

Natural Selections

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

Markus Library Reopens with New Study Areas and a New Staff Member

JOHN BORGHİ

To walk into the Rita and Frits Markus Library today is to enter both an elegant space for members of the Rockefeller community to research and study and an establishment ready to meet the information needs of a twenty-first century research institution. After passing by the security desk in Founder's Hall, visitors to the newly renovated library can either proceed down the stairs to the quiet study spaces and collaborative research areas located on levels A and B or up the stairs to the historic second floor reading room. In addition to the significant physical improvements, this latest renovation also marks a development in library services that reflects advancements in scientific inquiry on campus and in the broader research community.

During the renovations, which began in 2011, library services were continuously maintained from several cramped rooms on the seventeenth floor of Weiss. Now, with all renovations complete, the library finally has a physical space to match the goals of its staff—for the library to serve as the beating heart of knowledge and intellectual curiosity on campus. Accessible twenty-four hours a day with a Rockefeller ID, the library boasts an array of out-of-the-way study spaces and rooms equipped with projectors and computer monitors, designed to facilitate small group collaboration. In the centerpiece of the renovated library, the historic second floor reading room, visitors will find not only banks of computers, the circulation desk staffed by one of the library's experienced staff members, and a significant portion of the library's

impressive collection of research material, but will also gain a sense of the university's rich history of scientific inquiry and discovery. In the new café, adjacent to the reading room, visitors will not only find a space for casual conversation and relaxation, but also that device most paramount to the advancement of science: a coffee machine.

The origins of the library's collection predate even the construction of Rockefeller's first permanent laboratories. In 1903, while observing the activity of major European research laboratories, Simon Flexner and Christian Herter spent the entirety of the budget allocated for books for the library on scientific journals. Far from simply a collection of physical reference materials, the renovated library is set to offer a breadth of resources to research faculty, post-docs, and students. In addition to providing access to the databases of full-text electronic journal articles likely used by every researcher on campus, the library is also ready to provide access to the new, more highly functional faculty publi-

cations database, the DSpace repository for scientific documents and data, and information on The Rockefeller University's collection of historical scientific instruments.

Beyond simply providing access to these resources, the library is also ready to now offer a more proactive form of research support than ever before. In the coming months, library staff members will offer personal instruction on the effective use of web-based databases and will endeavor to connect more fully with the other resources available to researchers at Rockefeller. Through the newly created Science Informationist staff position, the library will also begin to provide knowledge management support based on a model pioneered at the National Institutes of Health. The newly hired Science Informationist (who also happens to be the author of this article) comes to the library with a deep knowledge of neuroscience, one of The Rockefeller University's major research areas, and will work with area laboratories to relieve the burden caused by the ever increasing amount of information, relevant and otherwise, made available to scientists.

Standing in the middle of campus, the renovated library not only reflects Rockefeller's past and future as an outstanding research institution but also aims to fully support all ongoing research through its rich resources and to develop models of proactive knowledge management. Come for the study areas and the coffee, and stay to indulge your intellectual curiosity with the staff trained to help you do so effectively and efficiently. ☉



PDA Corner

ALESSIA DEGLINCERTI AND BRYAN UTTER

Much of the PDA efforts over the past few months focused on the launch of a new Student/Postdoc Summer Seminar Series. The Summer Seminar Series provided postdocs and graduate students the opportunity to present their work in front of the Rockefeller community. The Series took place every other Thursday at 4:00 p.m. and ran between June 20 and August 22. There was an informal wine & cheese reception following the talks that allowed the scientific discussion to continue beyond the allotted presentation time. We would like to thank all of the speakers, the faculty sponsors who hosted the seminars, and all of those who participated for making the series such a great success. We plan to make this seminar series a recurring event in future summers, so stay tuned for more information if you would like to participate!

In addition to the Summer Series, the PDA has been working hard to organize the annual postdoc retreat. This year, the retreat will take place on September 17-18, 2013 at the Water's Edge Resort and Spa in Westbrook, CT on the Connecticut shoreline. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Ruslan Medzhitov, the David W. Wallace Professor

of Immunobiology at Yale University and HHMI Investigator. Dr. Medzhitov's research focuses on the areas of inflammation and infection biology, as well as mechanisms of autoimmunity and allergy. Our program will also include other guest speakers to participate in a panel discussion on "The Future of Funding in Academia." Of course, there will be ample time for postdoc talks, as well as opportunities for socializing.

