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Cover Story



Urbanities



Waiting for April

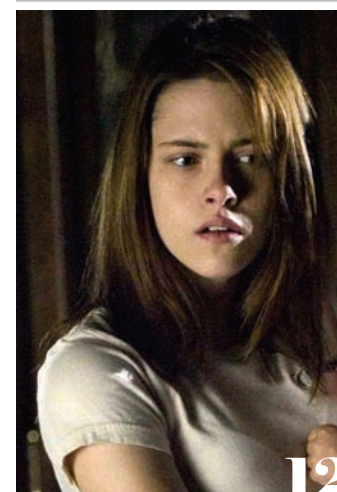
Seasonal depression ranks high among adolescents and urban dwellers.



Bring Your Own Pot

One house brings a bit of can-do to Frat Row.

A&E



Film

Trailers to keep you up at night

Style

The Metropolitan's vision of a fashion icon

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The future of new music is New Music

Food

A melodramatic tale of the oyster

Humor

Baby seals run amok

From the Editor...

In hindsight, the election of 2004 was hardly about red state or blue state. It wasn't about being tough on national security, or faulty exit polling. It was about speaking plainly; it was about arguing reductively. John Kerry's sailboat-ready haircut was rejected for a stale crow's nest. Then this week's top personality was Judith Regan, the infamous O.J. Simpson publisher, who on top of everything was accused of replacing mezuzahs with dollar bills. Vulgarly is afoot.

As for the midterm elections, forget the repudiation of violence, the end of corporate scandal, or the hypocritical sexual discrimination: Nancy Pelosi—now that's a woman who knows how to wear a skirt suit. The new Speaker represents a reaction against indelicacy, a resurgence of the orderly and the organized.

Lest one think me misogynistic or supercilious, allow me to clarify. A repudiation of vulgarity: did I not only two weeks ago pledge to eschew politesse?

Besides, it's not the suit that makes the Speaker.

The English word vulgarity dates from 1579, meaning "the common people," and deriving from the Latin vulgus for "the multitude." It reportedly picked up the connotation of "coarseness, crudeness" in 1774. There seems to be little question as to how specifically American the phenomenon is.

But vulgarity obviously has little to do with the inherent baseness of democracy, and seems destined to be restricted to snootier circles. The more visible offender is the vulgarian, who in spite of good economic fortune is unwilling to elevate himself. I'm looking at you, brown-bagging LIRR passenger.

But vulgarity lives on, violently, through intimidation. One need only remember the rhetorical masturbation of the "flip-flop."

In the art world, the confrontation with vulgarity is aestheticized, and thus inevitably in your face. Senior

writer Liz Brown investigates the alleged impurity that ensues when art mixes with business. The stock exchange-style auction houses and the cocktail party gallery scene are about anything but the autonomous, elevated work. Art Basel, anyone? And with splashy, self-aggrandizing profiles of New York's most admired young artists hitting mid-level weeklies (*New York*, Jan. 15, 2007), never is the model of the corporate artist more debatable. What does it mean to pursue art as a trade?

Margaret Livits turns our eye on Nan Kempner (page 6), noted fashion icon and avowed foe of vulgarity. Ariel Karlin explores the shameless pursuit of shock value with an analysis of the pulse-manipulating advertising that has taken trailers to the trailer park.

Learn it all in *The Eye*, for as Oscar Wilde once said, "Vulgarity is simply the conduct of other people."

INTERVIEW

By Marta Jakubanis

Judging Leslie Snyder



COURTESY OF LESLIE SNYDER

One Thursday morning, I got off the subway in midtown and faced a sky-high office building, where I was interviewing

Leslie Crocker Snyder,

a lawyer and a judge who challenged Robert Morgenthau in the Manhattan District Attorney election of 2005. Tight security and marble elevators reminded me that I was going to see one of the most versatile and accomplished lawyers in the city, but Snyder turned out to be a very down-to-earth woman with a great sense of humor. I talked to her about breaking ground for women in criminal law, facing death threats, and dealing with the mob—not only in the movies.

Did you always want to go into law?

I wanted to be a criminal lawyer since I was about five. There was a radio program on Saturday nights I listened to after I was supposed to be in bed. It listed the FBI's Most Wanted. I used to take notes, and make my brother come with me and look for the most wanted criminals. We were very young and it was very silly, but I liked it from the very beginning.

You ended up working as a prosecutor and a judge. Why?

Well part of it is just fate. I applied for a number of jobs because I was interested

in either side. I got turned down for some because I was a woman. When I got out of law school I wanted to become an assistant to the United States Attorney in the southern district. I went there, I asked for the application for the criminal division and they said, "Don't be ridiculous, we don't take women." So I then went down to Frank Hogan's office, a very famous district attorney of Manhattan, and was offered a job.

What were the working conditions in such a male-dominated environment?

Most of my contemporaries were fine with my being a woman. The problem was that a lot of the older men didn't think women should be doing the nasty cases. So in those days you really had to spend a lot more time proving yourself.

How did you manage to convince Frank Hogan?

Well, after I begged him numerous times, he told me he'd consider letting me go there if I brought a letter of permission from my husband. So I did bring a letter, and I was the first woman in the homicide bureau to try murder and rape cases.

Was trying organized crime different from what you'd dealt with before?

Those cases were especially horrible. The Wild Cowboys case involved 48 defendants who were charged with taking over blocks of buildings and just killing people, selling drugs all over, taking people hostage, enslaving children... I could go on and on. Such cases were usually very long trials, about 10 months each, during which my whole family and I received death threats. For years and years, until fairly recently, we were under police protection, the kids had to go to school with two cops each—it was quite an experience. But my family was very supportive. I felt that you can't let the bad guys win, and they felt the same.

But death threats... It must have been really scary and tough sometimes.

Yes, there were some horrible experiences. Once, I tried a massive stock fraud case, and the head of the group hired someone to kill me. I'll show you something. **[To my dismay, Mrs. Snyder shows me the front page of the New York Post with the headline "KILL THE JUDGE" and a huge photo of her face.]** It is not exactly the kind of memorabilia you want.

How do you look back on the process of running for DA?

I think I ran a good clean campaign, and I'm pleased with that. Of course I'm disappointed I didn't win, but I knew it was a very difficult race because I was up against an institution **[Mr. Morgenthau has been Manhattan's DA for 30 years now.]** I feel strongly that there should be a new DA, and I'm going to run again.

On a lighter note—do you have a favorite mob movie?

My husband and I go to all those movies. We've just seen *The Departed*, which I thought was excellent. I also liked *The Godfather* and all of those, but I couldn't rank them. I have a favorite mob story of my career, though.

I'm all ears.

A major mob figure in the "Garbage Case" I tried was a real gentleman, we used to call him the "gentleman gangster" because he was always polite, well spoken, not a wise guy or whatever. So after the trial he was out because he had to have a major eye surgery—he was not a flight risk. So my husband and I and two friends went to a restaurant on the Upper East Side and as we walk in, there he is! I was a little startled, but I wasn't going to leave because that would have shown that I was afraid of him, which I wasn't, but still I wasn't really looking forward to being in the same restaurant. So I wasn't going to say anything, but he comes over to me and he kisses me on the cheek. So I whisper to my husband, "Is that the kiss of death?" And then he says to my husband, "Your wife is my favorite judge." So I said to my husband, "Well, he's my favorite gangster." But I guess he doesn't really think of himself as a gangster. So we get seated and then he actually brings his wife over to meet me, but she's glaring at me like she wants to kill me so I don't know what to say. So finally I said, "It's nice to meet you, your husband is a nice man," just because I'm polite, and she says "I know he's a nice man!" and she leaves! So at that point, we were not feeling very hungry, and we didn't get very good service. Everybody waited on him, not on us.

Is there anything you could tell Columbia graduates who are considering going to law school?

The number one question is: do you really want to go to law school? I think it's a mistake to go to law school just because you don't know what to do with yourself, which I have seen happen, and that's disappointing. ■

urbanities



PHOTO BY DIANA WONG

Beating the Winter Blues

The busy lifestyle of a New Yorker may make it difficult to overcome seasonal depression

BY MANDIE NOWAK

It was the winter of Susan's first year in college and something just didn't feel right. She was sleeping all the time, missing classes, and ignoring her friends. What was going on? What happened to all of the excitement she felt from meeting her Carman suitemates at the beginning of the semester? Susan, CC '09, whose name has been changed by request, was concerned.

"I remember ... coming in August so pumped and willing to take on Columbia," she says. "But by the time November, hit I remember it hurting my back to get out of bed, so all I wanted to do was sleep. I missed class, I missed outings with my friends, I missed New York City, and that made me even more depressed."

