

Lifestyle: Spring fashion, plus Nadeau's dinner at the Pine Street Inn
Wheels: A special section on car and motorcycle care

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In Arts:

Classical contretemps

*Lloyd Schwartz on
the BSO and
l'affaire Vanessa*



Bustin' in Behind the big prison raid

by Michael Matza

The "operational plan" was as detailed as any ever conceived by officers of the law. No sirens. No blue lights. No radio transmissions of any kind. The convoy of more than 50 state-police cruisers, property vans, and buses filled with correctional officers swooped down on the Framingham prison on January 6 in a kind of dead silence — and in the dead of night. Surprise, after all, was the essence of the thing.

Earlier, at the MCI-Walpole Training Center, and at the State Police Academy just miles down the road from MCI-Framingham, the 220 men and the handful of women assigned to "Project Upper Crust" assembled for briefings. Between formal presentations about their roles in what the Middlesex District Attorney's office would later describe as "the largest coordinated law-enforcement operation in the history of the Commonwealth," some of the troopers checked their riot gear. Cops assigned to the search-and-response teams discussed strategy and awaited orders from designated team leaders and unit commanders. Following discussions about the objectives of their mission, personnel were supplied with 60 pairs of handcuffs, six shields, 18 flashlights, six metal detectors, nine "security" screwdrivers, and probes — law-enforcement tools to be used in the largest shakedown raid on a prison population in Massachusetts history.

At 11 p.m., female troopers were briefed on strip-search techniques. At 1:30 a.m., "pre-deployment personnel" entered the institution, established portable-radio contact with a

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Documenting the Duke

*Michael Ullman on
Ellington and his sidemen*

Plus after-the-war games:

Vietnam and its veterans in drama, art, and books

School for scandal

Billy Masiello takes to the lectern

by Charles P. Pierce

Yeah, that psych test was a bitch, no doubt about it. And you come to the union and the coffee's cold, and someone's unplugged the Pac-Man, and all the pool tables are taken. Nothing to do but think about how badly you punted that essay question. Damn Freud. Two hours until the next class. Serious time to kill here.

What the hell, check the bulletin board. Camelot '82? Nope, just a dinner dance for alums who went here when the place was still called Worcester State Teacher's College, the way it's carved over the door to the administration building. That was your father's time, long before anyone conceived of the idea of Worcester State College. WSC, indeed. Whoopie State, chuckle your friends from Assumption or the Cross. Further on down the board, how about Spring Fest? Forget it, it's 29 degrees outside. Someone's holding a 25-hour volleyball marathon, and they hung the poster over the subscription blanks for *Sports Illustrated* and *Popular Mechanics*. Which

doesn't matter, because all the blanks that are left have been filled out with names like Jimi Hendrix and Carl Yastrzemski anyway. There's always the WSC Lenten Liturgy, but let's be serious here.

Wait, the Center for the Study of Constitutional Government people are having a lecture today. Who is it? Who cares? It's two hours, that's what it is, and beats all hell out of watching five amateurs cut canals in the green felt of the pool tables.

Hey, there he is. The short guy over there wearing the gray suit with the bellbottoms that seem to be sucking up the heels of his shoes. He's sitting with a bunch of Boston reporters. A couple of big guys come up the ramp toting TV cameras and tripods. He waves at them. "Hey, Mr. Celebrity," shout two women. Who is that guy? You wander into the auditorium, and find a seat to the left of the cameras. There's a good shot you might be on TV.

Out in the cafeteria, the guest lecturer is

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Grey's Sacred Mirror series: "Caucasian Male," "Psychic Energy System," and "The Nervous System"

Grey's anatomy

by Kenneth Baker

The human figure continues to be the most fecund subject in the history of Western painting, but original treatments of it have become increasingly rare in 20th-century art. We might see in Alex Grey's "Sacred Mirrors" (at the Stux Gallery through April 24) an ambitious attempt to invent a new use for the human form in painting. I say "might" because I know that some people will find in Grey's art little more than documentation of a personal obsession. At times I see it that way too.

Grey's work is basically realistic in style but extreme in other respects: extremely fastidious, programmatic in its consistency, disarmingly didactic. Six of the paintings in the present show look pretty conventional, for they are simply frontal nude figures of black, white, and Oriental men and women. Two considerations make these pictures less straightforward than they appear at first. One is the show's title, "Sacred Mirrors," which tells us we are to understand the verisimilitude of Grey's

uses of black in Spanish art — that of Zurbarán and Goya for example. The reference is especially apparent in the picture that presents us with a full, standing skeleton. This canvas seems to embody the grim focus on mortality that recurs in Spanish painting, whereas the other paintings in the series have more in common with medical textbook illustrations (a gifted draftsman, Grey sometimes does freelance medical illustration).

