

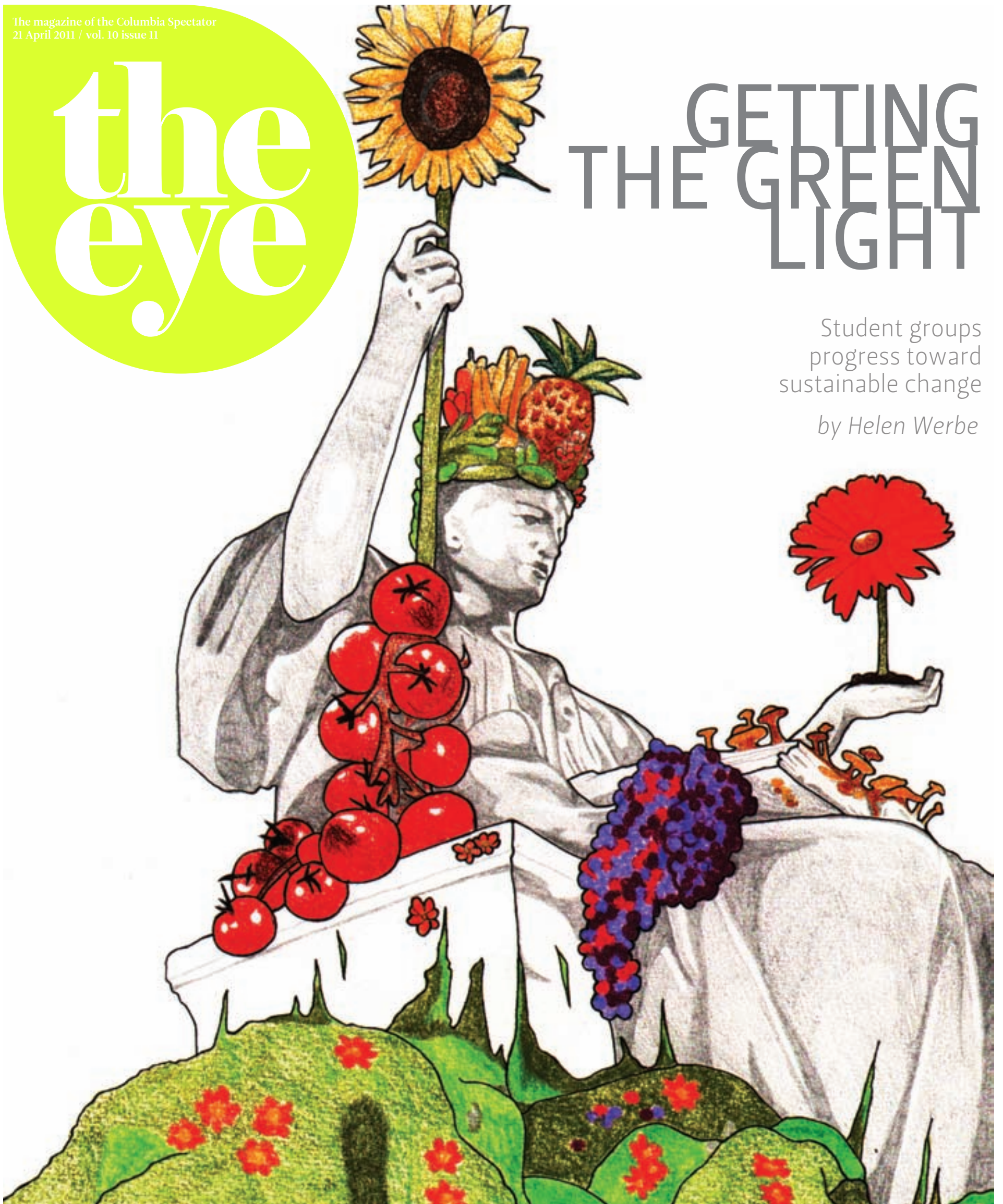
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eye

GETTING THE GREEN LIGHT

Student groups
progress toward
sustainable change

by Helen Werbe





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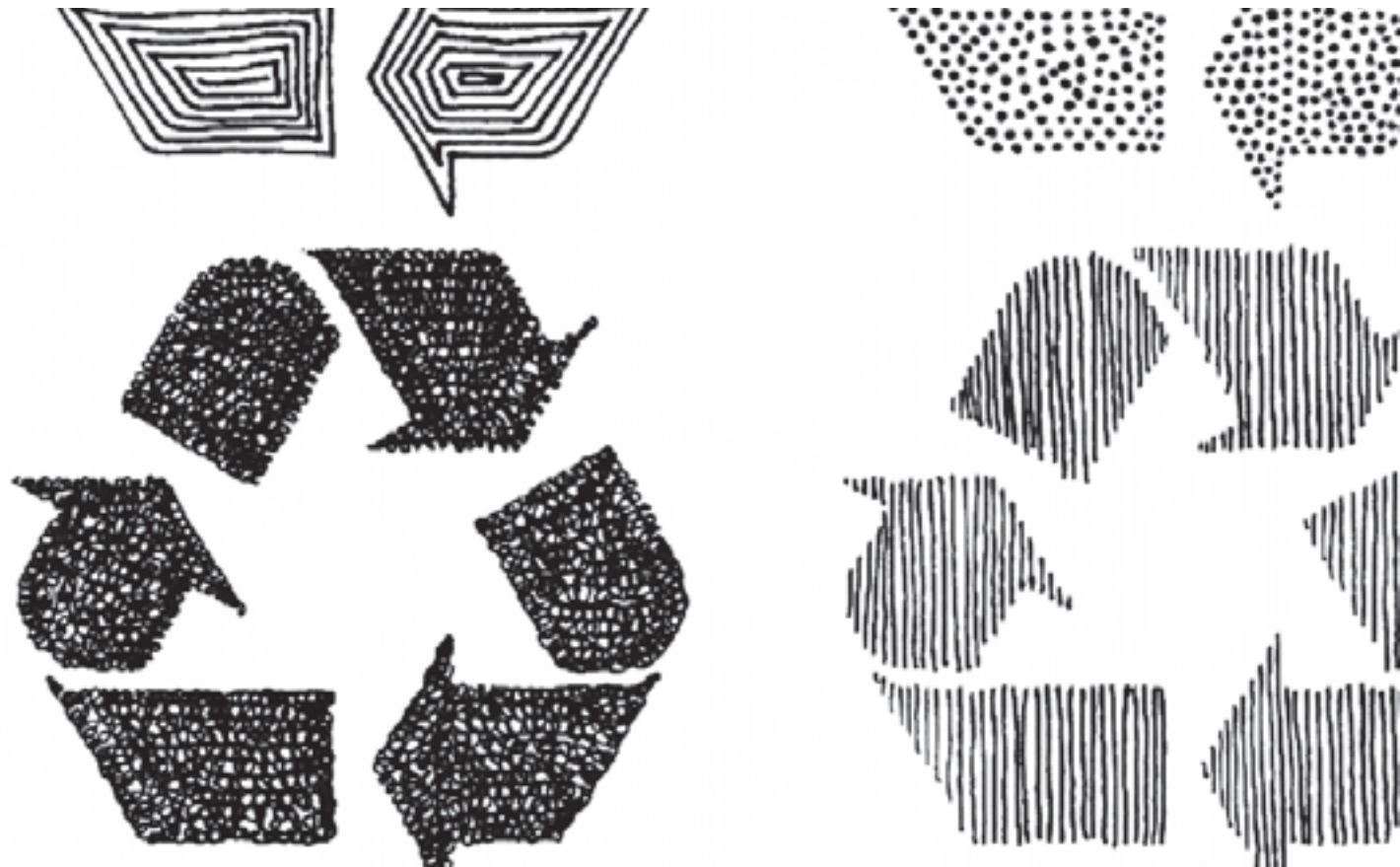
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GETTING THE GREEN LIGHT

Student groups progress toward sustainable changes, pg. 07

by Helen Werbe
cover illustration by Matteo Malinverno

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Can the crunchy hippie survive at Columbia?

I ask myself this a lot.

It's easy to be a crunchy hippie at a place like Berkeley, or a small college in Maine. Where the entire cultural expectation is that everyone is a crunchy hippie. Where a large sector of the economy is built on the one-upmanship of crunchy hippies trying to out-crunch other crunchy hippies.

In New York City, things are a little different.

Freegans can't look through discarded Garden of Eden food without accusations of unsanitary insanity. Food waste disappears magically down the disposal, and from memory. And it doesn't seem to make a difference if we turn off the lights in our dorm room or apartment, when safety codes dictate that lights are on 24/7 in the main hallway.

City life, until rather recently, has been pretty incongruous with the green life.

Our generation has a revamped, revitalized earth-conscious activism, which

focuses less on the crunch aesthetic, so to speak, and more on practical application—less Birkenstock, more biomass plant. But as Helen Werbe, former Eye editor in chief, points out in this week's cover story, even this new brand of activism is difficult to bring to a city campus.

Undergraduates face more obstacles in their initiatives when faced with the enormity of the University itself, and the red tape therein. It's hard for a lowly undergrad's ideas to stick out on a campus jam-packed with illustrious graduate schools.

But student groups continue to fight the fight—and even with some success.

