Cooper Union’s Toys for the Blind
Dean's List, East | Friday, January 27, 2012 | Tyler Silvestro.

“How can a construction toy be ‘playful’?” This is the problem that Tamar Zinguer asked her Cooper Union students in a recent seminar focused on the architecture of play. For this session, Zinguer, who has taught the course before, decided to eliminate the visual aspect, a sensory aspect of toy design highly relied upon in previous seminars’ constructions. Focusing less on color and more on the experience of the object, the result is a set of innovative and wonderfully textured toys, from blocks to shells, that encourage play for the visually impaired.

The project required that students to debate the meaning of architectural toys and critique each other’s theories and study models. Through various case studies students were able to understand the evolution of these specific concepts of play and begin their process of invention. “The project was initiated as a kind of taxonomy of found objects with shared and divergent material as well as formal properties that could be assembled or catalogued in a variety of ways,” says Derrick Benson, whose proposed toy (below) relied on highly textured found objects gathered in New York City. The sociological and philosophical engagement with these toys allowed Zinguer’s class to produce a variety of amusing, surprising and curious items such as Ling-Li Tseng’s “three dimensional Braille alphabet”; the lightweight pieces of corrugated cardboard fit snugly together offer a new take on traditional alphabet blocks.

*AR’89
*More images of student work featured in the article can be found at [http://bit.ly/Arch_Toys](http://bit.ly/Arch_Toys)
Innovations in Light

By TINA ROSENBERG

Fixes looks at solutions to social problems and why they work.

Africa, energy, Lighting, solar energy, the Philippines

People often write to Fixes telling us of cool new devices made for the poor: the sOcket soccer ball that stores energy as children kick it; the neoprene LifeWrap that hospitals can use to save women hemorrhaging in childbirth; adjustable eyeglasses.

We love devices — but we don’t like to write about them. It’s cheating. The technology is the easy part of solving problems. There are zillions of cool ideas. Plenty of college students have come up with a great new technology for the poor.

The bigger challenge comes from the questions around any new device: How do you build a market for a technology focused on people with no money? How do you physically get it to where it needs to be? How do poor people acquire it? How can it be adopted on a wide scale? How do you make it last?

If you look at the market for solar lighting in Africa, you’ll be excused for thinking that you’re looking at the mobile phone market some 15 years ago. Both are leapfrog technologies — neither land lines nor the electrical grid is going to reach much of the continent, so let’s just skip that generation of technology and move to the next one. Like cellphones, solar lamps are getting cheaper, smaller, better. Both are life-changing, indispensable. And the market is enormous. Today, about 1.5 million people in Africa use solar lamps. That’s a huge number — but it’s less than 1 percent of the potential market. A fifth of the world’s population lives without electricity. Another large group of people do have access to electricity, but need an alternative because it is too expensive and power outages are daily events.

People without electric light usually rely on kerosene, a terrible alternative. It gives poor light — really, not enough to study by — produces noxious fumes, and is a major hazard for burns and fires. Indoor air pollution kills 2 million people each year and kerosene is a major source. Kerosene itself is also expensive; the very poor typically spend 10 percent of their income or more on kerosene. Its users pay 600 times more per unit of light than people who use electrical-powered incandescent lamps.

The unsolved problem for lighting Africa isn’t designing a great lamp. Great lamps are out there. It’s designing a great business model. Here are three different ways it can work.

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The bottle bulb may be the coolest idea I’ve ever seen.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=rYTIYUUK70I

You take a one-liter plastic soda or water bottle, fill it with a mixture of water and bleach, cap it and seal it. Then cut a bottle-shaped hole in your tin roof and stick the bottle in it, cap up, with part of it above and part below the roof. Seal the hole so the roof doesn’t leak. The water inside the bottle refracts and disperses sunlight. You now have the equivalent of a 50- or 60-watt bulb that will never cost you a dime, burn your toddler or set your house on fire.
The bottle bulb was invented in 2002 by Alfredo Moser, a mechanic in Sao Paulo, Brazil, to light his workshop when his neighborhood was suffering through a long cut in electrical power. Soon, many houses in his neighborhood had the same bottles poking through their roofs as Moser did in his workshop. (Although many people credit M.I.T.’s design lab with inventing the bottle bulb, M.I.T. says it isn’t true.)

Though it was born in Brazil, the bottle bulb’s coming out party is being staged in the Philippines. A tiny Filipino organization, the My Shelter Foundation, has put the bottle bulb in tens of thousands of houses in the last year and is aiming for a million homes this year. The project, called Isang Litrong Liwanag — A Liter of Light — is the perfect grassroots campaign. It starts with community activities — on November 30, for example, 10,000 cyclists delivered bottle bulbs to 17 communities around Metro Manila. But after a few demonstration projects in each community, the only thing that needs to be delivered is the how-to information. This is a technology program where word of mouth and social media really can do most of the work.

This model — make it yourself, for no money, from garbage — solves a lot of problems at once. Affordable, even for the destitute? Easy to distribute, even to remote places? Scalable? Sustainable? All check. (And since it employs old plastic bottles, it’s doubly eco-friendly.) The only challenge is to spread information. That’s not a trivial challenge, but it’s a lot easier than all the others.

The bulb has no way to store energy, so it only works during the day. That’s fine for Moser’s workshop. And it’s more useful for houses than you might think. There are hundreds of millions of families in rural areas or crowded city slums who have no light in the daytime. People who build their own shacks put in tiny windows — really, a hole protected by a makeshift shutter — if they have them at all. So people conduct their lives outside.

But this is obviously far from a complete solution to providing off-the-grid light. Not everyone wants to have a bunch of plastic bottles stuck in their ceiling. And people do, after all, like to see after the sun goes down.