The power of these images derives in part from the eyeballs that Grey has left in his figures, even in the one that shows us the nervous system, with nearly everything else removed. When you notice the eyeballs, you realize that the realism Grey (and implicitly every other "realist") adheres to ignores the difference between the living and the dead. Those staring eyeballs, which seem to gape with awe or horror where their lids and sockets have been removed, fool us for a moment into thinking we are looking at images of living persons, when in fact several of these figures have been subjected

to dissections no human being could survive.

As if in compensation for his representations of the body flayed and laid open, Grey has done four canvases envisioning the body as represented by sacred and esoteric (Eastern) symbolism. The workmanship in these less literal images is practically fanatical, for Grey has tried to render all the forces that define the living body's field of energy. This group of works passes abruptly from the realistic to the visionary.

Once we've gotten over our initial amazement at Grey's technical control, his knowledge of anatomy and mysticism, and the sheer density of labor these canvases record, some philosophical problems emerge. Clearly, Grey's paintings go beyond the limits of traditional pictorial realism, at least formally, but he does not seem to have resolved the problem of the materialism implicit in realistic representation. You sense this inasmuch as you find the images of the body's physical systems so much more convincing than the evocations of its intangible essence. Representation is seductive as long as we don't see it for what it is, and it becomes really conspicuous in the context of the images as signifying direct reflection. The other consider-

ation is the presence of other paintings in the show, paintings that take the idea of the picture plane as mirror far beyond the limits of "realism."

The "Sacred Mirrors" are mounted so that their bottom edges are at floor level. Each is about four by seven feet, so that the figure in each is about life-size. Standing in front of each frontal figure, you can feel the parallel between your own posture and that of the picture's subject. This sensation is not very significant until you come to the images in which Grey has torn away the figure's skin or musculature or major organs, or the skeleton itself. Your first glimpse of the more visceral images in the series will be a shock, yet there is a kind of joke lurking in Grey's ostensibly grotesque revelations of the body's innards. We might see in these paintings a satire on the claims of realist art to depict clear vision: here we get realism pushed to the point of x-ray vision.

Each of the "Sacred Mirrors" presents a full figure on an uninflected black ground of indefinite visual depth. This use of black is the obvious framing solution, yet it also recalls the "Sacred Mirrors" only when the artist tries to make it describe invisible life forces. In the more

literal, visceral images in the series, the credibility of what we see is our experience of morbidity.

Now morbidity is a big issue in human existence, and one that art usually tends to skirt, so Grey distinguishes himself in having taken it on at all. But he does not seem to realize that the style of his work inevitably renders the most morbid images in the series the most powerful. This is so because pictorial representation is best suited to delineating a literal vision of reality, and the literal vision of embodiment is inflexibly morbid. Yet what other pictorial conventions could Grey have chosen to accomplish the purposes of the present series of works?

There is a strange quality of innocence to Grey's art that adds to its interest, at least for a while. First of all, the didactic intention of the "Sacred Mirrors" is so far out of step with recent and current art fashions as to make you wonder whether the artist is serious. Your doubts about his earnestness dissipate once you perceive the amount of labor that's gone into his canvases: nobody works that hard for irony's sake. There is something admirable in Grey's intention to make representation affect directly and expansively our sense of our own and others' reality. Yet can he really believe that these paintings will accomplish, or even make possible, such a broadening of spiritual awareness?

Part of the fascination of Grey's paintings is that they are so close to the basic questions we all have about art. Can a painting actually affect someone's attitudes toward anything besides painting? Does pictorial representation really cut through the prosaic monologue of mundane consciousness and achieve a communication more direct than words? Is representation dependent on the relationship of a picture to its title? (Would we understand Grey's images if we didn't know they were called "Sacred Mirrors"?) Although you won't arrive at the answers to these questions by looking at Grey's paintings, you should see his work, because there's nothing in contemporary art like it. □

Crossing the moat

by Kathie Min

The first real castle I ever saw was in the small Northern English town where I attended college for a year. It was made of gray stone and was covered with moss — a cold, forbidding fortress that was actually used as a jail. A far cry from the gleaming castles of white and gold I had imagined. I was, nonetheless, able to see in the cold stone the magic and romance of Camelot.

