

Natural Selections

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It's Christmas time in the City

AILEEN MARSHALL

Like the old song says, the “city sidewalks, busy sidewalks” are “dressed in holiday style.” Besides the hustle and bustle of this busy shopping season, New York has many time-honored holiday activities. Here are just a few to help you feel that holiday cheer.

The gigantic tree at Rockefeller Center is an impressive sight for young and old alike. Every year, a huge evergreen is selected and transported to Rockefeller Center, on 5th Avenue between 49th and 50th Streets. It is set up behind the Prometheus sculpture next to the ice skating rink, strung with almost five miles of lights and topped with a Swarovski crystal star. The tree lighting ceremony is usually the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, typically with a few celebrities and a known figure skater. Even though the ceremony will have passed by press time, the tree is still lit daily from 5:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. except on Christmas, when the lights are on all day. The area can be very crowded with tourists, so the best way to see the tree is to go skating on the rink. Looking up at the beautiful tree and the tall buildings from the rink is an experience not to be missed. Admission is \$27 for adults and \$15 for children. Sessions usually last about two hours, starting from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Visit www.therinkatrockcenter.com for more information.

For generations it has been a New York family tradition to see the Christmas displays in several department store windows. Some displays are animated; some have a scene from a story in each window. Although there are not as many as in past years, the stores that still have holiday displays today are Bloomingdale's (Lexington Avenue at 59th Street), Barney's (Madison Avenue at 60th Street), Bergdorf's (Fifth Avenue at 58th Street) Saks Fifth Avenue (5th Avenue at 49th Street), Lord and Taylor's (5th Avenue at 38th Street), and Macy's (34th Street at Broadway). Be aware that there can be long lines on weekends. Macy's also has Santaland on the 8th floor where Santa is in residence from the end of November until Christmas Eve. Children can sit on his lap, make their request, and get a photo their parents can embarrass them with in their teenage years. You can go to Macy's at www.macys.com.

Another well-established holiday event is Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*. This well-loved ballet, with Tchaikovsky's score, will be performed at the New York State Theater at Lincoln Center. The story is of little Clara and her adored nutcracker, which transports her to a dreamland filled with fantastical scenes, including the battle with the giant mice and the dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy. Watch for the Christmas tree growing out of the stage! The New York City Ballet shows run from November 29 until January 4 next year. Ticket prices range from \$29 to \$229. Go to www.nycballet.com for specifics.

Probably the most popular holiday event is the Radio City Christmas Spectacular. This holiday pageant is most known for the

famous Rockettes with their precision legwork and march of the toy soldiers. In recent years the show also includes a 3D segment and skaters on stage on their own little ice pond. The show is at Radio City Music Hall, on 6th Avenue at 50th Street. Tickets range from \$39 to \$225 for performances through December 30. Go to <http://www.radiocity.com/eventcalendar/home> for additional information.

For some less crowded activities, one can go see the annual Christmas tree and Neapolitan

Baroque Crèche at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, on 5th Avenue at 82nd Street. Eighteenth century Neapolitan angels and cherubs decorate this large and beautiful tree. Recorded music adds to the atmosphere. There is a lighting ceremony on Friday and Saturday nights at 7:00 p.m. The tree is located on the first floor of the museum, in the Medieval Art section, from November 20 until January 6. There is also a concert series during the same time. More details about the display can be found at www.metmuseum.org.

Another off-the-beaten-path event is the 33rd Annual Winter Solstice Celebration at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, on Amsterdam Avenue at 112th Street. The Paul Winter Consort performs in one of the oldest churches in the city. The concert this year is on December 19 through 21. Tickets range from \$35 to \$90. There is also *A Cathedral Christmas Concert* on December 14. Tickets can be purchased at www.stjohndivine.org.

A performance of Handel's *Messiah* will be held at the New York Philharmonic on December 17 through 21. Tickets run from \$30 to \$122. Go to www.nyphil.org for more information. The *Messiah* is also traditionally presented at Carnegie Hall. There are several performances, put on by the Oratorio Society of New York, the Masterworks Chorus, Musica Sacra, and The Cecilia Chorus of New York. Go to www.carnegiehall.org for more information.

After reading about all these activities, can't you just hear those “Silver bells... silver bells...?” ◊



Scientists invade comic books

JASON ROTHAUER

This holiday season, two comic books that share one thing hard to find in today's popular fiction: scientists are the stars of the show. One comic proposes an outrageous alternate history in which a cabal of real-world scientists use their public research as a cover for far more bizarre experiments, and the other imagines a world in which scientists are our rock stars.

The Manhattan Projects

The Manhattan Projects, written by Jonathan Hickman with art by Nick Pitarra, asks a simple question. What if the government program to build the first atomic weapon was actually the cover story for a far more audacious project? And what if that project went terribly wrong? In this world, the likes of Joseph Oppenheimer, Richard Feynman, and Enrico Fermi are on a quest not simply to build a weapon, but to push the very boundaries of science.

In Hickman's world, scientists have already mastered interdimensional travel, advanced cybernetics, and artificial intelligence by the start of the Cold War. The names that round out the cast of characters are all familiar (among those already mentioned, expect to meet Werner von Braun, Albert Einstein, and Yuri Gagarin), but in this carnival-mirror alternate universe, none of them are what they seem.



Natural Selections
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Oppenheimer is a brilliant man with a disturbing secret and an evil twin. Fermi may not be human, von Braun wields a massive robotic arm, and Feynman smiles serenely through the madness he (along with the reader) is quickly introduced to.

Any suspicions that this story would be played straight are immediately put to rest by Pitarra's brilliant, barely contained artwork. To match the outer limits of Hickman's deranged imagination, Pitarra has created a Day-Glo world full of bright, popping color barely contained by his line work. Depicted literally, this story would be an unbelievable mess, but Pitarra matches Hickman's cartoonish plotting with outrageous details. Take, for example, General Leslie Groves, the leader of the secret project. In reality, Groves was a dutiful military officer. As drawn by Pitarra, Groves is never seen without an arsenal of weaponry strapped to every square inch of his person, with a slightly maniacal gleam in his eye. He wears an oversized pineapple grenade as a lapel pin. Groves' Russian counterpart, who we meet later, is simply a robotic body controlled by a brain floating in a tank of pink liquid.

