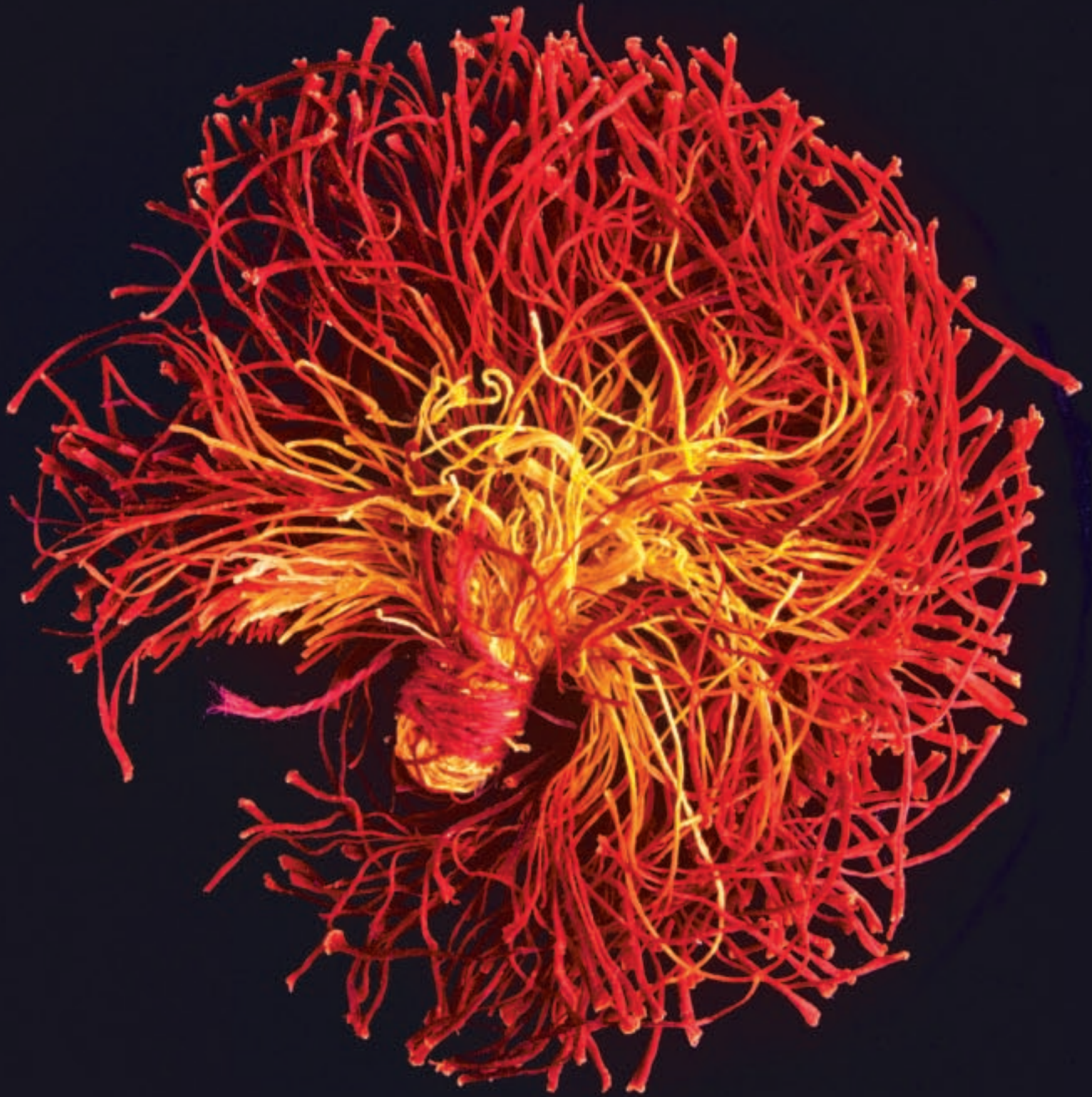


WEEKEND JOURNAL.

FRIDAY - SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28 - 30, 2011

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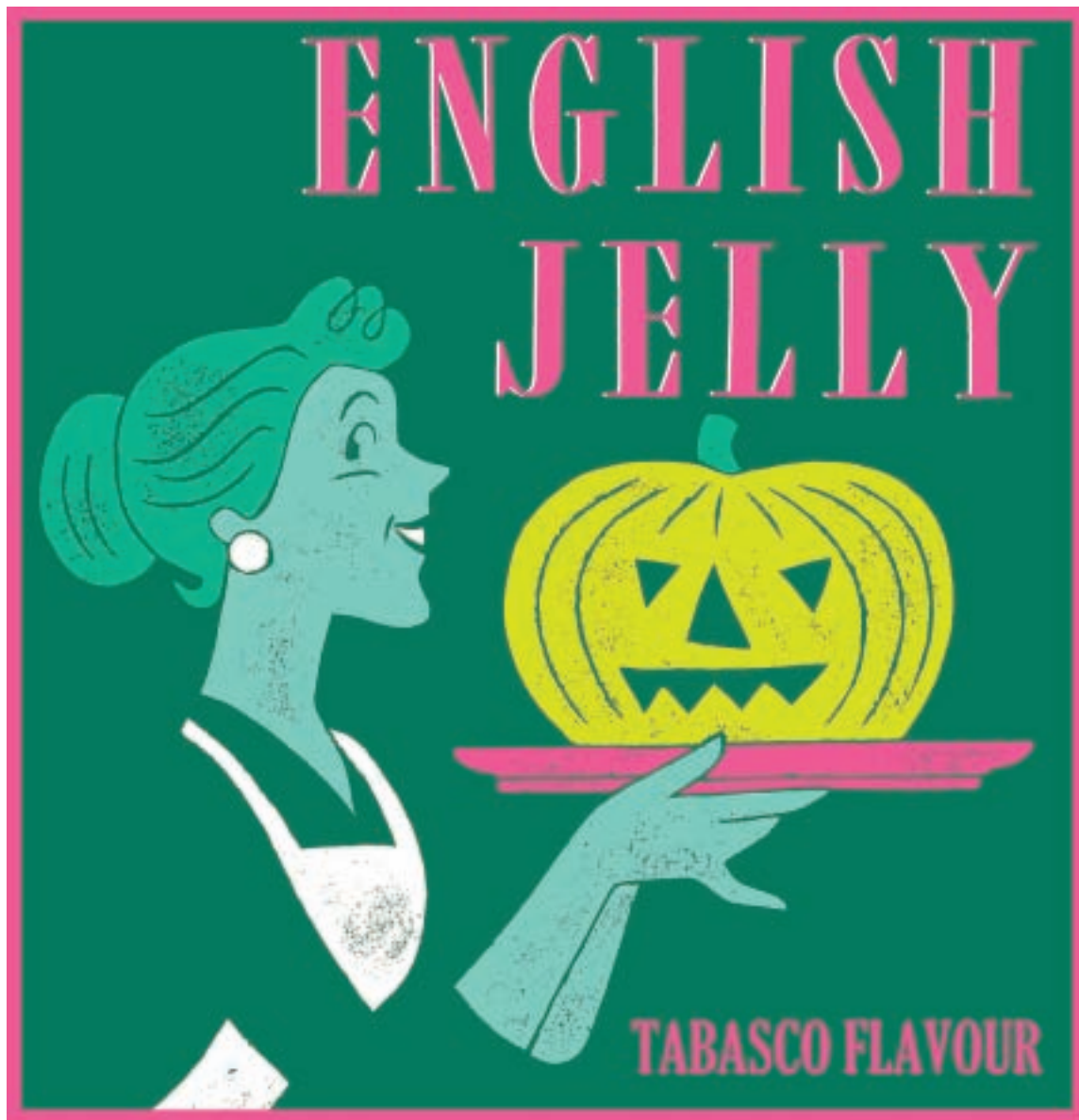


Illustration by Jean-Manuel Duvivier

All Hallows' Eve Is More Trick Than Treat

[European Life]

By SAM LEITH IN LONDON



Halloween draws near. It brings with it a frisson of fear. Up and down the country, folk whisper quiet prayers under their breath, bolt the door and turn on extra lights. These people, be advised, aren't superstitious. Their minds aren't plagued with images of ghosts and witches and things that shudder and creep in darkness. Their minds are plagued with images of things that shout and ring doorbells and ride their bicycles on the pavements.

Let me paint a picture. Most Friday nights, there tends to gather below my window a knot of sullen teenagers debating the ups and downs of their love lives in language that would make a sailor blush. On Oct. 31, thanks to the importation of a charming tradition from small-town America, these kids are licensed to ring my doorbell.

Halloween trick-or-treating is another of those trans-Atlantic co-productions that—like extraordinary rendition and the “missile shield”—plays less well in the U.K. than in the country that thought it up. Think of trick-or-treating in the American context and you think of Charlie Brown and Linus, or of E.T. waddling around in a sheet.

To the London dweller, though, the approach of All Hallows' Eve isn't one of suburban coziness. It heralds, rather, an epidemic of 8-

year-olds dressed as Chuckie, the killer doll from “Child's Play”—if you're charitable and assume that the dungarees and kitchen knife are some sort of fancy dress—extorting Haribos with menaces from petrified pensioners.

These 8-year-olds, be it known, don't have lisping voices and Lord Fauntleroy curls: they have five-o'clock shadow, a strong sense of their due entitlements according to the current trick/treat exchange rate and a lovingly accumulated arsenal of eggs, fireworks and plastic bags full of dog doo with which to play jocular tricks on spoilsport adults who

To the London dweller, the approach of All Hallows' Eve isn't one of suburban coziness.

won't join in with the spirit of Halloween. Giving them chocolate only encourages them.

In years past, when I lived in a frisky area of South London, I simply didn't answer the doorbell after dark on Oct. 31, and I know I wasn't the only one. It's not unknown, indeed, for people to cower at home with the lights off and their heads below the level of the windows in the hopes trick-or-treaters will think that they're out and be reluctant to waste a dog's egg on the letterbox.

Heigh ho. But that's life. As long as they keep egging our houses, we'll keep soaking their Haribos in Tabasco.

A Rising Food Trend

Last week, we celebrated National Baking Week. A new and, to my mind, entirely delightful development in our cultural life is the obsession with smart bread. As recently as 10 years ago, sourdough was regarded as exotic and suspicious—something to do with San Francisco, probably not tasting very nice. Now, every second fridge has a rye starter bubbling away.

Artisanal breads are coming to occupy the same place in this decade that the sun-dried tomato did in the 1990s. The surprise hit of the TV schedules has been a show called “The Great British Bake-Off.” Bakers such as Richard Bertinet, Dan Lepard and Andrew Whitley are media stars, while home bakers exchange tips on poolish and post photographs of crumb structures on Twitter with hashtags like #breadporn. Let's hope that, unlike the sun-dried tomato, this food trend endures.

Like the Dickens

The approach to February's bicentennial of Charles Dickens's birth is under way. Fine new biographical studies by Claire Tomalin (“Charles Dickens: A Life”) and Robert Douglas-Fairhurst (“Becoming Dickens”) have already come out, with more in the works. Dickens-mania is expected in public spaces, museums, theaters and the small screen. It makes me wonder: Is there any writer of equivalent stature whose direct influence is so little felt in the literary culture of today? We have many Dickensians, but oddly few Dickensian writers.

—Next week,
Francis X. Rocca in Rome

LUXURY

A French Perfumer's Seductive Sense

Jean-Claude Ellena Reveals What His Nose Knows, Applying a Haiku Approach to Puzzling Out Scents

By LANIE GOODMAN

Odor is a word, perfume is literature," Jean-Claude Ellena, the official in-house perfumer for Hermès since 2004 and possibly the most adventurous, unconventional nose in France, writes in his new book, "Journal d'un Parfumeur," which was published in May by Sabine Wespieser, explores the conundrums of his profession with the delicacy of an olfactory poet.

Mr. Ellena, whose father was a perfumer in Grasse, began training as an apprentice in a local perfumer factory in 1964 when he was 17 years old. After four decades of working in Paris and New York with multinational companies, and creating more than 100 fragrances, including Van Cleef & Arpels's First, Cartier's Declaration, Bulgari's Eau Parfumée au Thé Vert, he is exactly where he wants to be: hidden away in a forest in Cabris, a tiny hilltop village in the tranquil Riviera back-country near Grasse in the south of France.