The summer was also a great time to meet new people and reconnect with old friends. The PDA sponsored a summer party in the Faculty Club on August 8 and co-sponsored the Tri-Institutional Picnic on Roosevelt Island on June 2. Additional Tri-Institutional events will be scheduled in the near future. We hope to see you there to mix and mingle with our neighbors from across the street.

In other news, the PDA and the Housing Department worked together to begin a new apartment sharing policy for postdocs who live on campus. This policy allows postdocs to share two- or three-bedroom apartments, based on availability. If you are looking for a roommate, sign up on the online form available through the Housing Office. For more information on the policy, please contact the

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Housing Office.

Finally, the PDA is happy to welcome Alessia Deglincerti as a new member of the PDA Board. If you are also interested in serving on the PDA Board, please contact us at pda@rockefeller.edu. Becoming a PDA Board member is an excellent way to contribute to the improvement of our community while gaining valuable leadership experience.

To stay up-to-date on the latest news, join our Facebook group at "The Rockefeller PDA." ®

Football (The American Kind)

AILEEN MARSHALL

Have you ever wondered what your lab mates are talking about when they discuss Sunday's football game every Monday morning? Or have you seen a game on television and tried to follow it? Have no fear, football is a very exciting and entertaining sport that can be enjoyed by all. The season just started on Labor Day weekend, so here are some "Cliff's Notes" to help you enjoy the game.

For those who are not familiar with the game, it is played on a 100-yard-long field, with every 10 yards numbered. At each end of the field is a 10-yard-long "end zone." The last yard line on each end of the field is called the "goal line." Goal posts are at the back of each end zone. Each game is divided into four 15-minute quarters, with a "halftime" period after the second quarter. Each team defends its half of the field. The object of the game is to get the oblong-shaped ball into the opponent's end zone and score points.

The game begins with a "kickoff"—one team kicking the ball towards the opposite end zone. The position of the ball on the field at the beginning of each play is called the "line of scrimmage," where the ball is placed after the last play ended. Usually a play starts with a "snap," in which a player on the offensive team snaps the ball to the "quarterback," the pivotal position. The quarterback can either throw the ball (a "pass") to a teammate, or a "receiver," or hand off the ball to a teammate (a "running back") to run with it. The offense is allowed four tries, or "downs," to move the ball ten yards. After the team advances ten yards, they are rewarded with another four downs. If they fail to move the ball ten yards by fourth down, they lose possession of the ball to the other team (a "turnover.")

A play in which the ball is kicked between the goal posts is called

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a “field goal” and earns three points. Running with the ball into the end zone, or throwing the ball to a teammate who catches it in the end zone, scores a “touchdown,” worth six points. After a touchdown, the team is allowed to kick from the 2-yard line through the goal posts for one “extra point.” All this time the opposing team has its defensive players on the field to stop the advance. They do this by hitting, or “tackling,” the other team; or by catching, or “intercepting,” the ball.

American football is a derivative of rugby. It started in colleges in the 1880s. The game was so rough that in 1905, eighteen college players died from injuries. This led to better rules and equipment to protect the players. Professional games started in the Midwest in the early 1900s.

Professional leagues have come and gone, but in the 1960s, two professional leagues existed, the American Football League (AFL) and the National Football League (NFL). The first match up of these two leagues was called the AFL-NFL World Championship Game, played on January 15, 1967. This later became known as Super Bowl I, as that was the name that the media and the public used. The two leagues merged later that year to form the current National Football League, the NFL, which consists of the two conferences, the American (AFC) and the National Football Conferences (NFC). The champions of these two conferences play each other in the Super Bowl.

The Super Bowl is a championship match of the two best teams after five months of football, including pre-season. The Super Bowl has long been one of the most watched television shows, last year viewed by almost 134 million in this country alone. It is broadcast in 234 countries in thirty-two languages.

Vince Lombardi was the head coach of the Green Bay Packers when they won the first two Super Bowls. After his death in 1970, the trophy awarded to the winning team was named after him. Interestingly, no tapes exist of the first two Super Bowls. In those days, no one thought anyone would want to watch the same game again. In addition, videotape was very expensive and regularly taped over. The NFL has a large reward offered for either one of the tapes. One of the most famous Super Bowl games is Super Bowl III, in which Joe Namath of the New York Jets successfully predicted their defeat of the heavily favored Baltimore Colts.

