SPEAKING IN TONGUES
Not all languages are created—nor taught as—equal.

WELCOME TO THE CLUB
The Columbia sailing team tests the varsity waters

The Blue & White visits Pelham Bay, stops by Miller Theatre, and tells you a Super Sad True story
Cover: “Tower of Babble” by Maddy Kloss
Talk to John Jay Dining Hall on a weekday evening and take a look at the food offered around you. From the grill at the front to the piles of lettuce at the salad bar to the oblong steel pans heaped with steaming entrees, variety is king. And why not? After all, John Jay must cater to the tastes of hundreds of Columbians day and night—try agreeing on a restaurant for dinner with a group of friends, and you’ll have an idea of the challenge facing the dining hall staff every mealtime.

But somehow they always pull through. Week after week, the John Jay Dining Hall never fails to swing open its doors, lay out tray after tray of food after food, and feed hordes of undergraduates. It’s an inspiration, really—such consistency and diversity and efficiency are exemplars of what we at The Blue & White wish to achieve. Like John Jay, we also seek to provide for the Columbia public, though we hope the issue before you delivers more mental nourishment than physical. And with a little less grease. And maybe a bit more spice.

With these goals in mind we set about putting our November issue, a wide-ranging medley of investigation, observation, and review. Senior Editor Mark Hay, for example, keeps things close to home as he delves into the politics of Columbia’s language programs to understand the quirks of language learning at this university (pg. 20). Senior Editor Claire Sabel, meanwhile, takes us far off-campus to the end of the 6 line subway to discover the city (pg. 32). Contributor Camille Hutt grounds us again with an exploration of the campus’ shortage of dance space (pg. 16), and Senior Editor Sam Schube follows with a look at Miller Theatre’s director one year into her tenure (pg. 13). If reality isn’t exactly what you were hungry for, though, don’t worry—Senior Editor Hannah Lepow has whipped up a fanciful peek into Columbia’s near-future through the lens of novelist Gary Shteyngart’s newest book (pg. 31).

These selections are but a few of the offerings on the full menu inside this November, so grab a plate and dig in. We realize we are no Wilma, but as you begin your mental meal, we wish you bon appetit nonetheless.

Jon Hill
Editor-in-Chief

THERE’S AN APP FOR THAT

More than 60 percent of Columbia students use Apple products, so why aren’t more of the Apple Store’s apps tailored to Morningside Heights? Here are five apps for which the staff of the B&W has determined there is the greatest need.

**m2m on the Hour**
Hourly updates on supply levels of miso soup, broth temperature, and tofu content. Runs, of course, morning 2 midnight.

**Teiresias2T-Pain**
Recite Lit Hum’s lines and receive T-Pain’s rhymes (feat. Mista Ramsay & Shorty Sancho). Ballin’.

**Pothole Protection**
Maps protruding and raised obstructions on College Walk, including but not limited to cracks, loose stones, divots, kids, and protesters. No need to make eye contact with last weekend’s mistake—or anyone, for that matter!

**Translator 2.0**
Input foreign tongues and receive English. In this new Editing Edition, Translator 2.0 will eliminate from speech pretentious qualifiers, allusions to Western Imperialism, and tangents about that time you felt enlightened in a Third World country.

**Shut It Down**
Turn neighbor noise to white noise. No more electric guitar riffs, Freddie Mercury impressions, or questionable grunts. Sleep soundly.

BY THE NUMBERS

With the holiday season approaching, the prospect of time off from classes is an occasion for excitement—and jealousy. Because comparisons are inevitable, here are the number of total annual vacation days enjoyed by our counterparts at peer institutions.

Columbia: 162 days of vacation
NYU: 162 days of vacation
Fordham: 162 days of vacation
City College: 160 days of vacation
Princeton: 162 days of vacation
Yale: 169 days of vacation
THESES TITLE TANGO

Match the titles of real, in-progress Columbia senior theses with their actual subtitles

<table>
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<th>TITLE</th>
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<td>a. Seeing Stars</td>
<td>1. Where’s Your Mustache</td>
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<td>c. Flowers in the Mirror</td>
<td>3. Melodrama, the novel, and the social imaginary in nineteenth-century Japan</td>
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<td>e. The Anxiety of Irrelevance</td>
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<td>f. Two Sleeping Giants</td>
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<td>g. Vision, Folly and Balance</td>
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<td>j. Female Olympic Athletes</td>
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POSTCARD FROM MORNINGSIDE

Compiled by B&W Staff
Postcard by Stephen Davan
Always an area of intense pressure and continental clashes, Morningside Heights was pretty much the same place 450 million years ago as it is today. Except instead of panic attacks in Butler and anti-protest protests on College Walk, the neighborhood disturbances tended towards the geological. Continents collided, layers of sedimentary shale burst through the surface, and an extremely tough form of bedrock known as schist abounded.

Today, a 30-foot pile of schist remains on 114th Street, sandwiched between the service entry to Havana Central to the east and the Columbia-owned brownstone Greenborough to the west. Although it’s roughly the size of a circus tent, the rock is far from a spectacle. Instead it is a surprisingly uncared-for piece of Morningside lore.

“It’s hard for many of us to imagine that there once was, and still is to a lesser extent, a natural landscape here,” says Andrew Dolkart, professor of architecture, planning and preservation and author of *Morningside Heights: A History of Its Architecture and Development*. Despite the daily deliveries that bring meat and produce into the restaurant’s kitchen, Erika Rodriguez, manager of Havana Central, says that much of her wait-staff isn’t aware of the boulder’s existence.

But the residents of Greenborough, a special interest house dedicated to environmentally sound living, are a more conscientious bunch. Among its residents, the pile of schist is referred to as “the famed rock.” Elizabeth Kipp-Giusti, CC ’12, awaits the famed boulder’s big break. “After years of working the burlesque circuit, next will be the inspirational movie about its life starring Sandra Bullock as a glacier. I smell Oscar!”

Fanaticism aside, the rock elicits a kind of pacifism, if not distinctly romantic feelings from Emlyn Resetarits, CC ’12. She connects with the rock, saying it’s nice to have such a “mountainous, natural entity” next door. The prospect of the rock, just outside her window, is a constant reminder of the essential tenets of the house—“A balance between nature and us living here sustainably.” Covered in moss and saplings of an invasive species, some refer to it as the Tree of Heaven, the rock leads Resetarits to transcendental ecstasy: “If I could go out and sit and read on the top of the rock, I’d be the happiest person at Columbia.”

A recent construction project undertaken by Columbia Housing, however, would suggest that the organic majesty of the rock lies more in the eye of the beholder. The backyard of Greenborough and the rock were directly contiguous up until last spring when Housing erected a concrete wall resolutely separating the two and dashing all hopes of union between man and nature. Rock and a hard place, indeed.

— Mariela Quintana

Morningside old timers remember “the castle” at 106th and Central Park West as it once was. Not an inch of the restored structure betrays its past today, but for 40 years, the five crumbling turrets of 455 Central Park West dotted the skyline with decay. Only rats, squatters, and ghosts called its cluttered hallways home.

The castle first opened its doors in 1890 as the New York Cancer Hospital, a state-of-the-art experimental facility and the only one of its kind in the U.S. To visit the building in those days would have felt like stepping into the Loire Valley—its French Renaissance revival...
architecture gleamed with red brick and black ironwork, and its circular turrets lent a romantic grandeur to its grim medical mission. (The round towers were, in fact, functionally designed to eliminate the corners where physicians once believed germs collected and grew.)

Breakthroughs in the use of radium for cancer treatment put the castle-cum-hospital at the forefront of the medical world, but by 1955 the hospital vacated the circular wards for a more modern facility. The center then became the Towers Nursing Home—a low-rent eldercare facility shuttered in 1974 for abusing and swindling its residents—before falling into total neglect. For the next 30 years, the castle lay abandoned, saved from demolition by a timely landmarks designation and the periodic, but fruitless, chatter of possible renovation projects.

A white knight finally rode to the castle’s rescue in 2003. After purchasing it in the late 1990s, developer Dan McLean finally succeeded in corralling funds to restore the building by convincing Columbia University to help cover the $150 million needed. In return, McLean would set aside for Columbia faculty 15 floors of a luxury apartment tower he planned to build and attach to the restored structure. In just two years, the castle was recreated as a complex of luxury condos so chic that they attracted the attention of celebrities like Phil Collins and Bill Clinton.

Now called “The Towers,” the once-decrepit castle stands today as a clean, beautiful model of Victorian institutional architecture and, as Sarah Bernard of New York Magazine put it on the eve of the restoration, a monument to “the winds of uptown gentrification.”

—Liz Naiden

“You could die,” reads the slogan of the Broadway Bomb, an unsanctioned longboard race down the legendary avenue. The disclaimer is no exaggeration; more than 500 boarders barreled down Broadway to the bronze Bowling Green Bull on Oct. 16th, rolling through red lights and weaving between cars.

Skaters gathered on Riverside and 116th Street before officially starting the tenth annual race outside the Columbia gates. Adrenaline aficionado Phillip Dupree, SEAS ’11, joined the daring skaters, whom he affectionately calls “concrete surfers.”

“Do you know what it feels like to be so in the moment that time goes from a ticking clock to a fluid flow?” Dupree asked. For him, the speed and the danger make the race seem like a blur. “Ten minutes, an hour? Not important.”

