

Walker in the *Pas de Trois* (a dance for three) from *Swan Lake*, and as *Queen of the Dryads* in *Don Quixote*

to somehow make an impact.”

For now, she dances. “I’m going to keep doing it until I can’t anymore or until it doesn’t make sense to anymore,” she says. Back in the studio, *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* took shape with amazing quickness. Walker, in black tights and diaphanous green skirt, darted and turned and leapt. After an hour, the dancers had mastered Balanchine’s clockwork choreography. The company would not revisit the piece for six months, until final rehearsals for the performance, but when the time came, Walker would remember the steps.

Is she glad she took time away from ballet? Walker’s characteristic gratitude is tempered by what-ifs. “Some days I’m

frustrated, because you never know if you’d be farther along in your career if this or that hadn’t happened,” she says. But she wouldn’t give up what she learned, or the people she met, while at Harvard. “With time lost from that and time lost from the injury, I think I appreciate everything I get to do a lot more,” she

continues. “I feel like I’ve earned the things that I do.”

Maggie Shipstead ’05 is the author of Seating Arrangements and a second novel, Astonish Me, about ballet.

Brain Food

Comics to chew on

by SAMANTHA MALDONADO

TAPING a package closed, shaving an armpit, coaxing bread out of a toaster with a fork, sitting on a toilet while staring at a phone—chin resting in hand, pants puddled around ankles. In her comic drawing “Faces of Death,” Andrea Tsurumi ’07 imagines skeletons performing each of these banal activities. No

words explain the message: Is this a parallel universe? A setting for a cautionary tale? Are death’s most ordinary

moments just x-rays of life’s? Equal parts grave and goofy, the image captures Tsurumi’s specialty: life observed and shown as absurd.

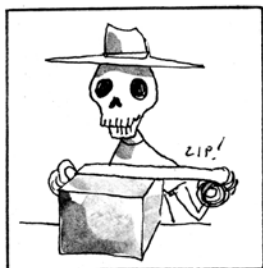
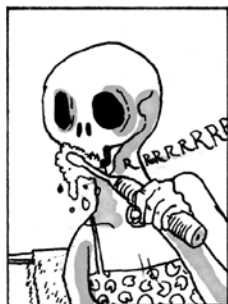
In her work—which includes one-off drawings, visual book reviews, picture books, and illustrations—Tsurumi pushes situations to their extremes, asks “What if?” and then adds fanciful elements. “If I give my brain enough stuff to chew on,” she says, “something random will pop out.” For example: “I love watching people choose desserts. It’s a very naked and vulnerable indulgent moment, where someone who’s very serious will be, like, ‘Oh wait, they have coffee cake!’”

“There’s no way to get ahead of Andrea’s brain,” says Tsurumi’s literary agent, Stephen Barr, who is guiding the development of her forthcoming children’s book, *Accident*. In it, an armadillo knocks over a jar of strategically placed red liquid and rushes around encountering other animals who are experiencing their own accidents. Barr describes *Accident* as a “high-calorie picture book,” dense with jokes and detail; Tsurumi says *Ac-*



Tsurumi at work in her studio, and details from “Faces of Death”

cident is “Richard Scarry-crazy”—and the animals with attitudes, colorful liveliness, and earnest sense of wonder in her images do seem descended from his drawings of Busytown.



In Tsurumi's work, details explode from the page. Her cheeky maximalism packs a visual punch, whether she's using hard lines or a hazier, impressionist approach. En-



countering it can be as overwhelming, trippy, and thrilling as visiting a new place—allowing the reader to see things in a more fun and zany light. Her sensibility, delighting in what might seem mundane, can resonate with people of all ages. It's almost as if Tsurumi is sharing secrets of the world's possibilities, and it's exciting to behold—even if how she discovers these secrets and develops them on paper can be difficult to pin down.