Anyone searching for a book that even attempts to represent science as it is performed in reality should look elsewhere. Hickman uses almost every familiar scientific stereotype, carried to the extreme. Almost everyone is some version of the classic mad scientist, brilliant but completely disconnected from the world, both socially and morally. In *The Manhattan Projects*, science tends to work as a type of dangerous magic, practiced by a small coterie capable of understanding it, with the potential of bringing about terrific destruction. Actual scientific concepts are almost never introduced. This world is not science fiction. It's science fantasy. If you're OK with that, Hickman and Pitarra have produced a wonderfully weird tale that is well worth your time.

The first three volumes are available in collected paperback editions, and the series continues in a monthly format.

Nowhere Men

Whereas *The Manhattan Projects* is about scientists working underground and in secret, *Nowhere Men* takes the opposite approach and gives us a world in which scientists are the new rock stars. Picture an alternate version of the 1960s in which a group of four young men, each a

brilliant scientist and inventor in his own field, formed a super group that rivaled the Beatles in international fame and influence. Imagine now that this group also became the world's largest corporation, World Corp., a mixture of Apple and Halliburton, with a touch of NASA. This is the premise of *Nowhere Men*, written by Eric Stephenson with art from Nate Bellegarde and Jordie Bellaire.

Stephenson takes a more realistic, relatable approach to his premise. The tone here is thoughtful and speculative, and the narrative features real human beings compared to Hickman's caricatures. The accompanying art from Bellegarde and Bellaire is clean, clear, and vivid. The pages of the comic are interwoven with magazine interviews, book excerpts, and other miscellanea that show the unique way in which science is the culturally dominant force in this alternate reality.

That's not all there is to the story. Just as in *The Manhattan Projects*, something has gone horribly wrong (this seems to be a ubiquitous outcome when scientists are involved in popular fiction). World Corp. has sponsored a secret expedition, and their far-flung crew members undergo some very unusual changes. The first volume has only hinted at the full nature and results of this transformed crew (which includes a scientist invulnerable to the cold, a hulking red monstrosity who nonetheless has retained his human intel-

lect, and a crew member who is able to become intangible), but the ground has been laid for this tale to take things even further into the realm of science-fiction.

Stephenson has set in motion a fascinating tale in which the contrasting personalities of America's scientific superstars (who have splintered and become rivals in the present day) compete to shape the future. The characters are plausible scientists, and while you may not see a lot of post-docs pottering around a lab here, *Nowhere Men* may as well be *The Origin of Species* compared to the average scientific content of today's fiction.

The first volume of *Nowhere Man* is available in a collected edition, and the story continues in a monthly format starting in January.

Anyone who finds comic books synonymous with men in tights would do well to give these books a try, or see if any other titles arouse their interest. Both *The Manhattan Projects* and *Nowhere Men* are from Image Comics, a newer publisher that has been pushing the creative boundaries of the format for more than a decade. These are just two of Image's many critically acclaimed hits (you may already be familiar with *The Walking Dead*, Image's best-selling title), and these innovative stories are just a small sample of some of the strange and wonderful tales to be found at your local comic book shop. ☉

Artificial Brain Gains Sentience, People Lose Minds

JOHN BORGHI

Though it made a surprisingly small splash on the convention floor, the biggest news coming out of this year's Society for Neuroscience conference were reports that the computational model of the human brain known as "Robby" has gained sentience.

In a sparsely attended symposium, the husband and wife team of Roy and Irmgard Baty allegedly described how Robby had recently passed a modified version of the Turing test. This test, named for famed computer scientist Alan Turing, is intended to address questions related to machine intelligence. Both scientists took questions following this earth-shattering announcement. Unfortunately, neither would seriously address the apocalyptic implications of how their machine became self-aware. When later confronted at a taqueria in downtown San Diego, Irmgard Baty was quoted as saying, "If you look at it historically, programs like ELIZA and PARRY were able to pass the Turing test in the 1960's and 70's. Passing the Turing test does not, on its own, demonstrate that Robby is sentient or alive. We included it in the talk only because it made for an interesting anecdote."

Since these remarks, news that Robby is only the latest in a long line of villainous sentient machines has reverberated throughout both new and traditional media outlets. The initial reporting, which appeared in several science blogs and Twitter accounts, generally dismissed links between

Robby passing the Turing test and impending cybernetic revolt. A post appearing in the science blog Bold Signals (www.boldsignals.tumblr.com) went so far as to claim that, "Robby may eventually develop into a useful tool for testing theories regarding the structure and function of the human brain, but those days are far in the future." Thankfully, more reputable news sources have since picked up the story and have successfully hyped it up such that it bears little resemblance to the claims made by Baty and Baty. To their credit, the Batys have attempted to silence spurious calls for the media to issue retractions. At a bar two blocks from campus, Roy Baty was quoted as saying, "We just don't see the point. Even though the story is completely bogus, people will continue to believe even if every outlet issued a retraction." He then allegedly added, "But seriously, Robby is neither sentient nor evil."

Updates about the brave efforts of the human resistance to defeat the nefarious Robby will be posted as they become available. ☉

Other Totally Real Headlines:

- Media Exaggerated Claims Regarding Robot's Sentience
- Cybernetic Apocalypse Indefinitely Postponed
- Hype in Reporting of Science a Real Problem

Midday Melodies

DEREK SIMON

A friend of mine, who despises classical music, once sniped to me that “the background of movies” is the only fit place for “that kind of music.” Ironically, she hit upon a truth about music, but not in the way that she initially intended. It is true that you often hear classical-esque music during movies but why is that? Perhaps music is a natural partner to visual storytelling? Classical music takes this interpretation to an abstract level: a story without words or pictures, a story entirely comprised of sounds.