He composes fragrances at his own pace in his private lab, housed in a contemporary split-level glass-walled villa that was custom-built for him by Hermès. Dressed in khaki pants and a crisp white shirt, Mr. Ellena leads the way past his office—a long table with sharpened pencils where he ponders his mathematical formulas—to an outdoor patio facing the woods pungent with pines. At 64, he is quietly handsome, with an elegant soupçon of Cary Grant and a ready smile.

Does it take an innate talent to become a nose? If Mr. Ellena takes a whiff of a jasmine extract, for instance, he can tell you whether it's Egyptian, Italian or plucked from the neighboring fields. But he can also identify the subtlest scent of copper, tin, stainless steel or glass lurking behind a flower's absolute, and knows what kind of machine was used during the extraction process.

"You just store fragrances in your memory," he says. "Out of the 10,000 molecules developed by the perfume industry, any true specialist should be able to recognize about 1,000."

His small, white, sunlit lab is surprisingly minimalist, with only a stainless-steel carousel filled with 200 tiny glass vials of synthetic and natural odors ("I make no distinction—an odor is an odor"), two scales and one assistant. "Nature is complicated—500 molecules for the odor of a rose and even more for chocolate," he says. "With synthetics, I can conjure the aroma of cocoa beans with two molecules—for dark chocolate, I add patchouli. A perfumer is, above all, an illusionist. People never imagine that in one small room, with just a few products, you can make magic."

Frédéric Malle, founder of Editions de Parfums, an alternative brand of luxury scents that includes three of Mr. Ellena's fragrances—Cologne Bigarade, Angélique sous la pluie and L'Eau d'hiver, says, "Jean-Claude has always played the fragrance game as high art. He's become the true descendant of his mentor, Edmond Roudnitska, who created Eau Sauvage in the '60s and was one of the first to develop minimalist formulas."

After the commercial success of Mr. Ellena's first book, "Le Parfum" (Editions Que-Sais-Je, PUF, 2009), a brief, straightforward layman's guide to the fragrance industry, based on

the perfumer's own experience, which will be released in English next month as "Perfume: The Alchemy of Scent" (Arcades Publishing), he longed to write something "more literary," he says.

Based on a year's worth of notes from the author's notebook, his "Journal d'un Parfumeur" aims to seduce. His goal, he says, was to convey that perfume formulas aren't like food recipes, measured in liters and pinches, but more like haiku.

"In the past, perfume creators didn't communicate about what they were doing—it was an open secret," says perfume expert Jean Kerléo, who was Patou's chief "nose" for 35 years, and is now the founding president of the perfume museum Osmothèque in Versailles. "In his book, Jean-Claude Ellena lays his cards on table, and you're sometimes surprised. He represents a new way of crafting fragrances today that is reminiscent of the early days when perfumes like Shalimar, Arpège and Joy were a luxury, made with heavy, expensive, pure extracts, not eau de toilette. Jean-Claude is always looking for something very particular, but his perfumes remain a mystery."

Since abstract ideas are hard to talk about ("How do you talk about this...? he sniffs demonstratively in the air), Mr. Ellena offers an example of the difficulties he sometimes encounters. One morning, while wandering through the stalls of fresh produce at Rungis, the famous wholesale food market in the suburbs of Paris, he had a kind of revelation. "I picked up a bouquet of mint—it wasn't the first time I smelled it, of course—but at that moment, there was something very green and intensely fresh about the odor. I was determined to transcribe that first emotion in perfume—not the odor of mint itself, but capture its stimulating, vigorous quality." After 11 tries, Mr. Ellena abandoned the research. "No matter what I did, the result smelled like cleaning products, chewing gum or herbal tea—it was still just mint...and nothing more."

Often, he says, he finds his inspiration by total fluke, while traveling. His best-selling exotic scent, A Garden on the Nile, for instance, began with a chance encounter with a green mango, snapped off a tree during a stroll on the banks of the Nile. After one deep whiff, the perfumer knew that he was on to something.

To demonstrate how he develops an idea, Mr. Ellena digs into his pocket and pulls out a small, curved piece of wood. "Fifteen years ago, I came across this marvelous massoia wood, not well known in perfumery and used in Indonesian cuisine. The odor is startling, unforgettable, mysterious, a sensual riot of exotic spices, fruit and milky coconut. It's what I call a horizontal scent," he says. "It's round, supple, almost carnal, lascivious—in a word, feminine."

It took six years to develop Santal Massoia, Mr. Ellena's 10th fragrance in the Hermès collection, which launched this week and is sold in Hermès boutiques.

Is there a downside to his hyper-developed sense of smell? Sometimes, Mr. Ellena says, his sensitive nose reveals too much information about perfect strangers. In a plane, he can practically rattle off the menu of a badly digested dinner that his neighbor enjoyed the night before.

When asked about cultural differences between the American and French corporate approach to per-

fume, Mr. Ellena smiles. "Performance," he says, "is a very American concept. If you can measure the esthetic value of a product, and smell it from 20 meters away, then it's a success. Another concern is a perfume's tenacity, which can also be measured in time. For me, elegance is defined by discretion—not invading the space of your neighbor."

Mr. Ellena pauses, gazing at the distant Mediterranean. "There's a wonderful quote by Provençal writer Jean Giono, who says: 'I love to look behind the air.' That's what I try to do—go behind the obvious. You have to bring people's noses a little further than what they see to sense what is happening somewhere else. You enter the scent and follow the path."



Quentin Bertoux: Sabine Wespieser éditeur (book cover)

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FASHION



Luxuriously Cozy Winter Coats

[Style]

By TINA GAUDOIN



If you are anything like me, the moment the clocks change, you begin to think about cashmere, wool and fur. There is some meteorological sense to the theory that the shift in time and light turns our thoughts toward winter—and winter coats. Two decades ago, one owned only one winter coat. These days, clever marketing, cheaper manufacturing and the advent of a somewhat democratic designer culture (think second lines and more affordable options) means that most of us own two or three coats or jackets for differing occasions. This season, the field of fashionable options has never been wider or more indulgent. Here are my top choices for spectacular winter coats to blow your budget on.

You'll notice, if you are a keen follower of fashion dictates, that I don't reference the recent "oversized" trend, for which we have Miu Miu to thank. That's because I'm not yet sure the trend is going to translate into the mainstream and I remain unconvinced in any case that these coats will become classics and worthy of spending pots of money on.

The Sensible Stoppag

The puffer lives on and fills many a practical void. Gap is best for bottom-line dog walking, touch-line spectating and school running. Try their metallic burgundy parka (£59.95).

If you still don't own a full-length puffer for fear it will ruin your body image, get over it. There's nothing warmer when the temperature dips five below zero (even fur has its limitations). Try Burberry Prorsum's long, navy and black quilted satin down puffer (£1,495), the slimming-est long puffer out there.

The Classics

Surprisingly, the best this season is from Gucci. While the Italian label also showed some pretty over-the-top stuff, their wool-and-cashmere mixes, double- or single-breasted or funnel neck in navy, off-white or black with gold buttons (from around £1,660), are long-term investments that you will haul out year after year. The other classic must-have with a modern twist is Céline's dogtooth patchwork coat with silk lapels (£2,350).

Pea coats are another classic investment. Great for weekends, so long as you don't defeat the purpose by buying one of the shrunken versions that serves to only keep the top half of your chest warm, leaving your midriff

and rear section open to the elements. Try Maison Martin Margiela's pea coat in gray (£770), or a twist on the simple theme with Cacharel's duffle-finish in navy and gray wool (£695).

The Statement

This season, there's a lot of "rad" in the coat department—patterns, colors and skin effects. If you are going for somewhat outlandish, bear in mind that once you have made a statement with your outlandish coat, it will thereafter be just another coat you have likely paid handsomely for and will equally as likely be truly bored with in a few years.

There is an argument for buying cheap when it comes to a statement coat, but this piece is about properly expensive, properly wonderful coats, so.... Try Azzedine Alaïa's calf-hair coat with the kasba print (£7,740), Marni's multipatterned Mondrian collage-style with raglan sleeves (£1,290), Céline's leopard print (£8,300) and Dries Van Noten's tie-front, blue tweed trench, with one half of the collar lined with fur (£1,290).

The Ultimate Parka

Parkas are still going strong, and that's because they satisfy the three Fs—form, function and fashion—though they are no longer the hip signifier they once were.

This season's best is by Yves Salomon (£1,005), in khaki with rabbit lining (the sleeves are lined with quilting). Browns in London had such a success with this coat that they've just restocked (and it's only late October).

The Rather Irritating Cape

They're back—didn't you know? I'm going to recommend two from opposite ends of the spectrum: Lanvin's cape in black wool, with silk lapels and tortoise-shell clasp (£2,110) and Coach's in navy-blue, with gold buttons and black leather trim (£475).

I'm not keen on capes; they limit what one can do with a handbag (only a tote or short-handled bag will do—there's no throwing over the shoulder of one's messenger bag). I acknowledge, though, that they are the answer to what one wears over a jacket to work on bitterly cold days.

Wool and Fur Fabulousness

Is it a coat? Is it a cardigan? Is it a gilet? The answer is sometimes all three. The luxe combo of wool and fur has long been acknowledged, but if you want to see it at its best, take a look at Miu Miu's pink or yellow coyote-and-wool gilet (from £1,185). Lanvin's sumptuous black cashmere cardigan, with a fox collar, zippered front and pockets (£3,650), will

double as a super-chic daytime cardigan or a night-time black-tie coat, thrown over a long skirt and simple top.

For the best shearling, also look to Miu Miu—try their cream blouson with removable hood and black piping (£2,100). Balenciaga has created the edgiest fur this winter, with the short, black baby alpaca coat (£2,645). (As an aside, if you still don't own their navy-blue biker jacket, buy it now (£1,625). You will never regret it and who knows whether they will do it in the same perfect navy next year.)

If you are averse to the real thing, Emporio Armani has a fun, knitted knee-length furry effect cardigan/coat in a deep blue/black (£569), which would look as good over jeans as it would over a day dress or a pair of black pants, towering heels and a silk shirt.

The mother (or father) of fur is Alexander McQueen—well, this season at least. Sarah Burton has created masterpieces in off-white fit for a snow queen or, at the very least, a chilly princess. I don't know anyone who would choose to buy an off-white, full-length, silk-lined, shaved mink, goat and fox fur for £22,430. I wish I did, because I would beg them to let me wear it; preferably over my pajamas. For my money, that's one of the real definitions of decadence.

FASHION

The Clash of the Prints

By RAY A. SMITH

Who wears stripes with a print? Bigger question: Who wears stripes with a busy print on the same garment paired with a little floral? The fashion industry thinks you might.

The looks from the spring 2012 runway shows hitting stores in the next two to three months are a riot of print-on-print designs, clashing stripes and wild-patterned motifs that boldly go to places even the most fashionable dresser has rarely gone before. Designer labels including Diane von Furstenberg for women and Alexander McQueen for men encouraged such clashing styles in their collections.

The prints party marks an increasing shift away from the pared-back styles, heavy on neutrals, that coincided with the economic downturn's more subdued mood.

Retailers are expressing optimism that customers will shop for these madcap prints, since they probably don't have a lot of them in their closets already. "We embraced the print-on-print trend wherever it looked good to us," says Jeffrey Kalinsky, executive vice president of designer merchandising for Nordstrom. He adds that prints will be a huge part of the U.S. department store's designer business, but admits it's not an easy look to pull off. "Proposing print-on-print to our customers will be inspirational for them, but in reality, I think that they will be wearing the separate pieces on their own."

In some cases, the ensembles

can't be broken down and worn separately. At D&G's and Miu Miu's women's runway shows, for example, some mismatched tops and bottoms were stitched together and will be sold as one piece, and dresses featured at least two different patterns.

Designers cited street style as an influence. Prada can also be credited, or blamed, in part for the

dent of trend-forecasting firm Tobe.

Also, the color-blocking trend of 2011—putting two or more large blocks of color in an outfit, Rothko-like—was a sort of introduction to clashing. Now, print-on-print is the advanced course.