Tsurumi's first book, *Why Would You Do That?* exhibits her dark humor and tendency toward surrealism. Published in May, this playful assortment of her comics and drawings also documents her **Detail from "Challenging the Gods: Rubens Becoming Rubens," Tsurumi's contribution (adapted from curator Christopher D.M. Atkins's essays) to *Prometheus Eternal***

various obsessions: dogs, books, history, and food. The cover depicts two ice cream cones fighting: one, cone-fists balled up at the end of stocky cone-arms, has just punched the other's scoop-head off. Within the book, fluffy bichons become trichons become tetrachons, like Cerberuses with an extra profusion of heads; a food photographer shoots breaking news for a newspaper; a Civil War battle is imagined with desserts in "Cake vs. Pie." The latter is gleeful and gruesome: cakes on roller skates aim arrows at multi-legged pies, a fortune cookie spars with a muffin, and a jelly roll bashes a cinnamon roll. Later, an ice-cream orderly empties a bed pan while a biscotti doctor stands by, splattered in guts. Tsurumi commits to every joke, and her attention to detail in realizing these conceits keeps them from becoming precious.

For her contribution to *Prometheus Eternal*, an art anthology showcasing a recent Philadelphia Art Museum exhibition, Tsurumi

Off the Shelf

Recent books with Harvard connections

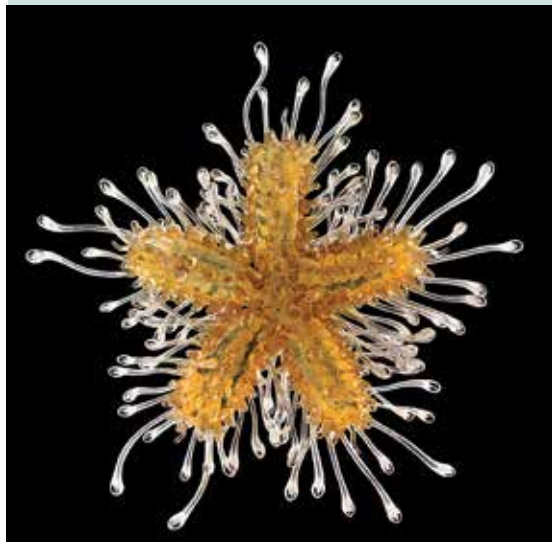
A Sea of Glass, by Drew Harvell (University of California, \$29.95). The Blaschkas, of glass-flowers fame, first modeled marine invertebrates (see "A Glass Menagerie," harvardmag.com/glasssea-16, on Harvard's specimens). A professor at Cornell, who curates the marine invertebrate collection there, uses the glass creatures as her point

of departure to examine the living equivalents today, and to probe the changing oceanic ecosystem and the threats that may make the actual fauna more fragile than the Blaschkas' enduring works.

Louisa: The Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams, by Louisa Thomas '04 (Penguin, \$30). The marriage of London-born Louisa Catherine Johnson and John Quincy Adams, as New England as they came, united Old World and New at a pivotal time. Their fruitful lives together, not always easy, unfolded on farms and in the White House, from Russia and Prussia to Washington. And during its course, she emerged as a distinctive, towering figure in her own right, here vividly portrayed in full for the first time.

Hogs Wild, by Ian Frazier '73 (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$26). A collection of the author's essays and journalism. The title piece, grounded as ever in fact—domesticated hogs become feral "readily," and reproduce "quickly and

A star is born (in glass): a juvenile common sea star, *Asterias rubens*.



GUIDO MOCAFFO/COURTESY OF THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF IRELAND

abundantly," meaning that "The wild hog is an infestation machine"—is a good point of departure. The omniscient Frazier was profiled in "Seriously Funny" (September-October 2008, page 40).

Legal Plunder, by Daniel Lord Smail, Baird professor of history (Harvard, \$39.95). A close scholarly examination of household goods as they were accumulated in late medieval Marseille and Lucca reveals the rise of the modern consumer economy, with valuables enmeshed in webs of exchange, credit, and state-run debt collection: the "plunder" of the title.

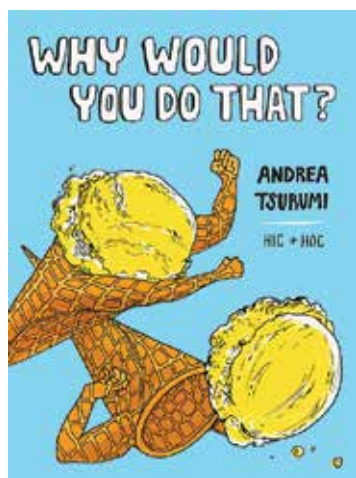
Magic and Loss: The Internet as Art, by Virginia Heffernan, Ph.D. '02 (Simon & Schuster, \$26). An observer of digital culture for *The New York Times* (profiled in "Savant of Screens," September-October 2007, page 19) here sets out to address "the trippy, slanted, infinite dreamland" of the Web, assembling "a complete aesthetics—and poetics—of the Internet" from its basic building blocks of design, text, photos, video, and music.