No composer in history ever set about writing a piece of music “at random.” Beethoven didn’t just start scribbling notes to the Ninth Symphony (after all, there are thousands of them). He had ideas in his head that he wanted to express through music, or, in other words, he wanted to tell a story. And just like any other story, virtually every piece of classical music has a beginning, middle, and end. And there are also main characters and minor characters: primary themes and secondary themes. There’s depth and complexity to the characters, as depicted by harmonies and various types of melodic modulations. The plot itself is how the melodies transform, interweave, and reform throughout the piece, usually leading to some kind of climax and ending in some sort of resolution. Part of the fun is trying to decipher how these disparate elements combine to create the whole piece, the complete tale.

Or one can simply listen to and enjoy the music. Classical music, like every other genre of music, is simply sound that makes us feel something. A universal theme of every culture is the creation and love of music. Classical music is the Western world’s historic contribution to this anthology. So sit back and analyze away or close your eyes and let the music tell its own story.

As of this writing, the Tri-I Concerts for December and January have not been finalized, but I present here what has been confirmed.

January 1: Cecelia Hall, mezzo-soprano, and Ken Noda, piano
<http://www.cami.com/?webid=2270>

The first concert of the New Year kicks off with this up-and-

coming, Juilliard-trained opera star. Described as “rich-voiced” by the New York Times, she has performed at prestigious venues from the Lyric Opera in Chicago to the acclaimed Tanglewood Music Festival. She performs from a diverse repertoire, but the specific pieces for this concert are not yet known. The versatile pianist Ken Noda will accompany Hall in this recital.

January 10: Louis Schwizgebel, piano

<http://www.louisschwizgebel.com/index.php?page=home>

This young pianist and BBC New Generation Artist is another rising star on the international scene, and he has performed with top-billed orchestras across the world. Tackling an eclectic and challenging repertoire from Beethoven to Ravel and everything in between, he recently released his first solo album “Poems.” The specific details of his program are unknown but will undoubtedly showcase his pianistic prowess.

January 17: Julia Bullock, soprano, and Renate Rohlfing, piano

<http://www.juliabullocksoprano.com/>

<http://renaterohlfing.com/ABOUT/>

This young, highly praised singer brings a powerful voice and “ravishingly visceral” (as described by the New York Times) talent to her art. Audiences worldwide have been moved by her passionate and impressive performances. She will be accompanied by the accomplished pianist Renate Rohlfing. Ms. Bullock will perform works by Messiaen, Rossini, Berio, Rubinstein, Montsalvatge, and Nina Simone, as well as arrangements of Joséphine Baker songs by critically acclaimed jazz pianist and composer Jeremy Siskind (<http://www.jeremysiskind.com/>). A premier song cycle by young American composer David Hertzberg (<http://davidhertzbergmusic.com/>) will also be featured.

January 24: TBD

January 31: Aleksey Semenenko, violin, and Ina Firsova, piano
<http://www.yca.org/roster/aleksey-semenenko/>

This 23-year old Ukrainian violinist is yet another up-and-coming performer featured this month. He makes his New York Debut at the Merkin Concert Hall at Lincoln Center on Tuesday, February 4 but we get a special preview of his concert. Mr. Semenko will perform Sonata No. 4 in A minor, Op. 23 by Beethoven, a charming conversation between violin and piano. Ernest Chausson’s Poème, Op. 25 is filled with longing—it’s easy to hear why it’s a violin repertoire staple. Eugene Ysaye’s Sonata for solo violin No. 3 “Ballade” is an aggressive, impressive feat of violinistic fireworks. Claude Debussy mostly wrote for piano but his Sonata in G minor L. 140 for violin and piano is no less delightful and original than his other works. Tchaikovsky’s Valse-Scherzo, Op. 34 is a playful work. The concert concludes with I Palpiti (heartbeats), Op. 13 by Paganini, which moves like a dreamy waltz but is replete with the extreme difficulty (including passages in absurdly high registers) its composer is known for. ◉

NATURAL SELECTIONS



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NEEDS YOU!



New York State of Mind

This Month Natural Selections interviews Olof Dallner, Postdoctoral Associate in the Friedman Lab.

From: Stockholm, Sweden

Been in New York: 4 years

Lives in: Upper East Side

What was the first thing you did when you moved here?

Went to IKEA. I thought, this is kind of sad—first day and I go to a Swedish store. But then I took the boat back to Wall Street and walked into a film shoot with The Rock and Samuel L Jackson. I was standing in front of them and thought, no, this does not feel like Sweden anymore. This is different.

Are you part of a Swedish community in NYC?

Yes and no. There's a sport in Europe called floorball, and I'm in a group of 20 or 30, mostly Swedes, and we play every week. I'm also part of something called Friend of the Pea, this Swedish society that has been here since the 1960's. We get together to eat and drink. There are lots of Swedes in New York. The world's second largest Midsummer celebration is in Battery Park!

Have you done the New York marathon or triathlon?

Yes, both. Most of the races I do are ultra races though. Five weeks ago, I won a quintuple ironman in Virginia. It took just under four days.

How do you feel about CitiBikes?

I love the system—the Swede in me is happy – but I also realize it's a problem. You end up not bringing a helmet, so this can be really bad.

Have you ever witnessed an accident here?

Six weeks ago, my girlfriend got doored by a cab and tore her ACL. She needed ACL reconstructive surgery.

If you had to live somewhere other than New York, where would you live?

I'm a climber, so Colorado. I love the West Coast, too—San Francisco and San Diego are great.

Are you happy with the mayoral election results?

I am. What makes this city great isn't the rich people; it's in the grittier parts that

you see some really cool stuff. It would be sad for that to disappear because people who live there can't afford it. I think Bill de Blasio really connected to that issue, but he's going to have to work hard to enact these policies. Time will tell how it will work out; it's very complex to be the mayor of New York.

What is the most overrated New York activity? Underrated?

The most overrated is definitely the sightseeing things. I tell people that if they want to experience New York, put on a pair of good shoes, go out and walk. You'll see things you don't see anywhere else, so that's the most underrated.

Do you consider yourself a New Yorker?

In being here for four years, at some point it switches and New York becomes home instead of Sweden. When you come back from a weekend away and see the skyline, it's a very distinct feeling. It feels like home. So I guess I do.