Susan was diagnosed in February of her first year with Seasonal Affective Disorder, a type of depression that corresponds to seasonal conditions. People who suffer from SAD are typically affected during the fall and winter months, but feel 'normal' in the spring and summer. In very rare cases, a condition known as "Reverse Seasonal Affective Disorder" can affect people exactly the opposite way by being depressed during the spring and summer.

New York City's cold, gray weather can be conducive to feeling especially sluggish in the winter months—over the past 20 years, however, what used to be simply the 'winter blues' has developed into a large area of study for specialists in mood disorders.

The most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders does not list SAD as a disorder in and of itself, but rather it's described as a "seasonal pattern specifier" for pre-existing depression and bipolar disorders.

Those suffering from the disorder will, according to the manual, experience regularly occurring episodes of depression during fall and winter, but full remission of any symptoms during the spring and summer. During the

depressive episodes, sufferers reported increased desire for sleep, increased appetite (particularly for starches and carbohydrates), weight gain, and irritability.

It's unclear as to what exactly causes SAD, but a variety of studies have indicated that the disorder is connected with light exposure. It's thought that melatonin, a hormone connected with human sleep patterns, is produced at increased levels with decreased light exposure. Melatonin is one of the hormones that is also responsible for symptoms of depression. The increased melatonin production ultimately alters the body's rhythm and the sleep cycles, which is why neurological research has been concentrated on the theories around melatonin secretion.

"The doctor recommended that I start using some special intensity light bulbs in my floor lamp, and if that didn't work, then possibly some pills," Susan recalls.

SAD varies in its severity; experts in the field estimate that as many as 20 percent of people experience a mild form of the disorder, but probably in a form mild enough that it doesn't merit special treatments. In its most severe form, SAD affects approximately 2 to 3 percent of people.

The regular Columbia student, however, may have more reason to worry than the average person when given the risk factors for the disorder. Research from the Canadian Mental Health Association concluded that SAD is most commonly onset in people who are in their early twenties and urban dwellers. It has also been found that women are four times more likely than men to develop a severe manifestation of SAD.

As SAD is connected with the amount of light exposure one receives, it's no wonder that cases of SAD are found in higher concentrations in urban areas. Gregg D. Jacobs, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, says, "We spend our days working or living indoors away from natural light while, at night, we are exposed to indoor light and the constant illumination of city-lit skies."

And, as an added bonus, he continues "The 'light pollution' of urban environments means that many people also don't receive exposure to true darkness anymore." Both the reduction of natural light and natural darkness cause unnatural fluctuations of melatonin and serotonin and create the perfect condition for a disorder that will mess up a person's schedule enough to sleep through more than a few lectures.

"What was even harder though, was that I didn't think anyone understood here," Susan adds. "I thought everyone just thought I was lazy or a slacker. And I didn't understand what was going on, so even though it's a big city, I struggled alone."

As SAD grows in recognition as a potentially harmful condition, the market for treatments has been increasing rapidly. Studies across the board have shown that light therapy is generally effective in treating SAD. Increased exposure to sunlight or even a spring break trip down to a warm, sunny location can also be enough.

If the merriment of fun-in-the-sun isn't enough, is unappealing, or is highly improbable, the markets in phototherapy have been exploding. Special light bulbs that emit light comparable in intensity to the light emitted by the rising or setting sun are available for any home fixture.

For all the opportunities that New York City offers, it's not a place where SAD, or just general winter blues, can be avoided. Even though April is only a few months away, the cold winter grayness of the Big Apple makes the days drag on longer. Add on stress and schoolwork, and Columbia seems just about as fun as root canal treatment without anesthesia. Brighter days are only a few weeks away, though.

"It started getting warmer and sunnier again in April, and I started feeling like my old self," Susan says. "I got my friends back, I got my city back, I got my life back. And now that I have treatment, November feels more like April." ■

Letter From Baghdad

Dec. 19, 2006

Life here has for the most part been fairly uneventful and routine since last I wrote, believe it or not. To say that, though, leaves out two particularly notable events, and it would be a disservice if I didn't mention them.

It was just about two weeks ago to the day that my platoon was waiting as a Quick Reaction Force to respond to events out in our area. The QRF, or Quick Reaction Force, is a unit of soldiers that sits at the base on standby in case another unit comes under attack.

It had been a largely uneventful day when we got a call that there were reports of an attack involving



COURTESY OF JOSH ARTHUR

small arms fire, rocket-propelled grenades, and incoming mortar rounds in part of our area and that we needed to move to that location and attempt to neutralize whatever was going on. As it turns out, the reports of a coordinated attack were somewhat overblown, as we later came to find out. All of those things had happened at some point throughout the day, but there wasn't any kind of planned, complex attack on a position.

In any event, when we were close to the area we certainly did hear a lot of gunfire, but we couldn't identify where it was coming from until we were practically on top of it. When we figured it out, well, I've got to hand it to my gunners for being disciplined—they didn't shoot anyone until they figured out exactly who was doing the shooting. You need to have reasonable certainty that someone you're thinking about killing is either in the process of committing a "hostile act" or clearly showing hostile intent, so that you can justify taking action against him—i.e. shooting or blowing him up. There's an endless catalogue of "what if?" scenarios that comes into play when you're talking about situations that could potentially involve using lethal force.

Thankfully for me, this time a guy on a rooftop raised his AK-47 and began firing at us. So that much was more or less cut and dried. We returned fire, and within minutes there were helicopters overhead, another patrol was on its way to aid us, and of course, by the time they got there, all shooting had stopped.

If you were under the impression that there are hour-long firefights these days, I think, for the most part you're mistaken. That was certainly not the case with us, when after a few minutes everyone had stopped firing and we'd secured the area. Bold though the anti-Iraqi forces may be, I can't blame them for not wanting to stick around when multiple bullet-proof trucks with machine guns are firing at them and helicopters overhead can potentially see their every move.

Brief though it was, that was by far the most action our platoon has seen yet.

—Lt. Josh Arthur



PHOTO BY RAHEL AIMA

Potluck on 114th Street

Columbia's special interest house offers an alternative to Frat Row

BY RAHEL AIMA

Lively discussion and healthy food help the atmosphere of 604 W. 114th every Friday evening when a unique group of motivated students come together for a potluck dinner.

The Symposium House hosts this widely attended dinner for Columbia's artsy types: resident and *Spectator* staff writer Mark Holden, CC '09, guarantees that while the weather is still freezing, the Potluck House—as it is affectionately called—is the “warmest place on campus.”

Founding member Hannah Temple, CC '07, adds that Columbia can often feel like “a cold, detached place,” with any social activity centering around getting intoxicated. “Other students find it so strange that people would want to just come together [without the extensive influence of alcohol].”

Not everyone thinks the group is inclusive, however. Unable to reconcile the convivial potluck dinners with the festivity norms put forth by frat parties situated on the same street, students have accused Potluckers of being “vegans, hippies, and lesbians,” says resident Rachel Waldholz, BC '08.

And there may be a grain of truth in this stereotype. The food, first and foremost, is consistently healthy. During Friday dinners, conversations flow about a myriad of topics, from local activism and problems with the city's education system to slam poetry and new, independent films.

Patrick Faurot-Pigeon, CC '07, likens the Potluck House to political writer Hakim Bey's idea of a “temporary autonomous zone” to which artists almost subconsciously gravitate—a place outside authoritarian boundaries, invisible on maps, “always hidden, always shifting.” A while back, Faurot-Pigeon felt “bankrupt in the experience of community,” and that was when he first decided to create Symposium House.

The community started informally two years ago when six friends started hosting weekly dinners in a suite in East Campus. As the idea grew, the group sought to expand its reach and applied to be a Special Interest Community

through Columbia Housing. Last semester, the house—under its formal name—debuted in its brownstone on 114th Street.

Upon acquiring special interest housing status and moving to its current 114th Street brownstone, the Potluck House began to experience a few setbacks. Despite being frequent visitors to the house, Barnard students are officially excluded from living there. The two residents who slipped through the cracks have to pay more than their Columbia housemates.

Compared to the Potluckers' proclivity for mattress sliding, sleeping on the roof, and lights-out dance parties, other campus parties may seem, well, conventional.

The interests of community members extend beyond the brownstone, too. Kate Hibbard, BC '07, spends each summer with the politically charged performance group Circus Amok, which addresses issues like gentrification, rent control, immigration, and standardized testing. Other Potluckers enjoy stilt-walking, putting out zines, or even staging Mortal Kombat-esque fistfights in the basement.