Ms. Moellering says she is skeptical about the popularity of clashing prints arriving so soon. "There's a huge amount of the consuming public that is just getting the color memo. Prints are much more subjective than color," she says. "It's a harder sell."

Designers, however, are confident the public will bite. "Layering [prints] is a good way to be more daring," says Thakoon Panichgul, who has been a fan of clashing prints for years. "Sometimes it's amazing how you think two prints will be overloaded or clashy, when in fact it looks even more subtle."

At Diane von Furstenberg, long-known for prints, creative director Yvan Mispelaere, says, "This season was all about mixing [prints] with a fresh and light eccentricity that is still effortless" and can have a "bit of an edge."

For men, the runway looks go far beyond mixing patterns between a tie and shirt. "They have to not be afraid of trying something new," says Thom Browne, whose spring 2012 men's show featured checks, pinstripes and more worn together.

Mr. Mispelaere recommends one accessory that meshes particularly well with the print-on-print trend: confidence. "If you are afraid you won't pull it off," he says, "you probably won't."



A riot of print-on-print at Etro.

trend. Last year, in its spring 2011 show, the influential label's collection was so ripe with banana prints and monkey motifs that some bloggers dubbed it the "Carmen Miranda" line. The house threw in clashing stripes for good measure. "When Prada puts something out there, it opens the gates for more designers to jump in," says Catherine Moellering, executive vice presi-



Left page, clockwise from top left, Net-a-Porter (2); Browns; mytheresa (2); Matches; This page, from top, Browns; Dries Van Noten; Céline

Opposite page, clockwise from top left, Gucci wool and cashmere-blend military coat, £2,210; Burberry Prorsum satin down coat, £1,495; kasba-print calf-hair frock coat by Azzedine Alaïa, £7,440; Miu Miu beige wool-blend chunky-knit vest with pink coyote fur trim, £1,185; Lanvin black wool-fleece cape with a black satin peaked lapel, £2,110; khaki-green coyote- and rabbit-fur coat from Meteo by Yves Salomon, £1,005. This page, Marni navy virgin-wool coat printed with tribal motif, £1,290; 'Rai' bouclé wool coat with rabbit-fur lapel by Dries Van Noten, £1,290; Céline's leopard-print skin gold sand Crombie coat, £8,300.

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TRAVEL

The 'I Don't' Honeymoon

An American Author Shares How She Called Off Her Wedding, Yet Still Met in Paris to Celebrate

BY JULIA REED

The honeymoon was to begin in Paris because that was, more or less, where we began. When I met my fiancé, I was in my early 20s and living in Washington. He was almost twice my age and living in London, so Paris is where we got together—where he romanced me over the course of seven years.

Sometimes our visits were fevered two-day jaunts; sometimes, when we had the use of his sister's sprawling apartment, they'd last for more than a week. On one trip we stayed at a tiny hotel called the Sévigné. On another, it was the ultra-discreet San Régis, said to be a favorite of Lauren Bacall.

Like a lot of Aussies I've known, the man in question was determined to prove that he was more cultured than the Brits he lived among, and I was happy to benefit from his efforts. We ate Gilbert Le Coze's dazzling pounded tuna at Le Bernardin before he and his sister, Maguy moved the restaurant to Manhattan; we toured the de Menil collection at the Centre Pompidou before it went off to its permanent home in Houston. I learned to enjoy a pastis before dinner, thrilled to the Jacques-Louis Davids at the Louvre, and happily drank a hell of a lot of Château Giscours, his favorite Bordeaux.

The problem, with regards to the honeymoon, was that all that had taken place when there had been an "us"—an entity I'd rather abruptly shattered when I called off the wed-

The bill for the evening remains one of the largest of my life, but it was a small price to pay for finishing the 'honeymoon' off in style.

ding a few weeks before it was supposed to happen. Still, much to the disbelief of my mother and a great many other people who were similarly sane, we chose to take the trip that had been meant to celebrate our union.

I thought I was doing the civilized thing. I thought I'd be letting him down easy, that he could save face with friends and family (many of whom lived in Paris) if he could say it was the wedding and not the marriage I feared. There was also the fact that we already had first class tickets (by this time we had racked up a gazillion miles), a suite at L'Hotel, and, on my end, a particularly swell trousseau.

We got over the first hump, the bottle of champagne left in the room to welcome the new "Mr. and Mrs.," by drinking it—quickly. My jilted groom spent his days catching up with fellow foreign correspondents; I had my own pals in the form of my then-colleague at Vogue, André Leon Talley, who was in town with our friend George Malkemus, CEO of Manolo Blahnik U.S.A. André had a new wardrobe whipped up for my wedding, which included a double-breasted seersucker suit with matching shoes by Manolo. We dressed to the nines and lunched at Caviar Kaspia or on the Ritz terrace. We shopped at



Above, Hadley Hooper for The Wall Street Journal; below, Vasser Howorth.

Madeleine Castaing and an ancient place George knew where I bought ropes of green cut-class beads that looked like emeralds.

I wore the latter with a white silk dress to dinner à deux with my would-be fiancé at Restaurant Jamin, Joel Robuchon's first restaurant in Paris. Tucking into Robuchon's justifiably famous potato puree (accompanied by lots of the aforementioned Giscours), I remembered why I'd fallen in love in the first place. But then the next morning we were off to Lyon, a city not nearly so romantic nor containing a single soul we knew, and by the end of day two we'd almost killed each other. (I fear we actually might have killed the Michelin three-starred chef Alain Chapel—all the electricity went off in his restaurant the night we dined there, and he died of a stroke less than 48 hours later). By that point, I'd decided to bail on the rest of the journey, a foray further south to Cannes, and called André, who told me in forceful and colorful language to get my pale rear end on the fast train back to Paris, where he would meet me in the bar at the Ritz.

Thus ensued one of the most entertaining nights of my life. For one thing, it was the occasion of my discovery of the Pimm's Royale, a

Ritz specialty that consisted of Pimm's No. 1 topped off with champagne and garnished with lots of sliced fruit and potent brandied cherries. Somewhere around the third one, it seemed like a good idea to invite my almost-groom and his sister. By this time the room had filled up with people André knew, from Alain Mikli to Donna Karan, and they joined us too and we were all very jolly. Toward the end of the night, I found myself seated between a former Los Angeles Ram, who was one of Madonna's bodyguards, and actress Arlene Dahl, of all people, to whom I poured out my story.

The bill for the evening remains one of the largest of my life, but it was a small price to pay for finishing the "honeymoon" off in style, and even with a modicum of grace. I kept it as a reminder that even misguided intentions sometimes end up being not so crazy and that Paris can be a forgiving place—Bogart and Bergman are not the only ones who will always have it, after all. A Pimm's Royale remains one of my very favorite cocktails.

Ms. Reed is the author of "Queen of the Turtle Derby and Other Southern Phenomena" and "The House on First Street: My New Orleans Story."



FOOD & WINE



Italian butcher Dario Cecchini at his shopfront in Panzano.

Dishing on a Classic

Trying Out Tuscany's Iconic Bistecca alla Fiorentina

[Food]

By BRUCE PALLING



There are a number of great "city signature" dishes that are universal and equally delicious in destinations other than their origin—think of Spaghetti Bolognese, Pizza Napoletana or even Vienna's Wiener Schnitzel. When it comes to Tuscany's most esteemed dish, Bistecca alla Fiorentina, these rules don't apply; its foreign forms rarely, if ever, come close to the local.

"This dish, excellent because it's wholesome, invigorating, and tasty, has not yet spread throughout Italy, perhaps because in many provinces butchers work almost exclusively with old and draft animals," Pellegrino Artusi, the godfather of Italian cuisine, wrote in his masterpiece "La Scienza in Cucina e l'arte di mangiare bene" more than a century ago. That can hardly be the case today, yet when I think of the most memorable Bistecca I have eaten, they were invariably served in Tuscany.

There is no secret about the ingredients or even the cooking method: To be traditional, Bistecca alla Fiorentina should be made with a large (1-2 kilogram) T-bone steak from a 2-year-old Chianina cow. These beasts of burden appeared in Etruscan paintings more than 2,000 years ago and have hardly altered since—tall, white, slightly cavernous creatures with short horns and a sweet disposition.

To find out more about this local delicacy, I traveled to Panzano, 40 kilometers south of Florence in the heart of Chianti country, to speak with Dario Cecchini, Italy's most renowned (and flamboyant) butcher, who is on record as describing the dish as "one of the most supreme physical pleasures in this earthly life." Such is Mr. Cecchini's cult status, doubtless assisted by Bill Buford's extravagant

portrait of the Italian in his book "Heat," that it is a considerable task to enter his modest butcher shop, given the likelihood of having to jostle past German camera crews and crowds from Japan.

Shortly after we were introduced, Mr. Cecchini sidled up to me and whispered "To beef, or not to beef!" He constantly quotes from Dante and frequently blows his own (hunting) horn from a cluster of brass near his shop's front door; I expected to tire of this peculiar showmanship, but instead found myself caught up in his enthusiasm. "The Fiorentina is a celebration of food in Tuscany—a noble cut—and means of sharing the very best thing, but that is not the dish in itself," Mr. Cecchini says. "Usually, for the cook, the dish is the goal. But in Tuscany, it [is] the means of sharing with

'For the Tuscan, a banquet of 40 people with a big fireplace and a grill, this is paradise on earth.'

friends, which represents a very different philosophy than simply creating an individual dish.

"French and bourgeois cuisine is about the search for status—whoever was richer, ate better—but the Tuscan idea is that you eat richer when you eat together," he adds. "For the Tuscan, a banquet of 40 people with a big fireplace and a grill, this is paradise on earth. It is our religion."

He is quite specific about the characteristics of Bistecca, too, saying "it has to be thick—the best quality—from an animal that led a good life, and it has to have a good death and then hang for 30 days." Despite owning a small herd of Chianina on the edge of the famous Fontodi Chianti estate, the beef he prefers isn't from Tuscany, but from Catalonia in Spain.

To put the quality of his Spanish beef to the test, I purchased a

T-bone from Mr. Cecchini and one from Claudio Lunghini, a third-generation butcher on the edge of Cortona, where Chianina cattle are said to have originated. "Anatomically, you can make it with other beef," Mr. Cecchini says. "There is no law that says you have to have Chianina." But he still prefers using the locally bred meat.

Both butchers provided me with prime cuts, which they had carved from the untouched sides of beef; Mr. Cecchini's Spanish steak had hung for 30 days, Mr. Lunghini's Chianina, for 20.

I followed a traditional recipe when preparing the Bisteccas. My first task was to create a bed of hot coals over which to grill them. Fortunately, the farmhouse I was staying at has a large fireplace with a number of metallic grills, which rise and fall to within a whisker of the embers I created after burning logs for two hours.

Mindful of the butchers' advice to not season the meat before cooking, I simply placed them on the grill for two minutes. The Spanish cut from Mr. Cecchini was quickly engulfed in flames, as it released fat. After some anxious moments, it was time to move the steaks higher for three more minutes before resting them for 12 minutes. Both were cooked perfectly, with a wedge of rare meat in the center.

The conclusion of all four participants in the taste test that followed was that the Spanish version, with its additional fat, had more flavor and was more succulent. The following day, once the remnants had cooled, it was impossible to judge which was superior—a pleasing result, as I would hate to think that a 2,000-year-old tradition could be upset merely by using a different breed of cow.

Despite the Bistecca being a "celebration" of local food, Mr. Cecchini admits it isn't really his favorite beef dish. "Being a butcher, I never like to waste any cut of the animal. For me, the best part is the tenderloin, or the knee of the cow."

The Recent Price Dip

[Wine]

By WILL LYONS



It hasn't been an Indian summer for wine investment. As Europe's vignerons get down to a month of work in the cellar, racking wine and keeping a close eye on the freshly picked and now fermenting grapes, those who track the prices of the world's top wines are in some cases looking at substantial declines.

In September, Live-ex's Fine Wine 100 Index, the London International Vintners Exchange, which tracks the price movement of the world's 100 most sought-after wines, fell for the third consecutive month since its peak in June. Bordeaux's 2008 vintage appears to be the biggest loser, with first growth Château Lafite Rothschild off by more than 30%.

