

Take any job that comes your way. Don't mistake sexual power for real power. Sometimes sincere trumps snarky. (In an interview, she offers a few more, on the spot. "Comedy is always easier when we're with familiar characters"—so, in a first episode, "Every line not only has to move the plot forward, it also has to illuminate the character.") There's also something to be learned from the one-liners embedded throughout her narrative like razor apples. If a new colleague asked if she had kids, she'd blithely reply, "I've got two sons, but I'm blanking on their names right now." Recalling a misogynistic former boss, she writes that they never met again, then tosses off, "It's unlikely we will since I don't get to Branson, Missouri, much." It's these moments that really show how Scovell made it in enter-

tainment: thick skin, secret steel, and the ability to parry.

Yet hers is not a straightforward growth narrative. Instead, it zigzags from triumph to disappointment. A "Job Timeline" lists every single project she ever worked on, including the unshot and unaired, each rewrite and every rejection. Then there are the lists of jokes that didn't make it, a chapter all about shows that she narrowly missed working on—it's like a movie made of outtakes, as if she stitched a narrative from what she's swept up from the cutting-room floor. "I have cried in every parking structure in Hollywood," Scovell confides.

In the book, she quips that the flipside to that William Goldman chestnut, "Nobody knows anything," is the helplessly hoping, "You never know..." Even to her,

Hollywood remains baffling, a system operating on variable rewards. Hopefuls are lured in by intermittent reinforcement, like gamblers playing the slots, or caged rats. "Pressing the lever may lead to insanity," she writes, "but how else are you gonna get a pellet?"

Scovell admits that she sometimes chafes against the suggestion that she must give herself over to mentoring young women. After all, she still has aspirations of her own. She's working on a pilot about a divorced one-percenter who moves in with her school-teacher sister and her school-nurse brother-in-law. She might like to run a show again. She would love to direct another movie. "I'm not done. And I don't want to admit that it's over just yet. I want one more shot!"



THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK, STUDY COLLECTION

Time in Space

Renée Green's new art, embedded in the Carpenter Center

by LILY SCHERLIS

MANY WHO WORK in and around the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts have a weird relationship with the French modernist architect who designed it. Le Corbusier is a mythic figure for Harvard's art students: his notoriety, when combined with the loudness of his architecture, means that making art able to hold its own in the building feels like shouting over a lawnmower.

Artist, filmmaker, and MIT professor Renée Green has been making work at the Carpenter Center during a two-year resi-

dency—enough time to get to know the space intimately. She has set up colorful modular viewing stations for displaying videos, installed grids of images of California infrastructure, and presented essay films, ephemera, sound works, and print publications. Throughout, "I've used spaces that I wouldn't ordinarily imagine would be used," she says, "more interstitial spaces"—under the stairs in the basement, in the vertical vitrines, in a corner of what is now the bookstore at the top of the building's ramp. She's excited about her final exhibition, "Within Living Memory" (on view through April): she gets the whole place to herself. The culmination of her residency, it contains works made in the past decade and spanning many media. Gravitating around



While at the CCVA, Renée Green set up viewing pods for her installation *Media Bichos* (top), and grids of images for *Code Survey* (left), among other projects.

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themes of habitation and displacement, the show highlights projects reflecting her attention to modernist architecture.

Before her time at Harvard, Green's last encounter with Le Corbusier was in 1993, when she ventured to Firminy, France, to live in a half-deserted housing unit that had been part of his multi-site modernist residential concept, *Unité d'habitation*. She reflects on that (literal) residency in *Secret*, a rarely shown trio of videos on view in "Within Living Memory"; her new moving-image work, *Americas: Veritas*, premiering during the exhibition, considers the Carpenter Center alongside his only other built structure in the Western hemisphere: Casa Curutchet, in La Plata, Argentina—5,404 miles away. The pairing feels, in her words, "oddly peripheral" in contrast with Le Corbusier's imaginings. Green is fascinated by the wide gap between his dreams for the Americas—re-doing entire cities—and what he actually managed to build.

Green has a long-term interest in modernist architecture: her essay film *Begin Again*, *Begin Again*, also on view in the exhibit, is an attempt, in her words, to "think with"

the eponymous West Hollywood house built by the Austrian-American architect R.M. Schindler in 1922. Designed to facilitate an experimental and communal lifestyle, the building gave rise to the California strain of modernist architecture. The film begins with a deep rumble of a voice announcing, "Begin again. Begin again. Begin again," where every "again" is a little more electric and each beginning has a little more weight. Teal seawater tumbles over the camera. The voice tallies every year from Schindler's birth in 1887 until the film's own making in 2015; shots of the house and surrounding na-



RENEE GREEN/FREE AGENT MEDIA

A still from Green's film *ED/HF*, on artist Harun Farocki (top), and another from her installation *Secret*, about her residency at Le Corbusier's housing complex in Firminy, France

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RENEE GREEN/FREE AGENT MEDIA

ture are punctuated by archival footage of twentieth-century commercial and military activity. Green makes the past feel strangely close. How, the film asks, are Schindler's words and buildings differently experienced 60 years after his death? How can time dilate lives?