Had you been standing on the corner outside of Morton-Williams when the race began that Saturday, you probably wouldn’t have also lost your grip on the space-time continuum, but you might have nearly lost much worse. Only moments after the stroke of noon, a torrent of boarders charged up 116th Street, careened around the corner, and jetted down Broadway, all with the hell-bent fury of a pack of Harpies. Taxi drivers angrily honked and bewildered tourists grabbed their cameras. One spectator even played the concerned mother—Dupree remembered a middle-aged woman shouting “helmets and pads” to the flood of racers.

In less than an hour, Dupree completed the Broadway Bomb and joined his fellow longboarders in celebrating the race’s end with cheers. “Your legs are burning,” Dupree remembered. “People that don’t think skateboarding is exercise have no idea what they’re talking about.” But the party did not last long—screaming sirens soon interrupted the cheering. “I heard someone yell, ‘It’s the cops. Book it!’” Dupree said. “Did I mention this race is completely underground and illegal?”

—Carolyn Ruvkun
Kia Walton, CC ’12, claims her goal is “to create a space in the world where I feel comfortable, and to create a space where I feel other people are comfortable—being who they are and loving themselves.” The Bay Area native’s vision for a world devoid of constructed identities and limiting social pressures manifests itself in her personal attitude. “I don’t know if I’d want to be cool,” she wonders aloud. “Because, what is ‘cool’? I have bigger things to do than worry about trying to be cool.”

Walton is an officer of Proud Colors, a group that engages with queer students of color on campus, and is a perfect place to wrestle with her “triad of identities.” As a gay black woman, she felt that her needs were not always met in other campus groups that did not cater to queer people of color. “It’s not uncomfortable,” she says of her experience with those groups. “It’s just that there are certain parts of my identity that may not get tapped in to.”

Walton’s predilection for suspenders, along with more than a few other quirky fashion choices, might be misinterpreted as part of a wider rejection of the mainstream. Really, though, they’re just what makes her comfortable. “Just logically, they work better – instead of cinching gravity you’re actually working against it.”

Walton has carved herself a niche in the culinary world, too. Her favorite sandwich at P&W, where she works, isn’t one from the menu; it’s one she had to make up herself. “Hot egg, cheese, lettuce, sometimes olive tapenade, sometimes black bean spread, in wrap - I really like burritos, but we don’t have them.”

But Walton’s little idiosyncrasies and unique outlook don’t translate into narcissism. “I know you’ve got a job to do,” she said, pausing only a few moments into our ninety minute interview. “But I want to know about you, too. What do you do?” She went on to make our time together less like an interview, and more like a casual conversation between friends. In turns inquisitive, pensive, and talkative, her words poured out in rapid succession, but only after a moment to reflect and perhaps twirl a strand of hair around an outstretched finger.

Her genuine interest in the people around her is a longstanding personality trait. “It all began that fated Thursday night when volleyball practice was canceled so we decided to dine together at the gourmet restaurant down the block—Hewitt, I believe was its name,” says Michi Arguedas, CC ’12, of the night she first got to know Walton. “Dinner turned into an episode of Grey’s Anatomy, which led to 9 hours of deep conversation and soul searching. We cried, laughed, and bonded with each other unlike we had with anyone else during our first semesters here at Columbia.”

Behind the minutiae, behind what she calls “the image,” Walton remains a marriage of spontaneity and contemplation - still grappling with her identity.
but having fun along the way. “I need to be able to take a sledge hammer and break down this particular beam of this particular structure than I have created so that it will crash on me,” she says, gesturing a box-like structure and its vertical beams, then smashing it to pieces them with her hefty invisible sledge hammer.

— Grant D’Avino

If you’ve ever received an e-mail from Sean Manning Udell, CC ’11, you’ve only seen a fraction of his ebullient personality. Take, for instance, the salutation of his first class-wide e-mail as senior class president—“Oh hay big SEEEENIOOOOOORRRRRSSSSSSS of Twenty Eleven”—or even just the subject line—“2 FREE PARTIES—GET THOSE PARTY HATS ON!” Although Udell admits that administrators would like him to “tone down my emails because it seemed to suggest too much unsafe exuberance,” he says, his capitalized cheer and long elisions are an integral part of his goals for the year: “To make Columbia a good community; a good place to have fond memories of.”

This gregarious showmanship, however, is not self-serving. His emails are not just ploys to get seniors to attend events, but rather extensions of his perpetually caps-locked personality. “It’s not a façade,” says friend and senior class vice president Alexandra Coromilas. “He always has this enthusiasm and this great attitude and it really doesn’t waver when he’s hanging out with his friends.”

Udell epitomizes gay pride. “In my life I’ve tried to be as loudly out there as possible,” Udell says. But the clash between his sexual identity and his on-campus persona has sometimes produced problems. “You do run the risk,” Udell says, “of being a one issue person, and people then just assume that everything you do is for your own self interest and for LGBT interest and I’ve really tried to separate the two worlds.”

Udell’s dual roles merge in the campaign for gender neutral housing, an initiative he spearheads as both senior class president and president of the Columbia Queer Alliance. He took up the issue because he recognized a flaw in the university housing system. “I wanted to live with members of the opposite sex and the policy wouldn’t allow for that,” he says. Implementation of a gender-neutral housing policy was put off by the Columbia administration last semester, news that Udell found devastating. “We didn’t really know how to respond because we had gotten so many people excited about it.” But he’s bouncing back this year with a new proposal, crafted in conjunction with housing officials. This revised plan will introduce a gender neutral pilot program to six upper-class buildings. Though Udell hopes it will assuage all parties, he admits, “it’s not perfect.”

When things don’t go his way, Udell does not admit defeat, per se, but rather reverts to Spanish curses and catchphrases he picked up from a former babysitter he had growing up in Florida. Ali Krimmer, CC ’11, a friend from Carman 9 and current suitemate, delights in the confused stares the lanky Udell and his Spanish outbursts elicit from onlookers. “He doesn’t take himself too seriously,” Krimmer laughs.

Even projects like the campaign to secure Barack Obama as Class Day speaker cannot escape his multiple exclamation points and pep. His e-mail informing seniors of the initiative asked students to “do your part! Ask not what Columbia can do for you, but what you can do for Columbia, FOR SERIOUS Y’ALL!”

This enthusiasm should serve him well in his post-graduation plans—he hopes to work as a kindergarten teacher with Teach for America. His friends are optimistic about his success. “No matter what he’s doing, he puts his entire self into it,” Coromilas says. •

—Chris Brennan
Can you get

I’ve been doing it for years. It’s not like it’s hard; who even notices? See, the problem is that people just get too paranoid about this kind of thing. People start thinking that they are being too conspicuous, start worrying about passers-by, start thinking that they are going to get caught, start ruining the vibe, and then no one has a good time. Sam Schube is people.

Whether it’s in the park, some little nook on campus, or, hey, even a secluded residential cross-town block, chances are that there really are not going to be that many people around and with a little planning, you can almost always fool the ones who do pass by. If someone should happen to walk by, just play it off like you were in a midst of an animated conversation, nothing more. It doesn’t have to be the most convincing act in the world. The key is to not make eye contact, and chances are they’ll buy it; most people aren’t looking that closely.

What Sam doesn’t realize is that most people fall into either one of two categories: those who are oblivious and those who are down. Those who are oblivious naively believe that this sort of thing doesn’t go down all that often, at least not in their neighborhood. They go about their lives without it even crossing their minds.

Sure, maybe they went for it one time that summer in Berlin, but that was the ‘60s. One need hardly worry about these folks, and the best part of all is that even if the clueless do catch wind of what’s up, more likely than not, it will only make them walk by a bit faster.

See, Sam doesn’t get this. Sam is under the impression that the slightest clue will instantly alert passers-by to what’s going on. Enraged, those passers-by will take enough time out of their busy lives to 1) call the police and 2) file a police report. Visions of handcuffs, public humiliation, and ashamed parents presumably flash through his eyes. But Sam’s got it all wrong: the subtle risk that he finds nauseating, others find thrilling.

But the secret is: even if they realize what’s going on, a surprising number of people are down. And why not? It’s a good time. You’ll come to recognize these ones from the knowing nod of respect. You pick a nice spot, maybe with a pleasant view, or if you’re more skittish, somewhere a bit more private. You get organized, you take one last quick look around, and then you go for it. Don’t spend too much time trying to find the perfect hiding place—you’ll only end up psyching yourself out—or worse—attracting attention.

Now I’m not advocating reckless abandon. By all means keep an eye out or whatever and don’t linger, but there’s no need to rush through the whole thing constantly looking over your shoulder. You won’t enjoy that. Once it’s done, the risk of getting caught pretty much drops from slim to none. The evidence against you is minimal and, hey, you’re not sticking around. Then comes the opportunity to relish having gotten away with it. Imagine the sense of satisfaction, walking smugly down the street knowing full well that no one has a clue of what you just pulled over on them.