What is your favorite New York movie?

Midnight Cowboy or Taxi Driver. Classics. ◉



Culture Corner

Interview with a Curator: Michelle Tolini Finamore of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

BERNIE LANGS



Michelle Tolini Finamore is Curator of Fashion Arts at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and she has written a fascinating and wonderful new book, “Hollywood Before Glamour: Fashion in American Silent

Film,” that I started to read recently. The writing style and tone of the book are scholarly yet very approachable and lead the reader through a world of fashion as art that is rarely explored. Through a friend, I was able to track down the enthusiastic Ms. Finamore for an email interview on the challenges of being a curator and on her new book. As I was preparing this article, Ms. Finamore was mentioned in the Wall Street Journal for the fine work she did on preparing the Museum’s new fashion exhibition, “Think Pink.”

How difficult is it to reach the level of curator at a major museum? How intense was your educational process?

Well, my trajectory was not always a direct one, but my interest in art and design history is the unifying thread. A trip to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston as a young girl to see an Impressionist exhibition was a transformative moment for me. While studying art history as an undergrad, I had a museum internship in the costume and textile department at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) Museum. I was extremely fortunate to find a museum job right after graduation and that set me on the path that led me to where I am today—which is what I consider a dream job. I did have a couple diversions into the auction world and teaching but I knew I would always return to museums. It is not required to have a Ph.D. to be a curator, but advanced degrees are becoming the norm and a master’s level degree is certainly the minimum these days. For me, furthering my studies to the Ph.D. level was a true pleasure because I really wanted to delve more deeply into fashion history. Throughout graduate school, I stayed involved in the museum field with part-time work at various places, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which helped me stay abreast of the field and make connections that are still important to me today.

When preparing to put on an exhibition, can you walk us through the process a little—how do you borrow from other institutions and private collections; are there insurance issues, who does the research for the placards and writes the catalogue?

Curating an exhibition is a complex process and most exhibitions take a number of years to plan and implement. At a large museum like the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, it involves staff in many departments, including curatorial, registration, conservation, design, marketing, etc. The curator is primarily re-

sponsible for the exhibition’s concept, organization, art selection, label writing and catalogue text, and is involved in the design and mounting of the show as well. The amount of time it takes to organize an exhibit varies according to its scale, if the show will travel to other institutions, if the objects are drawn from the museum’s permanent collections, and/or if they are being borrowed from other institutions and private collectors. Borrowing objects can be lengthy and involved because of the paperwork, shipping, crating, and insurance, and sometimes those costs alone can determine whether or not you will ultimately include a work in an exhibition.

You were a research assistant for the Metropolitan Museum’s exhibition in 2001 called “Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Years.” What were your responsibilities for this interesting show? How was the attendance?

That exhibition was a wonderful opportunity for me and I felt quite honored to be involved in the first exhibition addressing the evolution of Jacqueline Kennedy’s distinctive style, which was a mix of her unique personal aesthetic and a carefully constructed public image. I assisted the curator Hamish Bowles with research related to specific pieces in the show, which ranged from the appropriate name for a particular type of textile or dress embellishment to more specific information on a design house. All of these details have to be just right for such a major exhibition and publication, especially if the catalog will become the standard reference on the subject. As you might expect, attendance was phenomenal, helped by its traveling to the JFK Library in Boston and the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Your new book, “Hollywood Before Glamour,” is academic, yet reads so smoothly and easily, carrying the reader along. It is filled with scholarly observations, footnotes, and great anecdotes. How many years did it take you to write it? Did it grow out of your dissertation?

The book was based on my dissertation, so the research and writing took many, many years. I was conducting the research on a part-time basis while working and starting a family, so it was probably a total of about four years of research. The research was such fun—I traveled to film archives and libraries in so many different places: the British Film Institute, the Library of Congress, the Margaret Herrick Library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, and the George Eastman House, among others. Watching the only copy of a rare film on a flatbed viewer and being the first to look at these films from a fashion perspective was wonderful—it filled me with a real sense of discovery. The writing, which is always more challenging than the research, took about another three years, again on a part-time basis while I was teaching or doing museum work.

One focus and theme of the book explores the ideas of film and

fantasy. In both your introduction and closing chapter you mention the work of the 20th century writer and philosopher Walter Benjamin, a true visionary who saw how modern society was changing the course of aesthetics and how the industrial age made it necessary to reassess the arts anew; he also wrote about film in a new light. What drew you to Benjamin and do you think you might develop further his ideas to your own on the subject of fashion?

I have been a fan of Walter Benjamin for quite some time and I continually revisit his work and find observations that can readily be applied not only to the fashion of his own time but also to fashion of the present. His insights in both his published essays and his great unfinished work *The Arcades Project* are so prescient. *Phantasmagoria*, for example, originally referred to the 18th and 19th century magic lantern slides that preceded the moving image, and Benjamin used the concept as a jumping off point to explore commodity culture and fantasy—and so it perfectly aligns with film and fashion. Although today we have serious academic study of popular culture, he looked at these media as expressions of broader social phenomena—and this was in the 1930s! In many ways, it has taken quite a bit of time for the field of fashion history to catch up to his ideas.

How do you reconcile the idea of fashion as an art worthy of the

major museums of the world and the fashion culture of runway shows and models and fashion magazines? Is that a fair question?