Putin Country: A Journey to the Real Russia, by Anne Garrels '72 (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$26). Life in the country today, outside Moscow, emerges in the little de-

Tsurumi's first book documents her many enthusiasms.

rumi adapted the curator's catalog essays into a historical comic. Narrating why and how Rubens painted *Prometheus Bound*, she depicted the old master as a child, doing pushups and nursing schoolgirl-like crushes on Michelangelo and Titian. She takes humor just as seriously as she does her subjects, which makes her shy away from treating *anything* too reverently. Humor can help readers access unexpected ideas and ways of thinking, she says: "It's a great horse that can bring you into a common experience, which is very uniting and empathetic."

She recently moved from New York City to Philadelphia, where she's enjoying



the relative calm. New York provided endless material for inspiration, as shown in her people-watcher diary comic *Eavesdropper*, which records happenings in the city. But the relentless pace grew over-stimulating. It turned her off as an observer, she says, and she grew numb to her environment—

dangerous to an artist whose job requires paying close attention to what's going on around her. Tsurumi's dedication to her work prevents her from moving through her days on autopilot. It keeps her mind fed, imagination active, and art exuberant. "Art is a way to fight the shorthand," she says. "To quote Vonnegut—oh god, I'm quoting Vonnegut—art is not a living, it's a way to live."

HM Explore More

For more online-only articles on the arts and creativity, see:

Michael Pollan's Crooked Writing Path

At Radcliffe, the author talks on nature, food, and altered states of consciousness. harvardmag.com/pollan-16



2016 Norton Lectures

Toni Morrison speaks on race and literature. harvardmag.com/toni-16



tails: an "ideal prisoner," up for early release, pays the judge's \$10,000 price—but when the head of the prison is left unhappy, not having received his cut, he blocks the deal. Solid on-the-ground reporting.

Unequal Gains: American Growth and Inequality since 1700, by Peter H. Lindert and Jeffrey G. Williamson, Bell professor of economics emeritus (Princeton, \$35). A scholarly economic history details alternating periods of egalitarian and of unequal incomes in the United States. The authors don't shy from the implications: "The second great rise of American income inequality after the 1970s was probably avoidable," had the country not fallen short in education, financial regulation, and the taxation of heritable wealth.

What Works: Gender Equality by Design, by Iris Bohnet, professor of public policy (Harvard, \$26.95). A behavioral economist suggests overcoming unconscious biases indirectly, by altering institutional arrangements in the workplace—from reviewing résumés in new ways to looking at how hallways are decorated and what role models are available.

Blue in a Red State, by Justin Krebs '00 (New Press, \$24.95). A MoveOn.org cam-

paigner probes what it feels like to reside as a member of a political minority (in this case, liberals in conservative redoubts, but one can imagine the opposite) in an increasingly polarized, and geographically divided, country. And speaking of fish out of water, Joel K. Goldstein, J.D. '81, a law professor, has explored America's least-scrutinized, but potentially most important, leaders in **The White House Vice Presidency** (University Press of Kansas, \$34.95); the subtitle refers to "the path to significance" during the past four decades. Scrutinize the entire ticket this fall, voters!

Metropolis Nonformal, by Christian Werthmann, former director, master in landscape architecture program, Graduate School of Design, and Jessica Bridger, M.L.A. '09 (Applied Research and Design, \$34.95). Multiple perspectives on the pervasive phenomenon of self-assembled urban growth (via slums, favelas, and shantytowns), with wonderful photographs. Separately, in **Landscape as Urbanism** (Princeton, \$45), Charles Waldheim, Irving professor of landscape architecture, advances a theoretical underpinning for



A typical example of informal urbanization, in Medellín, Colombia

breaching the barriers that have separated urbanism and landscape; the aim is a more coherent view of what cities can be.

Illiberal Reformers, by Thomas C. Leonard '82 (Princeton, \$35). A reinterpretation of the Progressive Era economic reformers, whose enthusiasm for taming laissez-faire capitalism did not extend to everyone, as they also embraced Darwinism, racial science, and eugenic theory to exclude immigrants, people of color, women, and "mental defectives." A timely complement to "Harvard's Eugenics Era," featured in this magazine's March-April issue.