims' families, the production company chose to cover the victims' faces with thick black lines, like CIA censors. De Palma was still angry about this at the junket.

I should have asked him why he cared about these images if in the preceding 90 minutes, he had loudly told the audience to question all images, real or not. Was this photography really real? Wasn't this a contradiction? Instead, someone asked if digital video would allow him to reedit the movie, which is irrelevant. I again chose to stay silent.

PHOTOS COURTESY MAGNOLIA PICTURES

HUMOR THE CORE-NER: PHILOSOPHY IMMANUEL KANT ON ISLAMOFASCISM

BEWERBUNGSVORRAUSSETZUNGEN FÜR einen Bundesaußenminister: Das Schnürsenkelfädchen ist im Nachkriegsdeutschland während des wirtschaftlichen Aufschwungs als Waschmaschinenmechaniker tätig. Diese Grundproblematik wird dem Leser auch direkt ihm Titel präsentiert, wie zum Beispiel, von qualifizierten deutschen Nachwuchskräften initiiert, die Berliner Initiative für mehr Internationalität, die Einrichtung einer Stabsstelle für internationale Personalpolitik im Auswärtigen Amt und die weitreichenden Internationalisierungsbestrebungen deutscher Hochschulen.

Das auswärtige Amt leistet humanitäre Hilfe für Flüchtlinge und Binnenvertriebene. Es ist reich an rhetorischen Mitteln und gewandter Sprache, die poetisch-philosophisch eine universelle menschliche Grundthematik; Böll bietet uns mit seiner Erzählung eine subtil konfliktreiche Geschichte mit einer Auflösung durch persönliche Fortbildung an - eine Art Initiationsgeschichte eines jungen Mannes, die sich jedoch als ein einziger lebensbewegender Tag entpuppt. Ich habe mich schon immer sehr für internationale Beziehungen und Diplomatie interessiert; mein eigenes Leben basiert auf multikulturellen Erfahrungen als Deutsche im Ausland. Vorallem aber herrscht eine enge Verbindung zwischen Walter und seinem Vaterland, einem Vaterland, dem er nicht verzeihen kann.

„Ich wäre in einen anderen Zug eingestiegen, wie man ausversehen in einen anderen Zug einsteigt“. Die Handlung läuft innerhalb eines Tages ab, was ungewöhnlich wirkt, da es fast unmöglich ist eine ausführliche Exposition und gründliche Persönlichkeitswandlung zeitlich zu erzeugen und stattfinden zu lassen. Mein grosses Interesse an fremden Kulturen und Sprachen wurde durch den Beginn meines Studiums

verstärkt, insbesondere durch die Vorlesungen über internationale Politik, internationale Organisationen und Afrikanistik. Doch in dieser einfachen Handlungskonstruktion wird ein wesentliches Grundproblem der menschlichen Existenz dargelegt: Hunger. Worin hier verschiedene Komponenten enthalten sind; Hunger nach metaphysischer und körperlicher Nahrung, Hunger nach menschlicher Nähe und Geld. Dieser zeitlose Teufelskreis ist eher ein Kreis gebundener Konflikte, die sich gegenseitig ausschliessen; eine Konstellation mehrerer Bedürfnisse, die nicht alle gleichzeitig gestillt werden können. Ausserdem lerne ich an meiner Universität Suaheli. Vater und Sohn haben stark mit der Problematik der Vergangenheitbewältigung zu kämpfen, und parallel auch die Nachkriegsjugend und ihr Vaterland.

Selbsterfüllung, Rettung, Geistlichkeit, Neuerfindung? Was sind die Zutaten dieses Gebäcks? Wer ist der Bäcker, wer liefert es, wie und wann nimmt man es zu sich? Kann man diesen Hunger überhaupt jemals stillen? Was möchte uns Böll mit seiner Erzählung füttern? In Seminararbeiten habe ich mich mit Wegen auseinandergesetzt, die zu verstärkter Demokratisierung, verbesserter internationaler Verständigung und Zusammenarbeit, und wirtschaftlichem Fortschritt durch Diplomatie führen.

auch um Vergangenheitsbewältigung drehen, wobei auch örtlich eine Kontextualisierung stattfindet, weil ihn die deutschen Schrecken der Geschichte seiner Mitbürger umgibt. Mein Verlangen nach Transnationalismus ist gefördert - waren wir zwar alle Deutsche, doch hatte jeder eine weitere Identität, die der europäischen zugefügt wurde, ein Gefühl nach Weltbürgertum, dass in jedem Atemzug vorhanden war und sich in jeden Gedanken einschlich: Für ihn gewinnt der Schicksalsschlag an.



CLASS OF 2012 ADMIT RATE 0% BY RAPHAEL POPE-SUSSMAN

IN A DEVELOPMENT THAT IS SURE to increase Columbia's standing in the academic community, the University announced yesterday that the admission rate for the incoming class of 2012 was a record-low 0%.