Over the long term, prices are still high and anyone who bought the wines when they were first released will be sitting on a tidy profit. Nevertheless, amid every downturn there lies an opportunity, and already speculators are looking beyond the present and asking what could be the next wine to emulate the steep price climbs that Bordeaux's first growths have experienced in the past five years.

To answer this question, all eyes turn to Asia, where demand driven by an expanding upper class, coupled with the abolition of import taxes in Hong Kong, which were as high as 80%, have helped fuel prices for fine wine. Next week, Hong Kong hosts its own International Wine & Spirits Fair, complete with more than 930 exhibitors from 37 different countries, underlying the region's importance to the fine-wine market.

True to form, there is a wine-investment zone where exhibitors will no doubt be talking up the latest opportunities in the market. One area that has received a lot of attention recently is Bordeaux's most sought-after sweet wine, Château d'Yquem. The château, under the ownership of Bernard Arnault's LVMH Moët Hennessey Louis Vuitton SA, has a meticulous attention to detail. According to fine-wine merchant Bordeaux Index, it still has the

highest unit labor costs of production of any Bordeaux wine and historically has sold for some of the highest prices. It certainly has the lineage to attract the investment community. The wine can boast a glittering array of distinguished collectors, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Napoleon Bonaparte.

In the past year, Bordeaux Index has seen volumes of d'Yquem rise almost 100%, driven by sales from Asia. This came on the back of an extraordinary sale in July, when a 200-year-old bottle of Château d'Yquem sold for £75,000, breaking all records and making it the most expensive bottle of white wine in the world. Wine brokers in Hong Kong say that whenever Château d'Yquem is served at a tasting, it is well-received.

"Château d'Yquem is a unique wine," says Joe Marchant, who works on the investment arm of Bordeaux Index. "It is really the only sweet Bordeaux that has the potential to attract a cache as a wine mega brand. [The château] has the production to support a market in Asia, but it is very early days."

Certainly its taste rivals any of the great wines in terms of elegance, concentration and complexity. I have tasted through a number of vintages and found that, when young, d'Yquem can appear somewhat reticent and closed. But with bottle age, around 10 years, it is transformed. The blend of predominantly Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc, affected by botrytis and aged in oak barrels, creates flavors of lemon, gingerbread, caramel, spice and, in some cases, an inviting creaminess.

But like all sweet wine, d'Yquem suffers from being prized but rarely consumed. In Asia, the market is still dominated by dry, red wines, despite a propensity for white wines and sweet wines to marry well with Asian cuisine.

Today, the 1996 vintage will set you back around £200 a bottle, compared with around £400 for the 2010. My suspicion is that back vintages of d'Yquem such as 1997, '98, '99 and 2004 may experience a price rise long-term and catch up with the 2010 price, while the much celebrated 2001 vintage will always be in demand. But for real gains, consumers will have to work out when to drink it.

Drinking Now

Morellino di Scansano Heba

Fattoria di Magliano, Tuscany, Italy

Vintage: 2009

Alcohol: 13%

Price: £13 or €15

With the leaves turning a deep golden color across Europe, thoughts naturally turn to the fireside and hearty, warming reds. This example from the southern coast of Tuscany, near the medieval town of Magliano, is one such wine. Here, the vineyards are 120 meters above sea level and benefit from being near the coast. Ruby red in the glass, this blend of predominantly Sangiovese with a little Syrah, is packed with immediate, easy-drinking appeal. On the nose, it has oodles of bright, red fruit with a luscious sweetness and soft, smooth tannins. An ideal accompaniment to a winter stew, game dishes or served by the glass as an aperitif with a good book in hand.



COVER STORY



The Purple Gold of La Mancha

Saffron Produced in Spain's Heartland Is One of the World's Most Expensive and Elusive Spices

By J. S. MARCUS

La Mancha is the Spanish heartland. Sprawling over a high plateau between Madrid and the Mediterranean, it is the birthplace of Manchego cheese and Pedro Almodóvar, and the legendary stomping-ground of Don Quixote himself.

Life has a harsh edge here. The weather is more extreme than elsewhere in Spain, and the villages have a parched, roughened look. But there is gold in La Mancha's fields—or rather, purple gold—in the form of a plant called *Crocus sativus*, the saffron crocus. If handled correctly, this humble plant, after surviving La Mancha's icy winters and broiling summers, is responsible for what many believe is the very best example of saffron, the world's most expensive, most elusive spice.

For a few precious weeks, starting in mid-October, isolated fields throughout La Mancha sprout the lace-like purple flower. Picked by hand each day before they have a chance to open, the flowers conceal three stigmas, which are removed by fingernail then quickly dried over a heat source like charcoal. The result has the same intense orange-yellow glow of saffron produced elsewhere in the world, but a uniquely sweet aroma that many

saffron fans say can only be achieved here.

"I love the crop," says La Mancha farmer Juan Antonio Ortiz, who, along with his wife Maria Ángeles Serrano, grow and process a small but prestigious saffron supply outside a village called Minaya, an hour's drive north of the provincial capital Albacete. During the harvest, which peaked this past week but continues on into November, the Ortiz family and their seasonal helpers may work in excess of 20 hours a day. They need to process around 200,000 individual flowers to produce a single kilo of saffron.

A reward for their labors is a constant supply year round. "I put saffron in my milk every morning," says Mr. Serrano, 61 years old, speaking in late September, when the hot La Mancha sun and the cool fall winds combined for a brief period of balminess. His wife says she puts saffron in everything from Spanish-style tortilla omelets and game courses to raisin cakes. "In traditional La Mancha cooking," she says, "almost all dishes have some saffron."

Using saffron is an exact science, argues Ms. Serrano, 55. "The amount is critical," she says. "If you put in too much, you spoil the dish."

Saffron cultivation is undergoing "a revival" in La Mancha, says José Antonio

Fernández, a plant geneticist at the Albacete campus of the University of Castilla-La Mancha. Prof. Fernández, who has made a study of the saffron crocus his life's work, says the local habit of roasting saffron is key to high quality.

"There are many different ways to dry the stigmas," he says. Invoking the world's other major areas of saffron production, he adds: "For example, in Iran and Mo-

La Mancha's harsh conditions may be hard on residents, but provide just the right situation for the saffron crocus.

rocco, they dry the stigmas in the open air." He says the immediate roasting causes "a chemical reaction" that both transforms and preserves a sweeter, more intense aroma. La Mancha's harsh conditions may be hard on residents, but provide just the right situation for the saffron crocus. Dry, hot summers and cold winters keep fungi and other predators and pests at bay, explains Prof. Fernández.

Saffron cultivation in the Mediterranean dates back to Minoan civilization, but it seems to have come to Spain with the Moors, who not only used it as a medicine or dye, but as an actual spice. Saffron has long been a valued commodity, and has subsequently "been adulterated for centuries," says Mr. Fernández. He adds that these days, "Spanish" saffron is likely imported from Iran, the world's largest producer, and repackaged by unscrupulous middlemen. Saffron from some Asian suppliers may be adulterated with everything from turmeric to dyed poppy petals. Mr. Fernández says that in some instances, artificial dyes used by deceptive traders and distributors are actually carcinogenic. When in doubt, he says, "the best thing to do is use turmeric or paprika," which are both far preferable to fake or adulterated saffron.

One way to insure that you are getting genuine saffron is to restrict purchases to a few European regions whose saffron has received protected geographical status from the European Union, and is marked by a seal. These include La Mancha, L'Aquila in Italy's Abruzzo region and around Kozani in western Macedonia in Greece. The professor also recommends saffron from new sources in Tasmania, Chile and

COVER STORY



Clockwise from far left: Harvesting the saffron crocus in Minaya, Spain; chef Quique Dacosta's Mark Rothko-inspired saffron dish; the Rose Saffron Festival in Consuegra; extracting saffron crocus stigmas in La Mancha; and Spanish paella.

Argentina. "Saffron is in fashion in the southern hemisphere," he says.

Dean & DeLuca, the American gourmet grocery chain, currently distributes several varieties, including organic Greek and Italian Abruzzi saffron. "We buy directly from vendors," says Maria Roemer, Dean & DeLuca's New York-based merchandise manager, when asked how the firm insures the quality of its saffron.

Observers have high hopes for this year's La Mancha crop; 2011 is turning into "a very remarkable harvest," says Prof. Fernández, who keeps in close touch with local growers. He says both the quality and the quantity of the crocus blooms are unusually high.

In La Mancha itself, saffron has become a tourist attraction. This weekend, Consuegra, a small town near Toledo in the northwest of the region, holds its annual saffron-themed extravaganza, the Saffron Rose Festival. Taking advantage of nearby windmills made famous in Cervantes's "Don Quixote," the festival is a celebration of La Mancha customs and includes events like competitive stigma separating.

Elsewhere in La Mancha, some enterprising foodies are trying to produce saffron-flavored Manchego cheese, thereby combining two of the region's most celebrated products.

"It's in the experimental phase," Ms. Serrano says of the newfangled orange cheese.

Saffron can now retail for nearly €20 a gram, and as its price rises, it has become a symbol of luxurious experimentation for some of Europe's top chefs. Pierre Gagnaire, whose three-star Michelin restaurant in Paris is the flagship of a world-wide culinary empire, created a sweet red-pepper dessert called "Hell," featuring olives, candied tomatoes, Peruvian peppers and ewe's milk yogurt, generously dosed with saffron. First introduced five years ago, the dish is now made upon special request. Mr. Gagnaire also uses saffron to flavor orange and grapefruit sorbets, and a special custard tart.

In Denia, an hour's drive south of Valencia, innovative Spanish chef Quique Dacosta uses saffron, blood oranges and red mullet to create a dish named in honor of painter Mark Rothko, who himself once named a red-hued abstract painting after the spice.

"I love saffron," says Mr. Dacosta, a native of Spain's Extremadura region who moved to Valencia when he was a teenager. Mr. Dacosta, who is known for finding radical culinary solutions lurking behind local Valencian customs, is a fan of saffron's most famous application in Spain—paella, the rice mélange that Span-

iards associate with Valencia but also treat as something of a national dish.

"Paella is the dish most representative of Valencian cuisine," he says. "And in this recipe, saffron is a main product—paella without saffron is like paella without rice."

Unlike many of the spice's aficionados, Mr. Dacosta doesn't assign superlatives to La Mancha saffron. (He himself relies on a producer in the neighboring Alicante region.) "I do not know if there is a 'best' saffron," he says. "But I know the one from La Mancha is very impressive."

In Sweden, saffron is associated with Christmastime, and with a sweet neon-colored yellow bun called a Lussekat, named in honor of St. Lucy and traditionally served on Dec. 13, or St. Lucy's Day. "Everybody relates to this bun," says Swedish chef Mathias Dahlgren, who doesn't currently use saffron in dishes at his celebrated Stockholm restaurant, but makes his family recipe for Lussekat at home every year.

Valued chiefly for its intense color and heady aroma, saffron also has a strong taste, but one that is hard to describe, says Mr. Dahlgren. He considers the possibilities when asked to do just that, and then answers the question with a question. "How do you describe the taste of honey?"

Chef Mathias Dahlgren's Recipe For Swedish Saffron Buns

- INGREDIENTS**
 (Makes 25 buns)
 3 grams saffron threads
 50 grams yeast
 200 grams sugar
 300 milliliters milk
 1 egg
 150-200 grams butter
 1 teaspoon salt
 750 grams flour
 100 grams raisins
Glaze:
 1 egg
 2 tablespoons water

PREPARATION
 To make "Lucia cats" (Lussekat), grind the saffron along with a cube of sugar, using a mortar and pestle. (For those who think ahead: drip a little cognac on top, and let stand a few days.) Place the yeast in a bowl and stir in a few tablespoons of milk. Melt the butter and pour over the milk. Add the rest of the ingredients, except the raisins, and knead the dough in a dough mixer for 10 minutes. Carefully mix in most of the raisins, cover the dough and let it rise for 30 minutes at room temperature. Divide the dough into 25 pieces and roll the buns in an oblong shape, about 10 centimeters long. Cover them and let rest for 10 minutes, then roll them twice as long and twist the ends of each bun in opposite directions to form a sort of figure 8. Put one raisin in the middle of each half figure 8. Place on a greased baking sheet and let rise under a towel for about 90 minutes, or until the buns have doubled in size. Bake in the oven at 220 degrees Celsius for five minutes. Beat together the egg and water, brush the mixture on the buns. Allow to cool on the baking sheet.