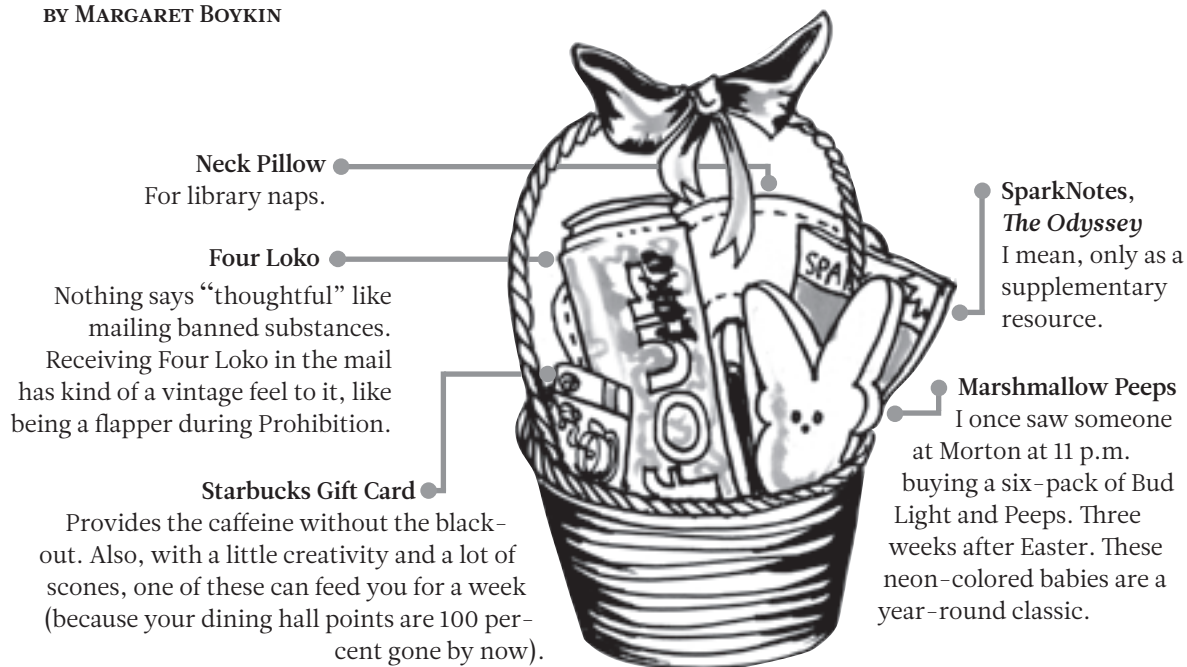
So maybe the crunchy hippie can't survive. But his eco-spirit lives on in plain clothes, swapping hemp bracelets for a MacBook full of ideas and proposals.

He still may drink kombucha.

Amanda Cormier
eye@columbiaspectator.com

THANKS, MOM EASTER BASKET

BY MARGARET BOYKIN



4 WAYS TO USE YOUR CELL PHONE AND LOOK REALLY COOL

BY MARGARET BOYKIN

The New York Times recently published an article about the fashionable rudeness of smartphone addiction, prompting us to dole out some advice on how to be an extra-awesome, tech-friendly socialite in this day and age. See our post on Spectrum for an in-depth list.

1 Line up your BlackBerry next to the silverware at dinner so that when your date gets boring you can check for a new BBM, and don't hesitate to answer calls to speak in code about your date (“Yeah, no, the appetizer is wearing a really bad shirt, Mom.”)

2 Have a cute mantra you chirp whenever your phone beeps, flashes, vibrates, or rings, like “Somebody loves me!” or “Ooh! I’m popular!” I’ll bet you are!

3 While you’re chatting, make “Can you believe her? She is so crazy!” eye contact with the companion you’re ignoring. They may not know who’s on the line, but they will get to fully participate in her pregnancy scare.

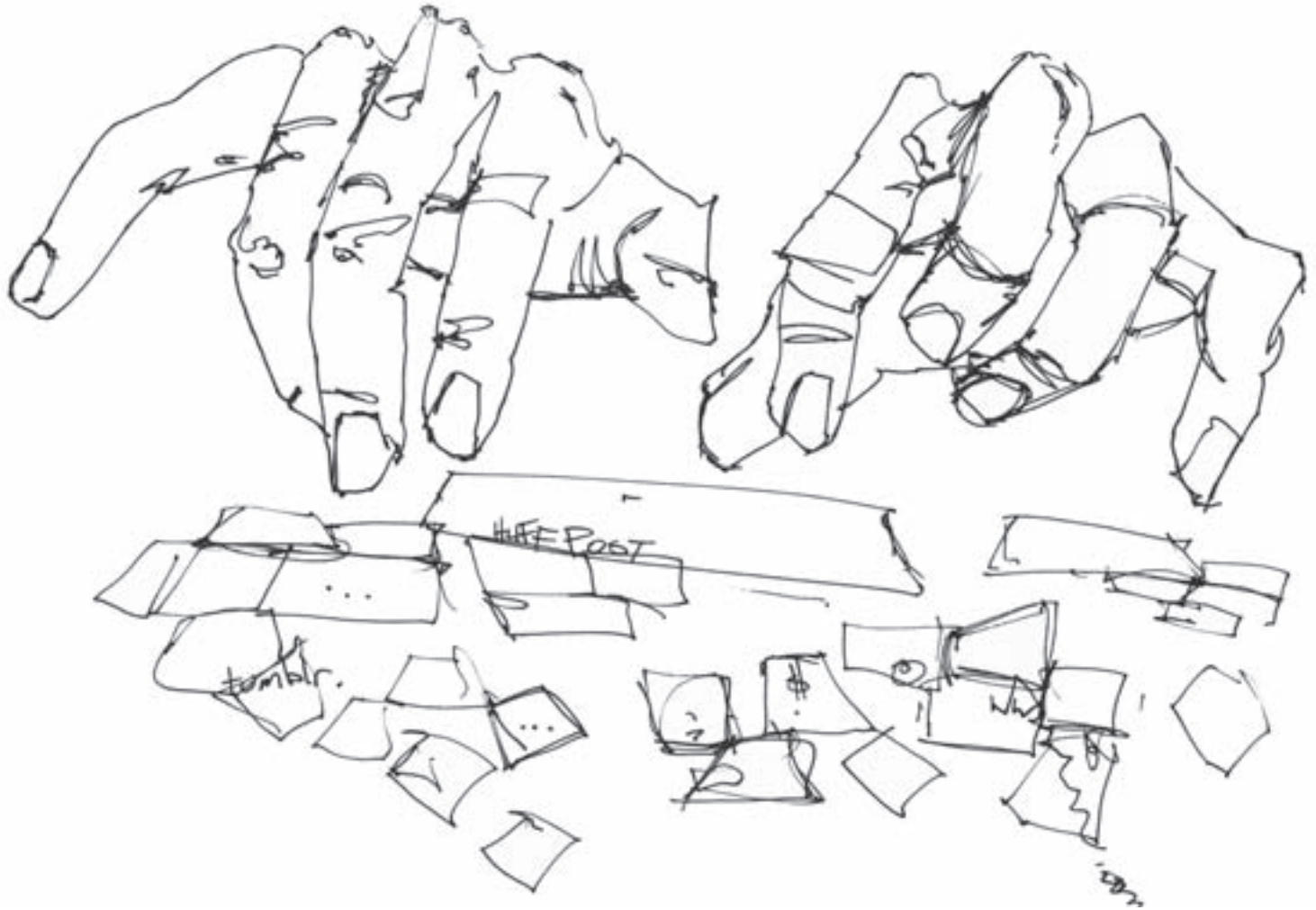
4 Speaking of pregnancy scares, talk loudly about personal matters in crowded, silent spaces like elevators and the Starbucks line. Anything about health conditions, sex, prison time, or body hair is great!

EDITORS’ PICKS PROM NOSTALGIA

It’s prom season in high schools across America, and although we’re deprived of this age-old tradition at college (save for a few confusing Webster Hall invitations to “’80s Prom Night”) we decided it was the perfect time to take a trip down memory lane, and asked the editors about their most memorable—or embarrassing—moments from that special night.



COMPILED BY MARGARET BOYKIN
ILLUSTRATION BY CINDY PAN



Entering the Blogosphere

is it possible to get paid for online content?

BY SASHA LEVINE
ILLUSTRATION BY THUTO SOMO

It's an age-old trope: the struggling artist desperately seeking to be heard. It's not hard to imagine the poor genius painter stuck in his studio—skinny, bearded, anemic—deliriously committed to his canvas. Or the musician—penniless and on the street—with a voice full of soul, and a guitar case sitting empty along side him. Or the author, furiously scribbling on a cocktail napkin in a dark corner of a bar, earning just enough to maintain his habit of whiskey and cigarettes. Or the blogger, hunched over his keyboard in a downtown Starbucks, thrusting his newest post into the ether—desperate with desire to be recognized, redeemed, and...paid.