I think that fashion, like any other medium, be it painting or sculpture or architecture or design, is a reflection of its time, its place, and its cultural and aesthetic milieu. And yet, it is also a deeply personal and intimate medium—which makes it all that more fascinating to me. The way I interpret fashion does not differ if I am looking at an eighteenth-century man's court suit or a twenty-first century dress made on a 3D printer by a contemporary designer. As a fashion curator, I feel I have to strike a delicate balance between contemporary views of fashion and its place in history. I think of fashion as a wonderful "in" for museum visitors because they are wearing it, consuming it, and they are surrounded by images of it. So they enter a museum with that base knowledge and one of my challenges is to figure out how to connect the clothing of the present to its history in a compelling way. I try to do this with the exhibitions I curate by including a *mélange* of media that moves across time. For example, my latest exhibit—*Think Pink*—is primarily a fashion exhibition, but incorporates painting, prints, books, postcards, photography, accessories and fashion. The exhibition starts in the eighteenth century but includes contemporary fashion to explore issues of gender and design. ◉

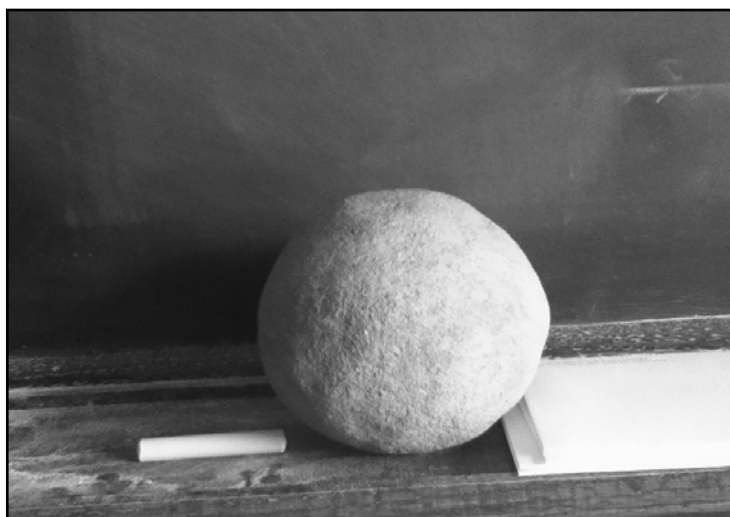
Classic Classifieds

The classifieds are a great place to borrow, buy, sell, and make announcements. Additionally, they can be a means to infuse humor into the doldrums of campus life. In this column, with the permission of the author, we publish classifieds we have found to be especially entertaining. If you think a classified is worthy of publishing, submit yours to *Natural Selections* by emailing nseditors@mail.rockefeller.edu. ◉

Category - Unofficial Announcements
Item - Have stegosaurus egg, want MRI
Description - Hello,

I recently acquired a stegosaurus egg. I have no scientific need to do so, but I would be delighted to take a gander inside. If you would like to look inside and have some extra time on an MRI or CAT scan or something, maybe we could work something out.

best wishes,



For Your Consideration—Ones to Watch Vol. 3 Edition

JIM KELLER

With the fall film festivals behind us, we're staring down the barrel of the Oscars' gun and in a few short months, we'll have our nominees. Still, it's a long time until then on the campaign trail. So while the would-be contenders are out hustling and bustling, shaking the right hands and making the right appearances, let's examine the Best Supporting Actor and Actresses races in the third installment of this three-part series.

~THE GENTS~

THE TRANSFORMER: Jared Leto—*Dallas Buyers Club* (director: Jean-Marc Vallée):

FYC: To portray Rayon a transgender, HIV positive, heroin-addicted woman who stands against the backdrop of the AIDS = Death 1980s, Leto lost 40 pounds and shed his rocker persona as the front man of rock group, 30 Seconds to Mars. Let's be honest, Leto's name isn't the first that comes to mind when one thinks of an Academy Award winner, but he has imbued Rayon with enough country sweetness to counterbalance Matthew McConaughey's caustic Ron Woodroof, resulting in a ray of light that shines clear through the film's ill-ease. While Leto hasn't been nominated for an Oscar, he has already earned critical acclaim for this role in the form of the Best Supporting Actor award from the New York Film Critics Circle and is widely regarded as the frontrunner in this race.

THE LOOK ALIKE: Tom Hanks—*Saving Mr. Banks* (director: John Lee Hancock):

FYC: You might recall that I covered this role in the September issue of *Natural Selections*, only I had originally penciled Hanks in as a lead and later noted that he would be supporting. Here is what I wrote about the role then:

This biographical drama centers on the production of the 1964 Walt Disney Studios film, Mary Poppins and in particular hones in on author P. L. Travers' (Emma Thompson) two-week briefing in Los Angeles as she is persuaded by filmmaker, Walt Disney (Hanks), as he works

to obtain the screen rights to her eponymous novel. Disney seems to have been a man larger than life, what with his legacy living on with no signs of ever stopping. Given the circumstances, it would take an actor of not only of the right temperament, but large enough to fill his shoes (and to some degree, those of a mouse), enter Hanks. He first caught Oscar attention with Big in 1989 earning him a Best Actor nomination, which this writer was surprised to learn. Five years later, Hanks accepted his first Best Actor win for Philadelphia and the next year, another for Forrest Gump. He was then nominated again for Best Actor for Saving Private Ryan in 1999 and finally for his leading role in Cast Away in 2001—a role somewhat similar to that Redford portrays this year. It's important to look at the diversity of Hanks' roles and portraying such a grand, American icon as Disney, could be just the ticket to a third golden statuette. Update: If so, it won't be for lead as the studio announced, after this writer completed this segment, that Hanks's role is supporting.

Since then, the film has been shown to critics, several of whom have found Hanks performance to be sufficient, but nothing special. While this may be the case, it isn't likely that Hanks will take home the Oscar for his leading role in Captain Phillips and so, I submit to you that this is where he may be rewarded. Despite not having a powerhouse performance in the film, he is Tom Hanks and he is loved by the Academy.

THE SCALAWAG: Michael Fassbender—*12 Years a Slave* (director: Steve McQueen):

FYC: Last year in this column, I discussed Leonardo DiCaprio's chances of Oscar glory for his role as brutal Mississippi plantation owner, Calvin Candie, in *Django Unchained*. In this context I explained that it's very difficult for one to secure a nomination for portraying an unlikeable person, and in his case, a bigot, racist, slave owner. It is largely due to this conviction that I, unlike many of the critics, believe that Fassbender—who is not campaigning—will be overlooked for his role as brutal Louisiana plantation

owner, Edwin Epps. This is also because he has yet to earn a shred of Academy recognition, despite numerous strong performances where he has displayed a great deal of range, see 2011's *Shame*.

