

Harvard²

Cambridge, Boston, and beyond



16F A Slice of Russia
Gilded icons, stark portraits, and a warm tea room



16B Extracurriculars
Events on and off campus through the end of 2014



16I Pretty Daggers
The art of weaponry at the Peabody Museum



16J Growing Pains
Brief respite at Wellesley's historic greenhouses



16L Slinging Meat
Drinks and vittles just outside Harvard Square

COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF RUSSIAN ICONS



Extracurriculars

Events on and off campus during November and December

SEASONAL

The 27th Annual Brickbottom Open Studios

www.brickbottomartists.com

More than 60 artists discuss, show, and sell their creations. Learn about art-making

while picking out unique and affordable holiday gifts. (November 22 and 23)

The 131st Game

www.gocrimson.com/sports/fball/index
Harvard Stadium. (November 22)

(From left) "The Case of the Mysterious X-rays from Space" at the Center for Astrophysics; The Light Princess at ART; Show Girl I (1969), by Karl Wirsum, at the RISD Museum

Harvard Glee Club and Radcliffe Choral Society

www.boxoffice.harvard.edu

Christmas in Sanders includes seasonal music and sing-along carols. (December 5)

Harvard Ceramics Program Holiday Show and Sale

www.ofa.fas.harvard.edu/ceramics

Clay forms, from funky teapots and wall hangings to festive platters and mugs. (December 11-14)

FROM LEFT: NASA/CENTER FOR ASTROPHYSICS; EVGENIA ELISEEVA/ART; ©KARL WIRSUM. COURTESY OF KARIN TAPPENDORF/RISD

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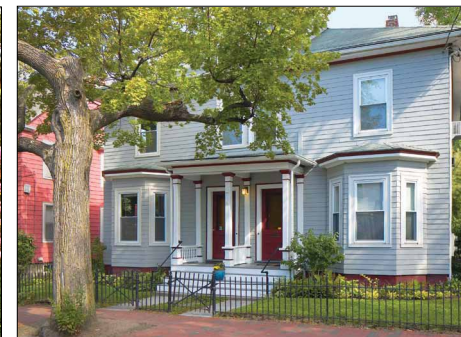
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The 105th Memorial Church Christmas Carol Services

www.memorialchurch.harvard.edu
The popular annual gathering features the Harvard University Choir. (December 14 and 15)

A Kuchar Kristmas

www.hcl.harvard.edu/hfa
The intimate, diaristic works of director George Kuchar include shorts reflecting the sometimes funny emotional turmoil brought on by the holidays. (December 20)

Boston Baroque: New Year's Celebration

Resolve to enjoy Domenico Cimarosa's Italian opera, *Il maestro di cappella*, at Sanders Theatre. (December 31 and January 1)

EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS Harvard Art Museums

www.harvardartmuseums.org/calendar
Celebrate the long-awaited opening of the museum—and be among the first to view the new presentation of **Mark Rothko's Harvard Murals**. (November 16)

Harvard Museum of Natural History

www.hmn.harvard.edu
Artist and ornithologist Katrina van Grouw explores **The Art and Science of The Unfeathered Bird** through her painstaking illustrations of skeletal forms. (November 15)

RISD Museum

www.risd-museum.org
What Nerve! Alternative Figures in American Art, from 1960 to the Present celebrates creations defiantly sourced in

Spotlight



© CHARLOTTE ZOLLER

On any Sunday morning, churchgoers can hear splendid gospel music in Greater Boston. Only this December at the Museum of Fine Arts can anyone tune into the select power of The NEC Millennium Gospel Choir, which features about 100 dedicated local singers chosen for their dynamic ranges and techniques. "It's a multiethnic, multid denominational choir that embodies the whole mission behind the Gospel, as well as gospel music," says choir co-director Herbert Jones. "That is, being a unifier of people and providing a place where everyone can come together and not let their differences be an issue." The choir was formed through the New England Conservatory's Community Collaborations Program in 2000, and has given sporadic concerts ever since. Jones says a mix of works is on the MFA program, such as the modern world classic "Total Praise" by Grammy-winning gospel artist Richard Smallwood. The song's beautifully harmonized chorus is a simple act of devotion: "You are the source of my strength/You are the strength of my life/I lift my hands in total praise to You."