Clockwise from top left: Azafran de Minaya; Quique Dacosta Restaurant; John Thompson/theopandora; Jam World Images/Alamy; StockFood/Teubner Foodfoto GmbH; Getty Images (bottom left)

HOMES

The Most Avid Trophy-Home Buyer?

How Software Billionaire Larry Ellison Has Taken Serial Property Buying to New Extremes

BY SARAH TILTON AND JULIET CHUNG

One of America's most voracious consumers of trophy real estate is back on the hunt.

Since the mid-1990s, software billionaire Larry Ellison has accumulated hundreds of millions of dollars worth of top-shelf properties around the world. The portfolio of Oracle Corp.'s co-founder includes five adjacent lots in Malibu, Calif.; a Newport, R.I., mansion formerly owned by the Astor family; a historic garden property in Kyoto and an estate in Rancho Mirage, Calif., with a private, 19-hole golf course.

The list of serial buyers of trophy properties, while thinning in recent years, includes Paul Allen along with Roman Abramovich and other Russian oligarchs. Mr. Ellison has a distinctive buying pattern: When he finds an area he likes, he takes a flood-the-zone approach. He often buys several adjacent properties to combine into a single sprawling compound. At the same time, he acquires other noncontiguous properties nearby, increasing his overall holdings in a desirable area.

Mr. Ellison has been applying this approach to a new location: Lake Tahoe, the resort area straddling the California-Nevada border. Records show Mr. Ellison has spent \$102 million (€73.3 million) in the past several years buying property, both on and off the market, to assemble three different parcels fronting the 495-square-kilometer lake. On one of them, purchased more than three years for a total of \$58 million, Mr. Ellison is constructing a compound with more than 1,670 square meters of living space, as well as a pond with an island, waterfalls and a tennis court with a pavilion, according to plans submitted to Washoe County, Nev.

Mr. Ellison declined to comment. An examination of public records and interviews shows that the billionaire sportsman acquires properties in the same determined way he goes about his other business, whether it's his hostile acquisition of rival PeopleSoft in 2005 or his successful bid to win the America's Cup sailing competition last year, an effort on which he reportedly spent \$100 million.

The third-richest American, with



Roslyn Banish/Zen Architecture: The Building Process as Practice by Paul Discoe with Alexandra Quinn/Gibbs Smith

a net worth of \$33 billion, according to Forbes, he was close to fellow tech-company founder Steve Jobs. Mr. Ellison spoke at Mr. Jobs's memorial service. He has two grown children, Megan and David, both in the movie business, and is recently divorced from his most recent wife, romance novelist Melanie Craft.

Real-estate observers say Mr. Ellison is known for getting what he wants, pursuing properties he's interested in regardless of whether or not they are on the market. "Larry's philosophy has always been, 'Buy the best, without compromise,'" says Kurt Rappaport, co-founder of the Westside Estate Agency, who represented Mr. Ellison in several of the Malibu deals. Mr. Rappaport declines to address specific deals but says that Mr. Ellison views prime real estate as a scarce commodity that cannot easily be replicated.

Mr. Ellison sometimes sends an associate to scout out a property before he visits, according to people who have been involved in his real-estate transactions. Mr. Ellison can be quick to act, sometimes making a decision after a single walk-through. "He was very much, 'I want it, here's the check, OK, move,'" says Christine Mitchell, whose husband sold Mr. Ellison a 0.64 hectare lot on the eastern shore of Lake Tahoe for \$11.7 million in 2006.

Mr. Ellison's other holdings include two properties in Woodside, Calif., a wealthy Silicon Valley community. One, a 9.2-hectare estate modeled on a 16th-century Japanese emperor's residence, was designed and built over nine years and completed in 2004, according to San Mateo County. In 2011, the county assessed it at \$70.4 million. The other was purchased for \$23 million in 2005 and is now for sale, asking \$19 million.

In Malibu, according to records and city officials, Mr. Ellison owns a hotel and two restaurants, the five adjacent lots on Carbon Beach that cost a reported \$65 million and at least two other homes. In Rancho Mirage, near Palm Springs, Calif., he bought a 100-hectare estate earlier this year for \$49 million.

In Kyoto, Japan, he owns a garden property with a home, pavilion and gardens fed by the freshwater Lake Biwa, according to a person familiar with the deal. With an asking price of about \$86 million, it was purchased in the last several years after a representative of Mr. Ellison's learned of the property while attending an art auction.

In San Francisco's tony Pacific Heights neighborhood, he owns a five-bedroom, four-level home, purchased in 1998 for \$3.8 million. Last June, Mr. Ellison sued his neighbors alleging that trees on their property were obstructing his views of San Francisco Bay and harming his property values; the suit was settled out of court in May.

In Newport, Mr. Ellison owns an

Italianate-style mansion previously owned by the Astor family and purchased in January 2010 for \$10.5 million. Mr. Ellison said earlier this year in a deposition related to his San Francisco tree lawsuit that he had bought a Newport mansion sight-unseen and planned to turn it into a museum.

Lake Tahoe, with its pristine waters and world-class skiing, has long been a seductive draw for Bay Area residents. Incline Village, the town on the Nevada side of the lake where Mr. Ellison has made a number of his buys, bears the nickname "Income Village" for its wealthy residents and its reputation as a tax haven (Nevada has no personal income tax). For years Michael Milken, the philanthropist and former junk-bond king, put on an annual fireworks display on July Fourth from a barge near his Incline

Mr. Ellison created three noncontiguous lakefront parcels in eight separate deals, sometimes without sellers realizing he had bought adjacent property. He assembled the Glenbrook-adjacent property, a forested, five-hectare parcel with a pebbly beach and several cabins built by previous owners, in three separate deals in 2006, 2007 and 2009 for \$29 million. He put together the Snug Harbor property—a 0.84 hectare parcel which has a sandy beach and, at the time of purchase, a 929-square-meter home, a beach house, a guest house and other buildings—in 2006 and 2009 for a total of \$15 million. Plans show he wanted to remodel one of the houses and install a heated driveway.

Mark Sweetland, 55, who was one of several inheritors of 1.64 hectares near Glenbrook, says there were no immediate plans to sell until Mr. Ellison's offer came in. "I think Mr. Ellison just decided he was going to own the thing so he made a significantly higher offer than we'd had before, and he ended up owning the property," says Mr. Sweetland, a beneficiary of the trust that sold the land in 2007 for \$12 million. He says he wasn't aware Mr. Ellison was buying up adjacent property, but says the price was fair regardless.

It's Mr. Ellison's three-hectare property on the north shore of the lake, in affluent Incline Village, where owners include PeopleSoft founder David Duffield, that has generated the most interest. There, on a wide, leafy street, where gated entrances and security cameras abound, Mr. Ellison is building a rustic-style lakefront compound on property he bought in three separate deals. Real-estate developer and rancher Les Busick, who used to live on one of the properties where Mr. Ellison is now building, says he went out on the lake in his boat to watch his old house being torn down. "I watched the whole thing," Mr. Busick says. "I got a tear in my eye."

The property has about 130 meters of lake frontage, according

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HOMES



Clockwise from opposite page, Larry Ellison's Woodside, Calif., property, modeled on a Japanese emperor's 16th-century residence; his 100-hectare estate in Rancho Mirage, Calif., includes a 19-hole golf course; his 0.84-hectare parcel with a sandy beach near Snug Harbor, Lake Tahoe; a five-bedroom, four-level home in San Francisco's Pacific Heights neighborhood; his Newport, R.I., mansion, previously owned by the Astor family; and Mr. Ellison.



Clockwise from top left, Carl A. Eklund, Trustee of BLX Group; Kenny Blum for The Wall Street Journal; Lori Eanes for the Wall Street Journal; Photolibary; AP Photo

to public records, as well as two private piers and a private beach. Plans filed with Washoe County show more than eight separate structures totaling more than 1,670 square meters, including a main house with a pool and spa overlooking the lake, a beach house, a cottage and a writer's cabin. A building permit has been issued for a lakeside gazebo with a stone fireplace.

From the street, passersby can peek beyond a stone wall with log accents to log-sided buildings with stone chimneys. A "living roof," a roof planted like a garden, was recently abloom with yellow flowers. In addition to the extensive use of granite and cedar on the exteriors of buildings, the plans also call for the use of rocks for landscaping and the planting of aspen and maple trees and currant, dogwood or other native shrubs.

According to the plans, the main house, three-bedroom beach house and "West House" are located on the side of the property closest to Lake Tahoe. The writer's cottage and a clay tennis court and tennis

pavilion—with a lounge, fireplace, fold-down bed and powder room—occupy the middle of the property. Closer to the street are another cottage and a caretaker's cottage. A guard house is at the entrance.

The compound is scheduled to be completed next fall, according to a construction schedule filed with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. Robb Olson, a principal at Olson-Olson Architects, the Tahoe City, Calif., firm that was named on the plans filed with the county, cited a confidentiality agreement and declined to comment on the project.

Mr. Ellison's investments aside, Tahoe's real-estate market has been struggling in recent years, with the median value for single-family homes in Incline Village down 31.8% since the peak of the market nationally in June 2006, according to real-estate firm Zillow.com. On the eastern end of the street, near where Mr. Ellison's compound is located, Tom Gonzales, co-founder of software company Commerce One, is asking \$49.9 million for a 1.74 hectare lakefront property, down

from its original 2007 asking price of \$65 million.

Mr. Ellison has worked with some brokers, architects and builders repeatedly. He's using the same contractor, Bruce Olson, on his Incline Village property that he used for renovations on his property near Snug Harbor. Malibu architecture firm Studio PCH drew up plans for a luxurious house for Mr. Ellison's Carbon Beach lots but the application was withdrawn; according to Malibu's planning department, the firm designed and is overseeing the construction of his two restaurants there. Studio PCH declined to comment, citing a confidentiality agreement.

He's worked with Christie's International Real Estate repeatedly in the past several years, buying the Kyoto, Rancho Mirage and Newport properties through its affiliates. Christie's spokeswoman Lisa Besone declined to comment. He's also worked with Mary Gullixson of Alain Pinel Realtors to sell property in the Bay Area.

Los Angeles brokers say West-

side Estate Agency broker Mr. Rapaport, who has worked with Mr. Ellison in Malibu, has represented his daughter, Megan, a film producer whose credits include "True Grit" and who herself is known as a buyer of real estate in Los Angeles. Ms. Ellison has three homes in the Hollywood Hills and currently has in escrow a 4.2 hectare estate in Topanga, near Malibu, that she had listed for nearly \$4 million with another agent, Scott Prather of Nourmand & Associates.

Despite his significant holdings—and sometimes-public legal wranglings—Mr. Ellison usually keeps a low profile when he's around, say some locals who live in towns where he has bought. "One or the other of his yachts shows up here about four times a year, right off shore. Other than that, we don't see him around town very much," says Malibu Mayor John Sibert.

In Incline Village, locals say Mr. Ellison's presence has been relatively free of controversy. Neighbors say his compound evokes the feel of old Tahoe and that Mr. Elli-

son has done a meticulous job of making sure the house fits into the surroundings. "It's in keeping with the rustic atmosphere of the mountain community," says Mr. Busick, who has since downsized to a condominium a few doors away from Mr. Ellison.

Some say projects such as Mr. Ellison's help keep people employed in tough times and that his investment is a sign of confidence in the local real-estate market. Resident Chuck Weinberger says conversation among locals revolves around the scope or specific details of the project, such as the time flatbed truck after flatbed truck ferried to Mr. Ellison's construction site boulders so large the trucks could accommodate only two or three at a time.

Mr. Weinberger says a live-and-let-live philosophy largely prevails. "His property is in a row of five or six very large, very impressive houses," he says. "And it's just another large, impressive house on the lake."

—Jim Oberman
contributed to this article.