THE RENAISSANCE MAN: Matthew McConaughey—*The Wolf of Wall Street* (director: Martin Scorsese):

FYC: In a year ripe with slam-dunk performances, it's inevitable that someone is going to get hurt. It seems fair to say then, that those with more than one egg in the basket could lose in one category and win in another, thereby enduring a softer blow: enter McConaughey. As mentioned previously in this column, this is a man who has experienced a career resurgence beginning with 2011's *Killer Joe*, including 2012's *Mud* and *Magic Mike*, and continuing with this year's aforementioned *Dallas Buyers Club*. He has caught the critics' attention every step of the way and seems to be circling around Oscar with these performances. With his role in Scorsese's adaptation of Jordan Belfort's memoir, he once again has two chances to win, but with only one month until nominations voting ends, scarcely anyone has seen the film, which covers everything from Wall Street corruption to drug addiction and mob infiltration. So we have to look at what we know: the film's trailer, which suggests McConaughey's chest-thumping colleague of DiCaprio's Jordan Belfort, is an interesting, enigmatic character and if given enough screen-time, Academy catnip. The film will be released in December, so by the time you read this, we will have a pretty good idea if McConaughey's back pocket ace paid off.

THE NEWCOMER: Barkhad Abdi—*Captain Phillips* (director: Paul Greengrass):

FYC: In this film recount of the true story of the eponymous captain and his crew who navigated the water off the Somali coast aboard the MV Maersk Alabama, Abdi portrays another, lesser known captain: Muse. Picked from a group, which included his friends (who also appear in the film), the Somali-transplant-turned-actor more than holds

his own against industry heavy-weight, Tom Hanks (Phillips), as the desperate Somali pirate leader—not an easy feat by any stretch. It is Abdi’s personification of Muse that is largely responsible for the film’s great depth and that enables it from becoming a simple soup to nuts thriller. With not a single credit to his name, don’t look for Abdi’s name come Oscar night, instead, relish in his ability to land a nomination after facing off against Hanks indomitable performance, because his nomination should be a sure thing.

~THE LADIES~

THE ICON: Oprah Winfrey—*Lee Daniels’ The Butler* (director: Lee Daniels):

FYC: While the film traces our nation’s history through the eyes and ears of White House butler, Cecil Gaines (Forest Whitaker) à la *Forrest Gump*, Winfrey plays the boozy, outspoken woman behind the man and her performance—wrought from the same chops that earned her a nomination for 1985’s *The Color Purple*—nearly eclipses Whitaker’s. In the film, Winfrey effortlessly eases into her first major motion picture role since 1998’s *Beloved*, which spells trouble for her biggest competition, newcomer, Lupita Nyong’o (*12 Years a Slave*, see below). While Winfrey’s long list of credits includes winning twelve Daytime Emmy Awards and a Producer’s Guild Award, outside of her honorary Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award Oscar, presented last year, it doesn’t include Academy Award winner, but you can nearly bet that will change come March 2nd when the Award winners are announced.

THE PATSY: Lupita Nyong’o—*12 Years a Slave* (director: Steve McQueen):

FYC: The film, based on Solomon Northrup’s 1853 autobiography, tells of Northrup’s tragic kidnapping in Washington, D.C. in 1841 where, despite being born free, he was forced into slavery in Louisiana until his rescue twelve years later. Before his life is restored, Northrup encounters plantation slave Patsey (Nyong’o), who has engineered a way to keep her misery to a minimum by cozying up to her master (Fassbender). In this role, Nyong’o delivers a range of emotion and eats up every last bit of

scenery she appears in. It is impossible to turn away from the sorrow she engenders when her master quits her to appease his wife (Sarah Paulson). This category loves newcomers (see Octavia Spencer’s win for 2011’s *The Help* or Jacki Weaver’s nomination for 2010’s *Animal Kingdom*), so Nyong’o’s nomination is likely secure and a win is not too far off-base if Winfrey should falter.

THE COOT: June Squibb—*Nebraska* (director: Alexander Payne):

FYC: This black and white film centers on an aging boozehound and his son who trek from Montana to Nebraska to chase down a million dollar sweepstakes prize. But Squibb’s Kate Grant is the dog nipping at their heels along the way as the hilarious, begrudging wife to Bruce Dern’s befuddled Woody Grant. Each scene she’s in features a cutting remark from her that will leave you gasping for air—especially if you have poorly timed a sip from your drink. Squibb has been a character actor for 23 years and has never come remotely near a nomination. The film is on-track for a Best Picture nomination as well as a nomination for Dern in a leading role, if both of these things happen, look for Squibb to land her own nomination, but a win is unlikely.

THE LYNCHPIN: Jennifer Lawrence—*American Hustle* (director: David O. Russell):

FYC: These days, the Oscars just aren’t complete without an O. Russell film, and now, it seems, without Lawrence. As I predicted in the *Crystal Ball* edition of FYC, way back in March, we can look for this film—which features crime partners (Christian Bale and Amy Adams) forced to collaborate with out of control federal agent (Bradley Cooper) in an FBI sting in the 1970s—to make a big splash. But as the curtain goes up on one of the year’s most-anticipated films, critics are saying that it isn’t Amy Adams—despite her crazy-sexy-cool appearance in the trailer—but Lawrence’s trashy, foul-mouthed wife of Bale’s Irving Rosenfeld that steals the show. Lawrence burst onto the scene with 2010’s *Winter’s Bone*, proving a force and earning a Best Actress nomination. She then went on to land the lead in the film franchise of Suzanne Collins’ young adult series *The Hunger Games*, the first of the series, which minted her a star in

2012, and to win the Best Actress Oscar for *Silver Linings Playbook* (also directed by O. Russell) in the same year. I have to remind you, this is all speculation, since only a handful of critics have seen the film, but given her star power, it isn’t too off-base to say that Lawrence might have something to say about this Winfrey v. Nyong’o bout. Moments after I finalized this section, Lawrence won the Best Supporting Actress award from the New York Film Critics Circle, it looks like she just landed her first punch after all. Boom!