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
<http://www.mfa.org/programs/music>
December 19 and 20

the vernacular through works by Christina Ramberg, Jack Kirby, and H.C. Westermann, among others. (Through January 4)

The Institute for Contemporary Art

www.icaboston.org
The first American solo exhibition of works by Brazilian artist **Adriana Varejão** examines interracial identity and colonization. (Opens November 19)

MUSIC

The Harvard Department of Music

www.music.fas.harvard.edu
Guitarist and composer Michael Pisaro joins others to perform his *Concentric Rings in Magnetic Levitation*. (November 17)

NATURE AND SCIENCE The Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics

www.cfa.harvard.edu/events/mon.html
"The Case of the Mysterious X-rays from Space." Astronomer Esra Bulbul explores the latest telescopic findings from the Chandra X-ray Observatory, followed by sky-viewing, weather permitting. (December 4)

The Arnold Arboretum

www.arboretum.harvard.edu
Enjoy a vigorous winter walk, then step inside to view **Small Worlds: Through A Small Glass Window**, an exhibit of Josh Falks's intricate, almost abstract images of nature. (Through February 3)

LECTURES

The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study

www.radcliffe.harvard.edu
"Sweet Talk: A Lecture by Kara Walker." The artist reflects on her life and the making of her 40-foot-tall sugar sphinx, which awed crowds earlier this year at the former Domino Sugar Refinery in Brooklyn. (November 8)

"What's Wrong With Me?: The Uncertainties of Chronic Illness." Radcliffe Institute fellow Meghan O'Rourke (a poet and writer) discusses her research on the apparent rise of illnesses such as autoimmunity. (December 10)

THEATER

American Repertory Theater
www.americanrepertorytheater.org
The world premiere of Eve Ensler's come-

dic satire **O.P.C.** ("obsessive political correctness") stars a dumpster-diving squatter (Olivia Thirlby) and her mother, a U.S. Senate candidate (Melissa Leo), wrestling with the impact of consumerism. Directed by Pesho Rudnick. (Through January 4)

The Light Princess is doomed to float through life unless the king and queen can restore her gravity before she turns 16. The musical (for all ages) is adapted from the classic fairy tale by George MacDonald. (December 6 - January 4)

FILM

www.hcl.harvard.edu/hfa
The Harvard Film Archive presents a retrospective on director **Mario Monicelli**, who is credited with discovering Marcello Mastroianni and Vittorio Gassman, and pioneering *commedia all'italiana*. Screenings include: *The Girl with the Pistol*, *For Love and Gold*, and *Big Deal on Madonna Street*. (November 21 - December 15)

Events listings are also found at www.harvardmagazine.com.

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A Slice of Russia

Gilded icons, stark portraits, and a warm tea room • by Nell Porter Brown



A former carpet factory (top left) was renovated to house the Museum of Russian Icons. An elegant interior spiral staircase leads to exhibits, including a circa 1450 painting of John the Baptist; a jeweled icon of Saint George and the dragon; and bathers on display in *Siberia Imagined and Reimagined*.



AROUND 1650, somewhere in what was then Russian territory, an artist transformed a piece of wood into a devotional object. On it, he painted a scene from The Presentation of Mary, a pivotal Christian theological event. The Gospel of James recounts that after God granted her elderly parents' wish for a child, they dedicated the Virgin to His service and handed her over at age three to the high priest at the temple. She lived there for 12 years before rejoining the world.