In all seriousness, freedom of expression takes on a whole new meaning when it comes to online culture—whether we're creating or consuming, we usually do it for free. From hard news to personal blogs, we've democratized the way we experience information, perusing and producing for no more than the time it takes us to read or write. The corollary, of course, is that writers are often publishing at the very same expense—that is, for nothing. People across the country are willing to put their lives, ideas, and observations

online without any sort of monetary compensation—and often times, without any hope for one. While at some places this is called an internship—regardless of whether it's a full-time job or not—for others it's a hobby, or a passion, which demonstrates their dedication to a specific topic area or subject matter.

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And although this is not new news, it's something to reconsider. While numbers of young people's talents are being discovered on their blogs, an even larger portion is not, and these writers struggle to subsist. As we increase our reliance on the web for our reading material, it's time our writers get rewarded for their work. Though the medium may be free, the time and effort shouldn't be.

Digital media professor Duy Linh Tu of the Journalism School helps explain the media revolution behind blogging, offering insight into the history of web writing. According to Tu, 1999 marks a benchmark year, when the first round of dot-coms emerged during what he calls Web 1.0. As Tu describes it, 1.0 was “a literal translation of the offline world on the online world”—that is to say, it behaved a lot like traditional one-way media, where consumer and producer played their separate and respective roles. From those humble beginnings, fast forward to 2005, when Web 2.0 enjoyed the burgeoning of new tools that changed the nature of our online conversations. Suddenly, with sites like Flickr, Friendster, and personal blogs, the Web moved from a one-way medium to a multi-directional community that allowed audiences to communicate directly with one another. For the first time, the consumer became the creator, and the Internet became “the great equalizer.” “It changed the way people thought about who could produce, and when you rethink about who can produce, you actually start thinking about what can be produced,” Tu explains. And here we have the Internet as we now know it—a worldwide compilation of voices, opinions, and perspectives all waiting for their audience's participation. As Tu says, “Online, it's the world in as many minutes as you want, with as many voices as you want.”

One of those voices is Sophia Moreno-Bunge,

SITESTHATPAY

THE WRITERS NETWORK

Though current content is consists only of home and gardening tips, the Writers Network has many plans for expansion in the near future. All articles are between 300 and 1,000 words, with an average pay rate between \$10 and \$25.

www.writersnetwork.com

PAYPER POST

Offers writers the opportunity to make money off their own blogs through advertising opportunities. Blogs and articles must be approved by Smorty to be part of the system. Each post earns a guaranteed \$6 minimum, though could earn up to \$100 per post via ad campaigns.

www.payperpost.com

SMORTY

Like Smorty, PayPer-Post allows writers to earn compensation from advertisements on their own blogs. Bloggers choose the price/post and price/word and negotiate opportunities with advertisers.

www.smorty.com

ABOUT.COM

About.com offers a wide range of content topics, including articles on travel, cooking, hobbies, and technology. Freelancers commit 10 to 15 hours/week and are required to write at least four articles monthly, plus blog one to three times every seven days. Writers receive a guaranteed \$675/monthly compensation for the first year, plus additional payment based on the number of monthly page views.

DEMAND MEDIA

Content includes articles written for brand name sites like eHow, Livestrong.com, Cracked.com, typeF.com, and others. Applications are required. Length of articles and subsequent payment vary.

www.demandstudios.com

a 2009 Barnard graduate and current intern to the editor for daily art news at the Huffington Post. Though she was never previously a blogger, Moreno-Bunge was offered the opportunity to join the arts blog a year after graduating college. Attracted to both the company and the creativity the position offered her, she started her career as a researcher and blogger. Almost a full year later, she calls it “the best, most fulfilling internship [she’s] ever had”—even if it means working in a demanding, fast-paced community with high expectations, and no monetary reward. She notes that all of her colleagues—including the associate editors she works under—are in their early twenties: “I think she [Kimberly Brooks, arts editor for the Huffington Post] likes having a younger editorial team because we are enthusiastic and more willing to work for no pay. I think there is a certain drive when you are young, to learn and experience—I think that is what the editor likes about us.” She compensates for her time writing and researching by living at home and working another job at a restaurant. Regardless, she is fully aware that what she is doing now will continue to grant her exposure to other opportunities. In other words, to use a phrase of professor Tu’s, Moreno-Bunge’s current work for the Huffington Post is being “paid in influence.” She’s wracking up experiences now that will allow her better job prospects in the future—hopefully ones that pay.

Yet, in the web world of proliferating possibilities, this isn’t the only option for writers: There are in fact an increasing number of places for people to publish their work online for pay. The Writers Network is one such site that targets freelance writers from a variety of sources and backgrounds. This start-up company opened for business in mid-December 2010 and started actively recruiting this January. In four months, The Writers Network has just under 500 writers in their community, and has generated somewhere between 6,500 and 7,000 articles in total, receiving on average about 100 article submissions daily. Essentially, The Network itself serves as the home base for their contributors, whose work is then published on their content site, Home and

Garden Ideas. This site offers their readers free information on niche topics ranging from how to best decorate a male teenager’s bedroom to great locations for a bachelorette party. As diverse as they are, these topics are not picked arbitrarily. Using an algorithm that mines data on the kinds of searches readers perform on the Internet, the editors tailor their content to the most popular—and most profitable—inquiries. In other words, if there is a large demand for information on the best hardy plants—an article featured on the site at time of writing—the Network will present the pitch to their growing group of writers, and pay whoever selects and writes it an average of \$15 for his or her work.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE CONSUMER BECAME THE CREATOR, AND THE INTERNET BECAME “THE GREAT EQUALIZER.”

While the content itself is based on reader interest, the founding principle of the Writers Network is still very clearly oriented toward the writer. As general manager and founder Fred Klein explains: “My overarching goal has always been to try to be a writer-friendly freelance writing site ... and to keep those writers happy, make them feel like they’re being treated fairly, make them feel like the future working for us is going to be even brighter than the present. And if we can do that than I think we have a very valuable business.” With a background in film, Klein has had a lot of experience with young, inspiring writers.

Knowing how hard it is to earn a living as a professional in any creative career, he created the Writers Network to recruit talented individuals who could use the experience, as well as the compensation. “I used to manage a ton of interns who were literally working for free, sometimes full-time for free, trying to crack their first job in Hollywood. ... These people definitely could have used the ability to make a few hundred

bucks by writing,” Klein says. Along that same vein, it is the Network’s premise that, whether or not you’re an expert on gardening, cooking, or home decorating, a little research and a demonstrated interest in a specific topic will be enough to write a solid 300- to 1,000-word article. “It’s a democratic process,” Klein said, “[and] will help democratize content publishing on the Web”—much like Tu suggested. As for the \$10 to \$25 that writers earns for each article, “it’s not a king’s ransom,” Klein admits, “[but] it will certainly help them make ends meet [while they] write their novel, or screenplay, or whatever it is they feel like doing.” In terms of the larger world of Web writing, Klein believes companies like the Writers Network will have greater implications for the branding sites already in existence than for the blogosphere in particular.

“Its biggest impact will be on the established content publications,” he says. “There is a place ... in my opinion, at a New York Times or Time Magazine... for talented, relatively novice freelance writers, because they can generate this niche content that would provide a tremendous service.” In other words, whereas blogging on a topic of your choice will most likely remain an unpaid gig, there may be a chance for writers to get their foot in the door with a portfolio of how-to articles that others are less willing to write—and a couple extra bucks in the bank. While that may sound less appealing than the content you plan for your own site, at least you know you have an audience, and some cash, waiting. And, if home and garden isn’t your forte, be on the lookout for future opportunities provided by the Writers Network, including their up-and-coming sites on style and fashion, finance and business, travel, and sports and fitness.

So while sites like the Writers Network move us in the right direction, it appears we’re still a long way off from a fully monetized media. In the meantime, it seems highly probable that writers will continue to contribute to the World Wide Web, and when not looking for cash, they’ll seek an audience for their published pains and pleasures. So, whether we write for reparation or reputation, Tu would like to remind us: “You’re going to get some other benefit if you do it well.” ●

Anna's World

a night on the job with columbia's favorite bouncer

BY ZARA CASTANY

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHANIE MANNHEIM

I had never been to The Heights, so I had never met their infamous bouncer Anna. But I had heard her described as a “sassy bitch” and a “real genuine lady” in the same sentence by students who frequented the bar.

It was only 10:30, and as I walked up the stairs to the bar with mixed feelings of apprehension and excitement, I had no idea what to expect from the Thursday night ahead. I was aware of my schoolgirl appearance. (Backpack, check. Umbrella attached to my backpack, check. Wallet attached to my umbrella that is attached to my backpack, check.) But I hoped she would take me seriously enough to answer my questions in complete sentences, unlike the bouncer at 1020, who earlier in the night mumbled his way through single-word responses of the “yes” and “no” type. When I entered the restaurant, after explaining that no I did not have a valid form of ID, I met not only a tough-as-nails bouncer, but also a guardian angel.

Anna Washington works four nights a week from 10:30 p.m. to 4:30 a.m. as a bouncer at local Morningside bars The Heights and Havana Central. Born and raised in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, she won't get home until at least 6:00 a.m., a few hours before she must wake up her 9-year-old daughter for the school day. Over the course of her six-hour shift she will not only check IDs at the door but also go above and beyond her job description, doing everything she can to maintain the safety of everyone who sets foot in The Heights. “When I see ‘randoms,’ people that aren't regular customers or Columbia students, particularly males, and if they are making females feel uncomfortable, I will approach them and ask them kindly to leave the ladies alone,” says Washington.