And it is precisely this variety of interests that makes the house so unique. As members explain it, the weekly dinners are an allegory for the House—there is no potluck unless everyone comes together, bringing along his or her very own dish and passion.

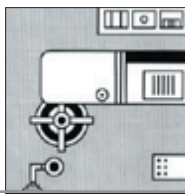
The Potluckers' personal involvement forges deep connections with their neighbors. They share their basement with their neighbors at the Inquiry House, another Special Interest Community, who actively participate in the weekly dinners and sometimes even help in hosting them.

“Potluck is not just a dorm, or a frat, or a house. It is home,” Holden said. ■

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Model Students

Two Columbia students take on the runway

BY ISABEL BOHRER

Scantly clad in white briefs and covered in white powder, two male models prance about the exhibition space of the Whitney Museum, greeting guests under the cover of a fog machine. Cast for Terence Koh's first solo gallery presentation in the United States, Ryan Reineck, CC '09, and Buck Ellison, CC '10, witnessed the debauchery firsthand.

"Two people grabbed my ass," Ellison says. "One was a girl—the other, of unidentifiable gender."

"The funny thing was, we weren't allowed to talk to people," Reineck adds, laughing, "which was especially hard when this one guy started approaching me with questions. He was very confused when I walked right past him and didn't answer."

All nudity aside, the experience provided a valid reason for missing class. "I told [my Art Hum teacher] that I was going to be walking around in underwear covered in white powder at the Whitney," Reineck says. "She loved it—in fact she urged me to go. She said it was one of the best excuses she's ever heard. She made me tell the whole class about it afterwards."

Ellison is tall and lithe, with dark, slept-in hair. Reineck, too, is thin, with baby blond hair slicked across his forehead and a button nose. For the record, they profess a passion for meatball sandwiches and cookies, respectively.

Neither came to Columbia with the intention of modeling. Ellison is studying to be a photographer and is represented by the Geras Tousignant Gallery in San Francisco, where he grew up. Reineck, from Boise, Idaho, is majoring in art history. He interns at *October*, a journal of art theory and criticism, and is the assistant to seminal

art historian Rosalind Krauss.

This past December, the two were independently introduced to Douglas Perrett, a casting agent who runs Development NYC. "Ryan had gone in a few days before I went," Ellison recalls. "I got there and had to sit against a white wall. Douglas took a couple of Polaroids, and then he said 'OK, I think this will work out.'"

Perrett gave them crucial advice: "Drink a lot of water and take care of yourself. Don't get in any fights."

Reineck began modeling this past November and was recently featured in two pages of fashion editorial from *Italian Flair*. He will also be featured prominently in the advertising campaign for *Teen Vogue's* new Web site, www.flip.com. The site launches in the spring, but Reineck's face will hit the presses of every Condé Nast publication in the next month.

Reineck and Ellison met this semester and quickly became friends. Incidentally, most of their modeling jobs have come together. "We come as a package," Reineck said, smiling at Ellison.

Returning early from winter vacation, they posed together in a dating spread for the spring issue of fashion glossy *V*. The shoot saw them wearing Balenciaga hoods and role-playing as boyfriends.

With fashion week gearing up, both Reineck and



PHOTO BY DANIELLA ZALCMAN

Ellison were recently checked out by Patrik Ervell, former fashion contributor for *V* and now an up-and-coming menswear designer.

Only last week, both attended a casting at KCD, a public relations firm that coordinates all the big names in the industry, including Marc Jacobs' London runway show.

"I thought they would be abusive, that people wouldn't treat us very well. And I was excited for that," says Ellison, a glutton for punishment. "But it turned out that all the people were actually really nice to us. They were really busy. Too busy to be mean, I guess."

"I don't mind feeling like an object," Ellison concludes. "That's what models are there for." ■

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The Nan Kempner Exhibit

BY MARGARET LIVITS

Diane Vreeland, legendary *Vogue* editor, once remarked, "There are no chic women in America. The one exception is Nan Kempner." Socialite, jet-setter, and frequent fashion contributor Nan Kempner not only wore couture—she cultivated it as an art form, if not for an unrivaled sense of style, then for the fact that she had acquired the largest collection of privately owned couture dresses. The new exhibit, "Nan Kempner: American Chic," at the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan, displays pieces from her ready-to-wear and couture collection in what is a veritable array of colors, fabrics, and sweeping ball gowns.

Kempner's style can be described as an offspring of European and American sensibilities. Kempner understood the European flair for color, elegance, and tailoring, but she was also the first to mix couture with ready-to-wear before other socialites would even dare. The exhibit displays many of her suits and ready-to-wear pieces that embody her casual European elegance, such as a Bill Blass tweed winter coat that is lined with luxurious fur. Some of the standouts in the exhibit are her collection of Madame Grès evening gowns, rich with gorgeous drapery, and a colorful display of ornate jackets ranging from Valentino to Lacroix, perfectly embodying the excess of the '80s. One of the highlights of the exhibit is the reconstruction of Kempner's closet, which is built behind the mannequin display. Her closet seems infinite and it is tempting to stare

at it forever, trying to discern the treasures.

Kempner is as famous for her relations to everyone in the industry as she is for her unique style. Aside from being a muse to Yves Saint Laurent, she has worked as a contributing editor for *French Vogue* and a fashion editor for *Harper's Bazaar*. She is even more famous for her legendary fashion stories.

When she was a teenager in Paris, her mother refused to buy her a gown at Christian Dior because it was too expensive. Kempner cried so much that they lowered the price for her. Though the exhibit does not delve into such personal tales, it is these colorful stories that seem to hide behind much of the clothing anyway, inviting observers to step into the life of Kempner—if just for one daunting, breath-taking, vibrant instant.

"Nan Kempner: American Chic," on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute. Through March 4. ■

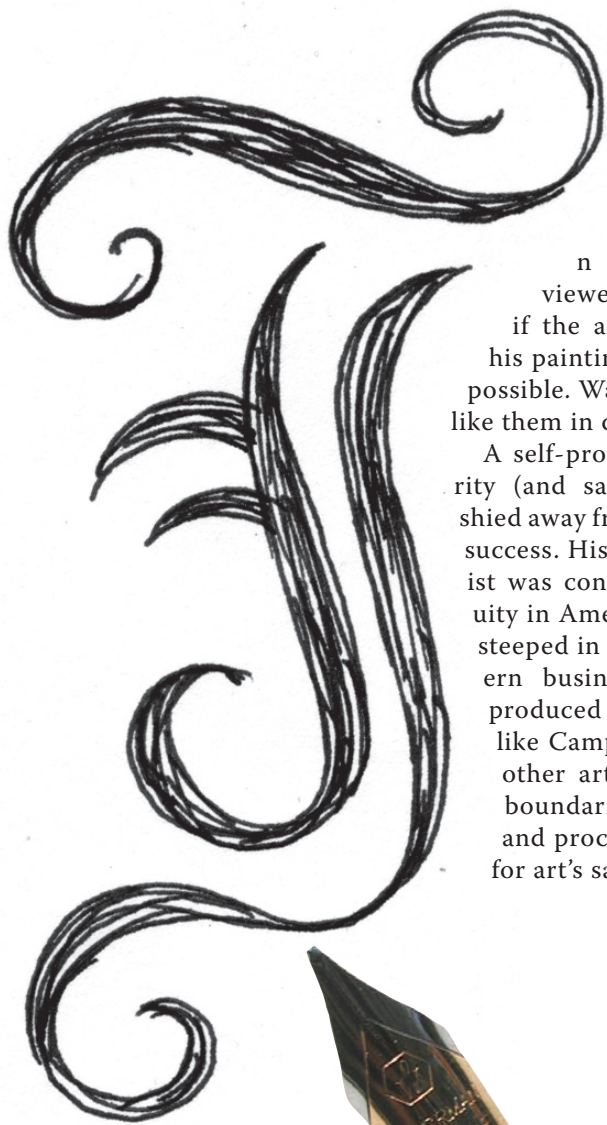


COURTESY METMUSEUM.ORG

The Business of Art

Article by Liz Brown

Photo Illustrations by Daniella Zalcmán



In 1981, a radio interviewer asked Andy Warhol if the artist would like to see his paintings on as many walls as possible. Warhol replied, “Uh, no, I like them in closets.”

A self-proclaimed lover of celebrity (and sarcasm), Warhol rarely shied away from trumpeting his own success. His achievement as an artist was contingent upon his ubiquity in American culture, a quality steeped in the culture of the modern businessman. His mass-reproduced silkscreens of subjects like Campbell’s Soup cans dared other artists, too, to break the boundaries between product and process. In other words: art for art’s sake, my ass.