That painting now hangs at the Museum of Russian Icons, in Clinton, Massachusetts. Founded by art collector and retired industrialist Gordon B. Lankton in 2006, the mse-

um holds more than 700 such objects—one of the world's largest collections. They range from a circa 1450 panel depicting John the Baptist and minutely detailed liturgical calendars, on which each day is represented by a saint, to a circa 1600 set of arched doors through which the clergy enter the sanctuary, to an icon created in 2006 by Alyona Knyazeva depicting Saint Andrei Rublev, the famous medieval painter of icons and frescoes. The museum has its own tea room, and hosts performances, lectures, and workshops, along with rotating exhibits on Russian art and culture, such as the arresting

photographs that explore lives and the landscape in *Siberia Imagined and Reimagined*, on display through January 10.

Icons are integral to the Russian Orthodox Church. "They are windows into the spiritual world," museum docent Michael Popik explained during a recent tour. "And believers will say that it's through the power of God that the icon can do things." Yet depicting religious subjects was, even in the early centuries of Christianity, problematic. During the latter 700s, images were banned and burned, and protesters

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were cruelly punished. “There was always talk and conflict in Constantinople in the 700s and 800s about whether this violated the commandment ‘Thou shall not worship false idols,’” Popkin says, stopping in front of a variation on the icon The Mother of God, known as The Mother of God of the Three Hands, a testament to those times. The monk Saint John Damascus had his hand cut off for his zealous devotion to icons, the story goes, and he held it while praying to be healed before the Mother of God icon. He soon fell asleep, and when he awoke, his hand was reattached, unscathed. In gratitude, he added a hand wrought from silver to the icon,



These carved and gilded “Royal Doors” to a church altar (circa 1600) depict the Annunciation and the four Evangelists. Such artifacts are rarely seen in museums outside Russia.

leading to the creation of an entirely new icon that has been replicated ever since.

Icons may be simple painted wood, formal paintings covered with decorated metalwork through which only faces and hands can be seen, or even richly enameled and bejeweled, like the museum’s two-inch-square depiction of Saint George slaying the dragon. Typical for the art form is the palette limited to lush reds, blues, greens, and yellows—with spots of gold.

The Presentation of Mary icon features a folk-art style that is nevertheless quite intricate. It shows the principal players, all with golden haloes, on the steps of the temple, with onlookers and ornate Byzantine buildings in the background. “I love the architecture and the patterns,” says Tara Young ’96, the museum’s deputy director. “But it also captures this rite of passage. Even if you don’t know the story, you know what’s happening. And you wonder how her parents might be feeling about letting go of their three-year-old. There is something about how each icon tells a whole story in a single moment that is fascinating.”

Young, who was an art-history concentrator and joined the museum staff in 2010, is impressed by the icons’ elaborate forms. But she is also drawn to their universal themes, what they reveal about the power of visual language and how art is used throughout religious traditions. “There are so many ways to approach this artwork,”

CURIOSITIES: Pretty Daggers

Curator Steven A. LeBlanc has picked out the Peabody Museum’s most beautiful instruments of pain. Some 150 of these knives, daggers, swords, guns, maces, shields, helmets, spear-throwers, and assorted clubs are now on display in *Arts of War: Artistry in Weapons across Cultures*. They date from more than 5,000 years ago to the twentieth century, and represent every continent. The new exhibit (on view through October 2017) draws no absolute distinction between art objects, LeBlanc

notes, and those designed purely to maim or kill: most are clearly both. “War in the past was much more pervasive and deadly than people realize,” the archaeologist adds, “and yet any of the evidence we have of weapons used throughout history shows that they were decorated.”

A wooden sword from a Kiribati warrior in the Pacific Islands is rendered more lethal with its

Clockwise from top: A Nisga’a club is armed with whale teeth (British Columbia); faces appear on part of an iron axe (Zaire); and a horse graces the hilt of a knife (India or Iran).



graduated series of shark teeth, laced on with twined coconut fibers tightly woven into intricate patterns. The ivory base of a Persian dagger sports carved human figures, while a Balinese blade’s golden haft is studded with a star sapphire and rubies. Someone with taste certainly chose the dark gray stone with handsome natural striping that was honed and polished into a flat club used by the Maori people. “It’s so elegantly curved, so carefully made,” LeBlanc notes. “Would you think that it was a weapon?” It’s clear, he continues, mentioning the nose art on military planes flown by both sides in World War II, that people anywhere will decorate their weapons if given the chance, “which is rather counterintuitive.”