Higher up on the quality chain are experiments like SociaLite. In 2006, *Toby Cumberbatch*, a professor of electrical engineering at the Cooper Union in New York, challenged his first-semester students to create a lamp for use in the middle of nowhere, one that cost less than $10 and could go for two days between recharges.

What they came up with was a very simple lamp with a housing made largely of local materials — a hair relaxer tub, an orange drink container and three bicycle spokes. It can be dropped and banged around. It can go 40 hours between charges on the high setting, 400 hours at the low setting.

Most revolutionary, it has no charger — instead, the whole community would share a charger. This idea is a variation on a model in use in several countries, the best known being TERI’s Lighting a Billion Lives campaign in India. It has several advantages over simply selling lamp-and-charger sets: the lamp is...
cheaper. Instead of paying for a charger in intermittent use, people could essentially be paying for a share of a charger in constant use — more efficient. Someone in the community could buy the solar panel (perhaps using microfinance) and start a business charging the lamps and mobile phones — the phone charging might subsidize the lamps. Perhaps most important, customers would not have to pay the full cost up front. They could pay three or four dollars up front and pay the rest in monthly installments, in the form of charging fees.

“We designed it not so much as a product as a service,” said **David Berger, one of a half-dozen students in Cumberbatch’s original class who has gone to Ghana every summer to work on turning the prototype into a business. “If something happens— you drop it or something breaks — the people at the base station will give you a spare lantern while yours is being fixed. You’re paying for light, as opposed to a lantern.”

Ghanaians who can afford it can buy solar lanterns in cities and towns. But lamp distributors don’t bother with villages. “The thing seems to be that you pay for it, and if you can’t pay, not my problem,” said Cumberbatch. Berger said that in four summers in rural Ghana, he saw only two lanterns in villages.

The Cooper Union students formed a partnership with Wa Polytechnic, a university in the north of Ghana, the poorest part. Wa students assemble the lanterns, take them out to remote communities, install the solar panel and train local people to run the system. They are then supposed to visit each village once a month.

So far the project is small, in use in only four villages — fewer than 400 lanterns. But the government of Ghana is planning to roll it out in 20 villages around the country.

The SociaLite is designed to fill a crucial niche: a high quality light for use at night by the poorest people in the world. The weak point in the plan might be the creation of a large-scale delivery system. Raj Gupta, deputy chief investment officer at the Acumen Fund (an investor in D. Light), points out that Africa doesn’t have a WalMart or Amazon that provides a standard way to get goods from various manufacturers to buyers. Each company has to invent its own delivery system. SociaLite may need distributors with a greater financial incentive to actually get out to remote villages. (Of course, that will add to the price.)

The project is new and small, and may never end up taking off as a business. But it has a chance — it is an ingeniously designed system for selling a necessary but relatively expensive product to people with no money.

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While these projects are tiny start-ups, the existing solar light business in Africa is enormous. Many companies make solar lights — **d.light** and **Barefoot Power** are two of the best-known. These companies are growing exponentially; Barefoot Power reached 1.5 million people by the end of last year, and is on target to reach 5 million this year. Stewart Craine of Barefoot believes the market will serve half of all unelectrified households in the world by 2020.

**CE’09**
These commercial solar lamps vary from $10 desk lamps to five-lamp systems that sell for more than $100. The manufacturers say the lamps pay for themselves through savings on kerosene in two to six months. But this is still far too much money for many people.

“We currently don’t target the poorest people in the community, as we sell products for cash, and $25 is still hard to find at one time for many villagers,” Craine wrote in an e-mail.

Barefoot and d.light do try to reach poorer customers, both physically and financially. Joyce DeMuucci of Barefoot said that the company often sells in bulk to nongovernmental groups that run camps for internally displaced people. These groups give away the lamps or subsidize their sale. The solar companies also work with local women’s groups or microfinance groups that can provide distribution and financing.

Sam Goldman, the co-founder of d.light, said that the major challenge for selling to villagers was supply chain and logistics — “how do we sustainably deliver products and provide after-sales and warranty services?” The company sometimes distributes lamps through businesses already designed to reach the rural poor — sellers of dried frozen fish, for example, or a kind of low-cost roofing, and d.light is starting to work with a multinational company that distributes products in rural Africa. In Guatemala, d.light sells its lamps in mountain villages through the microconsignment system that I wrote about last year.

These programs are small, in part because the potential market for full-price sales is so big. But the price of solar lighting is likely to drop substantially. Gaurav Gupta, who heads the energy and environment practice at the consulting firm Dalberg, makes the point that the demand for portability and energy efficiency is being driven by rich consumers, who want smaller and smaller mobile phones and better solar lights. But those improvements will end up bringing down the cost of solar lighting for the poor. If it gets cheap enough, then there just may be a simple business model that can serve almost everyone — the market.

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[http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/innovations-in-light/]
Will NYC have a 6th Borough?
By Ryan Cunningham

Sunday, January 22, 2012 9:00 am

We love the waterfront. It’s a great place to walk the dog, stroll with your love, and work up a sweat. And for about as long as New Yorkers have lived on the water’s edge, there have been ideas on how to make ours a city of the sea.

This past Wednesday evening, the 2012 ONE PRIZE design competition, organized by TERREFORM1, announced their winners, teams who came up with new visions for the waters of New York and how those ideas might create a Sixth Borough. At the AIA Center for Architecture on Laguardia Place, we learned the names of the winning team, and three honorable mentions. And while the exhibit is not particularly engaging, all the information from the winning teams and also (at this time) the semi-finalists can be examined online with high resolution PDF downloads.

