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THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH | Arts | SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2009

BREAKING NEWS: DISPATCH.COM

2009 < The Year in Review

BOOKS

Kennedy, Updike bade us farewell

By John Timpane THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Here are several noteworthy fiction, nonfiction and poetry books of 2009, compiled by reviewers for The Philadelphia Inquirer:

Fiction

• Jeff in Venice, Death in Varanasi (Pantheon) by Geoff Dyer: sort of a memoir and often brilliant.

• Juliet Naked (Riverhead) by Nick Hornby: a return by the British writer to his great comic theme, the fan's life.

• The Vagrants (Random House) by Yiyun Li: a masterful novel that gives a lacerating look at post-Cultural Revolution China.

• The Year of the Flood (Nan Talese/Doubleday) by Margaret Atwood: an insightful and funny post-apocalyptic tale.

Nonfiction

• Angels and Ages: A Short Book About Darwin, Lincoln and Modern Life (Knopf) by Adam Gopnik: a brilliant, stylish argument that these two men were the great beginners of the contemporary condition.

• The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire That Saved America (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) by Timothy Egan: the story of a fire

that spawned the modern conservationist movement.

• Going Rogue: An American Life (HarperCollins) by Sarah Palin: a publishing sensation by the former GOP vice-presidential candidate.

• Imperial (Viking) by William Vollman: a panoramic survey of California's Imperial Valley and those who make their lives there.

• Shooting Stars (Penguin) by LeBron James and Buzz Bissinger: a candid look at James' rise to NBA stardom.

• True Compass (Twelve): the affecting memoir by Massachusetts Sen. Edward M. Kennedy.

Poetry

• C.P. Cavafy: Collected Poems (Knopf), edited exquisitely by Daniel Mendelsohn: the fine poet's work in a definitive collection.

• Empoison and Other Poems (Knopf) by John Updike: a last word, praised for its heft, brilliance and poignant power.

Two valuable anthologies: • The Greek Poetic Homer to the Present (Norton), edited by Peter Constantine, Rachel Hadas, Edmund Keeley and Karen Van Dyck.

• The Oxford Book of Latin American Poetry (Oxford University), edited by Cecilia Vicuna and Ernesto Livon Grosman.

MYSTERY BOOKS

Connelly twice as good

SUN SENTINEL (FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA.)

Oline H. Cogdill of the Sun Sentinel in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., selected the best crime fiction from 2009.

Her list is in order of preference, with a tie at the top — two novels by Michael Connelly:

1. The Scarecrow (Little, Brown): An action-laden plot tackles the embattled newspaper industry, work ethics, integrity and pride in a job well-done. Nine Dragons (Little, Brown): Los Angeles police detective Harry Bosch's personal and professional lives overlap as the story explores the city's Asian community, serves as a travel guide to the back streets of Hong Kong, and depicts a man learning to become a father.

2. A Darker Domain (Harper) by Val McDermid: A coal-mining strike of the 1990s that changed many Scottish towns provides the background for a powerful modern tale.

3. Life Sentences (Morrow) by Laura Lippman: The novel takes a fresh look at relationships filtered through the prism of memories, racism, economics and jealousy as illustrated by a memoir writer who got everything wrong.

4. The Last Child (Morrow) by John Hart: A town's sinister secrets are exposed in a complex tale of broken families, despair and hope.

5. The Hidden Man (Putnam) by David Ellis: Edgar winner Ellis' first series is off

to an excellent start as a down-on-his-luck attorney defends an old friend who killed the man suspected of murdering his sister more than 26 years ago.

6. Ravens (Grand Central) by George Dawes Green: After 14 years, Green is back with a terrifying and funny cautionary tale about a family that wins the lottery and the grifters determined to steal their money.

7. The Tourist (Minotaur) by Olen Steinhilber: What happens when a former CIA field agent transitions to upstanding father and husband — but can't shake the soul-crushing aftermath of violence?

8. Darling Jim (Holt) by Christian Moerk: Mythology, Arthurian legend, fairy tales, noir and horror merge in this tale of an aunt, her niece and their fatal attraction to a charismatic, itinerant Irish storyteller.

9. Devil's Garden (Putnam) by Ace Atkins: Using the manslaughter trial of silent-film comedian Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle in 1921, the historical novel insightfully deals with celebrities, media power, dirty politics, voyeurism and the thrill movies brought to audiences.