And as you’re walking back into your building, sitting on the subway, or getting seated at a restaurant, you’ll get an incomparable sense of satisfaction. You got away with it.
It’s said no good deed goes unpunished. I think that’s a load of crap, not to mention beside the point; no bad deed goes unpunished, either. That’s why I’ll respond with a firm “no” when someone like that Brian comes along trumpeting his churlish ways. He thinks he’s invincible. He’s never been caught and can’t imagine a world in which he’d ever fall prey to police, dorm security, or any hint of a moral code. So he’ll ask, and I’ll refuse, thank you very much.

Yes, I know it seems harmless. No one ever gets caught, and guys like Brian believe you’re only really living, man! when you’re displaying flagrant disregard for social convention. But in the same way the gazelle, having made a valiant effort at escape, just knows he’ll be consumed by the chasing lion, I know that I will not get away with it. I’ll be seen. I’ll be heard. And I’ll be caught.

The slightest wrong move, the merest peep! And I’ll be whisked away, locked up, shamed, or worse. It’s supposed to be relaxed, and I know it feels good. It makes no difference. I’m always looking over my shoulder. My head always remains on a swivel—while I’m watching my back, and keeping an eye out and an ear to the ground. And that’s not particularly relaxing. You start to see things. That streetlamp? Hidden camera, for sure. That old lady with the walker probably has a particularly gossipy e-mail relationship with your aunt. Big Brother lives, everyone is watching, and you will not get away with it.

Hell, even assured success, I’d be miserable. Here are the purely practical and pragmatic reasons that I would not even enjoy getting away with it if I could. Let’s see: it makes me paranoid. It’s too loud. Outside, at least, it smells funny, and it can be itchy—I greatly prefer the comfort, familiarity, and soft corners of a bedroom, say, or someone’s car.

I don’t like to do it when other people are watching. It’s too obvious. Also too noisy. And you need too many damn objects to enjoy yourself: the preparation alone is cause for knee-quaking anxiety. And on top of all that, it’s just gauche—for Brian, nothing is sacred.

There’s a whole constellation of psycho-social-moral hang-ups and neuroses that curb my optimism, too. Part of it’s genetic, I think: “Hope for the best, expect the worst” is the New York Jew’s categorical imperative. The sort of rosy, goyish hubris that tells me I can get away with it is the very same false friend that led Woody Allen to take a break from movies to marry his stepdaughter. There’s something to be said for knowing your roots and in this case, my roots are telling me—with all the subtlety of an elephant eating dynamite—that this just won’t work.

There’s an old bit of Jewish humor that says the world’s made up of two kinds of people: there’s the schlemiel who spills his soup, and the schlimazel, whose lap he spills it on. That proverbial borscht bowl always seems to wind up on my lap, and that’s fine. There’s a certain honor in being the schlimazel, dammit.
Ah, Old V has had quite a good time during his first few decades at the University and feels himself a real son of Knickerbocker, but now he finds himself thinking of what lies ahead, and it seems time for your own Verily Veritas to begin work on his Senior Thesis (capitalization essential). The Thesis verily is the capstone to an Ivy League education—nay, any decent education—and VV won’t be caught dead without surmounting this academic pinnacle. How bland, when some chap asks in which field one received one’s degree, to respond with that most hackneyed of answers, merely “history.” Oh, how much grander it would be indeed to toss out a casual reference to Moravian court culture or, better yet, a rather obscure war “badly in need of historical reevaluation.” But, alas, how cumbersome a task the Thesis is, how positively daunting. Verily Veritas is verily vexed by this veritable venture.

Naturally, since the very earliest days of V’s prestigious preparatory schooling, his teachers and tutors prepared him for the sort of rigorous work one must undertake if one is to write a Thesis, yet nonetheless, your own V must admit a bit of trepidation over the prospect of forming a bibliography, let alone setting about to read the sources. Fluent, of course, in most of the better languages, V would not be bound by linguistic limitations to make some rather sad study of an American subject, nor, needless to say, would accessing far flung archives on The Continent be much of a bother (what else, after all, does one do in Prague in the off-season?). No, no, none of these mundane obstacles would be of concern. When it comes down to brass tacks, what seems to stump your veritably vexed VV most of all is the actual selection of a subject. Where to begin? Without a Thesis, one would seem to be adrift in a roiling sea of academic mediocrity. It goes without saying that after the rigors of the Core Curriculum any Columbian worth his snuff is sufficiently well versed in the arts, music, literature, and the sciences to make fine points on the distinction between the orders of columns whilst touring the cathedrals of Europe, as well as carry on a conversation on the finer points of Locke well into a second round of gin and tonics. But mustn’t one also have some area of expertise, some gem of information that alerts one’s audience to one’s particularly noteworthy intellectual acuity—nay, superiority? Your old V is no philistine rube, nor will he be mistaken as such. Unfortuntely for VV, the breathtaking breadth of potential topics is positively paralyzing. Where to begin? Where to end? (And why end at all?) The glories of Rome? The splendor of the Tsars? Napoleon? Elizabeth? Perhaps a study of the Crimean War would do; it would be a chance to finally put Grandfather’s silly daguerreotype collection to use anyway. On second thought, no. Simply too morose. Who on earth would switch to sherry after a round of scotches spent discussing typhus casualties? Something on Versailles maybe then, always good fun.

How proud your own V would feel, indeed how... verklempt, handing a copy of a completed Thesis to his advisor, the binding still smelling of new leather, it would verily be indescribable. And then, ah, to take it off a shelf many years later and mention in passing to an intimate friend, “Oh yes, here is my old Thesis,” simply divine. But then, of course, once the damned thing is done one has to worry about one’s next degree, whether in Law or otherwise. Thesis or not, one wouldn’t want acquaintances thinking one only had a Bachelor’s!♦
It's Miller Time

THE DIRECTOR OF MILLER THEATRE TUNES UP FOR A NEW SEASON

BY SAM SCHUBE

Miller Theatre, although regarded as a premier forum for contemporary dance and music, has struggled to carry its citywide renown into its own backyard. Despite Miller’s on-campus presence and the nearly 80 percent ticket discount it offers, Columbia students only make up a fifth of each concert audience. Even then, Miller Theatre Director Melissa Smey recognizes that those undergrads are there mainly for concerts like the Bach series—anything that furnishes a usable essay for Music Humanities.

“You should want to go to a concert, not because you have to, or because you ought to,” she says. The current season—Smey’s first since her recent promotion to director—features Miller’s trademark eclectic blend of early and new music, but Smey is eager to continue innovating the way the Theatre interacts with the University. Simply put, she is convinced that the Theatre can play a more significant role in student life.

Smey credits her predecessor George Steel with making Miller “the only game in town for new music” during his 11-year reign. After spurring Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center to develop new music programming (with Carnegie Hall even building a Miller-sized space for new music), Miller, always the innovator, looked inward for inspiration. This season’s program reprises the traditional “Composer Portraits” series, but the current iteration will feature two Miller firsts: a world, U.S., or New York premiere at every concert, along with a discussion with the composer.

Miller’s ambitious, constant reinvention reflects its aim to establish a niche in the New York music scene. “There’s no point in being the third-best string quartet series,” Smey explains, “because you can go to Carnegie and hear number one and number two.” Smey hopes to focus these aspirations to tackle one of the fine art’s biggest hurdles: programming for the everyman, or in Miller’s case, the Columbia man. Miller is a destination for music aficionados throughout the Tri-State area, but Smey admits that “in a way, it’s easier to attract the press than a wide audience of students.” Under Smey’s direction, then, audience development has become one of the Theatre’s top priorities.

Smey describes the Miller-Columbia dynamic, with its “brand-new, self-renewing potential base of audience members every year,” as a laboratory to explore strategies for audience growth. She has, for example, arranged for four sections of Music Humanities to hold class inside Miller during concert rehearsals, and the Theatre has begun analyzing ticket data to better target audiences in addition to conducting focus groups among students. Ultimately, Smey aims to “distill the principles of audience development: what is it that’s compelling, what makes it interesting?” With Columbia’s help, she hopes Miller can set yet another example to make Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall salivate: “A national model for audience development everywhere.”

It’s worth pointing out that Smey seems perfectly suited for the admittedly difficult task. She’s excitable and bubbly (she favors the adjective “awesome”), and she has a proverbial ear tuned to youth culture to broaden Miller’s experimental horizons. Last year, for example, a New York Times piece revealed her affinity for bands like Arcade Fire and Vampire Weekend. To her, thinking-man’s indie rock is another avenue to attract student interest, envisioning a Miller “unplugged indie series.” “They could all be showcased here,” she says. “And then we could hang out with them—wouldn’t that be great?”

Illustration by Stephen Davan
Many Columbia students did not attend a high school that lives and dies by the football team's fortunes. And even if they did, they certainly don't attend a college that does. Despite this, being a naturally competitive bunch, Colombians are sympathetic to the obsession with making varsity. However, the peculiar athletic culture here means it's not necessarily true that being a varsity sports team is more rewarding than existing only as a club sport.

Last spring, the Columbia University Sailing Team held its first alumni dinner, where sailors of all ages dined on roast beef and quaffed Martinelli's in Wien lounge. Tanned students and weathered alumni clad in Sperry Top-Siders and J. Crew chatted about favorite regattas and hovered over the club's merchandising table. Dave Perry, a coach from a major sailmaker and the Chairman of the U.S. Sailing Appeals Committee, spoke of the intimacy of the sailing community, mocking himself for showing up in flip-flops.