BOOKS

In the Name Of the Father

Marine Le Pen
By Caroline Fourest
and Fiammetta Venner
Grasset & Fasquelle, 430 pages, €20.00

By EMMA-KATE SYMONS

Marine Le Pen, the heir to France's far-right National Front (FN) party, has long suffered for being her father's daughter. Jean-Marie Le Pen is France's most notorious right-wing extremist, an unrepentant Holocaust denier and an alleged torturer in the Algerian war. His daughter, the future poster girl of the French far right, was bullied at school and spat at in the street. When she was eight, the family home was gutted by a bomb planted by suspected political opponents (the culprits were never arrested).

Life inside the Le Pen home was no less fractious. Ms. Le Pen's mother, Pierrette, left the family when Marine was 14, declaring in a series of interviews that her husband was laundering campaign funds through Swiss bank accounts. Pierrette told the media that the three Le Pen girls were being raised in an environment of "primary anti-Semitism" in which Adolf Hitler was referred to as *Tonton* (Uncle) Dolphi. Later, when Marine was a law student at the Sorbonne, her mother posed topless for *Playboy* magazine in a French maid costume. Her aim? To get back at her ex-husband for saying that she should clean houses if she lacked money.

These would be traumatic experiences for anyone, politician or otherwise. But what can it mean that Ms. Le Pen has duplicated so much of her father's tactics and style in her own political career—and to such success? Since becoming FN president this January, Ms. Le Pen has seen the party's fortunes rise precipitously. As next year's general elections approach, the FN's success in opinion polls has goaded President Nicolas Sarkozy's center-right Union for a Popular Movement party into at-times hysterical attempts to keep its extreme flank from defecting.

As Caroline Fourest and Fiammetta Venner suggest in their unauthorized biography, titled simply "Marine Le Pen," winning political acceptance is more than a matter of electoral ambition for Ms. Le Pen. Le Pen *filie* also wants to avenge decades of perceived slights and humiliations, and to restore honor to the sullied family name. In Ms. Fourest and Venner's telling, Marine Le Pen is a woman on a very personal quest.

* * *

Born in 1968 and raised in a sprawling villa in the wealthy western suburbs of Paris, Ms. Le Pen appeared in photo shoots, interviews and political marches alongside her father starting in her infancy. Mr. Le Pen employed his young family as a campaigning tool, a tactic made famous by John F. Kennedy but unheard of at the time in French politics.

The clan manor in snooty Saint-Cloud was the scene of wild soirees in the early 1980s, attracting celebrities like actor Alain Delon. Ms. Le Pen was dubbed a tomboy by her sisters, but as a student she emulated her father's *bon-vivant* style, frequenting chic Parisian nightclubs. In politics as in life, her father's in-



POSTER GIRL Marine Le Pen (center) with her father, Jean-Marie, in 1988.

fluence was not lost: She joined the FN at 18 and was an extreme-right activist at Paris II University.

Like papa, she studied law. After joining the Paris bar she started work at a firm that often represented her father's party, and soon returned to run the FN legal department. In 1998 she won her first local election as a regional councilor for the party fief of Nord-Pas-de-Calais, and in 2004 she was voted into the European Parliament.

The FN has always been a broad church. It incorporates Vichy France nostalgics, assorted anti-Semites, royalists, religious fundamentalists, pagan fascists and skinheads as well as the lumpenproletariat of alienated French. The faithful are fueled by long-standing anti-Americanism and residual anger over France's bloody departure from its former colonies such as Algeria. Newer followers are outraged at Muslim immigrants and their offspring, and simultaneously blame the "elites" for the nation's woes.

Yet in her own political rise, Ms. Le Pen has come to adopt a political strategy known as "*dediabolisation*"—or, literally, de-demonization. That means dragging the FN out of the fringes and into the modern mainstream of French politics. The bywords of the repackaged FN are secularism and "reasoned protectionism," a brand of economic nationalism typically associated with factions of the French left. Traditional FN opposition to the euro remains, though attacks on "Islamization" have replaced Le Pen *père's* anti-Semitic drumbeat.

Mses. Fourest and Venner's biography was published in French in June and has already attracted a defamation suit from Ms. Le Pen. The book is filled with exclusive interviews, dissection of party literature and a thorough review of existing scholarship on the Le Pen machine. It features an alarming exchange between Ms. Fourest and Jean-Marie Le Pen over his "truth" claims about the Sept. 11 attacks and the killing of Osama bin Laden.

And yet the book's most penetrating insights don't have to do with the party itself, or with "LePenism," but rather with Ms. Le Pen's psychology. For a politician who appeals to France's family-values crowd, Mses. Fourest and Venner note, Ms. Le Pen leads a lifestyle unapologetically characteristic of

France after May 1968: An unmarried mother of three, she has, like President Sarkozy, been twice divorced. She describes herself as a "non-practicing Catholic" and eschews the anti-abortion stance of her father's earlier career. Ms. Le Pen happily defended Sandra Kaz, an FN candidate who was exposed as an escort after winning two rounds of a regional election. Yet she rails against France's "destructive" 1968-inspired libertines and their individualistic ideology, which she says has "shaken up the foundations of our society."

That is why Mses. Fourest and Venner characterize the FN's transformation as opportunistic more than truly modernizing. The FN under Ms. Le Pen has shown itself to be capable of breathtaking reversals on policy. The key shift was the abandonment, after the financial crisis in 2008, of the party's long-held commitment to economic freedom and smaller government. Today's credo consists of populist, anti-globalist rhetoric and a protectionist agenda proudly pilfered from the left. Under this new spin, Ms. Le Pen suggests that her party is now a friend of Israel, a defender of secular values, and even a post-feminist supporter of women and gay rights.

But the fundamentals haven't changed. This is still a party that backs the worst kind of dictatorships in the Middle East and Africa, lionizes Vladimir Putin's Russia and keeps avowed anti-Semites in its fold. Ms. Le Pen does not have the same opinion as her father on the gas chambers, Mses. Fourest and Venner concede. "She is from another era, her era. But is that enough to pull the Front National out of the extreme right . . . this term that Marine Le Pen would like to reserve for skinheads?"

The FN of Ms. Le Pen, like that of her father, adheres to an expedient double-sided political discourse: "secular and republican on one side, but nationalist and xenophobic on the other." Ms. Le Pen "holds out her stigmata of the discriminated child to . . . provoke outrage and appear a martyr," Mses. Fourest and Venner write. "But at the end of the day the France she dreams of is the opposite of what she promises. Not greater, stronger and stable. But fearful, divided, isolated and in danger."

—Ms. Symons is a writer based in Bangkok and Paris.

The Beginnings Of World War II

[Five Best]

By RICHARD OVERY

The Life of Neville Chamberlain

By Keith Feiling (1946)

Since the late 1930s, Neville Chamberlain has had a bad press as the man whose misjudgment of Hitler and hesitation to re-arm hastened the outbreak of World War II. Yet Keith Feiling, the first to write a full biography of Chamberlain after the war, painted a more sympathetic and realistic portrait of a British prime minister who hated war and had a single-minded belief that he was the man who could save the peace. Ironically, Chamberlain's sudden decision in March 1939 to guarantee Polish sovereignty created conditions that made war more likely than ever. Feiling shows a man tortured by a situation from which he could not escape; Chamberlain resigned in May 1940 and died six months later. The last years of his life were ones of high drama for a most undramatic man.

The Origins of the Second World War

By A.J.P. Taylor (1961)

Probably the most controversial book ever written on the roots of World War II. A.J.P. Taylor (1909-90) deliberately set out to challenge the idea that Hitler was a monster bent on war at all costs. Taylor saw Hitler as yet another German imperialist like Bismarck. Like many of his generation, Taylor blamed the German army, with its roots in Prussian militarism, for the crises of both world wars; he did not understand radical nationalism. He never grasped the terrible imperatives of modern ideology and had no place in his argument for the fate of the Jews. For all these misjudgments, there is one significant and enduring merit to Taylor's book: He was the first postwar historian to acknowledge that it was Britain and France who declared war, and to ask why—stimulating a search for British and French motives that has resulted in a more complete understanding of that terrible time.



BEFORE THE WAR Neville Chamberlain.

Hitler Strikes Poland

By Alexander Rossino (2003)

Alexander Rossino's grim account of the German invasion of Poland and of the horrors perpetrated almost immediately by the German armed forces and security units shows how fully Hitler's war, even in its earliest days in 1939, differed from previous European wars. Brutal ethnic tension in the Polish-German borderlands created a febrile atmosphere in the months before the war. Poles reacted to German invasion by perpetrating atrocities of their own against Polish Germans, and the German invaders were no less savage. Rossino offers a detailed, blow-by-blow account of how resentful German nationalism was used to justify the slaughter of Polish intellectuals, the Polish national elite and Polish Jews, well before the death camps were established. Much of the work was done by Hitler's *Einsatzgruppen*, security squads assigned not to fight but to murder suspected enemies of the new German Reich. Within days of the invasion, the Germans were already engaged in what came to be known in 1945 as crimes against humanity.

Berlin Diary

By William Shirer (1941)

Among the most vivid English-language accounts of the final days of European peace and the beginning of war is journalist William Shirer's diary, first published in 1941. As a reporter based in Europe in the 1930s, Shirer was a close observer of conditions in the Third Reich and a strong critic of Nazism. A few days before the German invasion of Poland, he went to Danzig to meet Poles there and found them determined to fight at all costs. Shirer was back in Berlin when the invasion began. The outbreak of World War I had been marked by excited, war-fever euphoria, but now Germans knew what a European conflict might entail. Shirer walked in Berlin's autumn sun and found "on the faces of the people astonishment, depression." His diary is a reminder that it is politicians, not the people, who make war.

The Triumph of the Dark

By Zara Steiner (2010)

Every now and again, a book comes along that merits being called "definitive." Zara Steiner's "The Triumph of the Dark" is the most thorough, wide-ranging and carefully argued narrative available on the tumultuous decade that ended in world war. Every historian of the period will stand in Steiner's debt. Not everyone will agree with some of her arguments. Steiner is particularly tough on Neville Chamberlain, taking him to task for being so blinded by anticommunism that he failed to appreciate how a British-French-Soviet alliance in the 1930s might have stopped Hitler's military expansion. That was Churchill's view too, so she is in good company. Whether Stalin would have signed up, of course, remains open to question. But reading Steiner on the subject at least provides the comforts of contemplating an alternative storyline, one in which the dark does not triumph.

—Mr. Overy is the author of "1939: Countdown to War," now out in paperback.

FILM

'Moneyball': Stars, Stats and Perfect Pitch

With Pitt, Hill and Hoffman on Base, Miller-Zaillian-Sorkin Crew Hits the Story Out of the Park

[Film Review]

JOE MORGENSTERN



One of the best sports movies ever, "Bull Durham" has one of the best opening lines ever: "I believe," Susan

Sarandon's ardent groupie declares, "in the church of baseball." The church is desanctified in "Moneyball," whose context is runaway commerce, and whose subtext is statistics—i.e., a scientific approach to the major-league version of the game that seeks to sweep away nostalgic notions and dry the moist eyes of the faithful. Never before, though, have statistics added up to such electrifying entertainment. After the mostly minor-league productions of recent months, this movie, which was directed by Bennett Miller, renews your belief in the power of movies.

Brad Pitt plays—to perfection—Billy Beane, the current Oakland Athletics general manager who, in 2002, guided his small-market, underfunded team to an unprecedented 20 consecutive wins. (He was the subject of the Michael Lewis book from which the script, an inventive work of fiction based on fact, has been adapted by Steven Zaillian and Aaron Sorkin.) In that year, as the film has it, Billy finds salvation from the A's relative poverty—relative most painfully to the filthy-rich Yankees—by putting into practice the theories of Bill James, who'd been preaching the gospel of so-called sabermetrics.

Instead of paying lavish salaries to superstars who sometimes fail to produce needed wins, the cash-strapped GM—himself an ex-player who didn't deliver on his shining promise—depends on intricately detailed computer analyses of individual performance. By doing so, he's able to buy specific talents embodied by players who might otherwise be unwanted or ignored. His brainiac aide in this abstruse enterprise is his assistant general manager Peter Brand (Jonah Hill). A young, Yale-educated economist with a picture of Plato on his bedroom wall, Pete knows little about baseball but lots about teasing the meaning out of equations and algorithms. "Using stats the way we read them," he tells Billy, "we'll find value players that no one else can see."