10. A Duty to the Dead and The Red Door (Morrow) by Charles Todd: Todd continues to spotlight World War I and its repercussions, now with two series. Nurse Bess Crawford makes her debut in Dury, while Scotland Yard detective Ian Rutledge returns in Door.

EXHIBITS

Visual delights

Wide range of works caught viewers' eyes in past 12 months

Visitors to central Ohio museums, arts centers and galleries were treated this year to spectacles of teapots and mummies, real-estate drawings and Burmese artifacts, and the paintings of a Belgian phenomenon and a home-grown favorite.



Kanwischer-House w/ Arch, drawing by Charles Kanwischer

• "Charles Kanwischer: Real Estate Drawings," January and February, Dublin Arts Center: "The decline of the American housing market added poignancy to these meticulous and precise drawings of homes. . . . The cyclical nature of houses became a compelling narrative with sociological and psychological nuances."

— Kaizada Kotwal

• "To Live Forever: Egyptian Treasures From the Brooklyn Museum," February to June, Columbus Museum of Art: "The exhibit includes more than 100 objects beautifully installed in galleries decorated to make visitors feel as if they have been transported back to the time of the pharaohs."

— Jacqueline Hall



Two teapots by Laura Peery

• "The Infinite Teapot," February and March, Ohio Craft Museum: "The artistry, complexity and delight found in a simple object make this a special exhibit."

— J.H.

• "Vivian Pitman," March, Lindsay Gallery: "An outsider folk artist by definition, her art is marked by a gutsy aesthetic and daring dialectic of the political landscape in America, including race, religion and class."

— K.K.



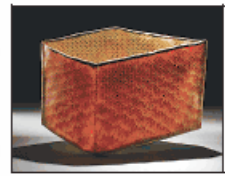
Lunch, 1964 by George Tooker

• "George Tooker: A Retrospective," May to August, Columbus Museum of Art: "Meditative and intense, Tooker's paintings are about the human condition. Best-known for angst-ridden, Orwellian imagery, his work also addresses the perils and possibilities of community."

— Christopher A. Yates

• "New Narratives: Paintings by Ohio Artists," May to July, Riffe Gallery: "Curated by Dominique H. Vasseur, the show assembled works by 12 painters who employ storytelling. Proving that narrative painting is not dead, the complex exhibit touched a host of social, political and personal issues."

— C.A.Y.



Counter by Curtis Benzle

• "Curtis Benzle: Double Vision," May and June, Sherrie Galleries: "The porcelain works exude a fragile refinement laced with a modernist exploration of line, form and texture. . . . When light interacts with them, the varying degrees of opacity within the surfaces makes these ceramic marvels seem to glow from within."

— K.K.

• "Tamara Jaeger: Selected Assemblages" and "Julia McLemore: Recent Floral Photographs," June and July, Keny Galleries: "The uncommon works of Tamara Jaeger and Julia McLemore — which have little in common except being created with great skill and imagination — are on display. Jaeger builds whimsical assemblages with recycled wood; McLemore's floral photographs are delicate and luminous prints,

made without a camera."

— J.H.

• "The Urban Landscape," June and July, Art Access Gallery: "A trio of artists — Perry Brown, Curtis Goldstein and Joe Lombardo — collaborates on a stimulating exploration of metropolitan scenes."

— J.H.

• "Luc Tuymans," September to January, Wexner Center for the Arts: "Tuymans' paintings exude a quiet, contemplative simplicity. Powerfully addressing concepts of memory and interpretation, he positions himself in the gray space between extremes, allowing for thoughtful introspection."

— C.A.Y.

• "Alice Schille: The Early Years, 1902-1914," October to December, Schumacher Gallery: "The profoundly gifted Columbus native led a storied life devoted to art, travel and teaching. Documenting her development before the start of World War I, the exhibit underscores Schille's compositional prowess and ability to deftly organize complex images into patterns of shape and light."

— C.A.Y.

• "Bapists in Burma," October to December, Denison Museum: "High-lighting Denison University's fascinating and unique collection of Burmese artifacts, the visually stunning exhibit includes Buddha sculptures, lacquered bowls, silver vessels, textiles, figurines and archived photographs and documents. The show's strength is in revealing the complex nature of religious and cultural collision."

— C.A.Y.



Seated Buddha With Two Disciples, the Earth God and Four Chintres

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