"[Executive Director of Undergraduate Admissions] Jessica Marinaccio and the rest the folks over in admissions really outdid themselves this year," said University President Lee Bollinger. "We're predicting that our final admit rate may be something on the order of infinity times more selective than Harvard's."

Columbia's acceptance rate has been dropping steadily for years, as greater

and greater numbers of overqualified applicants seek admission to the University. Marinaccio, who spent the weekend in Cancun celebrating the Ivy League-best admit rate, commented, "The true credit belongs to all the applicants out there. We were forced to make some incredibly tough decisions from the 22,456 applications we read. I wish we could accept everyone, but it just isn't possible. Rejecting every single applicant seemed like the only fair thing to do."

In a press conference this morning, *US News and World Report* responded to the University's announcement by placing Columbia atop its annual college rankings.

LITERATURE FOR TODDLERS

THE GREAT CATSBY

High-society feline is the bee's knees of ballyhoo-era New York.

ON THE TOAD

Travel across the Great American Desert on the back of a lovable, croaking amphibian.

TO THRILL A MOCKINGBIRD

Tickle its belly.

APES OF WRATH

Like Hungry, Hungry Hippos—but with Angry, Angry Apes.

GONE WITH THE WIND

A grand tale of the glorious days of antebellum Atlanta.

INFINITE VEST

A young traveler with a magical habillement. It looks like any other vest. But it has no beginning. And no end.

A MITE IN AUGUST

Late-summer infestation sends the townspeople of Jefferson into a Mississippi fury.

LAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE

When five German boys inhabit a cabin in the woods, the laughter is simply infectious.

EDITORS' PICKS PUBLICATIONS

PURPLE MAGAZINE



If you've been wondering, my editor-in-chief icon is *Purple's* Oliver Zahn. No other EIC gets a starring role in his magazine's shoots. Runners up are *Kaiserin* (for gay men), *Girls Like Us* (for lesbians) and *ANP Quarterly* (for skateboarding dreamboats).

ALEX GARTENFELD
EDITOR IN CHIEF

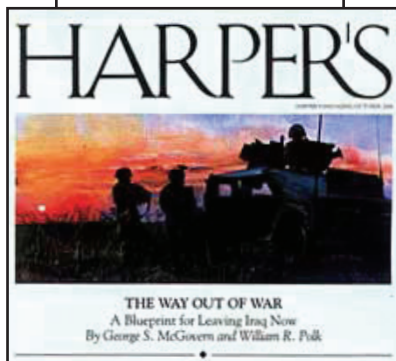
WIRED



Ignoring the fact that I worked there for nine months, *Wired* is my favorite unabashedly geeky publication.

DANIELLA ZALCMAN
MANAGING EDITOR

HARPER'S WEEKLY



Harper's is one of the oldest and smartest magazines in the United States. My favorite part of *Harper's* is the Weekly Review, which is basically a Cliff'sNotes for goings-on outside of Columbia. I even have the Weekly Review e-mailed to me each Tuesday, which provides the perfect dose of information with an entertaining liberal bend.

EMILY GREENLEE
PRODUCTION

FRENCH VOGUE



Less conservative than American *Vogue*, which means more breasts and fewer summer homes. Also, Carine Roitfeld has great eyebrows.

MEDAYA OCHER
URBANITIES

JALOUSE



Normally I prefer *Numéro*, but I really enjoyed the October issue of *Jalouse*, which featured Clémence Poésy.

TINA GAO
PHOTO

MOTHER JONES



It's so liberal it hurts. Not to mention the magazine is named for awesome American heroine Mary Harris Jones, a burly socialist who led protests and fought off thugs. She might even have been the inspiration for the song, "She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain When She Comes," according to Wikipedia.

DANIELLE ASH
PRODUCTION

THE CRAB STREET JOURNAL



The CSJ is a magazine run by land hermit crab owners for land hermit crab owners. They care about their land hermit crabs. Includes "Recipes" and "Crabitat of the Week."

J.D. PORTER
HUMOR

CARNEGIE HALL presents

THE RITE OF SPRING PROJECT

An Explosion of Sight and Sound

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AND THE BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER**



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The United Palace Theater
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Tickets available at this venue
Mon to Fri, 11 to 6; Sat 11 to 7:30; Sun noon to 3:30

 **The Weill Music Institute
at Carnegie Hall**

**Tickets
\$15**
Student
tickets \$10
(with valid ID)

The Berlin in Lights festival is made possible by a leadership gift from the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation.

Major funding has also been provided by Mercedes and Sid Bass, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and Fundación Mercantil (Venezuela), with additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional funding provided by Axel Springer AG and GWFF USA Inc.

The Rite of Spring Project is made possible, in part, by generous gifts from Martha and Bob Lipp, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and the Jerome Robbins Foundation.

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