Washington is petite and youthful, tonight wearing tight jeans, a simple light green sweater, and pink lip gloss. Now, imagine this and remember that she regularly makes it her business to walk up to intoxicated patrons, including those twice her size, and ask them to leave the bar. “My

WHILE SHE MAY SEEM INTIMIDATING IF YOU'VE EVER ENDED UP ON HER BAD SIDE, OR HAD YOUR NEW \$150 FAKE REJECTED, ANNA IS JUST AS COMFORTABLE LAUGHING AND GETTING TO KNOW VISITORS AS SHE IS ENFORCING THE RULES.

demeanor may be aggressive, but my build is not intimidating,” admits Washington, but this does not stop her from getting into her share of brawls, all for the sake of her patrons. She's been punched, kicked, dragged, scratched at, and even had the cops called on her (by a woman she says she “got the better of”), but takes it all in stride, confident that she'll always be able to perform her duties as a bouncer, no matter how dangerous. “I've been strong since I was a little girl,” says Washington. “I've been having to defend myself my whole life.”

With a job that allows her to witness firsthand the sometimes destructive behavior of social drinking, Washington often contemplates why students come to a bar like The Heights. “I can't understand the urgency to drink before you're 21,” says Washington. “Alcohol will be here forever, you really aren't missing anything.” But although she admits that alcohol has never been a part of her own social life, Washington remains sensitive to the stresses of college life. “Alcohol seems to ease students from the reality of exams, classes and midterms. They come here and they can forget real life for a while.”

Khadine Singh, a sophomore in SEAS, has witnessed firsthand the strict nature of The Heights' bouncer. According to Singh, a male friend of hers was attempting to persuade his way past Washington, but his smooth talk and courteous gestures had no effect on her. Both Singh and her friend had IDs, but Washington was adamant about no one else being let stay, as it had reached its capacity.

“She will stick to her guns and not bend the rules for anyone because she cares,” says Singh. “If anyone

gets in trouble or hurt she'll feel bad about it.”

While she may seem intimidating if you've ever ended up on her bad side, or had your new \$150 fake rejected, Anna is just as comfortable laughing and getting to know visitors as she is enforcing the rules. As I talk to her, I'm pleasantly surprised at how relaxed she makes me feel. Leaning down over my chair, her face stays close to mine as her eyes light up with pleasure while she talks of her close bonds with Columbia students, raising her voice so I can hear her over the clanking of bottles and shouts of the inebriated. “I love The Heights, this place is my home. I've gained a lot of friendships here and I really feel I've been an inspiration,” says Washington. “I even went to the 2010 graduation last year; I was invited by a number of people. That was the class I began with, they were my babies.”

As the clock strikes midnight, Washington's boss, The Heights' manager James, comes over to my seat to make it clear to me that my time with her is over, and if I stay any longer I'll be distracting her from doing her job. I'm sad to leave so soon but don't argue, and before I leave I ask Washington what she hopes to leave behind for the students she's met. Her answers are the only words left I need to hear to convince me that she's a guardian angel in disguise, brought over from Bensonhurst to protect the students of Morningside from our own foolish selves. “Columbia is the type of school where there are so many advantages and opportunities, and I hate to see kids abuse them. Whatever you do in life, big or small, do it to the best of your ability, regardless of whether or not you reap a grand benefit.” ●





GETTING THE GREEN LIGHT

Student groups progress toward sustainable change

by Helen Werbe
illustrations by Matteo Malinverno

Joel Gombiner, a senior in CC, woke up at 6 a.m., like he has every Thursday since early March, to sell mushrooms all morning at the Madura Farm stand in the Greenmarket on Broadway. Learning everything from the nutritional values of the large variety of mushrooms of different shapes and colors to what to do with unsold ‘shrooms has been useful for Gombiner, who plans to start his own mushroom business after graduation.

One of few undergraduates selling there, Gombiner became fascinated by fungi after watching a TED talk called “6 Ways Mushrooms Can Save The World” by Paul Stamets, a mycologist focusing on fungi’s medicinal benefits. Dan Madura, or “Farmer Dan” as Gombiner calls him, operates Madura Farms and provides a chart outlining the health benefits of his stand’s produce. It’s this specific information that customers don’t receive at commercial supermarkets and is an advantage of buying at the

Greenmarket, Gombiner says. “That exchange of information is really valuable to people who care about their food.”

After reading a Wikipedia article about the composition of ground beef patties, he started critically thinking about his consumption. “Fundamentally, it was sophomore year—for the first time in my life I was confronted with decisions about what I wanted to eat because I wasn’t on the dining plan and my mom wasn’t cooking for me.”

Now a vegetarian, Gombiner made a lifestyle change encouraged by the campus food scene, which includes green food initiatives such as Core Foods and 4Local. Encouraging students to adopt environmentally sustainable lifestyles, as Gombiner has, is a goal of the green student groups on campus. Though arguably the most challenging part of the green community’s mission, it is necessary for achieving tangible goals in environmental action, and something the University may ultimately rely on too.

In 2007, as part of the PlaNYC Mayoral Challenge, Columbia agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent of 2006 levels by 2017. PlaNYC is a comprehensive plan created by Mayor Michael Bloomberg to make New York City sustainable. To do its part, Columbia's action plan from October 2008 anticipated a reduction of 78,765 metric tons of carbon equivalents for the Morningside Heights campus and the University's residential properties, with 9.56 percent of the target reduction through behavior alterations and conservations. Nilda Mesa, Assistant Vice President of Environmental Stewardship, says the University chose the 9.56 percent figure after extensive consultations with SEAS faculty and is developing initiatives to reach this level. Mesa says the University is not relying on student initiatives to meet the reduction goal, though it will look to student activities to determine possible successful programs.

For now, Mesa says the University is focusing on tried-and-true methods of emissions reductions, such as replacing existing equipment with more efficient models, revamping operations and maintenance, and other capital-intensive initiatives. These methods do not include behavioral change, which Zak Accuardi, a member of Green Umbrella, the organization overseeing environment-related student groups, says is the undergraduate green community's focus.

A leap of faith

Accuardi, a senior in SEAS, says the University's expectation when assigning a 9.56 percent emission reduction goal was that students' habits would naturally shift and change. The University knew that groups like the EcoReps were actively spreading environmental awareness and implementing greenhouse gas emissions reduction initiatives, so it assumed that students would gradually adopt greener habits, he says.

Regardless, because they were never specifically instructed, Accuardi doesn't believe that environmental student groups are expected to complete the greenhouse gas emission reduction. This is not to say that the goals of reducing emissions and changing habits don't fall within the purview of the groups' missions.

“WITH THE COORDINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS UNDER THIS PLAN, WE REALLY STARTED TO SEE SOME EFFECTIVE ACTIVISM.”

missions.

Two years ago, achieving these goals would have been much more difficult. In spring 2009, a small team of five or six students, including Accuardi, recognized that Green Umbrella, which organized events, would be more effective if it worked to unite and coordinate the many existing and emerging green student groups that covered a lot of ground, but tended to overlap in their efforts.

Todd Nelson, a junior in CC, drafted two key plans for Green Umbrella to realize this idea.

The first plan outlined a new campus environmental framework, organizing existing groups into a more efficient scheme. Nelson observed each group and assigned the best area for each to perform future



work. “With the coordination of environmental groups under this plan, we really started to see some effective activism,” he says.

The second plan specifies environmental goals. Nelson found successful greenhouse gas reduction, adjustments in student behavior, and departmental changes on other campuses, such as UC Berkeley and NYU. The hope was that more concrete policy discussion and creation would have similarly tangible results at Columbia.

Today, Green Umbrella represents 12 undergraduate groups and communicates with graduate groups and inter-school groups such as Consilience, a journal of sustainable development. Green Umbrella's mission is to foster communication and collaboration amongst environmental groups, act as bridge between administration and students, and meet regularly with the Office of Environmental Stewardship to inform it about students' activities. The Office of Environmental Stewardship is the University's official department working toward reducing the school's carbon footprint and promoting environmentalism on campus.

The sheer increase in environmentally-focused events is proof that Green Umbrella's mission is successful. To celebrate Earth Week, Green Umbrella organized No Impact Week, to reflect on how we affect the environment and to learn ways to individually make a difference. Each day has a theme, such as transportation or water, and the program includes over 40 events, from film screenings to food panels, through April 23. No Impact Week is attracting involvement by non-Green Umbrella groups. For example, 4Local, a student group that makes and sells healthy meals using organic, locally grown, and ethically produced foods, sold baked goods at the Bacchanal movie screening and will cater EcoPalooza and the Earth Week closing garden party.

Tackling its second plan has proven difficult for Green Umbrella. Measuring change through greenhouse gas emission reduction is a major obstacle, Accuardi says. Klaar De Schepper, a major in Interdisciplinary Science and Sustainable Development who graduated from GS last fall, explored the discrepancies between measurement methods in her

thesis. “The differences between the models make a full analysis of a primary carbon footprint very difficult,” she writes.

Due to this, Accuardi says, “In a lot of ways, [there is] no way you could know that you're actually doing anything positive.”