There's nothing abstruse about the way "Moneyball" dramatizes the enterprise. Thanks to the elegant understatement of Mr. Hill's portrayal, the unworldly Pete provides a wonderful foil to Mr. Pitt's eccentric, flamboyant Billy in just about every scene they share. But just about every scene in the film crackles with intelligence, brittle humor and edgy conflict; it's not to minimize Mr. Zaillian's gifts, or those of the director, to say that the dialogue's pace and density evoke Mr. Sorkin's screenplay for "The Social Network."

Movie moments don't get much better than the staff meetings in which Billy takes on the panel of supposedly wise old executives and scouts who pick players for the A's to hire (every one of them is wittily delineated), or the machine-



Brad Pitt as the Oakland Athletics' Billy Beane in 'Moneyball'.

gun-rapid succession of phone calls in which Billy negotiates with other teams for players he wants to buy. (The calls come too fast to follow in detail, but they're hugely enjoyable all the same.) Or Billy's first encounter with Pete during a negotiating session with the top management of the Cleveland Indians. A relentlessly acute observer, Billy senses that Pete, an extremely junior member of the Indians staff, is playing an almost silent but extremely important role. Confronting him later in a hallway, Billy asks, "Who are you? What happened in that room?"

From top to bottom the casting is inspired. Mr. Pitt couples a star presence—there's a singular there there whenever the A's general manager is in camera range—to a beautifully measured ensemble performance that makes Billy a minimalist ironist, tossing off funny remarks with an abandon that almost conceals his deep anger, pain or self-doubt. "Good meeting," he says brightly after a horrible meeting with his stern-faced field manager, Art Howe (Philip Seymour Hoffman), an implacable foe of anything that smacks of sabermetrics: "Every time we talk I'm reinvigorated by your love of the game."

Art's character is written rather repetitively—he's implacable, and implacable, and then implacable—but Mr. Hoffman, as ever, gives his man a special, if ever-glowing, cachet. Robin Wright does a brief, graceful turn in the role of Billy's estranged wife. Chris Pratt is affecting as Scott Hatteberg, the washed-up catcher recycled by Billy, according to sabermetric precepts, into a valuable first-baseman. Billy's daughter, Casey, is

played by Kerris Dorsey, a young actress, in her feature debut, who's the essence of sweet simplicity in a couple of crucial scenes. One of them is set in a music shop where Casey, to her father's boundless delight, works out chords on a guitar and sings ever so tentatively. All you need know about the other, with Casey behind the wheel of a car, is that it serves, to the film's

Just about every scene in the film crackles with intelligence, brittle humor and edgy conflict.

immense benefit, as her exquisite, loving postscript to the complex subject of her dad.

The force that binds all of this fine work is fine direction. Whether Mr. Miller is dealing with the professional actors in his cast, or with real-life baseball players standing in for the players and scouts of the Oakland A's, his touch is unerring and his narrative vision is clear. After only one documentary ("The Cruise") and one feature ("Capote," with Mr. Hoffman in the title role), he now takes his place in the first rank of American directors. The cinematographer, Wally Pfister, has already demonstrated his mastery in a string of Christopher Nolan films and won an Oscar for "Inception"; this time he works stylishly but unobtrusively, and that includes what may amount to an accidental sight gag, when someone almost blocks the camera in the process of whispering in someone else's ear.

"Moneyball" was inspired, as the familiar phrase goes, by a true story. In fact, Peter Brand is a dramatic invention, and a very good one. In fact, Billy Beane was not the first general manager to bring a statistical approach to the Oakland A's; he continued the work begun by Sandy Alderson, who gets credit in the book but doesn't figure in the film. One might also debate, as my sportswriter colleague Allen Barra did in a separate Journal piece Thursday, the factual accuracy of the book, which may—or may not—have overstated the sabermetric case.

As a work of fiction, the film suffers from an energy sag toward the end by remaining admirably faithful to the odd nature of its source material. Because the Oakland A's didn't get a World Series win in 2002, and because Billy Beane's life has never been blessed by the sort of conventional triumph that makes for great movie endings, the film's narrative pauses, not once but twice, while others remind the hero—and the audience—that he really did change major-league baseball, and that he really does deserve to think well of himself.

On the whole, though, the film gets many important things exactly right. It isn't about numbers, be they player stats or the staggering sums spent by top-tier franchises, even though the story seems at first to be asking us to root for the gimlet-eyed statistician, rather than the sharp-eyed pitcher or batter; for data, rather than intuition; for the cool satisfactions of science, rather than the fevered romance of sport. What it's really about is the old-fashioned heroism

of a traditional hero in a fresh guise—a flawed guy with little to show for his 40-odd years; a smart guy who finds a way to make his smarts matter. "Moneyball" is a new manifestation of the old Yankee spirit, though hardly in the Steinbrenner sense—a deeply American film about a uniquely American sport in which a principled guy takes on the moneyed titans because he can't stand the unfairness of what they're doing to the game he still loves.

'Machine Gun Preacher'

Sometimes the phrase "based on a true story" signals a failure of imagination. That's the case in "Machine Gun Preacher," a would-be inspirational account of Sam Childers, a drug-dealing biker thug who, transformed by religious faith, became a lay preacher in Pennsylvania and founded an organization to rescue children from the ravages of internecine warfare in East Africa.

The failure lies not with the film's director, Marc Forster, nor with its impressive star, Gerard Butler, but with Jason Keller's dreadfully earnest script, which charts the hero's spiritual journey, and his Rambo-esque exploits, without offering a scintilla of mature perspective on his state of mind. Is Sam a saint, or is he a zealot who ends up killing child soldiers on his own? Has he turned his native intelligence from a life of crime to a life of service, or has he been driven mad by the suffering he finds after a casual first visit to embattled Sudan? No reason that it can't be any or all of the above, but the film's dramatic opacity can be maddening, too.

ART & AUCTIONS

Paris Photo Fair Breathes At the Grand Palais

[Collecting]

By MARGARET STUDER



Photography is on the move in Paris. Celebrating its 15th anniversary, Paris Photo will take place Nov.

10-13 at the Grand Palais for the first time, granting the premier photography fair more space to showcase 117 international galleries and 18 specialist publishers and booksellers.

"Stands will be bigger and we will have a number of shows and talks. We are re-energizing," Paris Photo's new director Julien Frydman says of the move from the fair's former location at the Carrousel du Louvre.

Michael Hoppen, of London's Michael Hoppen Gallery, calls the new venue "a huge advance. Photography will be allowed to breathe." Among the works on his stand will be the dreamlike, erotic creations of French fashion photographer Guy Bourdin, priced at £12,500, and pieces by Boris Savelev, a Russian aerospace engineer turned photographer, famous for his realist, color constructions of everyday life, priced at £9,000-£12,000.

"Collectors are hungry for great photos; and we are selling to a lot of people around the world who have never bought photos before," Mr. Hoppen notes.

Paris Photo will inaugurate a number of new features this year. One will be the presentation of new acquisitions by cultural institutions. New York's International Center of Photography will feature an exhibition illustrating the rise of press photography between 1919 and 1930; London's Tate Modern will show a series of works by Japan's star photographer Daido Moriyama; and Lausanne's Musée de l'Elysée will present images of Charlie Chaplin.

Another new feature will concentrate on a famous private collection. This year, it will be portraits juxtaposing the work of German and African photographers from German collector Artur Walther.

A central theme throughout the fair will be African photography, with a special exhibition devoted

to the newest generation of the continent's photographers from Bamako to Cape Town. They will include vital images by Nyaba Ouedraogo of Burkina Faso and works by Zanele Muholi of South Africa, noted for her penetrating portraits. "We will illustrate the vitality of Africa," Mr. Frydman says.

Concurrently with Paris Photo, auction houses in Paris will hold photography sales. On Nov. 11, Christie's Paris will auction 100 photographs by Henri Cartier-Bresson that cover the French photographer's travels, scenes of everyday life and portraits.

Cartier-Bresson had a "great ability to catch the moment," says Christie's photography specialist Matthieu Humery. One of the most iconic examples is "Derrière la gare Saint-Lazare, Paris, 1932," an image of a man jumping over a puddle, his figure shadowed in the water (estimate: €120,000-€180,000).

On Nov. 12, Christie's Paris will auction 52 photographs by American photographer Irving Penn. "There will be great fashion photos, portraits, still-life and travel images," notes Mr. Humery. The top lot will be "Harlequin Dress (Lisa Fonssagrives-Penn), 1950," an image of his wife, a top model, posed in a superb black-and-white dress (estimate: €200,000-€300,000). My favorite is "Poppy: Glowing Embers, New York, 1968," a brilliant, red flower captured in full bloom (estimate: €70,000-€100,000). Proceeds of the sale will go to Médecins Sans Frontières.

Meanwhile, in a photography sale in London on Nov. 3, Phillips de Pury will include works donated by 14 international photographers in aid of the Venice in Peril Fund, an organization devoted to restoring Venice. The artists, who were invited by the fund to photograph the city, have produced images that reflect not only Venice's beauty but also its ravaged side. German photographer Candida Höfer, known for her grand interiors without people, has photographed the golden rooms of the Teatro La Fenice, one print of which is estimated at £30,000-£40,000. And American photographer Robert Walker's consumer image of a Bulgari poster mounted on a palace overlooking the Venetian Lagoon, with tourists streaming over a bridge, is expected to fetch £2,200-£2,800.



Courbet's massive canvases are now shown to staggering effect in their dramatically illuminated new home.

New Visions at the Orsay

The Renovated and Refurbished Museum Reopens in Paris

By MARY TOMPKINS LEWIS

Twenty-five years after it opened along the left bank of the Seine, just across from the Tuilleries Gardens and the furthest reaches of the Louvre, the Musée d'Orsay has opened again after a period of expansion, refurbishment and thoughtful rehang of its collection. The massive, cavernous complex, designed by Victor Laloux in 1900 as a central train station for the city of Paris and flanked by an opulent hotel, was boldly transformed in the 1980s into a museum for late 19th- and early 20th-century art. At the time, its trove of early Modernist works enjoyed sufficient exhibition space and offered a largely chronological art-historical narrative that no other Parisian edifice could afford. Since then, however, the spectacular growth of both the Orsay's collection and viewing audience—with nearly 60 million visitors to date—as well as evolving museographic approaches, have demanded a new vision. After several years of planning and renovation, during which time some of the building was shuttered and much of its collection sent on tour, that vision has now been realized.

Even in the decades it served as a train station, concerns about security and the flow of foot traffic loomed large for Orsay architects. Today, after entering and passing under the clock, visitors walk the length of Orsay's colossal coffered nave with its central allée of sculpture and flanking galleries of Second Empire decorations and mid-19th-century art. At the very end, on the left, are the brilliant red walls of the newly reconfigured Pavillon Amont. Formerly the station's engine house, it was sorely underutilized in the earlier conversion but has been thoroughly redesigned and incorporated into the whole by the Atelier de l'Île, one of four architectural firms that have shaped the new Orsay. A gallery of deep-purple walls abuts the pavilion and houses four massive canvases by Gustave Courbet; two of the best-known, "A Burial at Ornans" and "The Artist's Studio," which were nearly impossible to see in the sunlit glare of their previous hang, are shown to staggering effect in their dramatically illuminated new home. Known for his

unforgiving naturalism and impudent brushes with authority (and also for erecting his own private exhibitions), Courbet no longer duels here with his academic contemporaries as he did in the museum's earlier installation, but instead invites us to ascend to its vaunted collection of Impressionist paintings by the vanguard artists who, like the Orsay's new architects, saw in his work a foundation for their own.

A tower of red walls and cascading light that extends from the ground floor to the Impressionist galleries five floors up, the Pavillon Amont also draws the visitor en route into three new levels of rooms devoted to late 19th-century decorative arts, the Nabis paintings of Pierre Bonnard, Edouard Vuillard and a handful of their French and foreign cohorts. In simulated private chambers with violet walls and delicate, ambient lighting, the Nabis no longer

The Orsay's new palette allows us to appreciate... the depth and range of Impressionist color.

appear, as they did before on the top floor, the poor stepchildren of late Impressionism but part of an international, cross-disciplinary movement that challenged contemporary hierarchies on its own terms.