But is it? A club bludgeons an enemy, thereby keeping its wielder alive. Why wouldn’t a warrior personalize or imbue with protective spirits any armament? How could a weapon taken into bloody battles not act in some sense as a talisman? And wouldn’t a soldier want to differentiate his or her weapon from others—if only for practicality? “The exhibit does not pose theories about why,” LeBlanc asserts. “It asks you to think about it.”

Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology
Nov. 6, “Beautiful and Deadly: The Arts of War,” lecture by Steven A. LeBlanc
www.peabody.harvard.edu



she says. “These icons open different doors for different visitors.” The museum receives a steady stream of church groups, seminary students, priests, and scholars. Yet most of the visitors to Clinton, about 15 miles northeast of Worcester, are not Orthodox believers, Young reports; they are intrigued by the story of the museum’s founding.

Lankton moved to the area in the 1960s and ultimately became president of Nypro, an international plastics injection molding company headquartered in Clinton, building it into a global manufacturer. He knew little about icons when, while traveling for work in 1989, he bought one at a Russian flea market. When his collection numbered around 100, he bought a former carpet factory in town, gutted the interior and restored the façade, put the artifacts on display, and opened the doors to the public. Now in his eighties, he is still active there, as a trustee, and at the separate downtown Gallery of African Art, to which he donated another impressive collection of works. His efforts are credited with spurring Clinton’s percolating revitalization. Other businesses have moved into rehabilitated buildings, the historic Strand Theatre was renovated and reopened in 1995, and a few new restaurants, such as Zaytoon, which serves excellent Middle Eastern food, have appeared in recent years.

Young encourages visitors to spend a day or two in the region: “People from Boston think we are really far away, but we’re not.” Within 15 to



20 minutes of the museum, she reports, are the Wachusett Reservoir (which offers local history lessons and walking and hiking trails), the Tower Hill Botanic Garden, Fruitlands Museum, the Worcester Art Museum, “and the Older Timer Restaurant. It’s an Irish pub and a

tions of ‘I’m not Russian, what is the appeal of icons?’ and get through the door, they are completely amazed by the building and the collection,” Young says. “And the museum strives to make icons accessible. You don’t need any background in Russian art or history or religion, you just need an interest in learning.”

Siberia Imagined and Reimagined captures the rawness of wild and urban landscapes, as well as the daily flow of human life in a remote region.

real institution.”

The museum itself has also grown over the years. “We find that once people get over their apprehension and initial reac-

ALL IN A DAY: Growing Pains

In the rear of the Hydrophyte House is a worn wooden bench where visitors may sit and listen to the burbling of a frog-shaped fountain and the erratic hissing of old pipes. Tropical pitcher plants hanging from baskets above ingest stray bugs, vines roam the walls, and stalks of sugar cane grow thick in one corner. Taking in the greenery and warm, moist air makes it possible to forgive the frigid winds swirling madly beyond the glass. “There’s always something growing, if not blooming, in the greenhouses,” says Gail Kahn, assistant director of the 22-acre Wellesley College Botanic Gardens, which include the Margaret C. Ferguson Greenhouses, completed in 1923. These shelter more than 1,100 specimens, many of them old and rare. There are black pepper plants; a Guadalupe palm and calabash and tamarind trees; cacti; bromeliads; and cycads. The 131-year-old camellia originally belonged to the college’s founders, Pauline and Henry Fowle Durant,

The Wellesley College greenhouses offer winter pleasures like the fuchsia moth orchid above.



A.B. 1841. Passionate horticulturists, the couple opened their collection of warm-weather plants to students, who also explored the flora growing in the meadows, woods, and waterways on and around the still-bucolic campus. Research and education remain the focus, but all visitors are welcome. Go soon to “catch sight of a Bird of Paradise in bloom,” says Kahn, “or the powder puff tree and some of the orchids.” Or even just to appreciate the historic greenhouses themselves. As early as this spring, they will be torn down to make way for replacements equipped with the most efficient climate-control systems and amenities. “They are charming and wonderful,” Kahn agrees, “but also past their prime.”