Honorable Mention

Enhancement of Estuary and Ecological System
Cooper Union Institute for Sustainable Design, USA
*Arnold Wu, **Kevin Bone, ***Paul Deppe, Joe Levine, ****Sunnie Joh, *****Raye Levine, ******Al Appleton, and *******Zulaikha Ayub

The project proposes to comprehensive soften New York City’s coastline, combating sea level rise, habitat loss, and other environmental issues. Moving past defunct maritime hard-edge infrastructure, the Enhancement of Estuary and Ecological System will build stepped tidal flats with wetland vegetation as well as reintroduce of ecologically beneficial hydrology in upland areas and floating wetlands in shallow areas. Choosing eight sites around the estuary for edge re-articulation, the project aims to “increase ecological complexity and the potential for biological systems to thrive [while providing] the benefits of ecological servicing: storm surge protection, natural water filtration, stream flow stabilization and increased recreational, cultural and economic opportunities.”

*AR’09
**Arch Fac, Director of the Cooper Union Institute for Sustainable Design
***AR’97
****AR’04
*****AR’09
******Senior Fellow of the Cooper Union Institute for Sustainable Design
*******AR’13
Creased prints, poorly reproduced images, frayed publicity materials—not what one expects when one enters a fine-art gallery. “It is not a documentary image, but the documentary mode that we see here on journal pages and exhibition walls,” Maren Stange writes in her introduction to the catalogue for “Social Forces Visualized,” on view at the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery at Columbia University. Slide 1 of 14

E. Stopff, Battery Floating Bath with Girls, interior, ca. 1900

Early last century, Jessica Tarbox Beals, Lewis Hine, Jacob Riis, and others defined social-documentary photography. “As a result,” co-curator Drew Sawyer explains, “many of their works are now in the collections of major art museums and most often viewed as autonomous aesthetic objects.” But these works were often commissioned by philanthropic organizations for their publicity campaigns, and the curators insisted on showing the photographs in their original contexts. “It is never the photograph alone that conveys meaning to viewers,” Stange writes. Each photograph is “anchored in a fixed relation to its caption, to an associated investigative text, and to an authoritative presenting agency.” Most of the material has never before been published or even publicly displayed.
In an event at the gallery on Saturday, at 4 P.M., the contemporary artists Martha Rosler, Trevor Paglen, and Lucy Raven will reflect on the role of documentary photography in their own art.

All courtesy Community Service Society Records, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

Read more http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/photobooth/2011/12/social-forces-visualized.html#ixzz119WPCaAX

*Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
The Butler Institute of American Art has acquired a master painting by renowned American realist painter Audrey Flack. The painting, titled “Baba,” is a 7-by 13-foot oil and acrylic on canvas painting that was begun by Flack in 1980 and completed in 1983. The work, among the largest paintings in the Butler’s holdings, was a gift to the museum’s permanent collection by art enthusiast A. Barry Hirschfeld of Colorado. “Baba” is the second work by Flack to enter the Butler’s collection.

“The Butler is known for its collection of masterpieces,” said Louis Zona, director of the museum. “This remarkable painting is considered to be one of the very best examples of the work of Audrey Flack, who is one of America’s premier realist painters. The Butler’s great collection of art has just become even greater with the addition of this work.”

Flack, who lives and works in New York City and Long Island, is a pioneer of photorealism and a nationally recognized painter and sculptor. Her work is in the collections of major museums around the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Whitney Museum of American Art (all in New York City), as well as in the National Museum of Art in Canberra, Australia. She was the first photo-realist painter to have a work purchased by the Museum of Modern Art.

Flack’s work has been featured in numerous traveling museum exhibitions and has been displayed at the Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y.; the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; the Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan; the Cincinnati Art Museum; the New Orleans Museum of Art; the Denver Art Museum; and the Butler Institute.

“Baba” depicts an Indian philanthropist, a descendant from a long line of spiritual masters, who in 1965 took a vow of silence, and who communicated only through sign language. Flack shot hundreds of photographs of the subject, and Baba’s face was painted by the artist in three days in 1980. The unfinished canvas remained in Flack’s studio for three years while she worked on other paintings. A year and a half later, she painted the three roses next to Baba’s face. She completed the skyscape and seascape late in the summer of 1983.

According to Flack scholar Thalia Gouma-Peterson, Flack transformed “Baba” into an icon of spiritual significance through this painting, making him the modern equivalent of a Byzantine icon. “The horizontal edges are defined by an intense sunset ... and by waves splashing upwards toward the clouds, both painted in thick impasto in almost relief-like, emphatic, abstract brush strokes. This expansive, elemental and mystical setting is Flack’s most monumental seascape. It was the result of her direct involvement with nature and pays homage to the early American landscape tradition of large vistas and untamed nature. The painting is a modern combination of the human and the sublime,” writes Gouma-Peterson.

“Baba” is on view at the Butler in Youngstown, in the second level Beecher Court galleries. Flack earned a graduate degree and an honorary doctorate from Cooper Union in New York City, and a bachelor of fine arts degree from Yale University. She attended New York University’s Institute of Fine Arts, where she studied the history of art. She was awarded the St. Gaudens Medal from Cooper Union and the honorary Albert Dome professorship from Bridgeport University. She is an honorary professor at George Washington University and is a visiting professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

*Board of Trustees, A'52
Cunningham Fostered Serendipity in Set Design

By TED LOOS

Daniel Arsham was barely aware of Merce Cunningham in 2005, when he got a call telling him that he was being considered as the set designer for the next work by Cunningham’s dance company. Mr. Arsham was 25 and just two years out of art school at the Cooper Union. “I knew him from my studies,” he said recently, “but as a passing name.” A few months later Mr. Arsham — who at first didn’t even know the concept of “stage right” — was at work on the set for Cunningham’s 2007 piece “eyeSpace.”