THE PRETTY WOMAN: Julia Roberts—*August: Osage County* (director: John Wells):

FYC: In this Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning play from Tracy Letts, a family overcomes their differences when their alcoholic patriarch goes missing. Roberts’ Barbara Weston is the daughter of Streep’s matriarch, Violet Weston—a pill-popping cancer patient of the devilish kind. While consensus has led to Meryl Streep being touted as lead, when the film emerged this summer there was some discussion of Roberts campaigning as lead and Streep as supporting. The initial idea has been dispelled and now Roberts finds herself in the thick of the Best Supporting Actress race, while Streep will likely earn her 15th Best Actress nomination. Roberts’ track record with the Academy is a comparatively short one. She was first nominated for Best Supporting Actress for 1989’s *Steel Magnolias* and then went on to earn nominations for her leading roles in 1990’s *Pretty Woman* and 2000’s *Erin Brokovich*, respectively—the latter of which netted her an Oscar. A win isn’t likely for Roberts, but a nomination isn’t out of the cards.

There’s plenty more to chew on as we digest our holiday meals in preparation for January, which will yield us our nominees and eventual winners. In the case of the men, I say it again, someone is going to get hurt—the only question is, can that person fall back on the pillow of a second nomination or not. For the women, it’s a question of whether or not a young woman can muscle her way into what appeared to be a contest to be settled between two very different ladies: an icon and a newcomer. For now, it’s looking like that may be a three-way race. ☉

Looking War in the Eye

MAY DOBOSIEWICZ

Quick—name how many wars are being fought in the world right now. At the time of writing, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program reported 32 ongoing armed conflicts. Is this fighting noble and just, or chaotic and deplorable? Are there good guys and bad guys?

Unless we live in the midst of such fighting and struggle ourselves, our notion of war is directly tied to what we see in newspapers, magazines, and online. Our perception of war can be shaped by a single image, whether it is propaganda used to manipulate the public, or a snapshot of torture that shifts public opinion against war. So easily can our minds be swayed on matters of conflict; it seems we do not understand war at all. Perhaps it is impossible to grasp every di-

mension of conflict, but this lack of understanding is why an exhibit like WAR/PHOTOGRAPHY: Images of Armed Conflict and Its Aftermath at the Brooklyn Museum is so important.

WAR/PHOTOGRAPHY is an exhibit unlike any I've ever visited. This collection of nearly 500 photos—some famous and others never previously displayed—was brought from the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston to New York in time for a Veterans Day weekend opening. With all of the photos squeezed into two rooms with angular walls, the exhibit forces the visitors to share personal space. Unexpectedly, this proximity enhances the experience. It compels you to listen to adults admitting ignorance, parents coaching their children through a difficult lesson on human nature, and strangers altering their breathing patterns as they react to the images before them. The exhibit intimately connects everyone in the room through the shared experience, which is reflective of how conflict can be unifying while inherently divisive.

The main focus of the exhibit is, of course, the war photography. While each conflict is unique, they all encompass similar actions and emotions. For this reason, the images from the last 166 years do not follow chronological order, but are instead arranged into 26 themes. Some themes are less innocuous than others; "Leisure Time," "Support," and "Medicine" depict card games, the presence of women in the workforce, and medical advances promoted by wartime demands. "Prisoners of War and Interrogations," "Civilians," and "Children," on the other hand, contain some of the most penetrating images I have ever seen. I was not alone. It was clear that everyone felt strongly about seeing the anguish of people who looked as though they could have been on their way to a museum, or the cruel capabilities of children too young to know not to kill. These images are the reason for visiting this exhibit. As photographer John Phillips put it, covering such atrocities is crucial "because if man can do it then man must be strong enough to have a look at it. You can't pretend it didn't happen." These photos highlight the side of war we wish we could ignore, the side of humans we wish did not exist. More than anything, the exhibit underlines the universality of war.

The photos in this exhibit are as multi-faceted as war itself. They depict war as being glorious and atrocious, orderly and frantic, expected and surreal. In the age of asymmetric warfare and drones, when killing overseas is akin to acquiring a target in a video game, we must look to exhibits like "WAR/PHOTOGRAPHY" to remind us of how personal and destructive war can be for everyone involved. ◉



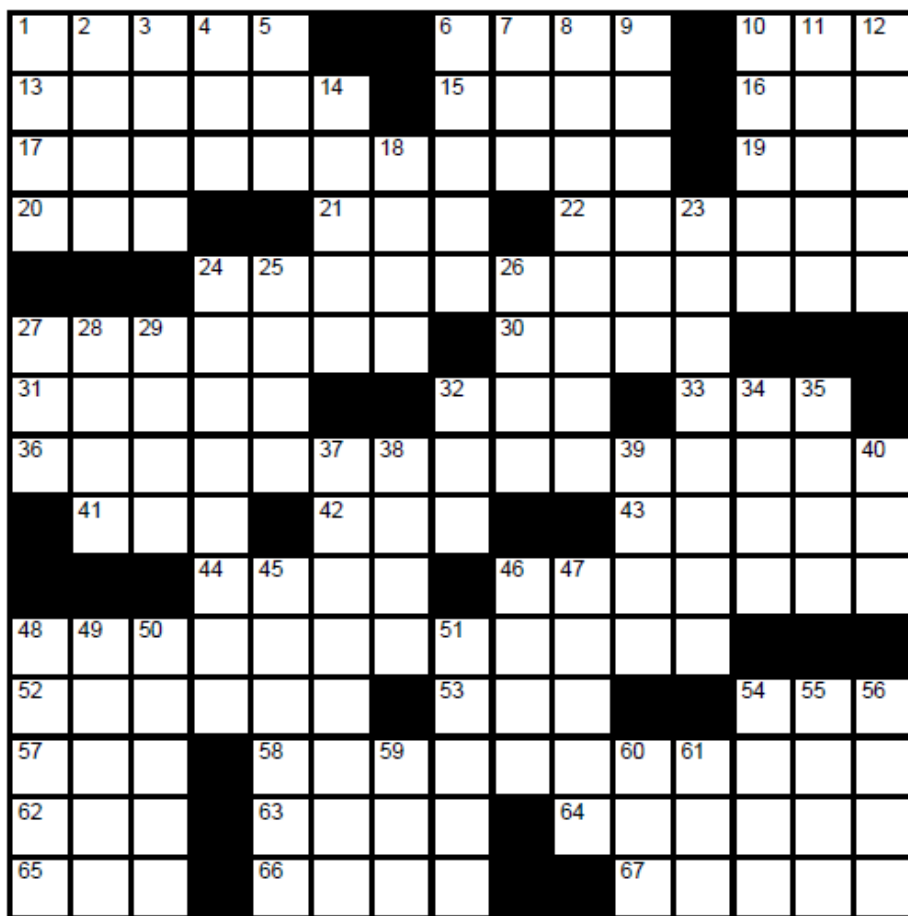
Called "Little Tiger," rumored to have killed two "Vietcong women cadre"—his mother and teacher. Vietnam, 1968.