But according to prevailing cultural lore, the very lifeblood of the art world relies on the truth of that maxim. The painter or actor who doesn’t get a break depends upon the legacy of the bohemians who have championed it. Without it, a failure to make money would mean a failure to make art, which would mean just quitting already. Without belief in art for art’s sake, it seems like most artists would be forced to put down the paint brush and pick up the law school textbook. Still, such a scenario seems unlikely: in the tradition of bohemians everywhere, artists will always measure the real against the ideal, and they will always choose the creative over the practical. Right?

There are crayons cluttering one East Campus high rise. And they’ve made it onto the walls, too, as scribbles and drawings—but the tenants aren’t cleaning it off. Describing herself and her suitemates, Cecilia Fix, CC ’07, notes that they are “pretty arty people,” a statement illustrated with one look around the suite. On one wall is a crayon rendition of a stoplight; above their couch is a chicken-scratch drawing of a green penguin; Polaroids of the happy homemakers are tacked up near the stairway. Fix chuckles at their decorations: “Our walls are covered in crayon at this point—which is fun now, but maybe it won’t be so fun at the end of the year.” Unless, of course, the room’s next tenants want pre-decorated walls. Art as business or money-making seem as far from Fix’s mind as her concern for cleanup in May.



Since long before her crayon-covered walls or even her arrival at Columbia, Fix has been avidly “arty,” her main passion being photography. Her creative sensibilities are immediately obvious. From her suite’s decor to her oversized neon plastic hoop earrings and bright red canvas tote with black polka dots, the incorporation of art into Fix’s everyday life pervades her extracurricular activities as well. She curates for the campus art gallery, Postcrypt, brainstorming themes and seeking artwork to entice patrons to the basement of St. Paul’s Chapel, where the club holds its exhibitions.

Last semester, Fix’s suite threw a party to prepare for a Postcrypt exhibition she was to curate. Her plan was to use the works created that night

as the gallery’s featured art. The theme of the exhibition was “Destruction,” hence the theme of the party. The suite provided materials, space, and booze, and Fix estimates that about 40 people showed up, triple what she had expected. A massive amount of plain cardboard at the beginning of the night turned into an array of posters and collages by the end. Fix says the event was a success, with plenty of pieces now ready for her exhibition. “There was definitely some garbage but there was a lot of good art that came out of it, too,” she laughs.

Postcrypt Art Gallery has been showcasing undergraduate student art since 1989. It runs out of the basement of St. Paul’s Chapel as an exhibition space that affords undergraduates a wall to curate—a teaser for the stark, hallowed Chelsea galleries. Earlier in her Columbia life, Fix’s photography landed in some Postcrypt exhibitions, and she found the similarity to a “real” show thrilling. “It’s a really nice organization because it does feel like your stuff’s in a real gallery. We have openings where there’s wine and cheese and all that. Plus it’s just a nice space in itself.”

Because the gallery is limited to Columbia student artwork, the students whose works of art make the exhibitions at Postcrypt are obviously not students at a specialized art school like New York City’s School of Visual Arts. Nor are they even necessarily art majors. A visual arts major at Columbia demands similar course-point minimums to other majors, requiring 35 points in the department, just a few more than the English and philosophy departments. In contrast, four years and a 120-credit course load earn a student a Bachelor of Fine Arts at SVA. At the end of the day, one would be hard-pressed to find a gallery that quizzes an artist on Immanuel Kant or *The Iliad*. So the question is, why should aspiring studio artists bother with the Core when it won’t directly help them hone their craft?

According to Stephen Murray, former director of Columbia’s undergraduate art history department, a well-rounded education is (surprise!) integral to becoming a well-rounded artist. The specialization offered in art school does not necessarily lend the student an advantage over one pursuing a liberal arts degree. Murray is a bright-voiced son of Britain whose expertise in medieval art and Gothic architecture are as stereotypical as his rounded sentences and chirpy enthusiasm. In reference to how one should best study art, he says, “I’m very committed to the idea of practice and historical studies, and at Columbia you’ve got the two side by side very effectively.”

Murray’s role in Columbia’s art department gives him a particular bias. But with a son who attended the Rhode Island School of Design and a daughter who studied art here at Columbia, he has the ammunition to back up his bias: his son transferred out of RISD to continue his work in Manhattan while his daughter is a successful high-end mosaic maker in California. “She at a certain point [in her Columbia career] switched to a double major in art history and in-studio, and that’s just the ideal. I mean that’s just wonderful that you can do that! An ideal combination. Her career actually came out of exactly that. Right out of the Columbia experience.”

But one man’s ideal is another woman’s sore spot. Maddie Boucher, CC ’09, says Columbia’s art department was one of the big influences on her decision to come here and also one of her biggest disappointments upon arrival. With too few options for painting and drawing courses and department faculty who spoke with her about “our way of doing things”—“As if Columbia’s way of doing things was so much better than any other way,” she says—Boucher defected from the major. She adds that the visual arts major is also not well-crafted. Although its requirements appear on paper like many others at Columbia, “it’s a lot, a lot of studio time and the problem is that, because studio art classes are kind of long and in the middle of the day, it makes it really difficult to take any other academic classes.” Boucher wanted, like Murray encourages, to complement her studio art time with non-art pursuits, like courses from her current major in Middle Eastern and Asian languages and culture. But in the visual arts department, Boucher did not see the harmony of academics and studio time that Murray proclaims students receive in the art history and visual arts combined major, which falls under his department’s jurisdiction. “At this point,” Boucher concedes, “I’m a visual arts concentrator at best.”

This change of academic plans is not unique to Boucher. Before coming to college, Esther White, BC ’07, knew the art world well, due to her mother’s work in professional photography, and was certain of her own wish to be a part of it.

In her first year at Barnard, White began working with Postcrypt. She is an art history and visual arts combined major. She has peppered her Facebook page with Polaroids that betray the shutterbug gene she inherited from her photographer mother. She has interned at galleries, and one of her drawings sprawls across the welcome page of Postcrypt’s Web site. But this evidence to the contrary, after White walks the commencement stage in May, she will not embark on the life of a starving artist. Rather, she will take advantage of her unlikely minor: computer science. She will go back to the art world—for an MFA to teach art—only after four or five years of working a steady job, where her business and workplace skills will garner an income.



Those skills, she confesses, set her apart from some other artists. "I think sometimes people make the choice to become an artist because they want to and sometimes because that's the only thing they can do." Like professor Murray contends, White has benefited from a studying art in conjunction with another area, even if the result is not pursuing art as a career.

Aspiring visual artists at Columbia could feel outshone by our downtown neighbor, the School of Visual Arts, and perhaps steer clear of gallery-courting for fear of a cold reception. But it seems odd that the ambitious and cutthroat culture of the Ivy League would make us likely candidates to fall prey to intimidation. Something else must be in play. In spite of professor Murray's insistence upon Columbia's training philosophy as superior to specialized art schools, its liberal arts education inevitably encourages more diversified career paths than a place like SVA. For better or worse, the environment here of others' potential successes can be both daunting and demanding. Around us are so many talented students that suddenly the low pay and marginal recognition of all but a few in the art world makes art careers lose their luster.

White was a cautious artist when she entered college, in that she knew she was interested in art but also had the foresight to choose a liberal arts school, in case the art plan fell through. Fix, of the arty EC suite, is another student no longer looking toward a career at a gallery, as she once was. When she ventured off campus to intern in New York City galleries, she was disenchanted. "It ended up being more sales than anything else, which is less glamorous and interesting than I'd hoped." The business and moneymaking side of art soured her love for its creation. She now plans to take an extra year to meet medical school requirements and then go on to become a doctor.

And Fix is not an anomaly for the average artistic student at Columbia. After all, when asked if he sees many students opting to go for studio art after graduation, Murray replied: "No. No. Really not. No. What do you mean by studio art anymore, you know? Locking yourself up in a garage and painting impressionist pictures? No."

Carolyn Ramo, director of the Chelsea-area Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, describes the youth factor as complicated. She says she sees a sort of youth obsession cropping up in other galleries right now. "There is competition for some of the artists that might be stronger coming out of art schools right now. It's interesting, if you go to the open studios you see dealers standing next to their artist—and they're still in school," she laughs at the informal claim-staking ritual. She describes the Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery's approach as counter to that. "We're a little more leery," she says, because they don't want to place trend above quality, possibly sacrificing their shows' caliber. It's about "making sure that the work is there because that's the most important thing."