Traditionally, the game has always played in either a warm weather venue or under a dome. However, this year’s game will be played right here in the Meadowlands in East Rutherford, New Jersey, on February 2, 2014 at 6:30 pm. The site is decided years in advance. Interestingly, no team has ever played in its home stadium for the Super Bowl.

Over the years, the Super Bowl has become a major media event. Many people watch it for the famous commercials and the halftime concerts as much as for the game. Since it is such a highly rated show, advertisers will premier elaborately produced commercials during the broadcast. The cost of commercial airtime during the Super Bowl has sharply increased over the years. A 30-second spot during last year’s game was reportedly \$2.5 million. Famous commercials include Budweiser’s “Bud Bowl,” Pepsi ads featuring a different celebrity each year, and an Apple computer ad by director Ridley Scott.

The pre-game and halftime entertainment has gone from college marching bands in the early years, to major headliners. The pre-game show and the singing of the national anthem always feature renowned singers like Stevie Wonder and Aretha Franklin. The halftime show is a well-produced concert starring the likes of Aerosmith, the Rolling Stones, Michael Jackson, and Paul McCartney. Janet Jackson gained media attention for her halftime show in 2004 when a “wardrobe malfunction” caused one of her breasts to be partially exposed for a second. This led the Federal Communications Commission to increase enforcement of their standards for television and radio broadcasts.

The commercials and entertainment have become such media events that coverage starts early in the day, while the actual game starts in the evening. It has become common practice to host Super Bowl parties in homes, bars and restaurants, whether or not the local team is involved. Super Bowl Sunday has become an American holiday with lots of snack foods, excitement and entertainment, as well as the game.

A few sports bars in this neighborhood are likely to be having Super Bowl celebrations. Baker Street Pub, 1152 First Avenue at 64th Street, is probably the closest. O’Flanagan’s, 1215 First Avenue at 65th Street, is worth a visit. The Allie Way at 413 East 70th Street and Phoenix Park at 1074 First Avenue are also worth a trip. Look for celebrations at your local bar this February 2! ♦

Life on a Roll



Sutton Place Riverfront
by Nicolas Renier

An American in Athens

CHRISTINA PYRGAKI

Since the news of the financial crisis in Europe reached the US, whenever I meet someone for the first time, I have to emotionally prepare for the inevitable discussion that usually follows my answer to the question “Where is your accent from?” You see, I am Greek, and since it so happened that Greece was the first country to be singled out as the failure of the EU, I have to face the “consequences.” When people find out that I am Greek, I am, more often than not, showered with comments of concern about my “trouble-ridden” country. Less often I have to politely dismiss tasteless jokes about my country’s lack of financial responsibility. After that I usually have to respond to questions pertaining to what caused the financial crisis and what course of action will correct it, what is the future of Greece in the EU, or whether we are going to go back to the drachma (the national pre-euro currency) or not. Questions that, tapping into my guilt-ridden nature (courtesy of my Greek Orthodox upbringing), make me feel terribly inadequate since my answer to all of them is “I do not know.” I cannot but berate myself: What kind of Greek am I that I don’t know! But really, should I know? Should I have thought of a solution for the crisis and call up our prime minister? Should I magi-

cally transform into a modern day Cassandra and warn the citizens of my country: “Beware of the Germans bearing gifts?” Believe it or not, it takes time to overcome the guilt and forgive myself. I just don’t know what went wrong. And that is not because I do not care to find out or because I am away from home. Greek citizens living in Greece do not know either. My hardworking farmer dad who has been working in the fields since he was twenty years old and now, along with the rest of Greek citizens, has to bear the burden of extravagant taxation, does not know what went wrong. And neither does my grandfather, who also worked as a farmer his entire life, fought for his country in WWII, and now, at the age of 92, has to watch his already measly pension of 500 euros (~600 dollars) get cut in half. Greek citizens are not economists, but even if we were it does not look like we would know for sure what went wrong in Greece or in the rest of the European countries that are in trouble. Economists are theorizing left and right, but I have yet to read a solid explanation of how it is possible that a country the size of Louisiana and with half the population of NYC brought the once almighty European Union to its knees. Maybe I am looking for the answers in the wrong places. Something tells me, however, that the crisis in Europe is bigger than Greece’s—or Italy’s or Spain’s or Portugal’s etc.—financial missteps, but this could be the subject of another very long article in itself.