“I became a student again,” said Mr. Arsham, who watched rehearsals and went to see the Merce Cunningham Dance Company at the Joyce Theater several times in an effort to master a new medium.

But he quickly learned that his work with Cunningham would involve an unusual form of un-mentoring. There would be no feedback sessions, no notes about aesthetics and no pep talks. Cunningham, who died at 90 in 2009, saw dance, music and décor as separate entities, best created “independently of one each other, without the collaborators knowing what the other was doing,” Mr. Arsham said. In his case, for example, the only thing he knew about the dance was its title.

So the “eyeSpace” set — the first of four he would ultimately design for the company — was based on Mr. Arsham’s own vision, with an Art Deco-style theater facade that appeared to be sinking into the stage and re-emerging from the ceiling. Cunningham gave it his seal of approval by keeping the piece in the repertory, and staging it, with Mr. Arsham’s set, three more times around the country.

On Thursday, at the Park Avenue Armory, the company will begin the last three performances of its two-year-long, 50-engagement legacy tour, billed as “a final opportunity to see Cunningham’s choreography performed by the company he personally trained.”

Nearly 60 years after its first tour — which featured sets by a young Robert Rauschenberg — it will offer its swan song on another set by Mr. Arsham.

“It’s a momentous occasion, and it freaks me out a little bit,” Mr. Arsham said in an interview. “Merce meant a lot to me personally in giving me this opportunity, which was, frankly, insane to give a 25-year-old.”

The program is a mix of works including new sequences directed by the remaining company leaders that will be performed across three stages in the building’s enormous Drill Hall. Mr. Arsham has hung from its ceiling eight large “clouds” of polyethylene balls — 20,000 in all — dyed in shades of gray. The shape and color of the clouds, which took six months to construct, are based on pixelated photographs of clouds he has taken around the world while on tour with the company.

When not working on the Cunningham sets, Mr. Arsham shows his visual art in galleries. He also founded a firm in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, called Snarkitecture with a design partner, Alex Mustonen; in April they will unveil their latest project, a radically tweaked version of the old Miami Orange Bowl sign on the site where it once stood, now the new Florida Marlins Ballpark. (Mr. Arsham grew up in Miami.)

But his association with Cunningham has left an indelible mark on his career. That was “a very formative time for me,” he said, and the two bonded in several ways in the three years that they knew each other, with the older man giving votes of confidence — albeit usually implicit — along the way.

*A’03
“Here Merce was working with someone 60 years his junior, and he treated Daniel as an equal,” said Trevor Carlson, executive
director of the Cunningham Dance Foundation. “He was always really excited about the outcome.”

Cunningham never praised the “eyeSpace” set to Mr. Arsham, though he shared his approval with Mr. Carlson. “He felt Daniel was
working in a direction that hadn’t been explored by someone else,” Mr. Carlson said. The vertical orientation of the set “played with
the perception of something moving up and down through space, versus the side-to-side movements of the dancers.”

In Mr. Arsham’s experience, “Merce tended to talk around things,” he said. He recalled discussions ranging from their shared
interest in animal forms — Cunningham, a part-time visual artist himself, sketched kangaroos during a tour in Australia — to the
similarities between a fishing line moving downstream and dancers moving downstage. But trying to pull specific advice from the
choreographer was fruitless. On the evening he first invited Mr. Arsham for dinner in his art-packed apartment, Cunningham made
only one request: that the set be safe for his dancers.

This indirection was in keeping with Cunningham’s preference for artist-collaborators who “tended to be more abstract, like Merce
himself,” said Darsie Alexander, chief curator at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, who recently purchased sets from 150 of
Cunningham’s works for the museum’s collection, including some by Mr. Arsham. There were dozens of such collaborators over the
years, with Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Dove Bradshaw and William Anastasi holding the title of “artistic adviser” at different
points.

From Mr. Arsham’s perspective Rauschenberg loomed particularly large, both because of his artistic reputation and his long and
tumultuous relationship with Cunningham. Mr. Arsham was thrilled, he said, when Cunningham invited him to a company
barbecue at Rauschenberg’s compound on Captiva Island in Florida in 2007.

For a 2009 tour around northern France that he was too ill to attend himself, Cunningham went a step farther. He asked Mr.
Arsham to “do what Bob did” for the company’s first international tour, in 1964. Back then Rauschenberg traveled along and came
up with new sets, based on found materials, in each city.

To distinguish himself Mr. Arsham decided to “use the architecture of the theater itself as a found material,” he said. He built a wall
of black foam across the stage, and as the dancers performed in front of it, he periodically cut out holes from behind, letting light
pour through.

In Cunningham’s absence Mr. Carlson worked with him to get the timing right. “I was so nervous, five minutes waiting back there
onstage seemed like an eternity,” Mr. Arsham said. “But Trevor knew that the more time between them, the more impactful the
holes were. Trevor knew Merce’s language.”

Mr. Arsham, who frequently makes sculpture in his own practice, said his experiences with Cunningham have made him re-think
the three-dimensional nature of dance.

“Merce’s dances were never oriented toward the front of the stage, and they always work in the round,” he said. “He broke the idea
of the fixed viewpoint.”

Mr. Arsham has adopted Cunningham’s habit of watching rehearsals from backstage right, instead of somewhere in the audience.
“Wherever Merce was, that was the front,” he said.