And when the work isn't "there" enough for the gallery's main space, they can direct artists to what is called a "project space." Ramo explains, "In our project space right now, we have an artist who just graduated and a few who've recently graduated. But the difference between someone we really take on and someone we're experimenting with—that's a bigger line."

The director of Postcrypt is architecture major Valerie Nizewitz, BC '08. She talks enthusiastically about students' eagerness to contribute to shows and the thrill of all the fine details that go into putting together exhibitions for Postcrypt. She notes that one of her reasons for joining up with Postcrypt in the spring of her freshman year was that she took her first art history course that semester, "and I fell in love with it." When Postcrypt members sit down and discuss whose work to take on in their space in St. Paul's, "rarely do we turn people away. It's not policy, but who are we ... to judge whether or not a piece of artwork is 'good' or 'bad.' We do really want to provide an outlet. It's a forum for people to showcase their artwork." It's easy to see why students would be so eager to have their turn on the walls of Postcrypt's

gallery, with the open attitude Nizewitz, White, and Fix describe. White adds that some Postcrypt artists "just got involved in art after coming to college, but definitely some see it as sort of a launching pad for knowing what it's like to show their work in commercial galleries."

But as gratifyingly real-world as a gallery like Postcrypt can feel to its artists and club members, they would still do well to remember: it's not. Yet another example of the ways in which the college bubble can delude its inhabitants, Postcrypt members can be involved with the gallery world in the 'art for the sake of art' kind of way. White explains, "I guess the major difference that really

does set them [Postcrypt and a commercial gallery] apart is financial because in a museum or gallery, money is the number one priority. And at Postcrypt, although we do have to worry about funding, which is sometimes a little stressful, it's never that big of a problem."

White recognizes the differences between her intense involvement as an artist in college and what it would be like to exist as an artist outside college. "I'm not really interested in being particularly competitive ... I don't

know if I'm a business person enough to promote myself in that way." This is where her Barnard education comes in handy.

Postcrypt director Nizewitz will look to her liberal arts education after graduation, too. While not pursuing art full time, "I'll probably go into a field having to do with historic preservation." She isn't out to lead the next pop art movement, but in her own way, Nizewitz is exploring how art can make money for her. The shameless practicality of making mass reproduced silk screens is not, after all, so far removed from the career choices of some of Columbia's artists who seek to embody art, create art, or live in an artist's world without hoping for success on the level of a cultural icon. ■

“WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY STUDIO ART ANYMORE, YOU KNOW? LOCKING YOURSELF UP IN A GARAGE AND PAINTING IMPRESSIONIST PICTURES? NO.”





Diane Keaton proves yet again that there are no good roles for women over 60—or at least, not more than one role. See her aging, single, but peppy in *Because I Said So*, opening this Friday.



When Jet Li stars in a movie, he is almost certainly bound to kick ass. This time it's Jason Statham's. The brawl begins Friday in *Rogue*, music video director Phillip Atwell's film debut.



A KINDER, GENTLER WAR
DIVISIVE POLITICS ARE RELAXED IN AN *UNREASONABLE MAN*, GIVING RALPH NADER SOME RARE POSITIVE SCREEN TIME

COURTESY OF IFC FILMS

Politics Without Reason

Taking a fair and balanced look at Ralph Nader, *An Unreasonable Man* signals a willingness for greater impartiality in political docs

BY ROB BRINK

But the already constant noise of the 2008 U.S. presidential election is the menace of today, threatening to drown out the actual democratic process in lieu of punditry and analysis.

A faint silver lining glitters on the edge of this looming cloud of political gas: there will be plenty of dead airtime for citizens to think about the national election process. And film may be just the medium to start some discussions.

An Unreasonable Man, the documentary debut of Henriette Mantel and Steve Skrovan, tells the story of Ralph Nader, from his early days as a public interest lawyer through his more recent forays into presidential politics. Reproached alternately by the political left and right, how can one reconcile the two Ralphs?

Knowing Mantel had worked as an office manager for Nader decades ago, Skrovan originally approached her to collaborate on a sitcom about a public interest law office.

"Somewhere along the line, the idea of a documentary started to take over from the sitcom," Skrovan says. "I was struck by how many of his friends and former allies were mad at him. That seemed like an interesting conflict to explore. And it presented a story arc that asked a simple dramatic question: How does a man go from hero to pariah?"

That central question is framed from a perspective that leans slightly left-of-center. Skrovan's dramatic tension relies on the audience agreeing with the view that Nader dealt America a terrible blow

in the 2000 presidential election, when the votes he received were seemingly the deciding factor in the close Florida race. A Reagan-era republican might not understand the film at all, since Nader went from foe to friend in that camp's perspective. The film fails to create emotional conflict when viewed from the right.

Instead, the film's intention is to redeem Nader from the anger of the mainstream left. At one point, Columbia professor Todd Gitlin goes on a rant against Nader.

"It's the responsibility of a serious person not to be a fool," Gitlin says. "If the game was to get 5 percent so that you could get standing for the 2004 election under the election code, then he [Nader] should have campaigned in California and New York where he had many, many votes to pick up."

However, since the 2000 election, the Democratic Party has benefited enormously from a pull to the left that can largely be attributed to progressive grassroots organizers whose agenda and approach bear a striking resemblance to Nader's. Corporate malfeasance and election reform are themes du jour in the House. Thus, the emotional stakes of the film feel low, as the narrative is organized around a dramatic feeling of betrayal that has faded as Democratic fates have improved.

Unlike a sitcom, this film manages to move Nader's geek persona offstage and focus on his unwavering record of accomplishments. However, the film succeeds in something more interesting than the examination of Nader's changing reputation or unchanging character. It succinctly documents the forces that Nader fought at each stage of

his career. Those forces continue to play a role in our politics, and the contour of these forces is now much less controversial whether one looks from the right or left.

The filmmakers have elicited unguarded statements from every camp. For instance, Pat Buchanan offers a striking portrait of the Reagan revolution, which forced a turning point in Nader's career in the 1980s.

"The whole thing that we were trying to do with the New Deal coalition is to drive these wedges into the coalition, and take parts of it for the Republican base," Buchanan says. "You did this with social, cultural issues. You carve off all their issues which do not conflict with your own social and political beliefs, and you keep hammering them."

As a turning point, the film presents the Powell Memo, written by Justice Powell before he was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"There's a threat to America," he writes. "These public interest groups are a threat to America, and every corporation has to react. We have to take back the minds and hearts of the students and the academics and the media, and we've got to fight them tooth and nail." The film documents the largely successful fight by corporations to recapture their powerful position in national politics.

While the central narrative may be framed from a Democratic perspective, the interviewees range across the political spectrum. Skrovan notes that during two years of filming, Nader gave them only one admonition.

"Make sure you talk to people who oppose me.' That's pure Ralph. He never shies away from an argument," Skrovan says.

Though the film isn't particularly innovative in its structure, it could represent a bigger trend in documentary filmmaking—namely, political movies made without acidic agendas. While the filmmakers clearly have a point of view, there is no enemy—only a champion. And with Michael Moore being blamed for past Democratic losses almost as much as Nader, perhaps that's just what the party needs.

An Unreasonable Man opened yesterday at the IFC Center in New York and is due for national release soon. ■

Shooting the Messengers

Will someone please think of the children? The MPAA restricts ads and trailers, but the benefit is unclear

BY ARIEL KARLIN

There's something very scary lurking in homes nationwide, something almost impossible to avoid: commercials.

Creepy film trailers have become a staple of movie marketing, offering unsuspecting viewers heart-stopping scares, whether or not they are willing participants.

But how scary is too scary? Much of the attraction of horror films is in their palpable tension, imposed on audience members as they sit glued to the screen in suspense. If this effect can be simulated in the short span of a commercial, it would seem to be a valuable tool for advertising.

Unfortunately for the horror film industry, however, there's no way to direct the message exclusively to its intended audience, especially with the majority of advertising focused somewhat nebulously on television or the Internet. *The Messengers*, which comes out tomorrow, is about a house haunted by supernatural lurkers invisible to the eyes of adults. The film's trailer was originally deemed too scary for the masses and was only available for downloading between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. It could also only be shown before R-rated movies, by order of the Motion Picture Association of America. The restriction was ironic in light of the movie's premise—its intent was to prevent children from viewing a commercial for a film about beings that can only be seen by children.