That night celebrated the culmination of the club's fundraising for the spring, an effort that raised an inspired $115,000 for ten new 420 Class dinghies—the two-man, 14-foot boats widely used in collegiate sailing. Fordham, which sails out of the same yacht club as Columbia on City Island, also purchased 10 new boats that year, and, agreeing to pool their resources, the teams now share a fleet of 20. Despite this dynamism, sailing team co-captain Marie Johnson, BC '12, denies aspirations for more competitive divisions: "We're improving our program, but we're not moving to varsity." The claim not to have varsity aspirations, coupled with the serious energy the sailors have devoted to the program's recent overhaul, suggest a program not quite sure of its identity.

The world of collegiate sailing seems to exist beyond the scope of traditional athletics and also cultivates a particular social milieu that seems somewhat out of place in the middle of Manhattan. Morningside Heights simply is not a campus well-suited to competitive sailing, nor does it have much in common with the sun-splashed dock towns full of lobster-print chinos. Despite the obvious physical impediments, co-captains Kerry Morrison, CC '11, and Marie Johnson have worked diligently to expand the club's horizons. In addition to fundraising and buying new boats, last summer the club hired as coach one William Brown, a former Inter-Collegiate Sailing Association of North America All-American.

The team feels the difference: "Our new coach this year is obviously a lot more competitive than some of the coaches we've had in the past," says Morrison. Given their successful trajectory thus far, one might wonder why the club would not want to make the jump to varsity status to further increase their edge amongst competitors. Such a move, however, would require funding from the University—Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 stipulates that no educational program receiving federal financial assistance can discriminate on the basis of sex, meaning that men and women's sports have to be invested in equally. Since male sports tend to attract more funding as a general rule, the sailing team would have a better chance of attracting varsity sponsorship by promoting just the women's team. But this idea is unpopular among sailors who feel that it would weaken the team's chummy character. "My freshman year there was talk of just the women's team of going varsity, but our team didn't want to have that divide between men and women," says Morrison.
Not only would the team be broken up by sex, but the team would suffer an unwanted loss of independence. Team captains would lose the right to send sailors to a regatta without a coach, as well as the ability to take on sailors with little experience. “There are a lot of captains that come to our team who have never sailed before college,” says Morrison. “You can have people become a really important part of our leadership that came in with no experience.” Sam Hicks, BC ’11, is one of these sailors. “I came to campus for accepted students day and my mom jokingly pointed to the table where the sailing team set up,” she remembers. “There were two guys in Polo shirts and she just goes, ‘Sam, hey, you should totally join the sailing team. You love J. Crew.’ I was like, ‘Mother, stop. Please?’” But Hicks’ mother clearly knew best — her shared affinity for preppy clothing soon developed into an e-mail/Facebook relationship with sailing team members that compelled Hicks to join up upon arriving on campus in the fall.

Even if the team were willing to give up its co-ed roster of beginners and old hands, it is likely the team would lose money as a varsity sport. All varsity teams pool their donations into one fund while clubs keep whatever they raise. With strong connections to an affluent alumni community, a club could easily take in more than an official varsity sport. This is the case at Brown, whose sailing club was established in 1896. While Columbia sailing was established during World War II and lacks a 19th-century endowment, the club is nonetheless in a position to capitalize on donations from its older seamen and is working to establish an annual drive in addition to its alumni regatta and dinner.

While beneficial connections allow the team to flourish as a club, they are still missing out on certain benefits of the varsity cache. Within the Ivy League, Yale, Brown, Harvard, and Dartmouth traditionally have the top performing teams, with Columbia, Penn, Princeton, and Cornell residing on the second tier. While club sports have gained weight in admissions processes at those other schools, Columbia still only allows varsity coaches to recruit. The captains believe their inability to influence admissions decisions in favor of experienced sailors is responsible for this loss of ground in the league standings.

The principal benefit of going varsity would be to establish legitimacy in a sporting community that discriminates between clubs sports and their varsity brethren. Club sports at Columbia, which can only call themselves “clubs” and not “club sports,” are not allowed to associate themselves in any way with the lion mascot, nor can they display the school colors in certain ways. The Columbia University Club Sports Style Guide dictates the particular shades of blue to be used in the crown logo and typeface. “That holds back the club,” says Morrison. “We had to almost beg to have our website just say ‘Columbia Sailing Team.’”

Hassles like these motivate clubs to weigh carefully the value of moving to varsity. Rumors have circulated that men’s hockey and men’s rugby have thought about upgrading their programs, but men’s and women’s squash are the only club teams to have made the change recently after a generous donation from Geoff and Annette Grant, SEAS ’82 and BC ’83. These teams will benefit from improved facilities and administrative assistance from the athletic department, but sailing is working to prove that with enough initiative, club sports can succeed without the varsity moniker.

It’s not necessarily true that being a varsity sports team is more rewarding.
Too Many Left Feet

COLUMBIA’S DANCE TEAMS STRUGGLE FOR PRACTICE SPACE

BY CAMILLE HUTT

One spring night, then-sophomore Hank Oliver, CC ’11, and a couple of members of the hip-hop dance troupe Onyx planned on meeting to choreograph a new routine. They scoured through Columbia’s Virtual Event Management Systems website to find an open rehearsal space with mirrors, but to no avail – all rooms were booked. Facing a desperate need to choreograph and no alternatives, one member suggested the women’s bathroom on the third floor of Schermerhorn. The troupe of dancers headed across campus, iPods and speakers in hand, and held rehearsal amid numerous mystified women filing in and out of the bathroom’s antechamber.

While Onyx may be one of the only dance groups on campus that has practiced in a bathroom, all 21 of Columbia’s dance groups are familiar with that night’s problem, and as the number of dance groups increases, as it continues to do, the problem simply intensifies. “We don’t know ahead of time where space is and have to find out the day of,” says Renuka Agarwal, CC ’12, member of the Bollywood-fusion dance team, Dhoom.

In part, this “space chase” results from the specialized needs that dance groups have for their practice rooms – namely wood floors, mirrors, and an outlet to play music – that prevent groups from simply commandeering any of the dozens of empty classrooms on campus at night. But the problem is made worse by the sheer level of demand: the number of Columbia dance groups exceeds the number of dance rooms on the Columbia campus by a ratio of almost three to one. And of those rooms, only half are large enough to hold the entire crew of the larger dance groups.

Because of this bottleneck, the Columbia University Swing Club’s 70 members have faced an interrupted schedule of lessons this semester. The irregularity has made it difficult to recruit and keep new members of the club – when the first workshop of the semester was held after a week without beginner lessons, only two newcomers attended instead of the 20 more that would show up in past semesters.

“Barnard needs to get more involved,” says CU Swing’s former President Alexa Petrelli, CC ’12 who believes that a major cause of the glut is Columbia dance groups’ inability to use Barnard facilities even though their members often include Barnard students. “Barnard views Columbia as their space, but not vice versa,” and, thus, Columbia dance groups have trouble reserving space at Barnard despite the fact that many of their members are Barnard students.

Some changes may be in the works. Oliver says Onyx and other ABC-recognized dance groups have been contacted about how they want a new practice space set up. “A bunch of dance groups toured the Schapiro [first floor lounge] with Scott Wright,” says ABC President Beezly Kiernan referring to the Vice President of Student and Administrative Services. He is hopeful that the lounge will be converted into a dance space soon, though no definite timeline is in place. “Maybe by next semester,” Kiernan says.

Still, even after the transformation of Schapiro lounge is complete, many dancers believe the addition of only one new practice room will not be enough to end the space chase. The abundance of Columbia dance groups may continue to face a deficit of adequate practice spaces that forces them to rehearse wherever they can – even if that means a return to the Schermerhorn third floor women’s bathroom. As Oliver puts it, “the struggle should be to dance, not to find space”.

Illustration by Alice Mottola

16  THE BLUE & WHITE
If I had a cow, some tomatoes, and a basil plant, and maybe a beautiful woman who looked exactly like a man or a man who looked exactly like a woman, then I would be happy.

I am burning up. I can’t keep wearing sweaters with nothing underneath them, no matter how comfortable they are, I can’t take it off. I can though I CAN TAKE IT OFF

As the lady handed us the mirror, we told her that the monkey had been eating the glass. We were worried but she said not to be. “They eat that kind of stuff all the time.”

“Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer’s Day?” proves the point that the pen is mightier than the sword.

“Genius? Misogynist? Alcoholic? The Messiah?” The lyrics of post-Riot Grrrl band La Tigre demand an irrefutable response to this impossible-to-answer question in their 1999 underground hit, “What’s Yr Take on Cassavetes?”

AMAZING FEBRUARY

When I was nine years old we had the most amazing month of February.

When I was nineteen years old I did something a little crazy. It would have made my mother really mad, if she had ever found out. Don’t worry. I never told her and you better not tell her either

In this ethnographic account, I follow the production process within modeling agencies that begins with a fat woman as she enters into the field of modeling and concludes with her transformation into a product of constructed images that idealizes her deviant status.

Informative Speech

Title: Tragedy of the Commons- Ferris Booth, a lost social Centre

General Goal: To inform

Specific Goals: To inform my audience about the conversion of Ferris Booth from a social centre to a dining hall and the consequent social loss.