I miss the days when, once I told someone I am from Greece, they would ask me which island I am from—most people think of Greece being like Hawaii or Japan. Back then, my only duty as a proud Greek was to tell them that Greece is not just the islands, that it has a beautiful mainland, and to talk to them about Delphi, Epidaurus, Olympia, and my snow-covered village in the mountains of Korinthia. I miss the days when I would only talk about how hospitable, accepting, and open-minded Greeks are. I miss the days when I could tell people about how democracy was born in Greece and how Greeks valiantly fought throughout history to defend it. I miss the days when I did not have to defend the fact that the citizens of my country, misled by corrupt politicians and fear, voted the far-right joke of a political party that is Golden Dawn into the

parliament. I miss the days when articles or posts referring to Greece were talking about its beautiful beaches, its magnificent antiquities, and its proud and loving citizens.

So when I saw an article, accompanied by a picture of the face of an ancient Greek statue on page 14 of the “Review” section of *The Wall Street Journal* this past Saturday, I instantly had my guard up and started reading with apprehension, only to be pleasantly surprised. The article was talking about Mr. Josh Garrick, a Florida artist who is going to be the first American, and one of the very few non-Greek artists, who will exhibit his work at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens. The exhibit, titled “Seeking the Greek Kallos,” (kallos is the ancient Greek word for beauty) will start in September and end in January 2014. It will feature 95 black-and-white pictures of statues and landmark places from ancient Greece. With his pictures, Mr. Garrick aims to create a new way of seeing the beauty in these statues and landscapes. The exhibit will be split into four themes and the artwork will be shown among the museum’s permanent collection. The goal is to allow the observer to see the beauty of ancient Greece from a different angle and feel the living and breathing creatures that the ancient sculptors captured with their skillful chisels on the Pentelic marble. To achieve his goal, Mr. Garrick’s pictures have been taken from unusual angles, printed on large sheets of brushed aluminum, and they often have been blown up to exaggerate the features of statues. One of his works shown in the exhibit is almost eight feet tall.

Reading the article left me grateful to the artist for his devotion to ancient Greek art, but it also left me quite intrigued. Who was this passionate Philhellene (Φιλέλληνας = he who loves everything Greek), this modern-day Lord Byron?

Evidently Mr. Garrick is a fine art photographer, curator, lecturer and fund-raiser as well as an arts leader in Central Florida. He is also an accomplished writer with a portfolio of by-line articles for a variety of publications.

Mr. Garrick obtained his Bachelor of Arts from the Shippensburg State University, Pennsylvania, where he graduated with double honors, and his Master of Fine Arts degree from Columbia University, New



It is not certain whether this bronze statue (480-300 BCE) represents Zeus or Poseidon because we are not sure if there was a trident or a lightning bolt in its right hand. The statue was found in two pieces at the bottom of the sea off the Cape of Artemision in the 1920s.
(Picture by the author)



New York State of Mind

This Month Natural Selections interviews Jim Keller, Grants Management Specialist in the Department of Sponsored Research & Program Development. Country of origin: United States.

1. How long have you been living in the New York area? I moved here from Buffalo, NY nine days before 9/11—September 2, 2001.

2. Where do you live? Crown Heights, Brooklyn, but I'm about to move on up to the East Side!

3. Which is your favorite neighborhood? That's a really tough question. I've lived all over in the years that I've been here. Clinton Hill, Prospect and Crown Heights are definite favorites. I also have a fondness for Bushwick, having lived there the longest and more than once!

4. What do you think is the most overrated thing in the city? And underrated? Hmm. I guess I would say that Manhattan in general is overrated only because when people move to New York, they often restrict themselves to living there, almost as if it's a status symbol or something. Underrated by far is Open House New York weekend, which gives free access to hundreds of private residences and historic landmarks throughout the five boroughs. Visit ohny.org for details.



5. What do you miss most when you are out of town? The subway, surprisingly enough. There is something invaluable about being able to go where you want, when you want. This isn't possible in the freezing depths of Buffalo, NY, for instance, without a car, which I do not possess.

6. If you could change one thing about NYC, what would that be? I really despise a lot of the glossy new high rises constantly being erected. The first of these parked

itself on top of the Lower East Side, which used to be home to great music venues such as Tonic and Luna Lounge.

7. What is your favorite weekend activity in NYC? Getting dim sum at Jing Fong in Chinatown, followed by a trip to the Ice Cream Factory around the corner. It can't be beat!