The Messengers is certainly not the first movie to have faced these constraints. The MPAA has an entire division devoted to advertising, whose tasks include assessing an advertisement's "suitability for general audiences" and making "sure that the advertising is placed appropriately." For movies that are bound to offend, there is a special option to designate certain trailers as restricted, only to be shown before certain films, on limited-access

DON'T LOOK NOW THE MOVIE'S SCARY TRAILER MAY HAVE CAUSED A STIR, BUT IN THE PURSUIT OF PUBLICITY, MARKETERS KNOW NO FEAR.



COURTESY OF SONY PICTURES ENTERTAINMENT

Internet sites, and in late-night television spots.

The MPAA's treatment of *The Messengers'* advertising (and other trailers with potentially traumatizing visuals) is similar to the treatment that a full-length motion picture would receive. This emphasizes the growing similarity and important connection between short advertisements and the actual movies that they represent. While many observations have been made about the increasingly cinematic quality of television shows, little attention has been drawn to the television-like quality of movie trailers which, like an episode of *Lost*, leave the viewer involved in the story and wanting more. The entertainment value of stylized movie trailers is undeniable—they get right to the point in their offerings of excitement, celebrity, and the prospect of something fun to anticipate.

The mentality of showing up late to movies because "we'll only miss the previews" is on its way out, as the previews are becoming a part of the film-watching experience for viewers to enjoy. For advertisers, the appeal of movie trailers is a dream come true, and they haven't missed a chance to push the limits of audaciousness. Nothing is out-of-bounds in promoting movies—even if it means marketing the marketing itself, like announcing that the trailer for the new Harry Potter movie would accompany *Happy Feet*. Even the traditional voice-over is afforded many liberties these days, including having free rein to declare Peter O'Toole's part in *Venus* to be "the role of a lifetime."

Extravagant marketing strategies leave a strong impression on potential moviegoers—perhaps too strong. If viewers close their eyes until *30 Rock* comes back on instead of watching an ad for *The Messengers*, then they won't get the intended exposure to the commercial—although, admittedly, those people were probably not going to go see the movie, anyway. Like other trends that stick in the horror film genre—like Asian remakes or sinister British children—scary advertisements might be here to stay.

In addition to the content of the movie trailers, another huge appeal, especially for college students, is that the trailers can be viewed for free. As those who have repeatedly watched the trailer for *Factory Girl* instead of writing their papers know, trailers are available for free on a variety of Web sites, including iTunes. Free downloads on iTunes are always a draw—no matter how ridiculous the content—leading many young people to stuff their download libraries with pilots of shows they'll never watch, any song that's been a featured single of the week, from folk to techno, or almost any movie trailer. The iTunes store places its theatrical trailers alongside the rest of its downloadable media, as though they were actually worth purchasing.


Trailers offer cheap thrills without the high expectations and substantial time requirements of a full movie. In the city of New York, it costs more than \$10 to see a movie, but the movie advertisements can offer a taste of the same appeal—for free. ■

Front of the Queue

The cinematic expertise of professor Annette Insdorf has bedazzled Columbia's film department for many years, and this week, the director of undergraduate film studies shares her most recent thoughts.

- 1 In Deepa Mehta's superb *Water*, set in 1938 India, an eight-year-old girl whose husband dies is sent to a home where Hindu widows live in penitence.
- 2 *Perfume* is a sumptuous adaptation of Patrick Süskind's novel, often reminiscent of *The Tin Drum*. Director Tom Tykwer (*Run, Lola, Run*) evocatively recreates an ancient and odoriferous Paris.
- 3 *Dreamgirls*, smartly directed by Bill Condon, is a joyful musical.
- 4 Given that *Breaking and Entering* is gifted director Anthony Minghella's third collaboration with Jude Law and his second with Juliette Binoche, this contemporary London drama is promising.
- 5 Lasse Hallström's *The Hoax* sounds fascinating, with Richard Gere playing Clifford Irving—who tried to pull off a literary hoax with Howard Hughes' "autobiography."

—Compiled by Isabel Bohrer



DVD

DOUBLE FEATURE

☒
The Marine (2006)

☒
G.I. Jane (1997)

Spend your night inside this weekend kicking back, relaxing, and watching others sweat it out on the small screen. The newly released *The Marine* stars professional wrestler John Cena as a young marine recently discharged. He pursues a group of thieves who have kidnapped his wife in the course of their flight from justice. This movie, while short on introspection, is long on car chases, explosions, and heavily muscled men flying through the air. Once the smoke clears, continue the military theme with *G.I. Jane*, in which Demi Moore, in the face of a brutal commander, inhumane physical demands, and all expectations of failure, attempts to complete navy SEAL training. Demi's muscles may be smaller than John's, but he has only a handful of villains to fight while she is trying to change the minds and prejudices of an entire army. Viewers are encouraged to decide for themselves which of the two has more testosterone. —Chloe Smith



Cat Power
Hiro Ballroom
Sun., Feb. 4,
7 p.m.



**The Harlem Shakes,
The Subjects, Get Him
Eat Him**
Canal Room
Thurs., Feb. 11, 8 p.m.



MILLER THEATRE EDUCATING STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY WITH ITS COMPOSER SERIES

COURTESY OF HIRO ITO

Champions of the Avant-Garde

George Steel and Miller Theatre breathe new life into New Music

BY JUSTIN A. GONÇALVES

For better or worse, New York is about discovering hidden treasures—the quietest cafe, that next big band. And Columbia is no different. Whether it be roof hopping or tunnel diving, there persists that desire to experience something unique, if only to share it with your extended circle of closest cool-hunting friends. Unfortunately, this tendency to dig into Columbia's nether-regions leads students to ignore some of the most prominent resources the university has to offer.

Proceeding north on Broadway, past the Columbia Bookstore, lies what many have come to consider a haven for New York City's New Music scene. New Music, as ambiguous as any other wantonly applied genre distinction, is a predominantly unexplored realm of orchestral music that transcends the ill-founded preconceptions of classical music. "New Music is medicine," asserts George Steel, executive director of Miller Theatre and one of the rising champions of new and old music alike. "Occasionally people say 'I don't like New Music,' but just because you don't like this piece doesn't mean you won't like another piece." New Music encompasses a musical realm beyond the scope of any group of composers or formulas, a beautifully ambiguous genre that is continuously stretching and recreating its boundaries.

Steel, recognized in *New York Magazine* and *Time Out New York* as a trailblazer, has been running Miller since 1998. His mission, and that of the

theatre, is to "develop the next generation of cultural consumers"—the precept behind Steel's New Music Composer Portrait Series. The series, unique in its approach, stresses the educational value of becoming familiar with the various compositions of one single composer, providing a brief introduction to another facet of the limitless genre of New Music.

"The truth is," Steel admits, "nobody knows about New Music. Everybody's on a level playing field. There's a real wonderful feeling of everyone learning it at the same time, which is a much more appealing invitation to everybody. Everybody has the same experience with discovery."

It's this yearning for discovery, a desire to inspire and create cultural consumers, that has culminated in Steel's eclectic selection of composers for this semester's Composer Portrait series. Steel certainly had a goal in mind.

"We wanted to make Miller Theatre something unique in New York. It would make Columbia a player in New York's cultural life, which means not producing concerts like everyone else. We focus on early music and New Music, the music of contemporary composers—or newly dead composers. No one else does Frank Zappa. It's something that's perfect for us." With featured portraits of Zappa, John Zorn, and Steve Reich, among others, Steel is most certainly setting Miller Theatre apart.

The musical experimentation doesn't stop at the selection of composer. In order to execute the performance, Steel employs some of the most exciting, fresh musicians New York City has to offer. In tomorrow night's portrait of guitar virtuoso Frank

Zappa's compositions, Miller has commissioned the Fireworks Ensemble, an accomplished group in their own right, to interpret and perform the musical icon's work.

"They [Fireworks Ensemble] are a young, small group," Steel explains, "interested in blurring the lines between classical music and rock music and seemed like a natural fit for Zappa. It seemed appropriate to have an ensemble that could live in both worlds." Expect a clash of identities at tomorrow night's concert, a catatonic musical explosion the likes of which only Frank Zappa could imagine.

Miller Theatre's newfound role as pioneer of the avant-garde is hardly limited to the musical realm. The theatre is striving to include more modern dance productions, as well as expanding the theatre as a showcase for some of the most exciting and original play-writing in New York. On Feb. 23rd and 24th, Miller will be presenting an opera based on David Lynch's film *Lost Highway*. "The opera," as Steel describes it, "is an opera based on David Lynch's movie of people singing, telling the story of the movie while roughly following its story line. There'll be an ensemble in the orchestra pit, there will be electronics, and actors and singers on stage."