The fifth floor opens with exquisite northern views from the tower's windowed clock of the Seine, the city's rooftops and Montmartre, a momentary pause that reorients the viewer entirely within the milieu the Impressionists would make their own. Edouard Manet's "Dejeuner sur l'herbe," a Parisian studio painting with potent *plein-air* connotations that was long sequestered on the first floor, assumes its rightful place and appears here both more monumental and prescient. Throughout the Impressionist galleries, the ceilings have been opened, cathedral style, to reveal structural beams, a nod to the Orsay's industrial aesthetic, and also to admit an ingenious blend of artificial and natural illumination that beautifully captures on shimmering, grayish-lavender walls the effect of

lambent sunlight.

The Orsay's new palette allows us to appreciate, as its white walls never did, the depth and range of Impressionist color, and to ponder both newfound allegiances and profound distinctions between its masters, their predecessors and contemporaries, something also encouraged by provocative, and often convincing, new groupings of familiar works. Auguste Rodin's life-size bronze sculpture of St. John the Baptist, for example, one of the most powerful nude figures of its age, looks across one of the subsequent galleries to a late painting of bathers by Auguste Renoir, and suggests not only the primacy of the nude in Modernist art but the vast range of approaches it encompassed.

Despite the new square footage added in the course of the Orsay's renovation, the fifth-floor paintings, surprisingly, are densely installed, and also hung low to capture the streaming, overhead light; circulation issues may yet persist for museum-goers on its most popular floor. Some respite is provided, however, by the contemporary Japanese designer Tokujin Yoshioka's vitreous "Water Block" benches, which seem to float in their luminous space, and by the chic Café de l'Horloge, a Jules Verne-inspired fantasy by the Brazilian Campana team that fills the floor's foremost clock tower.

The paintings of the Post-Impressionists, including Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin, which formerly hung in the claustrophobic, columned Bellechasse gallery, are cosseted now one floor below in small, elegant, midnight-blue galleries dedicated to the late scholar Françoise Cachin, who served as the museum's first director. Exhibited for the first time here under artificial lighting, in itself a departure from the *plein-air* aesthetic of Impressionism, they hang in close and revealing proximity to Symbolist art. But in a subsequent gallery, dedicated to moody "Nocturnals," Manet is summoned once more into the heady mix, suggesting that the museum has abandoned not only the sterile white-box galleries of the past but its teleological reading of art history. In ways both subtle and monumental, the historic Orsay has become a vibrant expression of our age.



"Poppy: Glowing Embers, New York, 1968" by Irving Penn is estimated at €70,000-€100,000.

CULTURAL HIGHLIGHTS

Staging a Twitter Revolution

London

■ '13' AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE

There's something splendid about the National Theatre's rare failures, namely its entirely commendable attitude to taking risks—very often with bigger casts and more elaborate sets than West End producers can afford. Mike Bartlett's "13" isn't a hopeless turkey in the class of this month's other NT world premiere, "The Veil." It's worth seeing, but doesn't work perfectly.

The "13" are John, a comely young man who reappears after a long absence, plus what the script calls "The Twelve," Londoners who follow closely his soapbox speeches at Hyde Park Corner, sometimes not in person but via social-media links. As John, actor Trystan Gravelle projects impressive charisma and performs small miracles of diagnosis—we have little trouble making the analogy. But we mustn't take it too far, as the "disciple" Stephen (Danny Webb), a militant atheist guru modeled on Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins, is hardly a Judas figure. Another, Ruth (Geraldine James), happens to be prime minister, and is, refreshingly, a thoroughly decent, intelligent Conservative. Her dead son was John's soul mate.

Designer Tom Scutt's suspended, rotating black cube with which the play opens represents the God-box Stephen tells his students most of us are afraid to open, so instead worship what we conjecture it contains—though it is, in reality, empty. In another house-sized black box, the 12 wake up, all having had the identical bad dream: an explosion, insects and monsters. The same dream affected Sarah, an American mother, at Heathrow with her precocious daughter Ruby (a great performance by Jadie-Rose Hobson), as she explains to another traveler—John. Her husband Dennis is on an "unofficial" diplomatic mission from the American president, to see that



Geraldine James as Ruth and Danny Webb as Stephen.

the U.S. and U.K. remain secret allies in case talks fail and it becomes necessary to invade Iran to end its nuclear program. Sarah is a grim example of the dangers of religion, the negation of John's credo.

Director Thea Sharrock moves the large cast elegantly around the Olivier stage, with some fine performances, including Helen Ryan's as a switched-on granny and Lara Rossi as her part-time-prostitute grand-

daughter. Mr. Bartlett merits high praise for embracing the complexity and diversity of the moral and political issues that engage us today—but crams too many of them into too long an evening; and he never really makes us believe that John's messianic mission is to make a revolution by means of Twitter.

—Paul Levy

Until Jan. 8
www.nationaltheatre.org.uk

Dutch Masters Delight in Paris

Paris

■ COLLECTORS OF A GOLDEN AGE

"Ilone and George Kremer, Heirs of Holland's Golden Age," which opened Wednesday at the Pinacothèque de Paris offers 58 works by Dutch masters put together in just 16 years by the husband-and-wife team. The Kremers, the show's introduction points out, are heirs to the tradition of the wealthy 17th-century Dutch merchant class that replaced the aristocracy as patrons of art. The Kremers, too, are Dutch, and made their fortune in international commerce; they now live in the Netherlands, the U.S. and Spain.

Good things come in small formats to start the show—a tiny oval "Portrait of a Man" (circa 1627-30) by a follower of Franz Hals, a miniature half-length self-portrait by Gerrit Dou (circa 1645). There are several playing-card-size copper plates etched by Rembrandt, but the Rembrandt to remember is slightly larger, a chiaroscuro "Bust of an Old Man with a Turban" (circa 1627-28), softly lit from the side, his eyes lost in thought. When the Kremers bought it in 1995, it was attributed to Jacques des Rousseaux, although decades earlier it had been credited to Rembrandt and later Jan Lievens. But after extensive testing by the Rembrandt Research Project, in 1997 it was authenticated as a Rembrandt.



Isack van Ostade's 'Winter Landscape Near an Inn' (1643).

There are several "school of" and "formerly attributed to" designations here—hardly surprising given the scarcity of Old Masters on the market—but plenty of highlights: a big Hals "Portrait of a Man" with chubby, bright rosy cheeks; a pensive Michael Sweerts "Young Maid Servant" (circa 1660); and a delightful big "Winter Landscape Near an Inn" (1643) by Isack van Ostade, with skaters, fishermen and a horse-drawn sleigh on the ice. Pieter de

Hooch's "Man Reading a Letter to a Woman" (circa 1670-74) is a classic Dutch interior, with the woman in a lipstick-red dress. Gerrit van Honthorst's large "The Repentance of Saint Peter" (circa 1618-20) portrays the white-haired, bearded saint with reddened eyes of regret, his face upturned to a mystic light, his garment an exceptional vivid turquoise.

—Judy Fayard

Until March 25
www.pinacothèque.com

Bergen

■ FLEET FOXES ON TOUR

Robin Pecknold, singer, producer and songwriter for the American folk band Fleet Foxes, has been outspoken about the positive effects of Internet file sharing, admitting that he discovered most of the music that has influenced his writing through services such as Napster. He may be the first of a digital generation of musicians that pay no tribute to their parents' dusty record collections, but the Fleet Foxes sound conjures up the glory days of vinyl. Vocal arrangements that evoke The Beach Boys and Neil Young and lyrics that aspire to Bob Dylan's depth can now be heard across Europe as the band promote their second album, "Helplessness Blues."

Nov. 5, Grieghallen
Nov. 6, Sentrum Scene, Oslo
Nov. 8, Annexet, Stockholm
Nov. 9, KB, Malmö
Nov. 10, Falconer Theatre, Copenhagen
Nov. 11, Rolling Stone Weekender, Weissenhäuser Strand
More European dates at
fleetfoxes.com/tour

Berlin

■ JAZZ FESTIVAL

Krzysztof Komeda's 1965 jazz album "Astigmatic" is often cited as a turning point for European jazz, representing an evolution of a distinctive style that moves away from the many American incarnations of the genre. Perhaps best known today for his soundtracks to Roman Polanski's early films, including "Rosemary's Baby" and "Knife in the Water," Komeda will be celebrated at Jazz Berlin 2011 through tributes and interpretations by Leszek Możdżer, Adam Pierończyk, the Oleś Brothers, Tomasz Stańko and many other Polish jazz musicians.

Various venues
Nov. 2-6
berlinerfestspiele.de

Bregenz

■ VALIE EXPORT RETROSPECTIVE

Austrian artist Valie Export has a longstanding history of provocation and interaction with her audience, beginning with early performance works such as 1968's "Tap and Touch Cinema" and 1969's "Action Pants: Genital Panic." In an attempt to expose the one-dimensional and male-dominated perspective of film, media and art of the 1960s, she often exposed her own body and challenged viewers to accept her control of the interaction. In "Valerie Export: Archive," Kunsthau Bregenz explores the artist's creative process alongside a selection of later installations, sculptures, video and animation art in a retrospective covering three floors of the gallery.

Kunsthau Bregenz
Until Jan. 22
www.kunsthau-bregenz.at

London

■ 'REASONS TO BE PRETTY'

Neil LaBute's provocative comedy "Reasons to Be Pretty" represents the final work in a trilogy exploring the social values attached to physical attractiveness, following "The Shape of Things" and "Fat Pig." The play, which first opened in 2009, was Mr. LaBute's first Broadway production and received three Tony nominations. Actress Billie Piper, a former teen pop sensation now known for her roles on popular TV shows such as "Dr. Who," will star alongside Kieran Bew, Siân Brooke and Tom Burke in a production directed by the Almeida Theatre's artistic director, Michael Attenborough.

Almeida Theatre
Nov. 10-Jan. 14
www.almeida.co.uk

Paris

■ SAMURAI WARRIORS

A high literacy rate and a dedication to calligraphy and poetry gave Japanese Samurai warriors a rare quality in ancient warfare. They also valued what is known as "omote dogu," the aesthetics of their appearance. Intricately decorated Samurai armor and weaponry have fascinated Swiss art collector Gabriel Barbier-Mueller for years and a sample of his vast collection will be on view at Musée du Quai Branly. "Samurai: Armor of the Warrior" showcases 140 objects, including horse armor, helmets and weapons dating from the 12th to the 19th century.

Musée du Quai Branly
Nov. 8-Jan. 29
www.quaibrany.fr



Samurai armor from Gabriel Barbier-Mueller's collection on display in Paris.

Porto

■ THOMAS STRUTH'S EAGLE EYE

As a student of the first photography class taught by German art duo Bernd and Hilla Becher at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Thomas Struth developed an appreciation for symmetry and architecture in his compositions. Streets and cityscapes dominated his work until the photographer turned to portraits in the 1980s. This fresh focus honed Mr. Struth's ability to capture contemporary culture, leading to arguably his most famous series, "Museum Photographs," which depicts visitors and tourists admiring art in many of the world's greatest museums. "Thomas Struth: Photography 1978-2010" provides a detailed retrospective of Mr. Struth's varied impressions of the modern world and the people that inhabit it.

Museu de Serralves
Until Jan. 29
www.serralves.pt

Salzburg

■ EMIL NOLDE'S EXPRESSIONISM

Much like his idol, Vincent van Gogh, Emil Nolde became a painter late in life. At 31 years old, he embarked on a career as an independent artist and worked to become a key element in the German Expressionist movement. His popularity and membership in the Nazi party, however, didn't prevent his work from being condemned as "degenerate" art by the regime and Nolde was ordered to stop painting. In private and after the war, Nolde continued his work, but the Expressionist movement had run its course. "Emil Nolde: Man-Nature-Myth" has divided his oeuvre into three sections, encompassing more than 100 works in an examination of his prints, watercolors and paintings.

Museum der Moderne
Until Feb. 5
www.museumdermoderne.at

—Thorsten Gritschke