Pushing for Engagement

The environmental student groups, though concerned with decreasing the carbon footprint, ultimately are concerned with the challenge of changing behaviors of students not taking daily green action. The green movement is about starting a paradigm shift and getting people to really think critically about the impact they're having on the environment, Accuardi says.

To maximize students involvement and the impact of environmental efforts, Green Umbrella doesn't simply emphasize collaboration between its own groups, but also encourages members to engage beyond the green niche. “The name of the game is engaging with other communities and finding ways to talk to more people,” Accuardi says.

Last year, leaders of the green community started attending student council meetings to promote sustainability practices. Brenden Cline, former EcoReps Vice President and a senior in CC, found his niche in CCSC's policy and student life committee. He formulated a flyer policy to reduce paper use, but also weighed in on other non-green initiatives to introduce an environmental perspective. Accuardi played a similar role on ESC.

Elizabeth Kipp-Giusti, a junior in CC, is the current sustainable liaison on CCSC and says the position will likely remain a permanent one. General Studies Student Council is now adding a similar position, according to Accuardi. Meanwhile, Barnard's Student Government Association is completely revamping its structure, forming a new Sustainable Initiatives Consulting Board.

The initiatives these environmental liaisons are pushing for are small, but well-defined, such as adding publication racks in Lerner. These racks will keep campus publications organized, make the distribution system more efficient, and reduce the number

of publications that simply end up in the trash. Though perhaps not a “typical” green initiative, such as recycling, this program is feasible and effective. Approaching existing systems with efficient improvement methods that consider the environment is most successful. Other ideas Accuardi says the councils are considering are a textbook swapping event and a graduation robe rental system.

Nelson is also working to engage students not involved in the green community through his Green your Group initiative.

An EcoRep, Nelson realized that his group needed a more thoughtful approach to getting students to adopt green action. He conceived Green Your Group as a way to excite and induce students to take part in an environmental challenge. Green Your Group is a committee of five students (three of them EcoReps) that works with other student groups to reach each group's goals in environmentally sustainable ways. “It's [a] way to have a practical approach, as opposed to just an educational approach,” Nelson says. From September 2010 to March 2011, Green your Group worked on its first project with the InterPublications Alliance, which unites over 30 student publications. Todd says the publications were incredibly responsive and that it was a best case scenario.

InterPublications Alliance founder, Mark Hay, a junior in CC, and a former editor for multiple campus publications including The Blue and White and a former columnist for Spectator and Spectrum, echoes Todd's sentiments. “They were the first non-publication group to reach out to us with any sort of collaboration. ... They come from an organization that has a completely different skill set than we have and were able to help us identify just a host of new ways [to combat] some of our problems,” Hay says.

A green makeover hadn't been a priority for InterPublications Alliance. “It's something we're concerned about personally and for our readership because they'll like the fact that we're doing this. ... But it's not something that, just organically, would have been a huge focus for us,” Hay says.

Ultimately, what worked was that Green Your Group didn't enforce a top-down strategy, simply telling the publications what to do. “They put in

THE COMPOSTER

“Rocket A500”

8.2 ft x 2.3 ft x 4.3 ft

Will hopefully go in backyard of Schapiro Res Hall (“Schapatio”)

400 pounds of food waste / week on a 7-day feeding schedule

cost of a 5-year lease of the machine \$25,029

After a five year leasing period, the machine will be owned by the Office of Housing and Dining, EcoReps, and Office of Environmental Stewardship.

input

meat & poultry, fish, eggs (shells included), fruits and veggies, breads and cakes, puddings and desserts, plate scrapings, pasta and rice, tea bags and coffee grinds

output

compost, usable in gardens and landscaping as a soil additive, fertilizer, and mulch

total ecoreps funding for 6 years : \$32,600

estimated 5-year total cost : \$32,000

5 year lease + engineering consulting + accessories + shelter

a lot of hours on this ... And they were willing to compromise on issues,” Hay says. Green Your Group devised ways to help the publications financially and organizationally. Now, the publications access green printing, plan to launch a web platform that will reduce paper use and increase readership, and will add a green logo so readers can recognize their improvements.

Nelson says Green Your Group next aims to work with CCSC and the Greek organizations.

From Push to Pull

Already, without Green Your Group's outreach, some Greek organizations have focused their philanthropic efforts on environmental issues.

On April 3, Sigma Nu hosted a GrowNYC Stop'n'Swap event on Low steps. The free and public event attracted 300-400 people who exchanged clothes, furniture, and other miscellaneous items. Alex Smyk, a freshman in CC and a Campus Sales Deputy at Spectator, became Philanthropy Chair of Sigma Nu last semester and wanted his first event to relate to green causes and to engage both the Columbia community and New York City. He learned about GrowNYC, a non-profit that works to improve the environment in the city and also runs the Greenmarket, and got in touch with organization's West Harlem/Morningside Heights volunteer coordinator, Ermin Siljkovic. GrowNYC's Office of Recycling Outreach and Education coordinates Stop 'N' Swaps seasonally at locations in the five boroughs, but Sigma Nu's event was the first in this neighborhood. The vast majority of people who attended were not affiliated with Columbia and came from diverse backgrounds.

Organizing this event led Sigma Nu to become involved with additional green efforts. It is now working with Kappa Alpha Theta, Psi Kappa Alpha, and Hillel on a clothing drive for an on-campus flea

market on April 22. The flea market will sell about 100 bags of clothing collected from the Stop 'N' Swap to be set up at a special booth at the Greenmarket. GrowNYC will donate or recycle as textiles whatever clothes aren't sold.

With visible programs like the Stop 'N' Swaps and the Greenmarkets, students are regularly exposed to environmentalism. “New York City can really serve

“IT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT, JUST ORGANICALLY, WOULD HAVE BEEN A HUGE FOCUS FOR US.”

as this interesting case study of environmental issues, protection and action,” EcoRep Claire Fram, a senior in BC, says. “I think of a student body of smart individuals. It's becoming more and more apparent that sustainable development, or development in general requires this holistic consideration of the environmental, social, and economic factors.”

Food as a Gateway

On a campus where free food always attracts a crowd, using food to engage people otherwise apathetic to environmental causes has been particularly effective for Columbia's green community. Accuardi has seen this through his experience with 4Local. “It's really cool to see how excited people can get about having a really good meal ... And if we can talk to them about how our food is local, organic, and made by students the way any student can make, and that food is vegetarian or vegan and can still be good and filling.”

Until recently, 4Local was a mainstay on Lerner's ramps every Monday, where it sold homemade vegetarian lunches. Located in this high-traffic

space gave the group a chance to interact with many people.

Though the group is officially recognized by the Student Governing Board, Dining told 4Local in early March that it could no longer sell on the Lerner ramps. 4Local united with two other green food groups, CoreFoods and Feel Good, to form The Flying Beet, a student-run café. Now, The Flying Beet is working on finding a permanent location for their business. To move forward with this project, The Flying Beet will need Dining Services to support the business plan presented earlier this week.

While The Flying Beet team negotiates with the University, 4Local continues its outreach efforts. On April 18, the group sponsored an event at Ferris Booth, providing recipes for the chefs to prepare and serve, and, yesterday, 4Local catered a lecture by Michael Conrad with the SIPA Food Group, in addition to many events it has planned for No Impact Week.

4Local's push to increase awareness of green eating habits seems to be working. Malika Leiper, a sophomore in CC and a member of Columbia Students for Southeast Development and Service, recently organized a food event with 4Local chef Josh Arky, also a sophomore in CC. Half Cambodian, half American, Leiper wanted to interactively teach other students about Southeast Asian food.

The cooking class was held earlier this month at the Metta House, a vegetarian townhouse in East Campus where 4Local founder Gelseigh Karl-Cannon lives. 4Local chefs taught guests to make

"A PROJECT LIKE THIS HAS NEVER BEEN UNDERTAKEN BY STUDENTS IN AN URBAN LOCATION IN THE UNITED STATES, EVER, BECAUSE THERE ARE OBVIOUSLY A LOT OF LIMITATIONS."

summer rolls, butternut squash curry, and a banana tapioca dish. "We suggested a few recipes that were representative of the area [Cambodia] and they just adjusted a few of the ingredients to make it local, to make it healthy, to make it vegetarian," Malika says.

Leiper was pleased with the turnout of about 30 students—which crowded the townhouse's kitchen and lounge area—including several students from the Weatherhead East Asian Institute at SIPA.

This was SEADS' first official green event, but Leiper says the group hopes to host a panel discussion related to the topic of green business, living green, and how Columbia students can embody green lifestyles. "Sustainability is a focus for many start-ups in South East Asia. ... For developing countries in particular, it's a really important issue."

The fact that groups which were not involved in the green movement before are now shifting their focus toward environmental issues indicates that the larger student body is moving in a greener direction.

The Optimal Project

But even if many students alter their behaviors,

they will only be convinced to continue with habits that appear effective and are easy. Accuardi believes green efforts may encourage apathy when students don't see the difference they're making, they don't enjoy making the effort, and they don't believe that they are actually making a difference.

The Barnard EcoReps tackle this by truly making green action as accessible as possible. "We understand that not everybody is passionate about the environmental mission," says Claire Fram, an EcoRep since her sophomore year. She notes that EcoReps' involvement with Residential Life, so that each are assigned first-year floors, provides many opportunities to speak to students about their living habits. Educating students about seemingly trivial information, such as how to handle overheating in the rooms, can make a difference, Fram says. "I've actually found things like that to be really interesting to people because it's very specific to them and how they live, and that really draws people in."