Supporting Material
A. Victoria Dunn (Director of Dining)

Macrostructure: Expository

Global Structure of Speech
• Introduction
  - Compare Ferris Booth to an artist selling out...
  - Introduce the aspect of Ferris Booth becoming a full on dining hall and the loss of an avenue for real social interactions
• Body
  - Ferris Booth used to be convivial.
  - Ferris Booth is far more intense than usual
  - Students cannot even enter the place unless they want to eat
• Conclusion
  - We’ve lost a place where community was fostered.
  - At this rate, it wouldn’t be beyond our imagination to have Café 212 just below it, and Carleton Lounge in Mudd to become just like it.
  - It really is a tragedy of the Commons
Speaking in Tongues

THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING AT COLUMBIA

BY MARK HAY

Over the last decade Columbia has become acutely aware of and preoccupied with globalization. Under the auspices of President Bollinger and helped along by the World Leaders Forum and new Global Centers for this, that, and the other thing—not to mention the media hounding of Jeffrey Sachs and friends—the global preoccupation has come to shape the central goals of the university. Even those in charge of the Core Curriculum now conceive of its “courses and requirements work[ing] together to provide a foundation of knowledge and skills that help prepare our students for today’s increasingly globalized world,” as Professor Patricia Grieve, Chair of the Committee on the Core, puts it. Because of this global mindset, the Core’s language requirement has become central to Columbia’s mission.

“It’s very important to have the tools to critically understand the world, and language is the royal highway to a culture,” says Language Resource Center Director Stéphane Charitos. “The fact that students are expected to reach a level [an intermediate fluency] in a foreign language,” agrees Director of the French Language Program Pascale Hubert-Leibler, “shows that Columbia takes its mission of training global citizens seriously.”

Yet despite the commitment and idealism of the university, Columbia’s language program falls short of providing a common baseline for students to engage with the modern world. Columbia leaves gaps in its language education, and students graduating with equal credit hours of language training under their belts do not share an equal level of fluency. The problem of disparity in college language learning is endemic across universities, but certain facets of Columbia’s language problem come from within the university itself—from the various language departments and the way each chooses to pursue its own set of goals.

The problem common to all universities is the simple question of what constitutes fluency and how one reaches an equal level of fluency in all languages taught. Some languages like Arabic require students to master new sounds, new grammar patterns, or even a new script (two new scripts in some languages like Hindi-Urdu). Because of the sheer number of elements beginners need to learn, some languages simply require more hours to master. For example, Professor Charitos notes that “although we teach Modern Standard [Arabic], students do need to be aware of Classical Arabic as well as colloquial forms [the highly divergent and almost mutually unintelligible Levantine, Iraqi, Egyptian, etc. dialects].” A student of French, on the other hand, already possesses some knowledge of Latin roots from English, and will not find Quebecois or Belgian French immensely difficult to comprehend.

Given the unique demands of every language, Columbia College’s four-semester requirement does not produce a common level of fluency. The current language requirement measures time spent in a chair, as opposed to the British university system and the AP and IB systems, which test students for mastery. As a result, almost every language instructor will agree with the sentiments of Russian Language Coordinator Professor Frank Miller; compared to any other language, “[students of] Spanish and French are much more fluent” after an equal number of semesters.

More importantly, language teachers agree

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MADDY KLOSS
that there is no coordination between departments unless it happens by accident, when instructors get together for conferences held to develop classroom techniques. “Welcome to the world of Columbia. This is not just languages. Columbia is a very decentralized place in general,” says Charitos. Even the Committee on the Core, some administrators admit, exercises no real regulatory authority over the various languages students use to fulfill the language requirement beyond basic, university-wide standards of curricula and grading.

In practical terms, this departmental autonomy means 53 languages are offered unevenly across eight departments with vastly differing resources and overall missions, frequently leading to oversights. Southeast Asia, for example, is an area of the world covered by none of Columbia’s academic departments. No department’s mission lays claim to teaching Southeast Asian culture, and, because they tend to leave each other alone, the departments have not determined among themselves which department might. As a result, Columbia offers virtually no classes on Southeast Asian culture, although students can pursue several Southeast Asian languages. As Charitos remarks, seriously attempting to learn a language without a buttressing of cultural insight is nearly pointless.

Still, Charitos and the Language Resource Center (LRC) have attempted to engage with this vital and vastly underrepresented portion of the world. They currently offer Bahasa (Indonesian) through the LRC, have established a small Vietnamese program within the East Asian Languages and Cultures department, and hope to offer University of Pennsylvania courses on Thai in the coming year via Skype. But with no departmental focus on Southeast Asia, Bahasa’s presence at Columbia remains minuscule, with two students enrolled as of this printing. Even departmentally-supported Vietnamese remains nothing but a five-person introductory class. For lack of departmental mission focus, many languages of great importance to the modern globalized world like those of Southeast and Central Asia will remain atrophied or non-extant at Columbia.

One might think that enough student pressure could force a language into good standing in the University. Indeed, there is currently a movement to secure instruction in the politically vital Pashto language, the dominant language in Taliban-dominated Afghanistan and Pakistan. But, as Charitos explains, selecting a language requires great caution in assessing its long-term staying power, financial viability, and a host of other factors. He recalls students amassing in the early 1990s for a strong Albanian program and in 2008 for a robust Georgian program following political upheaval in those nations, but it is hard to tell what could inspire a similar interest in Asian languages. Even for languages that can outlast a fad, limited funds within the LRC often cannot attract the talent needed to establish a viable program.

Creating a course may be the easy part, though. Only by the grace of a larger department’s intervention can a language program really take hold and prosper. And as to how those languages survive once inside a department: “For lack of a better word, I’m going to call it departmental politics,” says Charitos of the dependency of languages on the missions and interests of the departments that house them.

Those languages already taken in by a department are also subject to the push-and-pull of academic politics. “If we’re going to have a good Slavic Department, we need other languages [than Russian] too,” says Miller, explaining his department’s insistence on offering multiple levels of study in non-Russian Slavic languages with tiny enrollments. “Plus, they’re important as far as linguistics is concerned,” continues Miller, hint-
ing at the influence of the now-defunct Linguistics Department which has been largely subsumed into the Slavic Languages department. Because several Slavic Languages professors are linguists by training, the department has a clear departmental mission—to encourage the comparative study of Slavic tongues, their structures, and their origins.

Some departmental missions effectively prioritize a few languages while neglecting others. When the Latin American and Iberian Cultures department took its current incarnation—shifting away from a focus on Spanish and Portuguese languages and cultures alone—it felt the need to incorporate Catalan. Only seven students study Catalan while the resources for three classes are allocated to it, simply out of the rebranded mission focus of its department.

Similarly, the Middle East, South Asian, and African Studies (MESAAS) Department has shifted its departmental values away from South Indian languages and toward North Indian languages within roughly the last decade. A shrunken Tamil program remains, but Punjabi (through the LRC) and Hindi–Urdu have become two of the faster-growing languages in their respective departments. Meanwhile, the LRC’s programs in the South Indian languages of Kannada and Telugu are no longer offered, despite no significant change worldwide in their numbers of speakers. As goes the department’s interest, so goes the fate of any language program.

MESAAS also provides a fine example of locked resources. Charitos explains that during a bubble—such as the explosion of interest in Russia during the Cold War or Japan in the early 1990s—a university may make the informed decision to employ faculty, even full professors, whose contracts stipulate that they teach a certain language. Then when interest in these languages is no longer so politically crucial, the University retains tenured professors in areas of decreasing academic importance. Sanskrit followed this pattern—the program was at its height a dozen years ago, but even now with an introductory class of only four students, Professor Sheldon Pollock and Assistant Professor Som Dev Vasudeva remain instructors.

Swahili exemplifies a more interdepartmental pull on languages. One of the rising stars of new languages, Swahili dwarfs its sister African languages of Zulu and Wolof in student interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL NATIVE SPEAKERS (in millions)</th>
<th>COLUMBIA STUDENTS ENROLLED (per million native speakers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.365 CHINESE 406 Students</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 SPANISH 770 Students</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>280 ARABIC 201 Students</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 VIETNAMESE 5 Students</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 MODERN GREEK 406 Students</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 YIDDISH 29 Students</td>
<td>17.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Above is listed a sampling of six world languages along with the number of Columbia students studying each language in the Fall 2010 semester.

On the left, the total number of native speakers worldwide is represented with proportional circles—the bigger the circle, the more people speak that language. On the right, the proportion of circles represent a ratio: the number of Columbia students studying each language per million native speakers. The bigger the circle, the better represented the language is among the university’s language learners.

Note that world prevalence is not a good predictor of student enrollment. Languages with fewer speakers globally, like Yiddish and modern Greek, can enjoy a kind of relative popularity at Columbia that more common languages—like Arabic and Vietnamese—do not.

SOURCE: Columbia University Directory of Classes
One might argue that Swahili has three times the total number of speakers of Zulu, but both have approximately the same number of native speakers. But, as Charitos notes, the dominance of Swahili at Columbia, especially recently, is probably best explained by the work of the Earth Institute in East Africa.

“There is a Columbia emphasis on that part of the world, and students are aware of that,” says Charitos. They take note of, seek work with, and generally follow the linguistic prescriptions of larger university entities like the Earth Institute, which have the budgets and prominence to attract them. Small languages that have almost no budget stay alive solely through external money. The diminutive Finnish and Armenian departments are kept alive merely by the grace of donors, the likes of which cannot exist to prop up and propel the fates of every language.