Another recent work continues this line of inquiry into how ideas, people, and built struc-

A still from *Begin Again, Begin Again* (2015)

tures move across time and space. Green's 2017 essay film, *ED/HF*, engages with the life of German filmmaker Harun Farocki, whose work explicitly reflected on the medium's political potency. The script of *ED/HF* is a collage of both Farocki's and Green's writings on lived space, migration, and the creative process, interspersed with quotations from poets Rainer Maria Rilke and Paul Celan, among others. But all this is voiced by a single narrator: hearing the uncited audio, it's difficult, if not impossible, to tell where Farocki ends and Green begins. They share a single set of

Off the Shelf

Recent books with Harvard connections

Without Precedent: Chief Justice John Marshall and His Times, by Joel Richard Paul, J.D. '81 (Riverhead, \$30), offers an accessible portrait of a giant from the third branch of government. The author, of the University of California Hastings Law School, in San Francisco, observes of his subject that no founder "had a greater impact on the American Constitution," and "no one did more than Marshall to preserve the delicate unity of the fledgling republic." More like him, please?

Can It Happen Here? Authoritarianism in America, edited by Cass R. Sunstein, Walmsley University Professor (Dey St./Morrow, \$17.99, paper). The indefatigable Sunstein (profiled in "The Legal Olympian," January-February 2015, page 43, and last heard from in *Impeachment: A Citizen's Guide*, published in October), imagines a post-terrorist-attack, President Trump-led America, and then gathers perspectives in essays by legal and other scholars from Chicago, Harvard, Yale, and elsewhere (among them, Martha Minow on the Japanese internment in World War II as a precedent for mass detentions). In the same vein, **How Democracies Die**, by Steven Levitsky, Rockefeller professor of Latin American studies, and Daniel Ziblatt, professor of government (Crown, \$26), scans experiences in Europe and Latin America to explore the fateful question, "Are we living through the decline and fall of one of the world's oldest and most

successful democracies?"—and if so, what to do about it.

The People vs. Democracy, by Yascha Mounk, associate of the department of government (Harvard, \$29.95). In a populist era, Mounk finds, popular will and individual rights collide. Monied campaign contributors advance rights without democracy, and populists, in effect, advance democracy without rights—collectively endangering the liberal democratic order, from India and Europe to the United States.

Of related interest, in legal and historical perspective: **Habeas Corpus in War-time**, by Amanda L. Tyler, J.D. '98 (Oxford, \$85), is a Berkeley law professor's comprehensive analysis—"from the Tower of London to Guantánamo Bay," as the subtitle puts it—of a subject of current relevance in an era of terrorism and the political responses to it. **Moral Combat: How Sex Divided American Christians and Fractured American Politics**, by R. Marie Griffith, Ph.D. '95 (Basic, \$32), examines a century of Christian debate about sexual morality and gender roles, and its political consequences. The author directs the Danforth Center on Religion and Politics at Washington University.

Biomedicine, then and now. **Vanishing Bone**, by William H. Harris, Gerry clinical professor of orthopaedic surgery emeritus (Oxford, \$21.95), is a medical mystery: why hip-replacement patients began suffering severe bone loss. Harris recounts how he and colleagues figured out the molecular biology, and moved toward substitute ma-

terials for hip prostheses, eliminating the affliction. **Bioinspired Devices**, by Eugene C. Goldfield, associate professor of psychology in the department of psychiatry (Harvard, \$45), is a demanding overview of the work pursued at the Wyss Institute for Biologically Inspired Engineering, where the author is a faculty associate working on a modular robotic system for toddlers at risk for cerebral palsy. Lay readers may find that skimming the work helps bring into focus the applied science being derived from nature's systems of assembly and repair.

The Biological Mind, by Alan Jasanoff '92, Ph.D. '98 (Basic, \$30). The author (who is professor not only of biological engineering, but also of brain and cognitive sciences and nuclear science and engineering at MIT), looks beyond tissue to explore "how brain, body, and environment collaborate to make us who we are" (the subtitle). His formidable credentials aside, he is accessible and inviting, beginning, "What makes you you? Wherever you come from and whatever you believe about yourself, chances are that...you know your brain is the heart of the matter."

The China scholars have been busy, adding to readers' understanding of the roots of the modern nation with which the United States now has its most consequential, if muddled, relationship. **The Art of Being Governed: Everyday Politics in Late Imperial China**, by Michael Szonyi, professor of Chinese history (Princeton, \$35), vividly explores families' relationship to the state in fulfillment of their obligation to man the army. The director of the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies brings the Ming

vocal cords. Green, who calls the piece “a film as a conversation,” says, “I wanted it to be blurry.”