With a fresh approach to the world of the classical music, Steel hopes not only to open up the ears and minds of the educated elite—the stereotypical theatergoers—but to foster cultural growth regardless of academic affiliation or musical training. "We [Miller Theatre] are a place where Columbia meets the city. We're one of the few doors on Broadway that is open." ■

The Wood Brothers

Restoring musical integrity, one song at a time

BY LANA LIMÓN

It's a tale of two cities—literally. Brothers Chris and Oliver Wood grew up side-by-side in Colorado, yet when it came time to tie up the oxen, head down the Oregon Trail, and begin a life of their own, their paths began to look like a bad split-end. Oliver's voyage ended in Georgia, while Chris settled in New York City.

After years of playing in their own respective bands—Oliver played with King Johnson and Chris with Medeski Martin and Wood—and soaking up the flavors of each musically rich region, what started as a jam session between two brothers has turned into the new voice of the folk-rock movement.

"I went into it with no expectations other than to have fun playing with my brother and to make good music with him," Oliver Wood says. "We just have been living so far apart and yet on the same musical path."

Their debut album, *Ways Not To Lose*, which came out in March of last year, has maintained enough of a following to convince the Wood Brothers to record another album this spring.

Ways Not To Lose features the brothers on acoustic guitar and bass topped off with one hell of a soulful and mesmerizing voice. Though the next album will incorporate more percussion and varied instruments, Oliver explains that the acoustic album serves as a core for their music, something that they can stray from in different musically experimental ways.

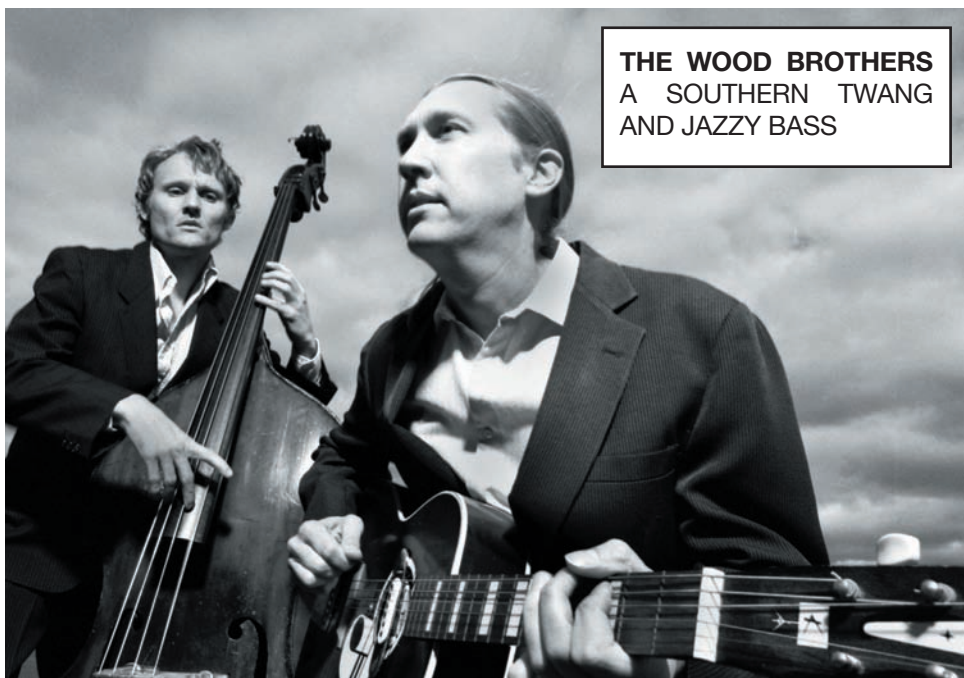
"We feel like it's the purest thing. The way we started was just all acoustic and that's the essence of what we do ... We don't want to make the same record," Oliver says. "I think that's my favorite thing about the Wood Brothers right now, how much you can do with just two guys."

Something that the Wood Brothers have been able to famously accomplish in their music is the obliteration of all things cheesy. Whether it's the punk-rock-star-gone-soft image that we associate with acoustic albums or the image of a bunch of old people gettin' down with their line-dancing selves that we associate with folk music, Oliver and Chris have made a name for themselves that doesn't make anyone feel culturally wary.

"One More Day" and "Chocolate On My Tongue," two tracks from the album, really capture what the Wood Brothers do—combine Oliver's comforting Southern feel and Chris' jazzy experimentalism to create what only the Wood Brothers can do.

"Our father was a big influence when we lived at home," remembers Oliver. "He was an excellent singer and guitar player. Our music scene when we were growing up was listening to records or listening to Dad."

Other than Papa Wood, Chris and Oliver both listen to artists such as Ray Charles, James Brown, and Miles Davis, which helps bridge the gap between the music that



THE WOOD BROTHERS
A SOUTHERN TWANG
AND JAZZY BASS

COURTESY OF EMCEE ARTIST MANAGEMENT

they are surrounded with on a daily basis.

Though their new eclectic fusion of North and South has been labeled as the tip of the folk-rock spear that is now slicing through music worldwide, Oliver would rather have the Wood Brothers stand alone, separate from all labels, packaging, and postage.

"I think the movement is just for good music—something with depth and good musicianship," Oliver says. "Maybe that's what's folk-y about it and I'm all for that. I think there's a movement of good music and there are a lot of good songwriters and players out there. I definitely want to be a part of that, whatever it is."

Though it may have been fate that separated the Wood brothers, it is the music industry's desperate cry for something genuine and culturally rich that brought these two back together.

Be sure to catch the Wood Brothers at Joe's Pub Feb. 7. ■



PETER BJORN AND JOHN TRANSCENDING
THE SWEDISH GEOGRAPHIC TRAP WITH
INFECTIOUS POP SONGS

COURTESY OF WINDISH AGENCY

An Everywhere Indie Band

Peter Bjorn and John learn how to exist outside Stockholm

BY CYRUS MOUSSAVI

These are strange times for Peter Bjorn and John. Just one year ago, Peter Morén, Bjorn Ytting and John Eriksson, the three Swedish musicians who comprise the conveniently named rock band, had released two albums no one had heard and had played only a handful of shows in their homeland.

Today, things are different. On Monday, Peter Bjorn and John played their first-ever show in America to a sold-out crowd at the Mercury Lounge, which they followed with another sold-out show at the Bowery on Tuesday. How did a band on a tiny European label with negligible American distribution sell out two large shows to cynical New Yorkers on their first go?

"I don't know," Peter says, "you tell me."

To this writer's mind, the success is attributable to a combination of sexual promiscuity and the Internet.

"The band's horribly catchy hit single, 'Young Folks,' most certainly concerns young, promiscuous sex, and, as young, promiscuous sex tends to do, it has spread at an amazing rate over the Internet as a free download. As a result, Peter Bjorn and John's third album, *Writer's Block*, which will finally be released in America on Tuesday, has earned spastic reviews from most online music blogs, and you can hear music nerds everywhere humming along to the whistle-solo from 'Young Folks.'"

"The previous two albums [2002's *Peter Bjorn and John* and 2005's *Falling Out*] were not even available most places, so it is not so strange that people didn't know us," Peter says from his home in Stockholm. "To suddenly have a proper hit was a really big change, especially when you're not a band that deliberately tried to write hits."

The change was pronounced. In their eight years together prior to the success of "Young Folks," Peter Bjorn and John had played relatively few shows and, with the exception of short trips to London and Norway, had not left their native Sweden.

"It is very hard to be a musician in Sweden," Peter warns. "It is a very small concert scene...even now our album sells poorly here. People will recognize the song but will not know the band."

This is not the case in the rest of Europe. The online presence of "Young Folks" propelled the band on their

first-ever European tour this summer, and the band played sold-out shows even in countries where *Writer's Block* had not been released yet.

"We've been in Germany and Paris the other week and that was just amazing. We didn't expect that because everybody before hand said the album wasn't doing well but the response was great," Peter says. "Ireland is probably the best, however. For some reason Irish people like us a lot."

The momentum, it seems, continues to build. After their shows in New York and LA, Peter Bjorn and John will travel to Australia and Japan, where "Young Folks" recently topped the J-Wave pop charts.

But things were not always world tours and Japanese fandom for Peter Bjorn and John.

"We are all from villages in the country side," Peter explains of his upbringing in the wilds of northern Sweden. "It's quite far between cities and it's a lot of nature, so when you were a kid you basically had nothing to do."