The Barnard EcoReps are a small team of 10 students, so they are limited in the scope of projects that they can work on. "We have our hands in a lot of pockets. ... We have to focus our priorities to be effective in any of them," Fram says. SGA's new Sustainable Initiatives Consulting Board will help fill some of the gaps between the educational component the EcoReps provide and the infrastructural needs—things like recycling bins and other equipment—of sustainable behavior, Fram says.

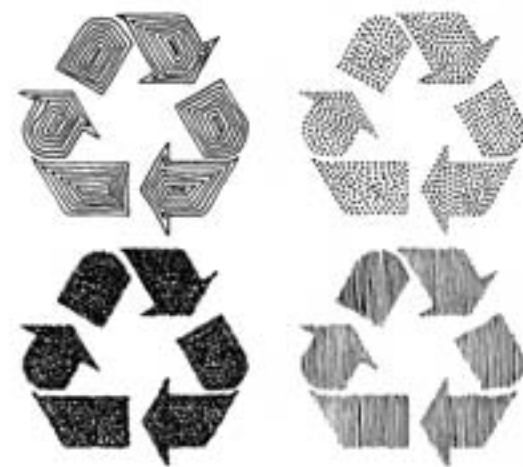
While it doesn't have the capacity to pursue the initiative, Barnard EcoReps and other green groups, support composting as an initiative with great environmental potential on campus because it would directly involve and educate students. Nelson, some fellow EcoReps, and a few GreenBorough residents (GreenBorough is the Special Interest Community focused on reducing environmental impact) make up the "Columbia Composting Coalition"—a team that seeks to start a full composting program on campus.

"The whole point is to come up with an environmental project where we can show students very attractively a step-by-step process of what 'green' actually looks like," Nelson says. Students participating in composting would see a reduction in their food waste, and the conversion of this waste into a usable material for gardens on campus to help grow more food. Nelson explains that composting benefits the environment because when food waste goes to landfills, it decomposes and creates methane, a potent greenhouse gas. "Food waste has five times more impact than other waste, like gasoline, per pound," Nelson says. Composting is a straightforward and effective way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. "It's the optimal project for us to pursue looking forward to the future."

Nelson first worked on composting when he was assigned the project as a freshman EcoRep. The administration called off the project, however, because there were difficulties finding space to house a composting machine. Somewhere near the dining halls, where most food waste comes from, is ideal.

Composting became a possibility again this year when Nelson discovered that the Schapiro patio had enough space for the composting machine. Matthew Hayto, CA of Schapiro, had invited Todd to visit the patio because he was working on turning the space into an outdoor garden and was considering some form of composting.

Nelson presented a 30-page business plan to



CCSC and ESC earlier this month. The proposal passed through CCSC with a 26-1 vote. "A project like this has never been undertaken by students in an urban location in the United States ever because there are obviously a lot of limitations," he says. "The one [the project] we have here is the intersection of a great technology, a great group of students who are working on it."

The Composting Coalition plans to donate a portion of the compost to Columbia's Food Sustainability Project to benefit the Grant House Community Garden Project and to the company that will be providing wood chips to mix into the compost. Ultimately, once the compost meets the campus' safety requirements, Columbia facilities will use it for campus greenery.

In the last two weeks, Nelson and his team met with Housing and Facilities administrators for approval of their funding strategy, a necessary step for purchasing a composter. He plans to take the administrators to St. John's University where a similar machine is operated. If bureaucratic and financial obstacles are overcome, Nelson says he'll spend the summer helping to install the composter so that it is up and running by NSOP 2011, since the first week of school seems to be a key time for targeting students with green efforts.

Wrapped Up

The next time you walk past the stairs down to the Dodge gym, toward Pupin and the Northwest Corner Building, look at the small garden tucked behind Havemeyer. You'll notice some clear plastic bags hanging from a tree. A different kind of composting project, they contain a mixture of coffee grounds and old Spectators, colonized by a mushroom strain.

Gombiner is experimenting to see if he can grow oyster mushrooms in the city. "The way I see it fitting into the framework of sustainable urban development is as a closed-loop system where you're not dealing with the environmental cost of importing your food and exporting your waste, and instead you're doing both of those things—waste processing and food production—directly in a city. Also, I see it as an education thing for people to learn how mushrooms work and how food works."

In just under four weeks, Gombiner will graduate. After college, he would like to start a full-time business based off this experiment. If it works, he'll still be selling mushrooms—but this time, they'll be his own. ●

Snapshot Decision

the ethics of photography fade in and out of focus

BY MEREDITH MOORE
GRAPHIC BY CINDY PAN

A young girl, collapsed, with bones jutting and a vulture looming in the distance: everyone knows the iconic, Pulitzer-prize winning photograph taken by Kevin Carter of a starving Sudanese girl. It is an image that clearly demonstrates the power of photography. But when Carter committed suicide shortly after, everyone wanted to know: Can photography ever be “art for art’s sake?” Or is photography subject to a set of inescapable ethics? Susan Sontag first introduced this question in *On Photography* in 1977, exploring the ethical relationship of the spectator and the photographer. Yet still, these questions remain unanswered, leaving the experimentation process to photographers.

In Martha Rosler’s recent photographic series *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems*, Rosler supplements images of the Bowery with words, not unlike a caption. Rosler believes that the image is incomplete without the text, and vice versa. Therefore, as a writer and photographer, she attempts to create a more accurate message by complementing it with biting social commentary. Her images attest to the need to consider photographs within their original contexts: not the typical photojournalistic approach. Rosler focuses on evidence, like empty beer bottles that litter the streets, believing that they capture reality better than a humiliated or deprived human subject.

CAN PHOTOGRAPHY EVER BE ‘ART FOR ART’S SAKE’?

Photography professor John Miller explains Rosler’s work: “The bad faith involves in the whole sense that a photograph can give you a complete account of a situation,” he says. “Rosler attacks war-photography and victim-photography because it creates a situation of the viewers in which they feel like they have done something.” Rosler directly opposed the photojournalist Weegee (Arthur Fellig), who believed that in order to capture a quality image, the photographer must scope out the victims in despair. “Rosler asks how a photo functions ideologically,” Miller says. “You have to see it as part of a system.”

Not all photographers feel Rosler’s need to more accurately depict a subject. With the advent of Photoshop, photographs are no longer trusted to depict reality—whether it’s the distortion of a model’s cover photo, or a subtle alteration in coloring. The photographic settings and subjects are adapted to suit a photographer’s artistic vision, rather than photographing the “absolutely

unstaged snapshot,” as the late Japanese photographer Ken Domon once put it. The “absolutely unstaged snapshot” is a form of realist photography, avoiding artificiality at all costs.

Currently on exhibition at MoMA, “Staging Action: Performance in Photography since 1960” features the controversial works of Ai Weiwei and Mathew Barney. The centerpiece of Barney’s *Cremaster 3* series is a photograph of a dead woman in a wrecked car. She is a decaying corpse, symbolically representing the criminal Gary Gilmore. The exhibit gives little context about the picture of the woman, and the picture is displayed with a blue line of tape in front of it to keep viewers from inching too close. Barney’s photographs are famous for their immense creativity, but it is obvious that they are not depictions of an unadulterated reality. Yet, by photographing decaying corpses “artistically” rather than “candidly,” does Barney make the viewer immune to suffering, or move him to action?

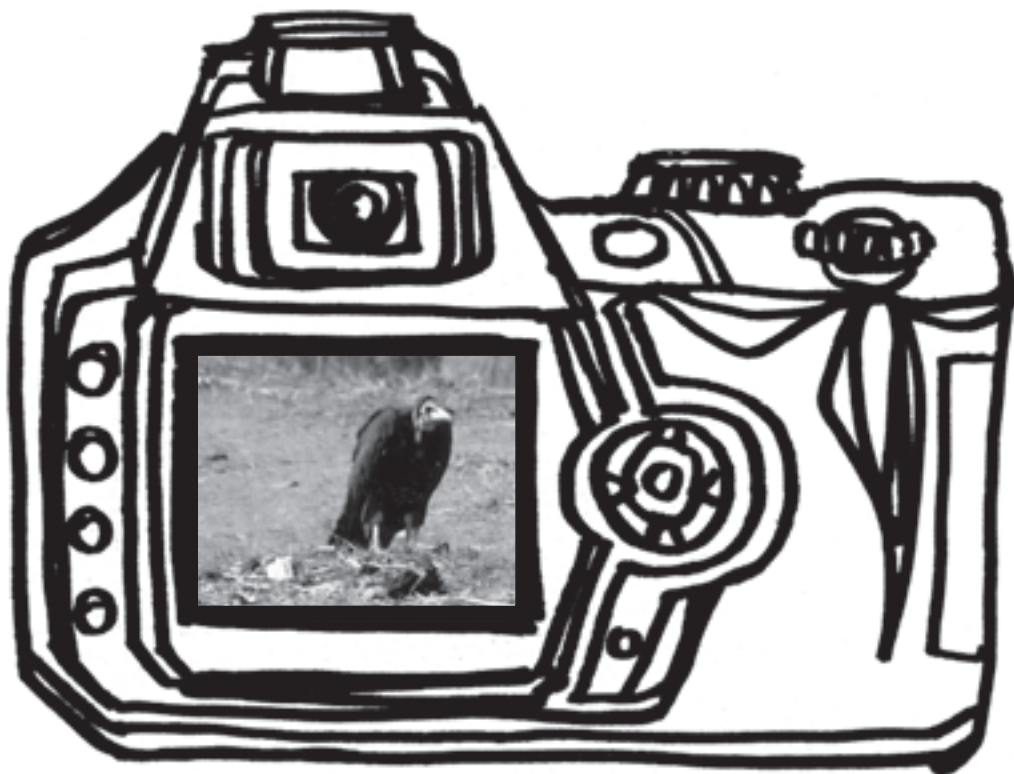
Pushing the envelope even more explicitly, Chinese photographer Ai Weiwei denigrates nationalism in his series *Study of Perspective*. Weiwei traveled around the world to various monuments, including the White House and Tiananmen Square. The focal point of each image is his middle finger flicking off these emblems of national pride. Disenchanted with Chinese communism, Weiwei violently attacks national pride. His art reflects aggressive dissent about international politics, using photography as a means to express his discontent with the Chinese government. His performance photography is a political statement. But from the perspective of a Domonian photojournalist,