The Wellesley College Botanic Gardens
www.wellesley.edu/wcbg

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Slinging Meat

A neighborly pub on the Somerville-Cambridge border

PINING for the warmth of human babble on a wintry night? Duck into The Kirkland Tap & Trotter, the casual, grill-centric restaurant of chef Tony Maws, where hunks of meat and swillable drinks comfort a shivering crowd.

The place can be loud, beware, and carries the feel of an English pub. Chunky wooden forms—mismatched table and chairs and benches—and white pillars with coat hooks dominate the interior. A ceiling with exposed beams and piping is painted black. Diners help themselves to utensils kept in metal buckets, although waitstaff hand the steak-eaters hefty five-inch blades. (Are we supposed to kill the cow, too?) But what do the vintage airplane propellers and other industrial rel-

ics on display have to do with anything? Perhaps they promote the idea of the open kitchen as a forge, or the ruggedness of the chefs therein, who bound around clanking pots and pans and tending the flames over which much on the menu is cooked.

Grilled corn was featured in the bold garlic and cilantro sauce that came with a pile of tender Maine mussels (\$14). Among the cold appetizers was a “salad” with pickled peaches and peanuts, slices of prosciutto,



and a handful of Gouda shavings (\$16). Greens were scarce, however, and the vinegary taste of the fruit, and the soaked, crunchless peanuts, overwhelmed even

the salty meat and made for an odd mix. The homemade whole-wheat rigatoni (\$15) was chewy and filling, even without the creamy ham ragout with corn and parsley. Perfectly grilled, the sirloin-tip brochette (time to use that big knife!) was paired with a rich salsa verde and grilled avocado slices (\$32). The latter, charred yet soft, was irresistible—but a crisp salad with a citrus kick might have better balanced the dish.

All told, the Kirkland Tap & Trotter seems to relish its lack of finesse. Maybe that's the point. Among the best items there is the cheeseburger (\$16)—extra-thick, with a puffy bun, and topped with Russian dressing, kimchi, and Emmen-taler. It fed two people, especially when



The convivial bistro-cum-pub, not far from Harvard Square, draws crowds for beers, burgers (left), and banana splits.



followed by the bourbon-caramel banana split (\$10), a gooey mass of dense chocolate ice cream, a fruity ice milk, and candied spiced peanuts. Drink-lovers are equally indulged. Drafts rotate, as do the inventive cocktails. We hope the bar has stocked plentiful makings of “Sky’s the Limit,” a blend of Dutch gin and

old Scotch whiskey touched with maple syrup, lemon juice, and bitters. A generous jolt of that ought to ease the pain of any nor’easter, right, mate? ~N.P.B.

The Kirkland Tap & Trotter
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www.kirklandtapandtrotter.com

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The Church of St. Paul | Harvard Square presents Celebrations of Christmas

A Christmas Celebration

The Choir of St. Paul's | Harvard Square
Sunday, December 7 and 14, 3:00pm

Benjamin Britten's Ceremony of Carols

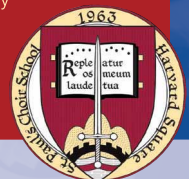
Sunday, December 21, 3:00pm

TICKETS: \$35/\$25

29 Mt. Auburn Street, Cambridge MA 02138
617 868-8658 | www.stpaulchoirschool.com



The boys of the St. Paul's Choir School are proud to announce the release of their debut international recording, *Christmas in Harvard Square!* CDs are available for purchase through the Choir School website, www.stpaulchoirschool.com. Produced by AimHigher Recordings/Decca, the CD features 19 classic Christmas songs of both traditional and contemporary arrangements, including original arrangements by Director of Music, John Robinson.



St. Paul's Choir School is a musically intensive, academically rigorous Catholic day school for boys in grades 4-8. Boys who enjoy singing are welcome to audition. For more information, please contact John Robinson, Director of Music, jrobinson@choirschool.net.