Asked how the experience of designing for the company had changed with its founder gone, Mr. Arsham said that Cunningham’s
insistence on embracing chance by knowing as little as possible about the sets in advance had made for a remarkable consistency in
the process, even after his death.

“The way I think of it, this collaboration is no different than if he had been here,” he said.
ANACOLUTHON comes from the Greek words for “not” and “following.” It applies to both stream-of-consciousness writing and conversations with *Lola Montes Schnabel*, the outgoing young artist who was having her first solo show in New York last Friday.

“Leo Steinberg told me anacoluthon referred to me,” said Ms. Schnabel, while guests streamed into the Hole Gallery on the Bowery, the host of her show. Mr. Steinberg, the art critic who died last year, is one of the many famous acquaintances of Ms. Schnabel, a daughter of Julian Schnabel. Guests included Mr. Schnabel himself, who arrived early, moved one of her large figurative paintings an inch, and declared her work good.

“I know it is,” she said.

“You do?” he asked.

Francesco Clemente, Sandro Chia, Salman Rushdie and John Ahearn came, too. But they weren’t Ms. Schnabel’s main concern during the early part of the night. Rather, it was Marjorie Garvey, a middle-aged, formerly homeless woman with a cane, who goes by the name Day-O, and whom the free-spirited Ms. Schnabel befriended in childhood.

“I have to help her get back to her halfway house in Queens right now,” Ms. Schnabel said, as she rushed in high heeled fur-trimmed booties out to the street to find her a cab. “Whenever I wanted to run away from home as a kid, I’d go hang out with her on the sidewalk on 11th Street until I felt better. She’s my fairy godmother.”

For the evening, it seemed the other way around. After finding a cab, she ran back into the opening of her show, which was filling with more boldface friends including Bob Colacello, Waris Ahluwalia and Jonas Mekas. Knight Landesman, the Artforum publisher, arrived in a red suit like a kind of Santa bringing the gift of serious attention to an emerging artist with a powerful last name.

Courtney Love, another fast talker, arrived in a pink couture coat and matching lipstick. “Look at this work, just look,” she said of her friend’s five virtuosic paintings of androgynous youth. She and Ms. Schnabel, 30 and a 2008 Cooper Union graduate, talked about many things, including the 66 pounds of plaster Ms. Schnabel was carrying in Venice, Italy (for a bust of Naomi Campbell), when they met several years ago.

“Lola’s her own woman, but we understand each other,” Ms. Love said.

“I understand her most of the time,” said Jacqueline Schnabel, the artist’s soft-spoken mother whose other children are Vito and Stella. “But not on the telephone.”

With the grin of a mom who’s seen it all (and put up with it), she watched her daughter run around with a butterfly pinned to her head and a million conversations going at once. The younger Schnabel covered topics like her artistic influences, the fear people have of feelings, burning sweet grass for purification, and “the universe taking care of things” like the potted palms a man donated unexpectedly for her opening.

She also talked about a silent meditation retreat she’ll soon be on in India. “Everything’s come together tonight,” Lola said. Especially those sentences.

*A’08*
What at first looks like a fairly typical piece of installation art (crumpled, whitish things lying casually around the floor) is, in fact, a conventional exhibition of discrete, faintly paintinglike works of art by Nick Mauss (b. 1980). Mr. Mauss silk-screens reproductions of his own loosey-goosey drawings, and black-and-white photographs from (a news release explains) "his own personal archive," onto thin sheets of aluminum, and then bangs them into a semisculptural state. (Two vitrines feature sketchbooks poised over mirrors, so we can see what's on the verso side.) One is left wondering: Are the images worth anything in themselves? If so, why do they have to be tarted up with all these installationist mannerisms? And if the form is the point, why does Mr. Mauss mess about with legible images, such as a photo of a mannequin leaning over a computer keyboard? He's an artist with lots of ambition, energy, cleverness and technical know-how. But there is sincere expression lurking in his art that hasn't worked its way, just yet, through the current fashion for elegant incoherence.

Nick Mauss/303 Gallery, New York
'At Its Edges' (2011) by Nick Mauss at 303 Gallery
Nick Mauss: The Desire for the Possibility of New Images
303 Gallery
547 W. 21st St., (212) 255-1121
Through Feb. 18
*A’03
**excerpt from original article
THE COOPER UNION
100th ANNIVERSARY
PHOTOGRAPHS

by Julie Castelluzzo
Electronic Services Librarian and Digital Projects Coordinator
The Cooper Union Library

Carol Salomon
Archives Librarian and Acting Director
The Cooper Union Library

On April 20, 2011, The Cooper Union Library announced the first searchable digital collection from the Cooper Archives: The Cooper Union 100th Anniversary Photographs. The collection consists of 198 scanned photographic prints depicting events surrounding the 100th anniversary, in the 1950s, of the founding of The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art. The centennial began with a three-day convocation in 1956 and culminated in the 100th Anniversary Convocation on November 2, 1959. Many notable individuals addressed the guests and participated in panel discussions held at The Cooper Union and at various locations in Manhattan. Speakers included the architect R. Buckminster Fuller, former President of the United States Herbert Hoover, Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, and writer and urbanist Lewis Mumford.

 Undertaking a First Digitization Project and Finding the Means
The Cooper librarians initially discussed a potential digital project in March 2009. Ideas for projects from the archives had been brewing for years but had not taken off, mainly due to budgetary constraints. Having been unsuccessful with grant applications, we lacked hardware and software for an appropriate development platform and personnel with the necessary skills, namely familiarity with the standards and best practices involved in creating an archival digital collection and ability to maintain a server.

Two major obstacles disappeared with the addition of a hosted instance of the CONTENTdm digital collection management software through OCLC, at no additional cost beyond the existing FirstSearch Base Package subscription. It eliminated the need for a server in house, and provided the right software for the task.