She and Farocki exhibited together until his unexpected death in 2014. He wanted to be a writer, and so she sought out his personal writings as source material for the script. “When a person is dead you can imagine what you like,” says the narrator of *ED/HF*. “You can also review what they left, if you can find it.” The process of writing the script seems like a kind of verbal knitting: she wove his voice into her own.

“Both *ED/HF* and *Begin Again, Begin Again*

are about considering a lifespan,” she says. Modernist buildings like the Carpenter Center, she notes, were not built to last longer than 100 years—not that much longer than a human life. She’s fascinated with what will happen if they last longer.

Green’s creations are sensitive not only to longevity, but also to how quickly “right now” becomes “just a moment ago.” Her work articulates a desire to be attentive to the passage of time. She’s titled her residency “Pacing,” suggesting how the work of these two years has been cumulative. Each project overlaps its predecessor, and all of

them address the Carpenter Center: “I can do [the work of the residency] over time in different ways, minimal, maximal, whatever, in between.”

As for the shadow of Le Corbusier himself, Green is unfazed. She’s very aware of his glossy notoriety: “He was very engaged with creating his archive, and having some kind of trace of everything he ever did,” she says. At the same time, she adds, he had failures and false starts and a list of projects he didn’t get to. She’s interested in the architect—as with Farocki and Schindler—as a human being.

roots of organization and authority to life. **China at War**, by Hans van de Ven, Ph.D. ’87 (Harvard, \$35), is a University of Cambridge historian’s reinterpretation of the Sino-Japanese war and the brutal civil conflict between Nationalists and Communists—underpinning the People’s Republic’s founding legends and its leaders’ quest for control over a fractious society. **The Contentious Public Sphere**, by Ya-Wen Lei, assistant professor of sociology (Princeton, \$39.50), explores how authoritarianism today involves attempts to control the media, the realm of digital dialogue, and China’s alternately rambunctious and cowed civil society. Finally, **The China Questions**, edited by Jennifer Rudolph and Szonyi, (Harvard, \$27.95), scans the major issues associated with “a rising power.” Thirty-six experts (many from Harvard) contribute essays on history and culture, the economy and the environment, international relations, society, and China’s internal political contradictions.

When Grit Isn’t Enough, by Linda F. Nathan, adjunct lecturer on education (Beacon, \$26.95). The founding head of the Boston Arts Academy tackles the “false promise” that high-school graduation alone ensures comparable preparation and success in college. She digs into the underlying assumptions about hard work and equal opportunity and focuses attention on the harder realities of poverty, race, class, and parental educational attainment that make for vastly unequal playing fields in America.

A Literary Tour de France, by Robert Darnton, Pforzheimer University Professor and University Librarian emeritus (Ox-

ford, \$34.95). A towering historian of the book, Darnton continues his scholarly work by examining publishing in France before the Revolution. Through the records of a Swiss publishing house, he reveals a world where print still seemed revolutionary, and had to contend, not with Kindle e-readers, but with censors, tax officials, piracy, and more.

Design Thinking for the Greater Good, by Jeanne Liedtka, M.B.A. ’81, Randy Salzman, and Daisy Azer (Columbia Business School Publishing, \$29.95). Liedtka, at the University of Virginia’s Darden School, and her coauthors try to apply “design thinking,” associated with buzzy products, to innovating in the social sector (healthcare, education, agriculture, etc.), where vexing problems and rigid bureaucracies block progress.

The focus is on collaboration, prototyping, and similar processes. The invitation to fresh approaches is welcome.

We Wear the Mask, edited by Brando Skyhorse and Lisa Page (Beacon, \$18, paper), gathers 15 essays on “passing in America.” Harvardians will be affected by “Passing Ambition,” in which Sergio Troncoso ’83 recalls the mishaps, racialized slights, and kindnesses that accompanied his

The Pursuit (1771-72), from Jean-Honoré Fragonard’s series *The Pursuit of Love*, designed for a chateau belonging to Mme. Du Barry, mistress of Louis XV

undergraduate attempts to have a meaningful internship in Washington, D.C.

A Life in Cybernetics, by Norbert Wiener, Ph.D. 1913 (MIT, \$50, paper). A one-volume edition of the celebrated autobiography, *Ex-Prodigy: My Childhood and Youth* and *I Am a Mathematician: The Later Life of a Prodigy*. That youth figured prominently in this magazine’s January-February feature, “Prodigies’ Progress,” by Ann Hulbert.

The Painter’s Touch, by Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, Boardman professor of fine arts (Princeton, \$65). A searching material analysis of the oil paint, brushwork, and textures of eighteenth-century masterpieces by Boucher, Chardin, and Fragonard. Sumptuously illustrated.



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