8. What is the most memorable experience you have had in NYC? In 2003, while working for the British Broadcasting Company (BBC), I was afforded the opportunity to tour the Queen Elizabeth II ocean liner when it docked in NY.

9. If you could live anywhere else, where would that be? I really loved L.A. when I visited and I also like Portland, Oregon, where my brother lives.

10. Do you think of yourself as a New Yorker? Yes. I remember when I first moved here people used to say "You're not a New Yorker until you've lived here for seven years." I thought it dumb that people cared so much about something so trivial. So, by those standards, having lived here for twelve years, I'm a New Yorker. ☺

Continued from page 4

York. He started out in his career as an assistant to Sir Rudolf Bing at the Metropolitan Opera, and he eventually became a professor and the spokesperson for the School of Visual Arts in New York City.

The artist travelled to Greece for the first time after completing his education. As a member of the School of Visual Arts here in NYC, the artist has led 15 student trips to Greece. He has also visited the country more than 25 times on his own. During his trips he has been granted access to the Parthenon and the Propylea on the Acropolis of Athens to photograph these architectural classics from the scaffolding that has been placed there during their ongoing restoration by the Greek Ephorate of Antiquities. This unprecedented opportunity has allowed the artist to view these monuments in a way that they have never been seen before, and with his pictures he has shared

this view with the world.

Mr. Garrick has devoted his life to serving the fine arts not only with his own work as an artist, but also as a spokesperson. He has served on funding panels including the National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and he has testified before Congress on behalf of the arts for the Congressional Subcommittee on Human Services. His "lifelong obsession," as he himself calls his fascination with Greece and everything Greek, does not stem from his ancestry. He was born and raised in rural Pennsylvania and he has no Greek heritage as many people assume, given the fact that it is not that often that someone who is not Greek identifies so much with the Greek culture and the essence of ancient Greece. On his website, the artist attributes his obsession to "...

immeasurable respect for that country—at a time filled with mankind's greatest achievements." And he continues: "We may thank Classical Greece for what we understand to be art, history, theatre, philosophy, judgment and 'taste'—all introduced to the world by the concentrated genius of that place and time."

To get a taste of his breathtaking photography, you can visit the artist's website at <http://www.joshgarrick.com/>. On his site, you also have the opportunity to make a personal contribution to support his exhibit and help him make art history. You can also follow Mr. Garrick on Twitter @JoshGarrickART.

As for me, who always visits the Museum in Athens when I am home, in Mr. Garrick's exhibit I found another motive to visit home before the end of the year—as if I needed one. ☺

Culture Corner

A Visit to the National Gallery (London)

BERNIE LANGS

I sometimes joke that the value of world currency should not be pegged to the dollar or to gold but to something truly valuable: paintings, drawings, and sculpture. And the arts of greatest value, in my opinion, are those from the Medieval and Renaissance periods. What, one may wonder, is the basis of such a standard? What is it that I find in art that is intrinsically worth more than a diamond or a vintage automobile or a house on the Riviera? What makes art priceless as a so-called commodity? Art, and paintings in particular, offer a sustenance for the mind not found elsewhere, except perhaps in classical music, or, I must add, in the sublime music of The Beatles. Paintings are time travelers from another age. You stand before the very piece of creation that someone hundreds of years ago stood before as well, with only the scars of time (and a shift in cultural vision) to differentiate the experience. Of greater importance than the historical education offered, the mind's eye is treated to the detailed expression of the geniuses of the past and one learns, in a bit more than a heartbeat, how these individuals toyed with the very concept of seeing the world in varying dimensions. Dimensions, that's the rub.

Kenneth Clark, in his book, *Landscape Into Art*, notes the following on how Leonardo da Vinci's work coalesces through an interplay of the conscious and the unconscious mind: "How highly Leonardo valued a free play of the imagination is shown in the most famous passage in his *Treatise On Painting*, where he says... 'that you should look at certain walls stained with damp or at stones of uneven color. If you have to invent some setting you will be able to see in these the likeness of divine landscapes, adorned with mountains, ruins, rocks, woods, great plains, hills and valleys in great variety; and then again you will see there battles and strange figures in violent action, expressions of faces and clothes and an infinity of things which you will be able to reduce to their complete and proper forms. In such walls the same thing happens as in the sound of bells, in whose strokes you may find every word which you can imagine.' Later he repeats this suggestion in slightly dif-

ferent form, advising the painter to study not only marks on walls, but also the embers of the fire, or clouds or mud, or other similar objects from which you will find most admirable ideas . . . because from a confusion of shapes the spirit is quickened to new inventions."