Next came the choice of a collection to digitize. The 100th Anniversary Photographs were chosen because:
• They had not been cataloged at the item level
• The collection was a manageable size

• The content would be of interest to researchers both inside and outside the institution, including historians, alumni, and development personnel
• The photographs would provide a touchstone for Cooper Union’s 150th Anniversary Celebration, which would take place in 2009.

Personnel
Without funds for additional staff, we decided that existing library personnel would take on the project as a team, even though the staffing level at the time could be best described as adequate. The learning curve would be steep, and it meant trying to squeeze more work out of the day. However, the benefits of experience gained as well as the promotion and visibility for the Cooper Archives and the Library in general outweighed the costs.

Carol Salomon and Julie Castelluzzo, the archives librarian and electronic services librarian, respectively, attended a METRO workshop on the basics of CONTENTdm, along with Mitsuko Brooks, part-time archives assistant. They formed the core of the team. Julie became project coordinator, learned the basics of Dublin Core, put together the initial record schema and

Continued on page 36
Another challenging task was putting together a group of beta testers for the site and keeping in touch with them to obtain feedback.

A few valuable lessons learned:
- Time spent on planning at the beginning will save staff time later. In particular, it is important to have the record schema and controlled vocabulary in place before any data entry is done, in order to reduce editing and corrections later on.
- If you build it, they will come. Once you produce an attractive and easy-to-use searchable digital collection, be prepared for your target audience to have high expectations that you will produce more!

We are very pleased to have produced this historic digital image collection, and are about to embark on the second digital collection from the Cooper Archives. It will be the early annual reports of The Cooper Union, from 1860–1884 — those reports published during and immediately following the lifetime of the institution’s founder, Peter Cooper. These documents provide valuable insights into his intentions and hopes, and constitute a significant portion of the documentation of the early history of the institution. As Cooper Union’s new president Jamshed Bharucha views Cooper’s writings and the institution’s early history guideposts for steering Cooper Union into the future while retaining the founder’s vision, there is no better time than the present to undertake this next digitization project.

For more information, contact Julie Castelluzzo by e-mail at julie@cooper.edu or Carol Salomon at salomo@cooper.edu.
Edward Sorel's work has graced the covers of some of our most prominent magazines. Millions have seen the art, if not the artist.

"When I sign my credit card bill at the restaurant, the waiter never says ‘are you Edward Sorel the artist?’ Never happens,” says Sorel.

The waiter may not know Sorel, but his peers certainly do. In 2011, they honored him as part of the School of Visual Arts Masters Series. He was the first artist honored in the series to be chosen by his contemporaries. The exhibit featured all types of artwork, including covers for The New Yorker, The Nation, Esquire, Time and many others. There was also a corresponding documentary produced by Sorel's son Leo.

In the Harlem apartment he shares with his wife Nancy, you can usually find Sorel working on his latest project. On the day NY1 visited, it was a series about writers.

"Various authors who published, and as a result of publishing something, either landed in jail or died, and I called it ‘Publish and Perish,’” says Sorel.

Sorel says he was an introspective, sheltered kid.

A bout with pneumonia kept him home for a year and spawned a love of drawing.

"If you’re not good at sports and you’re not into people that much, all you want to do is draw pictures. It's the same with musicians. You’d rather be at home alone playing piano than doing just about anything else, and I’d rather be doing pictures than anything else," says Sorel.

It is work done in solitude, but Sorel says the work is affected by all that goes on outside the studio. "When my first marriage went down the drain, the pictures were the worst pictures I ever did. Hard to do funny pictures when your life is going down the tube,” says Sorel.

He likes to work in a style he calls "spontaneous direct drawing." To Sorel, tracing is cheating.

"If you don’t trace, it's art. If you trace, it’s illustration," says Sorel. "For me, working direct is fine art, and tracing is commercial art. That's the difference."

He's long enjoyed satirizing organized religion, even if it isn't a big money maker. *A’51

"You can't sell the stuff, magazines won't take it. There is no money in being anti-clerical," says Sorel. Politicians are frequent subjects, though he says one time he refused.
"They wanted me to do a cover about how the press was treating Nixon unfairly. I said that's too much. I’ll sell out, but there are limits," says Sorel.

Humor is a constant, like the comments Moses really heard while crossing the Red Sea: "Some miracle. If I don't get pneumonia from all of this, that will be a miracle."

Sorel also created one of the New Yorker’s first post-9/11 covers.

He drew people going about their daily lives in the foreground with a picture of a firefighter who died in the World Trade Center in the background.

"I’m not sure that my style is good for tragedy," says Sorel. "I do funny stuff because I think I’m good at it. I don’t think I’m good at serious stuff."

Edward Sorel grew up as Edward Schwartz in the Bronx, but he’s not exactly nostalgic for the place. "It was a place to get out of," says Sorel, "and it's amazing how many people got ambition just to get out of the Bronx."

Sorel says his parents approved of him becoming an artist.

"My father had no business I could go into. He wasn’t a doctor. He was essentially a guy who slept on the sofa all day. There wasn’t much money in that. My mother worked in the millinery factory. I mean, how much worse could I do?" says Sorel.

Sorel attended the High School of Music and Art and then Cooper Union, but he says his love of drawing was considered old fashioned. At the time, abstraction was in vogue.

"I had no interest in abstraction or design. I wanted to make pictures," says Sorel. "Abstraction and modern art is what people who can't draw love."

In 1954, Sorel and some of his Cooper Union classmates started Pushpin Studios.

Sorel says **Milton Glaser and ***Seymour Kwast saved him by bringing him back to drawing.