Peter met Bjorn at age 16, when they were united because they "were the only kids in high school who liked Manchester shoe-gaze rock." The two have been making music together ever since, and with the addition of percussionist John Eriksson in 1999, the band was complete.

Now, after eight years together, Peter Bjorn and John has transcended the geographic trap that holds back so many bands in only a matter of months.

"I think the thing that's happening right now is sort of what we have always wanted," Peter reflects. "To be not a big band but to get audiences big enough to release albums in a lot of territories."

With the release of *Writer's Block* in America on Tuesday, Peter Bjorn and John may join the increasing list of bands who have circumvented the traditional route to music industry success—a band that only a few months ago was without label support, major touring, or even a strong fan base at home, Peter Bjorn and John may be on the verge of achieving their foremost goal.

"From the beginning we didn't think of ourselves as just some Swedish indie band," Peter says, "but as an indie band everywhere." ■

MIX-IT-UP

This week's drink:
Oyster Shooter

Ingredients

- 1 oz. vodka
- 1 shucked oyster
- hot sauce and
- cocktail sauce

Directions

Pour vodka into a large shot glass, and place the oyster on top. Then add cocktail sauce with a few drops of hot sauce. Bottoms up!

-Courtesy of recipezar.com

CHUCK YOU SERVE ICED BUT NEVER WITH COCKTAIL SAUCE



The Oyster Opens Up

After a century of terror in the East River, an ill-fated New York delicacy makes a comeback

BY SAM ASHWORTH

New York used to be an oyster town. For centuries, the banks of New York's rivers were thickly populated with great swaths of oyster beds—until 1927, when the city closed the last one in an exaggerated effort to staunch the spread of typhoid. Cheap and plentiful, the simple, fresh-out-of-the-water oyster was as much a part of quotidian life in New York as the bagel and cream cheese of today. The oyster had yet to be restricted to the province of the wealthy—many of Manhattan's all-night markets sold oyster stews, and oyster bars were more frequented by dockworkers and fishermen than by the top-hatted set. It is speculated that at one time New York accounted for half of the world's oysters.

Today, of course, no one in their right mind eats anything out of the East River. A century of over-fishing and pollution has ruined the New York oyster trade. Where menus all over the world once featured highly-prized Rockaways and Jamaica Bays, the most local oysters now come from Long Island, and more likely from Washington state, Canada, or Rhode Island.

Yet whatever its provenance, the mystique of the oyster has only grown with time.

Whether or not one believes in the idea of food as aphrodisiac, the cachet of the oyster is undeniable. In *Up in the Old Hotel*, Joseph Mitchell's collection of New York character profiles, Old Mr. Flood, a self-proclaimed "seafoodetarian" tells a weebegone old man how to banish the sorrows and aches of age: oysters. "That briny, seaweedy fragrance will clear your head," he waxes culinary. "It'll make your blood run faster."

Though they might not move your blood, oysters will certainly enrich it with protein, carbohydrates, and lipids. They're better than your multi-vitamin, too: they brim with vitamins A, B1, B2, B3, C, and D. Four or five medium-sized oysters supply the recommended daily allowance of iron, copper, iodine, magnesium, calcium, zinc, manganese, and phosphorus. Put that in your pan and smoke it.

The days of five-cent subway rides are gone, and with them the pleasure of skulking down thirty-six oysters: how are we to indulge in this miracle tonic within moderate means? Buy them wholesale—that is, by the bushel.

The Lobster Place at the Chelsea Market (15th Street and Ninth Avenue) sells a wide variety for about \$0.80 per shucked oyster. Unshucked—that is, unopened—come much cheaper, but shucking requires some finesse. When serving at home, avoid cocktail sauce, and serve them instead with a chilled Muscadet wine or heady pint of Guinness.

If dining out, the French-Mediterranean L'Orange Bleue (430 Broome St.) has one of the best deals in town, with oysters a dollar each from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on weekdays.

Finally, hope has resurfaced for New York oysters. In recent years, efforts have been made to replant the oyster beds around the Hudson River, where they once flourished unchecked. Not only will they act as natural water purifiers, they are playing a part in the cleaning of the Hudson. The hope is that in 20 years, New York's oyster trade will be revived, and maybe, just maybe, this city will see the Egg McMuffin for breakfast supplanted at last by a dozen Saddle Rocks with a dash of lemon juice. ■

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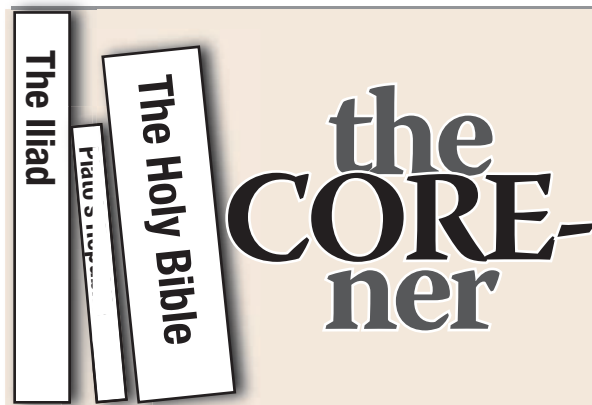
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the eye

Power Forward

BY TIM SHENK



Hints From Virginia

Dear Virginia,

What's the best way to remove ketchup stains from my husband's dress shirts?

—Dirty in Detroit

Dear Dirty,

These are the eternal problems facing us each morning with a swell like the redundant waves, eroding and depositing, and we must watch and only watch as they retreat to charge again. I use cool water, mild bleach, and a laundry stain remover.



VIRGINIA WOOLF

Dear Virginia,

My husband has been complaining that my mother's roast recipe is bland. I want to spice it up without completely covering the original flavor. How can I honor my parents and my husband, all in one dish?

—Hungry in Albuquerque

Dear Hungry,

"One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well." — Virginia Woolf

Dear Virginia,

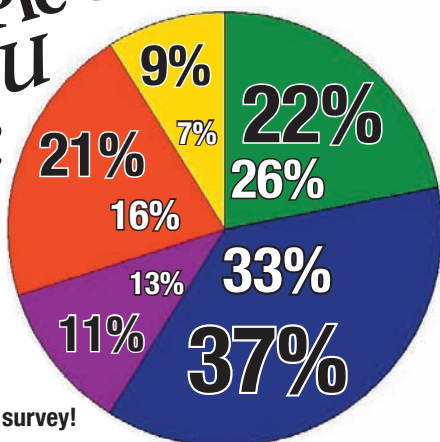
My son recently moved into his own room upstairs. The trouble is, his giant rock collection is putting pressure on the roof joists. Also, we live near a river. Any tips?

—Despondent in Orlando

Dear Despondent,

No.

What Percentage of a Pie Can YOU Eat?



% Based on a survey!

In a move that has sparked controversy, drastically increased game attendance, and warmed the heart of a nation, Columbia has replaced its varsity basketball team with adorable baby seals. When asked to explain the motivation behind the decision, Athletic Director M. Dianne Murphy said "Awwwwwwwww."

The decision has surprised many, including former head coach Joe Jones, who has been replaced by Steve Meyers. Meyers' background in animal training consists of a brief stint as a SeaWorld employee, where he held those rings that seals jump through. He also used to play basketball at recess.

Despite his lack of experience, Meyers has already become popular with his team. The seals are now familiar with his trademark pre-game pep talk, which ends with Meyers telling them, "Go out and play like I just clubbed your mother to death."

Jones, for his part, has taken the change in stride. "I would be mad about my abrupt and unjustified termination," Jones said in an interview, "but look at those seals. They're so cute that I just want to die."

Columbia seems to share Jones' enthusiasm. The stands at Leiven Gymnasium have been packed for every practice since the arrival of the seals. Coaches deny claims that many of the new attendees



Michael Feeley, a power forward, already has scouts talking about his lovable antics - such as balancing things on his nose

are in fact poachers.

"Frankly," assistant coach Jim Poacher said, "I'm more worried about Janey Sophomore slaughtering one of our players so she can light her dorm lamp with its oil or feast on its delicious, protein-rich meat."

The arrival of the seals has also changed the way the team's audiences acts at games, most notably their treatment of mascot Roaree the Lion. When the formerly popular lion tries to distract attention from the seals, members of the audience hurl rocks and other items, like exploding rocks, at Roaree.

"I understand the fans like

seals," Roaree said, "but that land mine they put on the court exploded directly underneath me. Now I don't have legs."

Other Columbia organizations are attempting to copy the success of the basketball program. Columbia's mock trial team has already substituted kindly chimpanzees for some of its veteran members, while discussions are underway to replace the staff of the Varsity Show with an iPhone. ■

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