I quote this at length to strengthen the point that one can view painting itself as mere flat, two-dimensional jottings of colors on a canvas, or one can take time with a piece and see it unfold into a new and completely unexpected world. On my recent trip to London's National Gallery, I was surprised to find what I've always considered the greatest drawing (it's actually dubbed a "cartoon") in the world—Leonardo's *The Virgin and Child with St Anne and St John the Baptist*. Much like his unfinished, near-monochrome painting of the *Adoration of the Magi* in Florence's Uffizi Gallery, there is a great confusion in the composition, especially in the background and foreground, and the viewer can be left to "fill in the blanks" as the mind absorbs the artist's many flowing, graceful swirls and curls.

The National Gallery boasts an almost embarrassing number of painted masterpieces. After the shock of being pounded by the likes of Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* where Ariadne's arm and hand point absently in the direction of the stars of a mystic, scintillating sky, after viewing Jan Van Eyck's iconic work *The Arnolfini Portrait* and standing dumbfounded in front of his so-called *Self Portrait*, I actually had to give the small laugh of the overwhelmed as I entered a gallery with rare and rarified works by the Renaissance genius Piero della Francesca. There, in one room, was his *Nativity* and his *Baptism of Christ*, which are so often reproduced in art history overview books. The most shocking thing was the space in which the singing angels of the *Nativity* stood. That is something that cannot be communicated on a postcard or in a photo on the page of a book. I can't really describe it either. These angels were standing almost out of the painting, like a hologram, in a space that could only have been created by the mind of Piero, who was known for his advancements in the uses of perspective.



Leonardo's "greatest drawing in the world" in London's National Gallery

And thus again and again at the National Gallery, I was treated to such spatial, emotional, and spiritual playing of dimension (and perhaps time) by the geniuses of the past.

To name just two other highlights, I was stunned by Raphael's work, *Saint Catherine of Alexandria*. The gracefulness and beauty of the painting was unexpected, given that I sometimes in the past have found Raphael to be a little too picturesque. Everything from the subtle coloring of the Saint's garments to the quiet, yet forceful way the figure emerges from the landscape emitted a great power over me. *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* by Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo is a downright force of nature. The incredible background of a countryside landscape featured behind the suffering Saint is painted in such detail on the large canvas, it defies one to believe it was possible for these artists to construct.

My head was swimming by the time I left the National Gallery. Swimming with not only the dizziness of having taken in so many top shelf works of art, but with ideas on the possibilities of representing personalized visions of reality to others on such a magnificent scale. If you want to "stand on the shoulders of giants" to gain new perspectives on life, I recommend you head to the nearest museum and take more than a beat in front of a great painting. ◉

For Your Consideration—Ones to Watch Vol. 2 Edition

JIM KELLER

Last year around this time, I covered the Supporting Actor and Actress races in this column in order to save the Best Actor race for last, since it's generally much more exciting. The trouble is the Supporting races really don't begin to take shape until later in the season, making them difficult to discuss—even with a lot of research. With that said, this installment of the four part series will cover the leading men. As was done in the first installment of the year, let's take a look at last year's names and see how they fared with Oscar.

Unlike the ladies, the leading men discussed last year for the Best Actor race were almost a foregone conclusion. For one, the men were assessed with the race in high gear, whereas the ladies were featured here months before. Outside of that, only five slots exist, making it inevitable that two of the seven men discussed would drop off: John Hawkes (*The Sessions*) and Anthony Hopkins (*Hitchcock*) earned that less than stellar distinction—the latter proving that Academy favor cannot always be garnered by name alone. Meanwhile, despite wanting nothing to do with the Oscars, Joaquin Phoenix was nominated for *The Master*—snugly next to winner Daniel Day-Lewis (*Lincoln*). Denzel Washington landed a nod for *Flight* and a pair of first timers, Bradley Cooper and Hugh Jackman, secured nominations for *Silver Linings Playbook* and *Les Misérables*.