Later on there were children's books and album covers, but in the mid-sixties, he was struggling. Sorel credits art director George Lois for reviving his career by offering him the cover of Esquire for Gay Talese's famed 1966 article, "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold."

"What saved my life was the only thing I could do was draw. What saved my life was my incompetence at everything else," says Sorel. "So I just kept drawing and drawing until finally I got good at it."Sorel also credits his second marriage—to his wife Nancy of almost 50 years—for improving his work. He describes the 1980s, when the couple collaborated on a series for Atlantic Magazine called "First Encounters" as "the happiest period."

"Being happy makes good pictures. I believe in being happy. It's not easy for me, either," says Sorel. It is work that has brought a lot of happiness to his admirers for many years. Sorel says he's no celebrity, but he has the recognition of his peers. "I would love to be rich and famous. Who wouldn't?" says Sorel. "But I'm quite happy with the respect of my peers and quite happy with the way my life turned out, actually."

**Former Trustee, A'51
***A’51
Changing Science of Movie-ology
By MANOHLA DARGIS and A. O. SCOTT

IN 1958 the writer and independent filmmaker Jonas Mekas contacted Jerry Tallmer, an editor and critic at The Village Voice and asked why the paper, which had started three years earlier, didn’t have a regular movie column. Mr. Tallmer invited Mr. Mekas to write one. He did. His first movie column that year inaugurated The Voice’s extraordinary, decades-long commitment to deeply personal, often political, always partisan, sometimes cranky and wonderfully crazed film criticism written by Andrew Sarris, Molly Haskell, Amy Taubin, Georgia Brown and David Edelstein, among many others, a tradition that effectively came to an end this month, when that paper’s longtime senior film critic, J. Hoberman, was laid off and told that his position was being eliminated.

Given the anything-goes reality of the Internet, where thousands of blogs bloom, it can be hard to overestimate The Voice’s critical place in the journo-ecosystem back in the day. Started by a triumvirate that included Norman Mailer, The Voice was a much welcomed if also sometimes wildly reviled counterbalance to New York’s establishment media, the dean of what became known as alternative weeklies. Its film coverage was crucial to that countercultural identity, with Mr. Mekas initially leading the charge and Mr. Sarris, who introduced the auteur theory to American audiences, soon joining him. Writing about the avant-garde and the mainstream with equal intelligence, wit and high style, Mr. Hoberman bridged the critical traditions his predecessors had carved out.

At The Voice it was possible to believe that intellectual work was a form of real and effective political activism and that resistance to the machine (Hollywood included) was not only possible, but also necessary. For Voice writers, a movie was never only a movie: it was a way of seeing, living in, understanding and, yes, even changing the world. A prolific author and influential teacher, Mr. Hoberman had a reach that went beyond The Voice, which, already weakened (by the Internet, Sept. 11, its owners) continued to lose its mojo, identity and relevance after it was bought by the New Times newspaper chain in 2005. Since then the chain, renamed Village Voice Media, has suffered the same economic woes endured throughout the industry, with the film department taking repeated hits.

Now without portfolio Mr. Hoberman plans to keep writing and teaching. We caught up with him by e-mail.

MANOHLA DARGIS In one of Jonas Mekas’s first columns for The Voice he wrote that “every breaking away from the conventional, dead, official cinema is a healthy sign.” There was an activist element to his rhetoric, and soon after he started writing for The Voice he decided that it wasn’t enough to be a critic, he had to become, as he put it, a near-midwife, so he could hold and protect “all the beautiful things that I saw happening in cinema and that were either butchered or ignored by my colleague writers and by the public.” He was fighting, to borrow the title of a book on him, to free the cinema. Taking a similar long view of your own work, what did you come to see as your role or even mission at The Voice?

J. Hoberman Jonas was no longer at The Voice when I started reviewing in late 1977, but he’d been important to me both as a reader and a filmgoer. I saw myself following his example, and also creating a beat. In addition to the avant-garde there were many things that the paper’s two established critics, Andrew Sarris and Tom Allen, were just not that interested in covering — documentaries, independent cinema, museum shows and most foreign films.

To the degree I thought about my role, I saw myself as a journalist (reporting on movies people might not otherwise know about) and as someone contributing to something I’d call, after Jonas’s magazine, “film culture.” On succeeding Sarris as lead critic in 1988 I continued what I saw as a Voice tradition — emphasizing work I felt significant, regardless of its commercial clout or mass appeal.

A. O. SCOTT In the ’60s and ’70s that “film culture” was in many ways understood to be a counterculture, a set of attitudes and commitments distinct from both the Hollywood mainstream and conventional ways of writing about movies. The Voice always saw itself as an oppositional paper, offering an irreverent, muckraking, avant-garde alternative to the establishment press. The language of opposition persists when people use phrases like “independent film” or “traditional media,” but obviously a lot has changed over the years. What is your sense of how the landscape — of film culture and the larger media world within which it is embedded — has shifted since you started?
A subject for a book! I was around in the ’60s but hit my stride as a critic in the ’80s — Reagan time — when the study of film culture, a science of movie-ology, seemed as though it should be the central pursuit of the age. (That’s now conventional wisdom, as when political pundits routinely read motion pictures as big social metaphors.) Even then, people were bemoaning the end of cinephilia. Movies had already been displaced. Over the past 15 years the photographic basis of the medium has been eroded by digital image making, the traditional delivery system is changing, not just for cinema but for criticism, the audience is dwarfed by the audience for video games, and yet great things continue to be made. My last review for The Voice was about two terrific, totally different movies: Nuri Bilge Ceylan’s “Once Upon a Time in Anatolia” and Ken Jacobs’s “Seeking the Monkey King.” I couldn’t have planned a more optimistic exit.