Even if the university could make a central decision about which languages to fund, departments will still drive their own priorities. “It depends on what the department feels its mission is,” says Charitos. “For some, it’s to train their graduate students.” For others it is to ensure that undergraduates are able to better understand a culture, or a political system, or enter a field unrelated to but increasingly dominated by that language. The East Asian Languages and Cultures Department, to these ends, has started to offer at the advanced level courses in Business and Media Chinese. It can be more subtle though—Sam Kohn, CC ’13 and a student of Swahili, Spanish, and Finnish, has noticed a stronger focus on spoken language in Swahili and on reading and writing in Finnish.

Most telling are the stated focuses of the language coordinators themselves; Miller wants his students to “have a good understanding of Russian culture, Russian life, and Russian people,” so his advanced courses include history classes taught in Russian. His attention to linguistic difference also drives him to believe that one cannot lump together even the closely related languages into a singular class. Ukrainian and Russian, fairly close linguistically, are taught as separate classes whereas Hindi and Urdu, which use different scripts and vocabularies are taught as a singular class through MESAAS. “They’re as different as Dutch and German,” says Miller.

Meanwhile in the French department, Hubert-Leibler aims to have students “able to read journalistic and literary texts” and to train graduate students well enough so that they are able to continue in French academia. She believes that focus is why her department’s faculty “teach writing and analytical skills in their advanced courses” more than another department might.

The grad student-centrism of the French department also leads them to teach many of their language classes at multiple levels with graduate student instructors, whereas MESAAS nearly exclusively employs language instructors who often have a better background and need less training in the art of language instruction. Taken together, this translates to the fact that, even were one to find a way of accounting for common fluency standards, of finding the funding and central authority to assure that every language could receive the same level of support and of buttressing courses, the intellectual interests of the department would still hem students in as far as focuses and strengths of teachers and teaching.

True, learning a second language will open doors for students. But with languages driven in every direction by their inherent difficulties for English speakers and by university and departmental goals and politics, the number and size of those doors will vary; some will jam, some will not budge. We become, then, less the global citizens Hubert-Leibler sees the language requirement driving us to become, and more envoys and scions of our departments traveling into a global, but still segmented world.

“This is not just languages. Columbia is a very decentralized place in general.”
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PEACE LOVE & GUACAMOLE
Michael Gallagher, the Sherman Fairchild Conservator in Charge of Paintings Conservation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has spent his career breathing new life into the works of the past. After receiving his degree in studio art, he attended the Hamilton Kerr Institute at the Fitzwilliam Museum at the University of Cambridge, a three-year program in conservation that then accepted only two students per year. Before coming to the Met, he worked at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin, and the National Galleries of Scotland. As an artist, conservator, and Briton native, Michael lends his perspective on New York, museum operations, and sustaining his passion for paintings.

Blue & White: How did you discover conservation and what drew you to the field?

Michael Gallagher: I trained in studio art in the UK and left college not really knowing what to do with a fine arts degree. It was when I was traveling in Italy that I saw a lot of exhibitions where conservation was featured, and from one in particular I came back in high dudgeon. It was the restoration of an equestrian statue. The conservation treatment was really amazing, but I thought they over-glorified its actual role. I came back sort of complaining about it to a friend, and he said, “Have you ever thought about conservation?” And I said, “Oh, I couldn’t do that, it’s all science.” And then it sort of planted a seed—a worm, probably, would be a better description.

When I got back to the UK, I wondered how you do this, how you study it. I rang the National Gallery, which seems a little presumptuous, but I was very lucky. They put me through to someone in Paintings Conservation, and the person I spoke to was patient enough to explain that science is a really integral part of the field, but as were other aspects, and that most people had to play catchup in some area. I think one of the most sensible things she did was suggest that I get a few books, including a set of Science for Conservators. I think she thought, “Let’s see if he gets past this.” And that was how it started.

B&W: What is a typical day like in the studio?

MG: It’s changed a lot over my career. When I worked in Berlin, my entire role there was to turn up and work entirely on the paintings. And that was a great experience, but one I felt was a bit one-note. I actually quite like the diversity here [at the Met] but I get very grumpy if I’m out of the studio for more than a couple weeks!

Well, take last week. On Monday, there was a connoisseurship class, which is when the curators bring in a group of students. Then the Gossart [Man, Myth, and Sensual Pleasures: Jan Gossart’s Renaissance] show—I was taking part in a two-hour presentation with someone else from conservation and the curator. Then we had a visitor from Russia. This isn’t so typical, but I went down to MoMA to see the Matisse exhibition. Last week wasn’t a good week for doing practical work, because there’s e-mails coming in between. I try and block out time to work in the studio. Then today, I was working on an article in here and doing e-mail. It varies like that. Sometimes there’s just reports to be done.

However, I think compared to when I was working in a national institution in the UK, there’s much less administrative work and bureaucracy [here]. Some perfor-
mance indicators are sort of meaningless targets in this field. No one can say if we work on two pictures or if we work on 25 which has been the better year. It depends what the problems are and how they’ve been resolved.

I honestly feel that we should try to capture the interest of as large an entry group as possible. But when that starts to be dragged into a political agenda, it distorts it. It changes—

B&W: It changes the meaning of your work.

MG: It’s a fine line. Some institutions manage to sail along that line really well, and others you go to and you feel like you’ve lost your way or you’ve sold your soul. It’s like when an institution starts to patronize its audience, as though no one’s ever going to come back. If you aim your labels at a smart 14-year-old, what happens when that 14-year-old grows up?

B&W: But you feel like the Met is aiming a little bit higher?

MG: Yes. When I told people I got this job—I was at the National Galleries of Scotland at the time—it was coveted more by curators, because they think the Met is like nirvana. They see that serious scholarship goes on, serious exhibitions are still being programmed here, and they think, “This is why I went into art history.”

B&W: Do you think that sense of seriousness

“The miracle of great paintings is that they’re these simple things turned into visual poetry.”
has something to do with the intellectual culture of New York and the Met’s place in that?

MG: It probably does. I grew up in a small town. Small towns are fine, but there’s not the same intellectual ferment you get in cities like London or New York. There’s an audience here willing to take on the challenge of an exhibition that might not be so mainstream. It’s the responsibility of an institution to keep up that challenge rather than take an easier route.

I’m biased, but I do think the Met’s managed to retain its integrity. With something like the Gossart show, the curator worked on that for five years. It was a commitment on the part of the institution to the cost of doing an intellectual exhibition.

B&W: Do you ever get to integrate technical information into your exhibitions?

MG: There seems to be a move in that direction. It’s clear the public has an interest, and I believe that an institution like us should be curatorially-led. I find the most relevant role of conservation is when the understanding of the work of art is enhanced, rather than it all being about conservation. It’s not always a field that’s well understood, and it doesn’t always lend itself—

B&W: To being understood?

MG: —To sound bite. It tends to get reduced to the genius of recovery, or to some kind of vandalism, and there’s not much in between. Conservation should contribute to a sophisticated understanding, not just a shopping list of materials. The miracle of great paintings is that they’re these simple things turned into visual poetry, and in any discussion of what we do that should be central.

B&W: One of the biggest controversies in the profession is between reconstruction and preservation. How do you balance those two concerns?

MG: I worked on a very large picture once in the National Gallery of Scotland, and the public came in during the entire process. I’m not sure I’d ever do that again. But it was really revelatory to listen—because I had no choice but to listen—to what comments were being made. It’s like you’re on television so people think you can’t hear. You’re working and they talk about you as a disembodied thing. The understanding of what was happening—what was cleaning, what was retouching, and what we do in retouching, which is that we retouch damages—whereas people felt we were brightening, as though we were wholesale repainting. It’s because it’s a slow process, but the impact can be enormous, so it’s difficult to grasp.

In terms of retouching, I always tell people it’s like cancelling out white noise. If it were for a piece of music, it would be so you could hear the original. It isn’t digitally remastering, it’s just getting rid of that hiss of damage. It’s surprising how dominant, especially with a great painting, the remaining original is. Great pictures do rise from the dead!

And fortunately, not every picture that comes through the studio is in a particularly damaged state. Many things come up here to be examined to see if they’re stable to go on loan, or to be examined and researched for questions that may come from curators and art historians in the building.

B&W: But when you do have to retouch an image, it seems that developing technology—infrared spectroscopy, for instance, which allows conservators to analyze pigment composition, or x-ray technology, which allows conservators to see underlying layers of paint—could significantly improve the process.

MG: Conservation is a young field. The sense of a shared agreement about the sets of skills required for the conservator in terms of an understanding of painting technique, an understanding of factors that might cause deterioration—whether it’s the effect of light, or changes in humidity, the solvent action, deterioration of varnishes—that’s all almost postwar.

That being said, it isn’t as though mistakes haven’t been made in the past fifty years. Paintings are not rocket ships. If you’re using really sophisticated technology to ask the wrong questions of a work of art, you can start to go into a manic preservationist mode that is inappropriate for works that have survived many centuries. How
you use technology requires sensitivity and intelligence to ask the right questions and use the right tools. The potential is definitely there to do good, but it doesn’t mean that the potential to do harm has gone away.