“THERE ARE DIFFERENT ORDERS OF VISUAL TRANSFORMATION IN SHOOTING, EDITING, AND OPTIMIZING PHOTOGRAPHS.”

Weiwei’s work is unethical because he does not portray each national monument in its original context. The Chinese government didn’t find Weiwei’s work right-minded, and he is currently in jail as a result of his artistic opposition.

Barney and Weiwei aren’t the first photographers to create an ideal setting for their artistic visions, and they certainly won’t be the last. In the Civil War, photographer Mathew Brady maneuvered dead bodies to create the prime photographic composition. Nonetheless, his images heightened awareness about the Civil War, inflaming Northerners against the South and urging viewers to fight. “There are different orders of visual transformation in shooting, editing, and optimizing photographs,” Miller says. “A pernicious example is the photograph that distorts reality and doesn’t even have that much to do with re-touching and Photoshopping. Look at the history of fashion photography; maybe things were done to make models look thin at the outset.”

The image, the photographic subject, and the circumstances holistically determine the truth of a photograph. Ethical and moral behavior is not only determined by the photographer, but also by the audience. ●



In Search of Fresh Kicks

why columbia students aren't first in line at foot locker

BY DIATRE PADILLA
PHOTOS BY ANTHONY CLAY

"He has to have the newest Jordans when they come out," says Ayelén Rodriguez, a freshman in CC, about a friend of hers from home. "He will look up online when they are coming out, and then go to a Foot Locker or anywhere that they sell them. Sometimes he will wait on line. You need to be one of the first people there, otherwise they will sell out." Indeed, for most "sneakerheads"—those who have made a hobby (or obsession) of collecting sneakers—getting that fresh pair requires a high level of vigilance and a higher level of monetary sacrifice. But to them, owning that limited-edition pair of Adidas is worth it.

"Where I grew up in the Bronx, sneakers were always the hype because of their closeness to hip-hop culture and because all of our favorite athletes or rappers wore sneakers," Aman Eyasu, a senior in SEAS, writes in an email. And indeed, most sneakerheads attribute their initial infatuation with the trend to similar origins. Sneakerheads are mostly influenced by hip-hop and youth culture. Many of the biggest rappers through the years have unabashedly shown

off their "fresh kicks," transforming them into a sort of urbanized luxury good for their predominantly young fans. Sports culture is just as influential: Basketball is arguably the most popular sport among American urban youth, and its most popular players often sport their personalized sneaker designs on the court. Nike's Air Jordan brand (simply referred to as "Jordans" by sneakerheads), which has released new designs continuously since 1985, has effectively outlived the career of its eponymous star. That the Jordan logo represents, as sophomore in CC Ryan Mandelbaum says, "cash and cred," certainly does not elude its most loyal consumers.

Sneaker brands and boutiques have definitely taken notice. Companies like Nike and Adidas purposefully create one-of-a-kind designs to market to sneakerheads. Adidas, for example, has released collections in which each individual design bears the colors or insignia of a specific sports team and player. Nike collaborated with underground New York artist Futura to design a line of sneakers featuring prints of foreign currency, of which only 24 pairs were released. According to the New York Times, these pairs are each worth thousands of dollars.

High-end designers have jumped on the

BUT WHILE COLUMBIA IS IN AN URBAN CENTER AND HAS A PLETHORA OF STUDENTS WHO FOLLOW THE WORLD OF FASHION, ONLY A SELECT FEW CAN CALL THEMSELVES SNEAKERHEADS.

sneaker bandwagon as well: Dolce & Gabbana and Dsquared2 have released designs that resemble the high-tops that are often collected, but which cater to a luxury market, and Louis Vuitton recently collaborated with rapper and fashion buff Kanye West to produce sneaker designs as well—the cheapest of which costs \$840.

But while Columbia is in an urban center and has a plethora of students who follow the world of fashion, only a select few can call themselves sneakerheads. Jeremy Jones, a freshman in CC, says he "probably knows of three or four people at



Columbia who actually collect sneakers. But out of those, probably one or two take it seriously.”

Why has such a highly recognizable trend bypassed our campus? Mandelbaum points to Columbia’s relationship (or lack thereof) with the urban culture surrounding it, noting that the sneakerhead trend is “probably bigger on a ... campus like NYU, which is tied more to urban culture than Columbia, which seems fairly cut off.” NYU’s campus is on the streets of Greenwich Village and SoHo—neighborhoods well-known for fashionable youth and the boutiques that cater to them. Morningside Heights, however, has no specialized sneaker shops.

Or maybe it’s just not Columbia’s style. According to Mandelbaum, “Columbia fashion generally favors a more bohemian, academic look, as opposed to the urban hip-hop look that other parts of New York favor.” The diversity of the campus, too, may discourage any one-time sneakerheads. “I grew up in New York City where what you have on your feet is always a topic of conversation,” Eyasu says. “Because Columbia comprises many students from all types of backgrounds, there are varying styles and significance of footwear. What’s fashionable to me may not be to someone from Utah, for example.” Rodriguez says that it’s simply a matter of personal preference: “I’m more of a heel kind of person, to be honest.”

Perhaps the student body wants to exude maturity, at least in matters of personal style. Catherine Curtis, a sophomore in CC, was only a sneakerhead in middle school, and believes it better that the trend remain among youth: “I actually disapprove of the idea of collecting sneakers at my age,” she says. “It is something I would

picture young kids doing, not an adult male.”

It could also be that Columbians take an entirely different approach toward dressing themselves than sneakerheads. “The more fashion-savvy people often seem to put all their focus into the clothes and leave the shoes as an afterthought,” Jones says. “And those who consider their footwear often don’t wear sneakers but more casual shoes, like Sperrys.” Columbia student style is rarely associated with the more athletic, casual looks seen on other college campuses, where sneakers might be emblematic. And growing and maintaining a sneaker collection like a true sneakerhead takes time, energy, and money.

FOR THEM, AND FOR CELEBRITIES THAT CAME FROM SIMILAR NEIGHBORHOODS, THE TREND IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF AN ENTIRE LIFESTYLE.

It appears, however, that the main reason that this trend is not prevalent around campus is simply that most of the student body has not been truly exposed to the culture from which the trend originates. The sneakerhead trend is most popular amongst black and Latino youth in the neighborhoods of America’s biggest cities. For them, and for celebrities that came from similar neighborhoods, the trend is an integral part of an entire lifestyle—sneaker collecting is intertwined

not only with overall personal style, but also with a love for basketball, hip-hop, and one’s urban upbringing. While most Columbia students may have seen some rappers with sneaker closets or a unique pair in a shop window and thought that it was cool, they don’t have an incentive to immerse themselves in a culture with which they have no real emotional connection. The typical Columbian simply isn’t interested in exploring the neighborhoods where urban youth cultures are on full display—even when such a neighborhood, ironically, is only five blocks away. In a city with a fascinatingly wide array of cultures, Columbians may be demonstrating a self-imposed insularity.

However, the trend makes a noticeable appearance on campus every so often: Mandelbaum notes that one of the school’s hip-hop dance troupes wears Nike Dunks as a part of their uniform, and students say that clubs focusing on hip-hop, street, and black and Latino cultures are more in tune with the trend. Meanwhile, Columbia’s sneakerheads, rare as they may be, enjoy bringing a slice of the outside world onto a campus that some consider sheltered. In a school where uniqueness is extolled and evermore difficult to achieve, the sneakerhead is as one-of-a-kind as a pair of Nike Air Force 1 x Entourage Turtle kicks (sold on eBay for more than \$5000), and the effort spent amassing impressive collections is reciprocated by the ease with which the owners can stand out. “How many people can say that they can match nearly every piece of their wardrobe with a pair of shoes they own?” Jones says. “In a school full of the smartest people around, everyone needs something to make them stand out. I use shoes.” ●



CAKE's Delicate, Geeky Return

the classic '90s alt rockers are still doing what they do best

BY AMANDA CORMIER

PHOTO BY TIM JACKSON, COURTESY OF EAST WEST RECORDS

It's been a long time for CAKE: since the members founded the band in 1991, since "The Distance" ruled the alternative charts (1996), and since they last released an album (2004's Pressure Chief). In January, they released a new album, Showroom of Compassion, to mostly warm reviews, with fans praising the return of their signature wordplay and talk-singing by lead singer John McCrea. On Tuesday, they played a sold-out show at the Music Hall of Williamsburg, and tonight, they'll play a sold-out show at Terminal 5. On the album's second track, "Long Time," McCrea sings rather presciently, "It's been a long time / since I've seen your smiling face." CAKE's lead guitarist, Xan McCurdy, chatted with us from his home in Portland about what they've been doing all this time—and where they want to go next.