THE DECORATED SOLDIER: George Clooney – *The Monuments Men* (director: George Clooney):

FYC: Robert M. Edsel's book *The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History* tells the true story of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives program—an Allied group, comprised of art historians and museum curators, who united to recover art pieces and other items from Hitler's destructive hands during World War II. This film adaptation sees Clooney front and center as George Stout—an integral member of the group. All told, Clooney has been nominated for eight Oscars, of which he won two: Supporting Actor for *Syriana* in 2006 and as producer of last year's Best Picture winner, *Argo*. Following his first acting win, he

went on to earn lead actor nominations for *Michael Clayton* in 2008, *Up in the Air* in 2010 and *The Descendants* in 2012, which he lost by a narrow margin. In the same year as his acting win, he was nominated for Best Director and Best Original Screenplay for *Good Night, and Good Luck*. Not to be outdone, Clooney shared screenplay duties for this film with Grant Heslov—a fellow *Argo* producer and is also in the Best Adapted Screenplay mix this year after his screenplay nomination for *The Ides of March* in 2012. From sheer pedigree, Clooney enters the race as a frontrunner in three categories, but will any of them yield a third win?

THE INDUSTRY VETERAN: Robert Redford – *All Is Lost* (director: J.C. Chandor):

FYC: Chandor's latest follows the travails of one man shipwrecked at sea, miles away from land, left to his own devices as he fights for his life. For the amount of films he has acted in (66), produced (33), and directed (11), it seems strange that Redford has only received one acting nomination, for his leading role in *The Sting* in 1974, but there it is. It seems almost inevitable then, that he would secure a nomination this year—almost as if winning an acting Oscar was the man's birthright. He may have just the vehicle to get him there, as Chandor's last film, *Margin Call*, snagged a Best Original Screenplay nod last year and earned high critical acclaim for the first-time director—critics will be watching. What's more, *All Is Lost* and Redford's performance, in particular, generated quite a buzz at this year's Cannes Film Festival, where the audience gave Redford a standing ovation. This could be the shape of things to come or the film might be too small to gain any traction, leaving Redford locked-out of a crowded race to the finish.

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

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

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

THE LONE WOLF: Leonardo DiCaprio – *The Wolf of Wall Street* (director: Martin Scorsese):

Jordan Belfort's memoir hits the silver screen in this adaptation, which depicts his refusal to cooperate in a large securities fraud case involving Wall Street corruption, the corporate banking world, and mob infiltration. DiCaprio is Belfort—a man with a hard-partying lifestyle and a tumultuous personal life, which included drug and alcohol addiction. Usually when I speak of the actor in this column, I speak with high hopes, but I have to admit, I'm about to throw in the towel. DiCaprio has his nominations, to be sure, and I've talked about them at length in this column previously (*What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, *The Aviator*, and *Blood Diamond*), so I won't repeat myself, but when one looks at what he could have been nominated for, it's quite daunting. Beginning in 1997 with *Titanic*, followed by *Gangs of New York* in 2002, *The Departed* in 2006, *Revolutionary Road* in 2008, which, to me, is completely absurd, *J. Edgar* in 2011, and last year for his supporting turn in *Django Unchained*, he fell short for a sixth time. He has been overlooked for

nominations and wins by the Academy so frequently, it's almost a joke. Of course, the last time I threw in the towel, I had lost faith in Meryl Streep winning her third Oscar for *The Iron Lady* in 2011, and instead, put my money on Viola Davis for *The Help*. So maybe this will be his year after all?

THE CHANGELING: Steve Carell – *Foxcatcher* (director: Bennett Miller):

FYC: Yes, you read that right. The funny man from *The Office* features prominently (more on this later) in this film based on Mark Schultz's autobiography, which depicts the murder of his brother, Olympic gold medal-winning wrestler Dave Schultz (Mark Ruffalo), at the hand of longtime friend, John Eleuthère du Pont (Carell). Pictures of Carell as du Pont were recently released, showing him with a prosthetic nose. So not only is Carell portraying a paranoid schizophrenic, heir to the du Pont chemical fortune, but he is doing so under heavy make-up—something, I need not remind you, that is catnip to Oscar voters (see Nicole Kidman's and Charlize Theron's Best Actress wins for *The Hours* and *Monster* in 2003 and 2004, respectively). While Carell will campaign as lead for the film, it is told from the perspective of Mark Schultz, played by Channing Tatum and Oscar voters, if he is nominated, will have the final say on whether or not he ends up in the lead or supporting category. Carell won the Golden Globe for Best Actor in a Television Series – Musical or Comedy in 2006 for his role on *The Office* and subsequently earned consecutive nominations from 2007-2011 for the same role. It will certainly be interesting to see if Carell is able to shed his comic skin and land his first Oscar nomination for a drama such as this, regardless of which category he is recognized for.