**B&W:** How would you characterize the sensitivity that makes a good conservator?

**MG:** I have always thought that if someone came through and thought, “I don’t think he likes pictures,” that would be the most crushing criticism that anyone could level. It sounds really superficial, but when I see people come through who are interested in studying conservation, if they’re more interested in the problems than they are in the works of art, that sets off an alarm bell to me. You want to resolve a problem because you love the work of art and you respect it. You don’t want to just fall in love with solving problems and being clever.

I love my job, and I wouldn’t have been sucked into it if I didn’t find it an exciting field. But I know that one day when conservation isn’t there for me, the pictures will be.

**B&W:** Do you have any favorite projects?

**MG:** It’s been really exciting working on a group of pictures associated with Velasquez. I was in on Sunday, and I was going up the stairs, and I looked down and I saw the Velasquez and Rubens and Del Sarto and I thought, “You know, life isn’t so bad.” I always get mother love for the next thing. Working on the Velasquez from the Frick and the rediscovery of the Velasquez portrait last year have been exciting, but you get sucked into whatever you’re working on.

**B&W:** Like the Velasquez portrait?

**MG:** It was a picture that had come into the collection in the ’20s. It had come in as a Velasquez, but we learned that it had been radically distorted before it was sold by a restoration that attempted to turn what was a life sketch into a finished portrait and was “Old Master-fied”—it killed the picture, really. As the materials that had been used to tone it back aged, it just got more and more dull until it really didn’t register on the wall. Keith Christiansen [Chairman of European Paintings] was always intrigued by the picture, and when I worked on the Frick’s Velasquez, he said it might be a good time to look at this portrait. I did a cleaning test and was really shocked by the level of distortion. I carried on cleaning, and a couple hours later I rang Keith and said he had to come up. That was a very exciting thing to happen. It doesn’t happen very often, and probably will never happen again. Velasquez is such a wonderfully painterly artist that it’s very exciting to be involved in something like that.

**B&W:** Do you feel like you’ve come to any new understanding of Velasquez, or any other artists, through working so closely with these pieces?

**MG:** You get some insights. It’s very tempting to think you get insight into the person, but with any art form you have to be really careful about thinking you understand or know the artist. You can start to project who they were, and again and again you’re proven totally wrong. Sometimes a body of literature that has been amassed about—well, an old master—can start to resonate with things you see in the work, and you do feel like there’s some connection. Certainly, if you work on a number of related things, aspects of technique start to become familiar. But again, I always think you need to approach that with a degree of humility.

When I first came to New York, I was very naïve. When you’d say you needed something, everyone said, “Oh, I’ve got the best”—the best cobbler, the best dentist. Gradually it dawned on me that everyone’s choice was the best. And they want you to be the best: to swing in with your silver-tipped cane and say, “It couldn’t possibly be a Titian!” I think you have to avoid that—the comic, absurd side of it. When it comes to complex issues, they are just that. They need reflection, they need discussion. Sometimes a gut instinct is good, but then you have to analyze what’s creating that instinct.

**B&W:** Your life isn’t *The Da Vinci Code*, basically.

**MG:** Yes. But I think often people would like it to be.
Hi Pumpkin,

It’s Halloween! What an appropriate time for your nickname! We’re not doing decorations this year because your father (accidentally) burned the Halloween box. I think he was trying to weld something. He’s fine, he only singed an eyebrow, which was a little too bushy to begin with (silver lining!). The fire almost spread to the other holiday decoration boxes but he contained it, thank goodness. The Virgin Mary’s eyes melted though, so we’re going to put tiny sunglasses on her for Christmas.

Ohhh your father. Where to start? I know it’s not a mother’s place to gripe but Jesus Christ he is a pain in my you know what (ass). We’re watching TV and I do the thing and then he, you know, with the remote and the dog and there’s a football and I just... I can’t anymore. At the risk of too much information, we’re not doing it (sex). He’s about as flaccid as Uncle Bob is bald.

But back to Halloween, the topic of this correspondence. What a fun word, that correspondence. Sounds like Columbia, if you say the first two letters. Anyway, I’m going to be a witch this year. I know, I know, I’m a witch every year, but now I’m a Christine O’Donnell witch! Isn’t that great? As far as the outfit goes, I’ll just be wearing the usual with an American flag pin. I am very excited. Your father’s going to dress as a ghost. He’s using one of our sheets to make the costume. I don’t mind it, it’s the most action that sheet’s seen in years (grr).

So I’m about halfway through this Chardonnay, which reminds me, are you voting? You should vote, pumpkin. Do you need an absentee ballot? Are you registered in New York? My memory’s waning by the gulfful. But I find I’m more expressive with a little bit of vino, so I say let’s go! As long as the wine is a-flowin’, so are these words!

Oh, Jesus. Jasper’s humping again. Not me this time, thank God (though I suppose beggars can’t be choosers), but your father’s new beer cooler. It looks great with his mid-life crisis hair cut (bangs). You know, it’s funny until someone gets hurt. Like grandmammy did last weekend. Not on the beer cooler, thank god, but Jasper about humped her leg off. I mean there was a lot of back and forth, pumpkin. No one needed it. No one asked for it. No one wanted it, least of all grandmammy. But there Jasper was, just riding her.

The point is, you should really vote.

Which reminds me, I’ve been reading the Spectator to figure out what’s going on in your neck of the woods, and what is the deal with those long lines in the East Campus dormitory? Unbelievable. I’ve seen soup kitchen lines shorter than that. I would drive over there right now and give those guards a piece of my mind but you shouldn’t THINK and drive! Ha-ha!

Oop, almost f5 o’clockadoodle doo. Gotta mail this litter correspondence if I want to get too bfore the ahlw’s eve! Evertme i whatch a Cialis commerciell i tink of thhe lif i vcouls have. Bt iweouldn’t wantto have twoo bathrudbes on a pruch. Why nothvre onel bath-rude andkso both coupls couldk b inthesale onek! that is more sexycle.

Doyour hwww!

Love,

mommomm ♣
In an nontraditional marketing move, author and Columbia professor Gary Shteyngart attempted to attract a different set of readers to his summer release, *Super Sad True Love Story*. Rather than courting subscribers of the *New York Review of Books*, Shteyngart released a series of videos aimed more at the Gawker set. An interviewed Columbia student shares that her favorite class with Shteyngart was “his seminar on how to behave at a *Paris Review* party”—smash cut to Shteyngart swirling wine in a plastic cup and commenting, “I do so much prefer early Ian McEwan to late Ian McEwan,” while his students, including James Franco, imitate him.

It’s not just Shteyngart who can’t read in the dystopian future world of *Love Story*, where books are antiquated relics. There are riots in Central Park, our Chinese creditors are getting fed up, and everyone is entirely dependent on a sinister descendant of the iPhone, the äppärät, which displays an individual’s vital stats, including hotness and fuckability. Yet, even in Shteyngart’s world, Barnard, and presumably Columbia, persists. So welcome to future Columbia circa, let’s say... next Tuesday.

First, our äppärät will have to have a special Columbia setting recalibrating hotness to fit the standards of our academic bubble. A student glancing up from his perpetually low fuckability rating will pass a new Columbia landmark—the rotating tombs of Foner and Delbanco. Before they pass away, the two professors will have commissioned special spinning sepulchers from the engineering school, ensuring that they will be rolling in their graves for the rest of time.

This student will now continue on to University Reading. Columbia, ever-preoccupied with preserving lost arts, will have finally given up getting people to care about the musical stylings of Josquin des Prez and shifted its attention to preserving the art of literacy. The syllabus will include the seminal works of the last era of literate humanity, Atlas Shrugged and tutorials on the Julia Roberts’ Eat, Pray, Love iPhone app.

After class, our student will go grab coffee (some things, thankfully, never change). IAB is closest, but the building, now a bomb shelter, requires a retina scan to enter. The student proffers his eye only to be blinded by the always-broken light (some things, not thankfully, never change).

Our one-eyed student stumbles back across campus toward Butler, passing the Center for Career ReEducation, and almost misses Columbia’s main financier, Glenn Beck. Now that Columbia’s endowment portfolio consists solely of Goldline gold, hawked by Beck during commercial breaks on Fox News, there are obvious improvements to the campus, such as the Low Plaza Digital Sundial.

Butler, taking a cue from Low, is now also book-less, and consists solely of Butler Cafe and 209. Our student, still singed, gets himself a latte and sinks down into one of the blue chairs. He pulls out his äppärät and waits. Like everyone else in the room, he isn’t doing any work. The many flatscreen TVs in the former library display the end of life as we know it—ROTC forcing freshman COÖPers up a mountain, the Upper West Side’s Wal*Mart grand opening, and the 1 train skipping from 242nd Street to 14th Street. Unfazed, our student pokes his nose over the rim of his device at his Butler companions, waiting for the inevitable: it will get later and later, people will care less and less, and finally (hopefully before the predicted firestorm) his fuckability rating will go up. •
Take the 6 to Pelham Bay

*The Blue & White visits the Bronx Riviera*

**By Claire Sabel**

The 6 train emerges from beneath East 139th street, rising in languid arcs above the Bronx. It crosses over the Bronx River and the newly completed and still-manicured Concrete Plant Park, a renovated abandoned cement factory. A pair of children shriek with Disney-inspired delight at the announcement of “Castle Hill,” and an older man patiently clasps his collapsible bicycle. The train proceeds northeast until it reaches its final destination: Pelham Bay Park, the massive green space that draws both the kids and the bikers.