A lot of reviews of the new album say that it's "vintage CAKE." But musically and in terms of production, this album was very different from how you've recorded in the past, right?

I'm not really sure how much different it is musically. I think one thing is that we've learned to be much better studio engineers. We've always produced our albums, but we've always had engineers helping us. And now we're kind of taking the reins with our own engineers, keeping it as self-contained as possible—being in the studio with just the five of

us is a little different. Then, musically, maybe it's a bit more riff-rock-y? The way I see it, it's pretty heavy guitar work. Maybe being the guitar player, I was a little more forceful in my role.

What do you mean, in terms of songwriting? It was a pretty collaborative process?

Absolutely, it was very collaborative. ... But maybe I was a bit more pushy when I was pushing my heavy rock guitar bit.

You also recorded in your own solar-powered studio, and on your own label. You've sort of held onto the DIY aesthetic of the '90s. Why is DIY so important to you guys?

For us, it's hard to trust people with our stuff as much. You can hire outside help, but no one's going to care about CAKE as much as we care about CAKE. I think if we can have our hands on every aspect of it, we can push it in the direction that's the best way we feel for it to go.

Also, this way, if things work out well, then we really get to pat ourselves on the back, and just ourselves. If it's a failure, then we've got no one to blame but ourselves. I think it's cleaner that way. And besides, it's fun. We learn stuff. You don't want your brain to get lazy. You want to know as much as you can about the whole process. It keeps life interesting.

Do you feel like you have peers from the early '90s who are also holding on to the DIY aesthetic?

I don't know! There must be some. Can you think of any people still doing the DIY thing?

I'm not really sure either.

Maybe Pearl Jam? Are they still doing the DIY thing? Are Fugazi still playing?

No clue. Anyway. Most freshmen at Columbia this year were not born—or even conceived—when CAKE was founded in 1991. It's funny, because CAKE is sometimes described as "college radio" music. What do you think of that classification? Do you think you still appeal to college students after all these years?

I'm not sure, really. I think John's lyrics are kind of open to interpretation—they're not just saying, "Oh, yeah, baby." He's got an interesting way around words—maybe that sells to a person seeking higher education. Musically, I think we're less appealing to a large part of the record-buying public, which is kind of an angry, visceral ... you know, like Creed, or something like that. We never subscribed to that wide-load anger stuff. We're a little more delicate, a little more geeky than that, a little more articulate. And maybe that coincides with people seeking higher education. Less brute force, more structured math.

How does it feel to play a very political song like "Federal Funding" next to a fun one like "Short Skirt/Long Jacket"?

It makes every show a lot more exciting. I'm

extremely lucky in my job, especially as guitar player, because variation is always a challenge in the best way. Switching gears, going from something very heavy, to something very light, something very funky, something kind of Latin-tinged, to something very country—it's a blast. It's great. I would hate to have to be sawing away on huge rock power chords every gig, all gig. No offense to people who play that. But for me, it's a blast. I have a very good job in that respect.

YOU CAN HIRE OUTSIDE HELP, BUT NO ONE'S GOING TO CARE ABOUT CAKE AS MUCH AS WE CARE ABOUT CAKE.

The lyrics sometimes contrast with the musical tone of the songs on this album—like "Mustache Man," which has hand claps and trumpets and really catchy riffs, but the heavy refrain of "I've wasted so much time." Is that intentional?

Absolutely. We all write different parts for each other, so we've got four or five guys who can write a great bassline, [and] four or five guys who can write a really good guitar part, and accompanying melodies. I think getting a groove first is really key. John will write a song, and he'll have some chords, and a melody, and a lyric, and then the first thing we generally go to is: "What is the best groove for this?" And sometimes, the best groove is a waltz. If we can give a song, one that John just brings in and strums on a guitar, as much forward motion as necessary, then we're happy. Then get a good drum beat and a good bassline, and we're there.

What are you guys up to right now? Are you in California?

I live in Portland, Oregon, but the rest of the guys live in California. We were in Amsterdam two days ago—we did a very short European trip, and it was really go-go-go, no time for sightseeing. There was a lot of jet lag experienced. I haven't even done my laundry from that trip.

What do you think of Portland?

I love Portland. It's an awesome place. I want to stay here. I grew up in the Bay Area, but I moved four years ago, and I want to stay here. We could possibly record an album up here. It's very calm, and it's filled with lots of artistic people, lots of musicians, lots of great recording studios.

Have you seen the show Portlandia?

Of course. I don't think there's any prissiness. No one's upset. It's all in good laughs. ●



Xan McCurdy of CAKE, right.

Jules and the Internet

things started innocuously enough

BY JASON GOTLIEB
ILLUSTRATION BY LOUISE MCCUNE

It's weird when things cross over from the virtual world into the physical one.

Stranger still that my friend Jules hadn't ever been on the Internet before now. He wasn't a new born baby or a really old man or anything. He was a young man, in his twenties. A contributor to society.

He was familiar with computers and technologies of all sorts and the Internet was the last and only thing that was new to him. So when he finally did go on the Internet, for the first time, he didn't have trouble clicking or typing or finding different sites; all this came easily to him because he was so familiar with computer technologies and taking the next step really only means using a familiar set of skills to access the new. I know, it surprised me the first time I heard this, too, but apparently—according to Jules anyway—it's a fairly smooth learning curve and really it's no big deal to access the Internet.

THEN HE INTERRUPTED ME TO SHOW ME THIS YOUTUBE VIDEO HE FOUND OF THIS FOUR YEAR OLD WHO CHAIN SMOKES IN INDONESIA AND WE GOT DISTRACTED FOR A FEW HOURS.

So all of a sudden, Jules, who is familiar with computers and technologies, goes on the Internet for the first time when he's already somewhere in his twenties. All this sounds sort of surprising and impossible, but really—Jules had an easy transition from his world without Internet into the world wide web. Maybe because it's so user-friendly these days.

At first everything was fine. I would see Jules on the weekends or sometimes at lunch and he seemed the same. He would have interesting facts that he'd heard about on the Internet. For example, he was the first person to tell me about Michael Jackson's death—how he found out so quickly can only be explained by the efficiency and speed of a blogger. At another point, he showed me an interesting Wikipedia page about crying. The point here is that he hadn't ever been on the Internet before and because he was well-versed in

computers, when he did finally get onto the web, it wasn't such a big deal. The only change I noticed was that he was a bit more up to date on things and he now had a little well of things that he would amuse me with if our conversations ever got boring. Internet-Jules seemed like an improved Jules to me, at first.

Not long after Jules started using the Internet, he cancelled his newspaper subscription, which was strange because Jules would always save clippings for me. Whenever he gave anyone a present he always wrapped it in newspaper. Jules was the sort of guy who saved his newspapers and actually did stuff with them like papier-maché and what not, and he didn't just throw them out after he was done with them, he actually used them. And so I was like, "Hey Jules, what's with the newspaper subscription cancellation? What's with that, man? You were always so creative with your newspapers and you always kept them and used them for all sorts of different things and now you just decided to cancel? I don't get it man." He smiled and told me about how with the Internet he doesn't need a newspaper subscription and he found a site that will send you anything you want, pre-papier-maché'd. "With email," and what not "I don't need to mail clippings to anyone," and now he just reads his news on Twitter anyway so it's so easy to re-tweet. It only made sense

to cancel the subscription. I started to ask him more questions, I wanted to know if he felt affected by the sudden... Then he interrupted me to show me this YouTube video he found of this four-year-old who chain smokes in Indonesia and we got distracted for a few hours.

I didn't worry, he was a good friend and I think he was happy that the Internet was a new player in his life, and I knew this because he invited me to this party on Facebook. I RSVP'd by clicking "Attending" and he even liked it on my wall when it popped up, so I wasn't worried at all.

I called my friend Carl and I was like, "Yo Carl! Wanna roll over to Jules's place together? He's having a party tonight." Carl hadn't planned on going, but eventually threw caution to the wind with a "What the hell," and then a "Why not, right?" So we both go to Jules's place and I decide to text him from outside his door, because I wasn't sure if I should ring the bell. I didn't know if that would bother him or not so I just texted him something like, "hey, we out front now :)." Jules didn't respond, instead just opened the door and let us in. When he saw Carl his face turned red, he seemed really confused and upset and he tried to say something but each word took him a more time to say than the next. It never really became a sentence, more like "You! ... Not-attending! Facebook! RSVP?" Then he just fell on the floor, cold. Then I started to worry. ●