THE MINORITY: Chiwetel Ejiofor – *12 Years a Slave* (director: Steve McQueen):

FYC: Based on Solomon Northrup's 1853 autobiography, the film tells of Northrup's tragic kidnapping in Washington, D.C. in 1841 where, despite being born free, he was forced into slavery in Louisiana until his rescue 12 years later. Of all the performances discussed in this edition, this is the one that I'm most excited about. For one, the Academy has a history of ignoring minori-

ties and even today there are few that have been recognized. This film not only stars a black man, but is also directed by one. What I'm thrilled to share is that this year, there are more minority actors and filmmakers combined in the running than ever before. Take Lee Daniels' *The Butler*, which features a subdued performance by Forest Whitaker—among the few black actors to have won an Oscar for his leading role in *The Last King of Scotland* in 2007. It's directed by Lee Daniels, who is also black and earned a nomination for *Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire* in 2010. There is also newcomer Ryan Coogler—a black filmmaker who helmed this year's *Fruitvale Station*, which features another black actor in a leading role, Michael B. Jordan, and like the former film, is being distributed by The Weinstein Company. Put this all together and it's clear that this year, there could be not one, but two minorities represented in the line-up. This hasn't happened since 2007 when Will Smith was nominated alongside Whitaker for his work in *The Pursuit of Happyness* and has yet to happen in the Best Director category. Ejiofor has yet to gain recognition from the Academy, but has been nominated for three Golden Globes: one for Best Actor in a Motion Picture - Comedy or Musical (*Kinky Boots* in 2005) and two for Best Actor in a Mini-Series or Motion Picture made for Television (*Tsunami: The Aftermath* in 2006 and *Endgame* in 2009). He also earned critical acclaim for his work in *Dirty Pretty Things* in 2002 and in *Talk to Me* in 2007. So his chances are up in the air, but the Academy recently elected its first black and only third female, president, Cheryl Boone Isaacs. Perhaps this will shake things up and before long, the line between minorities and non-minorities will be blurred so badly that the distinction wouldn't need to be made.

THE LATE BLOOMER: Bruce Dern – *Nebraska* (director: Alexander Payne):

FYC: This stately film (haha) centers on an aging boozehound and his son who trek from Montana to Nebraska to claim a million dollar Publisher's Clearing House sweepstakes prize. It sounds simple, but Payne's films are anything but. Dern has only been nominated once, way back in 1979 for Best Supporting Actor for *Coming Home*. Since then, he has kept a relatively

low profile and today is probably less familiar to most than his daughter, Laura Dern—though he has maintained a steady acting career. He won the Best Actor award at this year's Cannes Film Festival, which puts him in a good position heading into the race. The film itself, however, has been met with a divisive reaction from critics and was shot in black and white, so there's no telling how audiences will react by year's end when the film is scheduled to be unveiled.

THE OUTLAW: Matthew McConaughey – *Dallas Buyer's Club* (director: Jean-Marc Vallée):

FYC: The film, loosely based on the true story of Ron Woodroof, a pill-popping, promiscuous, homophobic who was diagnosed as HIV-positive in 1986, tells how he survived for six years in the midst of an epidemic and inadvertently helped pioneer the Dallas Buyer's Club—the first organization to smuggle and sell illegal, non-toxic, anti-viral medications to paying HIV patients in the U.S.. Images of an emaciated McConaughey have been surfacing for some time, generating a considerable amount of buzz for the actor who is experiencing a career upswing with one critically acclaimed performance after another (see 2011's *Killer Joe*, 2012's *Mud* and *Magic Mike*). McConaughey hasn't enjoyed this sort of acclaim since well, ever, but he does seem to be circling around Oscar with the type of performances he's been delivering. In fact, this year, like last year, he has not one, but two chances, with a supporting role in the aforementioned *The Wolf of Wall Street*. Critics will get their first glimpse of *Buyer's* this month during the Toronto Film Festival, which will give us an idea of whether McConaughey will be in or out come Oscar voting time, but for now it seems anything is possible.

There are several other leading performances to be seen this year than I can cover in this space. From the It-Brit, Benedict Cumberbatch, in *The Fifth Estate* and Oscar Isaac's folk singer in *Inside Llewyn Davis* to Christian Bale's con man extraordinaire in *American Hustle*, any one of them could unseat anyone I've covered here or one another, for that matter. It all depends on which way the wind blows, or if you prefer, which way the pendulum swings. ☺