The American fascination with turrets and spires, moats and drawbridges, is escapism. From the fairy-tale castle that Tinkerbell used to fly over every Sunday night on Walt Disney to the sophistication of Dungeons and Dragons played by undergraduates on computer terminals, the myth of the castle has been Americanized.

John Hays Hammond, the inventor of remote control, was a lover of castles. In 1929, he built his own overlooking the sea on the rocky shores of Cape Ann. Hammond's castle and the medieval collection it houses is a monument to American fantasy and to the eclecticism of the American collector. Medieval, Romanesque, Gothic, and Renaissance objects reside within an architectural hodgepodge of French, German, Italian, and English styles.

Currently on display at Hammond Castle (which has been a museum since Hammond's death in 1965) is an exhibit called, "Castles: An Enduring Fantasy."

The exhibit claims to explore both the myths and realities of castles in Europe and the US, but as the title suggests, it does better with the myths. (Real castles were cold and drafty, with no indoor plumbing, and one stood an excellent chance of contracting bubonic plague.) The exhibit, which is divided into the medieval, Gothic revival, and "Popular Explosion" periods, features pieces from all over the country. Among those who loaned objects are the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Cooper-Hewitt, the Worcester Art Museum, and Walt Disney Studios.

The great hall of Hammond Castle is the showplace for much of the Middle Ages display. The hall itself resembles a medieval cathedral, with its reproduction of the central section of a stained-glass window from Chartres cathedral and a huge organ that Hammond himself built.

In feudal Europe, castles were fortresses that needed to be strong to resist attack. But aside from this practical business of defense, the castle was romanticized as a metaphor of love. The most notable pieces on display in the hall, illustrating both aspects of castles, are a German suit of armor from the 16th century and a carved ivory casket lid from the 14th century depicting a siege on the castle of love.

The strongest part of the exhibit is the section dealing with the Gothic revival. The 18th-



century rekindling of interest in the chivalric past paved the way for writers like Sir Walter Scott and Mary Shelley and artists like those of the Hudson River School.

One room of the castle has been made to resemble the library of Horace Walpole, the 18th-century writer who helped restore the Gothic style to architecture as well as literature. His home, Strawberry Hill, is a Gothic monstrosity that provided Walpole with the inspiration for his *Castle of Otranto* — the first Gothic novel. In addition to this book, the exhibit includes early editions of *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. Whereas Sir Walter Scott invoked the adventure and glory of the chivalric tradition, Shelley and Bram Stoker used gloomy castles as backdrops for horror and suspense.

Artists like Thomas Cole and Jasper Cropsey were part of the 19th-century Hudson River School that journeyed to Europe and returned to paint landscapes

that were a curious mixture of American wilderness and European battlements swathed in romantic pink light. In Thomas Cole's "Mediterranean Coast Scene with Tower," a ruin of a castle looks out over the sea. Even as ruins, castles have mythic power as symbols of the impermanence of man's creations and the romance of his vision.

The Popular Explosion section ranges from the 19th century to the present day. It features work by artists like Maxfield Parrish and Walt Disney, writers like those who formed the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, and American and European aristocrats like Hammond who built castles of their own design.

The advent of the Industrial Revolution brought with it an increasing enthusiasm for a idealized and simple past, and the castle became the symbol of dreams and love amid decay. As technology continues to make the world more efficient and less romantic, the symbol persists. □

The euphoric expression on the face of the girl in Maxfield Parrish's "The Dinkie-Bird," as she swings in front of a castle in the clouds, conjures a languorous world where dreams come true.

Photographers of modern castles show how this popular myth translates into stone and mortar. Neuschwanstein, the castle that Ludwig II of Bavaria built in the late 19th century, is an absurd egomaniacal fantasy of gold and sparkling white set into a small alp. In the US, the rich imitated, embellished, dismantled, and brought over castles. They had no real history of their own but were rich enough to import a sense of the past, stone by stone.

Hammond Castle itself, if not a typical robber-baron fortress, is a variation of the genre. My favorite room contains no loan exhibits. This was the courtyard, which Hammond intended to convey the feeling of a town square. Each fade is taken from a different European setting; one is from 15th-century Amiens (France); another is from 12th-century Ravello (Italy).

In the center is a simulated Roman impluvium with columns and a third-century Roman sarcophagus. The courtyard is enclosed by a greenhouse-like ceiling, and hibiscus and other plants thrive here. The overall effect is delightfully confusing and reminiscent of the garden in the Gardner Museum — not coincidentally, as Hammond and Gardner were contemporaries and friends. The exhibit closes on April 30, but Hammond Castle, like its older European predecessors, will no doubt endure for centuries. □