DARGIS I love both those movies. Yet when I write about that kind of work, I can feel as if I’m whispering into the wind, drowned out by the whirring of the mainstream cinema hype machine, which of course is kept nicely oiled by the entertainment media. I try to resist whining about the good old days — though here I do need to point out that film as film is on the verge of extinction even if cinema is not — but the mainstream media pay even less mind to serious cinema than it did. It’s hard to imagine the kind of passionate debate about films like “Last Year at Marienbad” and even “Blue Velvet” going on for movies like “Anatolia” except in the more rarefied reaches of the blogosphere, which is good (sometimes) if also an index of the marginalization of serious cinema and the discussion about it.

HOBERMAN What you call “whispering in the wind,” I’d say is speaking through a powerful megaphone. Anyway, there’s still room for novelty and potential for debate. Look at the fracas over “The Tree of Life” and “Melancholia.” It just goes to show that, although a great filmmaker like the Soviet master Andrei Tarkovsky was a minority taste at best among the critics of the ’80s (check out his reviews), his epigones have succeeded in creating significant cine-scandals.

SCOTT I’m glad to hear you say that. I’ve been frustrated by the emergence of a conventional wisdom — not limited to critics — according to which movies have diminished in importance and the arguments about them have diminished in intensity since whenever the good old days are supposed to have been. This kind of nostalgia figured heavily in the flurry of writing about Pauline Kael occasioned by the 10th anniversary of her death and Brian Kellow’s biography. But I wonder if you’d be willing to walk down memory lane for a moment and recall a particularly fierce debate of the past, and say something about what it meant at the time.

HOBERMAN Probably the biggest debate I was ever involved in was precipitated by my critique of Kael’s “Shoah” pan. We had a heated exchange in the back row of the Broadway Screening Room. People seemed surprised to see us so worked up over a movie. She told me that I had made things hard for her at The New Yorker, and I said: “What the hell are you talking about Pauline? You wrote the review!”

DARGIS I wish I had been there to witness that. The thing is, there is truth behind such yearning — for film as film and for technical proficiency, you know, like sharply focused images. Some of my favorite movies each year are made or at least distributed by the studios. But they don’t make as many great or even competent movies as they did. Just look at the films James Agee was championing and dismissing in a given column, as when he plowed through “Life With Father,” “Thunderbolt,” “The Macomber Affair,” “Miracle on 34th Street” and a couple other titles in a single 1947 week.

These days, by contrast, there seem to be five times the number of movies opening and quickly leaving, and also five times the dreck. Along these lines, Jim, you mentioned that cinema itself has changed in the past 15 years, and I wonder how your relationship with the object has also changed, perhaps as a consequence?

HOBERMAN For 30-odd years, looking at movies and writing (or talking) about them, was my job. It was fun but it was work. You have to keep up. It’s too early to say how things will change for me now that I’m a civilian. I always loved old movies, and I still do. There are certain films that as a teacher, I watch almost every year — early Chaplin, “The Man With a Movie Camera,” “The Rules of the Game,” “In the Street,” “Pather Panchali,” “Vertigo,” “Flaming Creatures,” “Breathless” — and sitting there with a class, I get to see them again for the first time.

SCOTT To stay with that theme for a moment, what were some of your formative experiences of movies, the ones that started you on the path to becoming a critic?
HOBERMAN I didn’t set out to be a critic. If anything I backed into it. I liked to write and I was deeply interested in movies. The first that really spoke to me was “Dr. Strangelove,” which I saw twice when I was 14; a year later “Shoot the Piano Player” was the first movie I really wanted to live. They were like sacred texts. “Alphaville,” a kind of synthesis, just blew my mind.

That was the first movie I wrote about (a single-spaced sheet for the Harpur Film Society, along with Mike Kuchar’s “Sins of the Fleshapoids”), trying to get a fix on what made it so great. After that I kept a notebook. Later I knew a bunch of underground filmmakers and cartoonists, I wanted to be part of something — and it happened. My ideal reader was me at 16.
Spare Times for Jan. 13-19

By ANNE MANCUSO

Published: January 12, 2012

Around Town

Events

Talk on Terror (Wednesday) Matthew M. Aid, a historian, media commentator and author, will discuss his new book, “Intel Wars: The Secret History of the Fight Against Terror” (Bloomsbury). Mr. Aid, who is an expert on the National Security Agency, will speak about American intelligence operations around the world, including Iraq and Afghanistan. At 6:30 p.m., the Cooper Union, Menschel Boardroom, Seventh Street and Third Avenue, East Village, (212) 353-4195, cooper.edu; free.


Listings also appeared in:

95.9 The Fox (radio) NY Activists calendar
Activist Resource NY Daily News
Backpage NY Luxury
Check Out NY NY Press
City Limits NYC Political calendar
CityGuide Slice magazine
Culture Mob Stamford Advocate
DNA Info The L Magazine
Doing NYC The Lo-Down
Eventful The Villager
Gotham Gazette Time Out NY (online and print)
HopStop Times Union (Albany)
Indypendent Upcoming/Yahoo
Media Bistro Zvents
New York mag (online and print)
The Word
EDITED BY MOLLY LANGMUIR

EVENTS

LOUIS HYMAN
Rose Auditorium at the Cooper Union, 41 Cooper Sq., nr. 7th St. (212-353-4195)
The economist discusses his new book, Borrow: The American Way of Debt, a history of personal loans that offers precedents and potential solutions to today's problems; 2/10 at 6:30.

BORROW: The American Way of Debt was also listed by:

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