Pelham Bay Park is perhaps best known to outsiders for lending its name to John Godey’s 1974 novel *The Taking of Pelham 123*, the story of a subway train that leaves Pelham Bay Station at 1:23 pm and is hijacked beneath Midtown.

But today, the pace of a police thriller seems incongruous with Pelham Bay’s tranquility. An expansive, middle-class neighborhood, its residential streets betray its physical and ideological distance from Manhattan’s tumultuous density. Brick colonials and two-story Tudors add a suburban touch and house the neighborhood’s mix of elderly couples and new families. In recent years, the once predominantly Jewish and Italian-American area has become more diverse with the influx of Hispanic, black and Eastern European families.

While a third of Pelham’s population commutes roughly half an hour into the city to work in service, construction, or maintenance industries, a stroll through Pelham hints at the peaceful seclusion of a true suburb. On a recent Sunday afternoon, the streets were empty except for one elderly German woman hoping to find customers interested in contents of her bulging garage.

The unique feature distinguishing Pelham Bay from both the inner city and further-flung suburbs is the park itself. It is the city’s largest park property at more than 2,700 acres and covers more than three times the area of Central Park. But from the neighborhood, it’s easy to miss that expanse of green lying just beyond I-95. A small Parks Service office is the only hint of the undiscovered acres of woodland that line the Bronx’s edge.

Defining the neighborhood almost as much as the Park is I-95, which cuts a wide swath through Pelham Bay to carry hundreds of thousands of cars in and out of the city each day. The 6-lane thoroughfare courses a level down from the street, dividing the subway station and the edge of the neighborhood from the park. Above, the elevated subway line straddles Westchester Avenue, a main artery of the neighborhood lined with local businesses.

Pelham’s subdued character makes it seem all the more cloistered when one realizes its proximity to Co-op City, a cooperative housing development for some 50,000 New Yorkers. Rising as many as 30 stories high, the physically imposing development contains three shopping centers, six schools, a power plant, and a firehouse. Its homogeneous concrete form dominates I-95 and the skyline alike, reinforcing Co-Op City’s self-contained autonomy.

Despite urban planning’s oft-sterile feel, Pelham preserves its character. The neighborhood is well-worn and characterized by generations of New Yorkers, not by a development committee. Shingled roofs are visible walking down Pelham’s quiet avenues, not high-rises, and on the overpass that leads back to the station, neither the monolithic eyesores nor the rush of traffic detract from the satisfaction of the vista stretching out to the Sound.

*Illustration by Liz Lee*
At first it seemed innocuous enough: a couscous-like, gluten-free, and protein-rich alternative to rice. What damage could it possibly cause? Formerly confined to the lower shelves of Whole Foods and other “informed” markets, within the past few years quinoa (KEEN-wha, not ki-NO-ah, folks) has blossomed. It made its mainstream debut in supermarkets’ premade salads, rapidly rose to prominence in university dining halls across the nation, and now regularly appears on both family dinner tables and the fine china of Manhattan’s swankiest restaurants. It is more than a passing trend—this is no mere bubble tea. Quinoa, it seems, is here to stay. But in the face of the grain’s meteoric rise, one cannot help but ask: how did it happen?

Quinoa is classified as a member of the goosefoot family of plants, and despite appearances, is a close relative of spinach. Botanically speaking, the plant’s edible seeds are “pseudograins,” meaning that while it is not actually a grain, it can be used like one, and eaten either boiled or ground into flour. For this reason, it has long enjoyed a well-deserved cachet amongst those afflicted with gluten allergies. But the gluten-free crowd alone cannot account for the recent upswing in the miracle grain’s popularity.

Vegetarians and those more cognizant of their protein intake have turned towards the ringed, Saturn-like grain. Unusual for a single plant, quinoa has a perfect balance of amino acids, making it a complete protein. Olivia Burke, CC ’12, an organizer of Columbia’s Community Supported Agriculture program and a resident of the veggie-friendly, famously earth-loving Potluck House, “wholeheartedly endorses” quinoa. And why not? The grain boasts high fiber and iron counts. Crowds are still swarming toward this product, even though it is comparatively more expensive than its more mainstream grain competitors, such as rice and barley.

The evangelists of healthy eating at Columbia Dining Services have in the last few years taken a cue from the earthy-crunchy set and begun incorporating quinoa into dining hall menus. Columbia, perhaps more so than anywhere else, displays the superfood’s success.

In 2008, Dining Services used a respectable 200 pounds of quinoa. By the next year that number had quadrupled to 800 pounds, and projections for 2010 estimate that an astounding 1000 pounds of quinoa will have been eaten by year’s end—all in addition to the 360 pounds of quinoa-based breakfast blend that, mixed with yogurt and fruit, has become wildly popular amongst John Jay diners.

This extensive North American intake might surprise the Incans, the first consumers of quinoa. In fact, the word “quinoa”—along with “jerky”—is one of only two words in the English language derived from Quechua, the indigenous Andean tongue. And lest you think it’s overly colonialist that the only two words English took from the destroyed Incan culture pertain to food, you should also know Columbia just started offering Quechua as a foreign language this year. Now you can nourish your stomach and mind with all things Incan.

On paper the grain’s surge in popularity makes sense. It takes a mere 20 minutes to make and is incredibly good for you. In retrospect, quinoa seems to have been destined for greatness since its days in the Andes. But should we fear a possible health crisis from our newly elevated intake? Quinoa devotees are so loyal, so passionate, it’s as if the grain is cultivating them. Just remember, there’s a reason the Incans aren’t around anymore.
Measure for Measure

Blindsided, 1587

After the bend he tried to wend home and turned
and heard a tabby scraping his reflection
from the window. There’s the dense grey eye
and miserly sun that casts a strand of light,
pure in the fog. Curse this scene in this old cat.
Leaks are slow and deep, green plums
trying to retain escape—he still sees the orchard.
When Phillip lost the fleet, when the fox ate
from the garden, scents and gales stayed.
The miser bares a stop by the door, a new sweep—pure.
A stop, a door: Yellow-legged men haul cabbage in,
he’s learning and relearning to chew grey.
It’s mad like a swollen cavern of dome,
And he makes a share of blotches nude,
Scratching a tabby’s rude tick-riddled ears.

—Mali Scott
THE YEAR OF THE PIG

From the belly of the blessed pig
I was born pink with tumor, fat with grief,
unwrapped from between her intestines,

her three stomachs, their lovely rot,
from the cradle of the sliced halves
of her buttocks, and covered with bloody jelly

they pulled me out by the roots, nerves, hair
still sweetly dripping with entrails,
into the room, womb emptied, then

the damp nervous doctor, the nervous nurse
both in black coats drooped together by a wall
looked for ropes, hooks, skins, found finally

death in the heavy tits and sour treasures
of my brilliant sow, who had held and endured
that sick crystal, glittering clog

wound inside her with small violent strings,
the gem I’d sought as I sang climbing
into her eternal eating jowls: the song

of her I cannot name or love.

—Tian Bu
SAY CHEESE

An adult, leading a group of what looks like young high school students onto Revson Plaza, points at statue of Bellerophon Taming Pegasus:
“That’s modern art...”

Points at the statue of the Tightrope Walker
“Look, this is modern art too! You can take a picture if you want.”

NUKED

“I can’t believe it. She decided to put the ENTIRE pumpkin in the microwave.”

A father to his child in Oren’s:
“If only every meal were cookies—but it can’t be, ’cause you’ll get sick and your skin will fall off.”

PARDONS ET PETITE DEJEUNER

Saturday morning on the patio outside John Jay, a French frosh approaches an American gal: “I have been reminded of what I did last night, and I apologize.”

BETA PLEDGE CLASS 2019

Small child on Broadway, pointing to liquor store:
“Mama, let’s go there!”

WANTED: GPS

Guy on phone: “Hey, I’m right in the middle of campus, why don’t you meet me at that round thing, whatever it’s called.”

PHILOSOPHER MILFS

CC student 1: “Your mom is the ideal form of prostitution.”
CC student 2: “Well, if there were an ideal form of slut, it would be your mom!”
CC student 1: “Your mom thinks she lives in the ideal city-state because she is shared by all the men...”

Older brother’s advice to his freshman sis, delivered over a cup at Hungarian:
“Enjoy yourself, and you will probably be diagnosed with mono before you graduate.”

The latter may in fact be caused by the former...

THE TIMES OF THEIR LIVES...

One drunk freshman to another: “Dude, this is fucking awesome. I’m not even gonna BRUSH my TEETH tonight.”

Professor Herbert Sloan, during his “U.S. History to Civil War” lecture:
Prof. Sloan: “Does anyone know the year your state was born?”
Uncomfortable silence.
“Come on, guys... isn’t this something you learn in elementary school? In third grade?”

Uncomfortable silence. Then, dismayed, and with gravity... “This is depressing. The people who are worried that America’s going to Hell in a hand basket would be only too convinced by this demonstration.”

...1776 is not the right answer?

Schist...It happens!