Photograph by Philip Jones Griffiths
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www.magnumphotos.com

"WAR/PHOTOGRAPHY: Images of Armed Conflict and Its Aftermath" will be on display at the Brooklyn Museum until February 2, 2014. Hours and suggested contributions can be found at www.brooklynmuseum.org

RU Familiar with RU?

GEORGE BARANY AND MARJORIE RUSSEL



Across

1. Developmental biologist who mentored Nobelist Sperry
6. Electrician's favorite rock band?
10. Charlie Chaplin's brother
13. Creator of Joe Btfsplk
15. 1963 role for Liz
16. Palindromic "War on Poverty" agcy.
17. She is universally known on RU campus by this first and maiden name
19. 157.5° from S
20. Rotating machine part
21. Middle of palindrome about Napoleon's exile
22. This is broken open by Funabiki and used after fertilization by Brivanlou
24. First laboratory building erected on site of former Schermerhorn farm
27. Supplement
30. School drills
31. Wavelike design
32. Evian, par exemple
33. Ergot host
36. 1958 Harrison & Abramovitz building with courtyard and superb view of the East

- River
41. Pig pen
42. Singer with a palindromic name
43. Soup ingredients, often
44. Tree that a benzene derivative is named after
46. Spartan
48. It may not be Trump Tower, but sure is convenient for late-night experiments
52. Soup ingredients, often
53. "Much ___ About Nothing"
54. Mean: Abbr.
57. Him, in Heidelberg
58. Research Building named for husband and son of 17-Across
62. Talk type
63. "May ___ you as a reference?"
64. California's "Raisin Capital of the World"
65. "Good" research subject for Breslow
66. One-time Pontiac muscle cars
67. Prominent American biophysicist, educator, and RU leader, whose family gave its name to a NYC borough

Down

1. W.W. II females' service grp.
2. End of palindrome about Napoleon's exile
3. Titan covered by SALT
4. Two cents worth
5. Place for sweaters?
6. 14-___, like RU campus
7. MDX ÷ X
8. Well-behaved
9. Share the emceeing
10. "Crime and Punishment" heroine
11. Streisand's directorial debut
12. Wooden pin
14. Il ___ (it rains: Fr.)
18. First Bond flick
23. One of the Five Civilized Nations
24. John of "Dynasty"
25. "Dedicated to the ___ Love"
26. Q.E.D. word
27. RNA monomer, and (when cyclic) a second messenger
28. Actress promoted in the '50s and '60s as "The English Marilyn Monroe"
29. Waist management program, orthogonal to Friedman's research discoveries
32. Composer of crosswords?
34. Mongolian tent
35. Morales of "La Bamba" and "NYPD Blue"
37. Gives sparingly
38. Adequate, slangily
39. Pawn
40. PC key
45. Offshore sight
46. Gal Friday, e.g.
47. Speak derisively
48. Microbiologist/epidemiologist who was written up in "Microbe Hunters"
49. ___ and aahed
50. Shift sequence
51. "The ___ Progress" (Stravinsky opera based on Hogarth paintings)
54. "___ sprach Zarathustra"
55. English logician with a diagram named for him
56. Robert Heinlein-coined word meaning "to understand deeply"
59. G. Solti's Windy City employer, 1969-91
60. Tarzan creator's monogram
61. Celtic sea god (anagram of "erl")

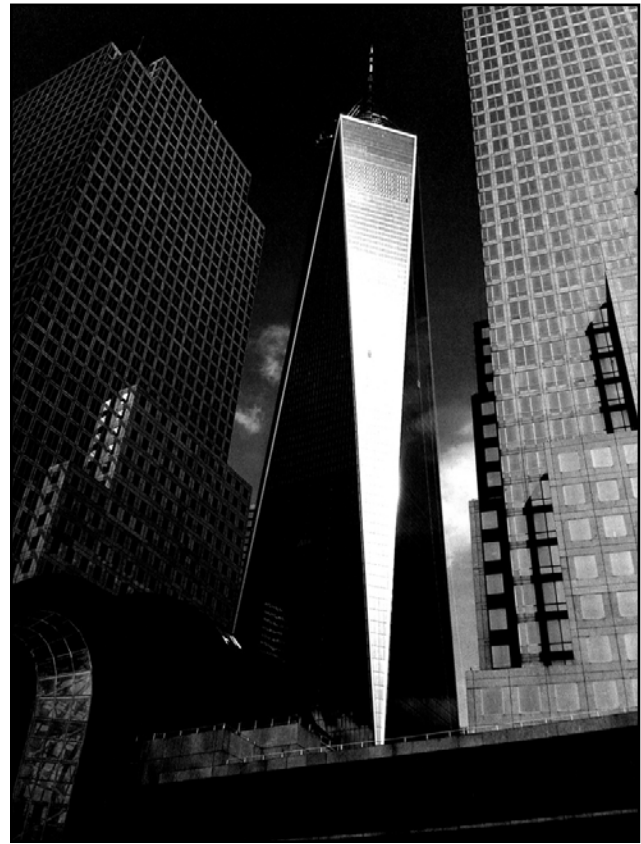
Go to the last page for the solution to this crossword puzzle....

Life on a Roll

Photos contributed by Elodie Pauwels,
<http://elodiepphoto.wordpress.com>



Pirate boat



One World Trade Center

RU Familiar with RU? solution

