

What Jobs, Hoops, and Housing? The Atlantic Yards Battlefield

BY SCOTT MX TURNER

Only communists, vegetarians, puppycide practitioners, and anti-social miscreants who hate poor people could be opposed.

That's what His Majesty Mayor Michael the First, Second, and, yes, now the Third would have you believe about mega-developer Bruce Ratner's Atlantic Yards project in Brooklyn's Prospect Heights neighborhood.

Announced over six years ago, Atlantic Yards is a 16-skyscraper/one-basketball arena project that has become the poster child for failed development in New York City. The project has floundered for three reasons: fierce community opposition, the bad economy, and Ratner's own mishandling of the job.

The splashy press conference in late 2003 that introduced Atlantic Yards, attended by a phalanx of high profile pols and celebs, contained all of the catchphrase rhetoric supporters continue to mouth and the rest of Brooklyn has grown weary of:

- 10,000 newly created jobs;
- thousands of affordable apartments;
- 15,000 union construction jobs;
- an NBA franchise (the New Jersey Nets, with Ratner then the team's owner) that would repair the hole left in the borough's heart since the Dodgers left 50 years prior;
- a Frank Gehry-designed architectural masterpiece;
- new parks;
- green technology;
- won't cost the taxpayers a cent;
- no use of eminent domain; and
- a rebirth for Brooklyn.

A little over six years later, none of this has come to pass.

Atlantic Yards—the footprint sits on the northern edge of Prospect Heights, bounded by Flatbush, Atlantic, and Vanderbilt Avenues and Dean Street—was haphazardly and

Ratner, the target of black construction workers' protests in the 1980s, bought off his potentially harshest critics in the black community.

undemocratically pushed through a flimsy state review process that kept local residents alarmed at the project's size and public cost at arm's length.

Still, groups formed to stop Atlantic Yards and replace it with different, community-responsive developments, including the UNITY plan. The best-known group, Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn, has done everything it can to stop Ratner's megablock development and has several court cases pending. It has cited dozens of problems over the years, including:

- \$2 billion in taxpayer money for Ratner's for-profit luxury condo development;
- 87 percent of the housing stock costing too much for Brooklyn's low-income families;
- grossly exaggerated numbers of union construction jobs the project would create;
- the city's Independent Budget Office's report that New York City would lose \$40 million on the basketball arena;
- the forced relocation of over 1,000

people from their homes, jobs, properties, and businesses;

- a woefully incomplete environmental impact statement;
- the haughty condescension from original

starchitect Frank Gehry, who gleefully anticipated "building a community from scratch," stunning the people whose community already occupied the project's footprint and surrounding streets;

- the lack of plans for increasing the neighborhood's infrastructure to accommodate 18,000 arena ticket holders and upward of 50,000 residents and office workers squeezed onto the site's 22 acres—a concentration that would make Atlantic Yards the densest population tract in the nation;
- an initial promise from Ratner that Atlantic Yards would create 10,000 new jobs, a figure so pie-in-the-sky that the most recent figures suggest only a few hundred;
- 16 skyscrapers from 20 to 50 stories high that would cast parts of Fort Greene in permanent shadows, including the Atlantic Terminal public housing complex across the street; and
- a flimsy "community benefits agreement" that isn't legally binding, has no government signatories, and was signed by only eight "community groups"—six of which didn't exist before the project began, and all eight of which have received financial gifts from Ratner.

Further complicating the issue is Brooklyn's always dry racial and class tinder. Ratner, the target of black construction workers' protests during the building of his colossal Metro Tech office park in Downtown Brooklyn in the 1980s, bought off his potentially harshest critics in the black community.

ACORN, via its mercurial head Bertha Lewis, was made Atlantic Yards' affordable-housing management company. (With the contract came a gag order preventing Lewis and ACORN from criticizing Ratner, even in the face of Ratner's many broken promises to ACORN's constituency.) Rev. Herbert Daughtry, a firebrand community activist who lives in Teaneck, N.J., was brought aboard to tout the plan. Daughtry's church has received funding from Ratner.

Jay-Z was made a part-owner of the Nets, to give Ratner street cred and political cover for the project. Never mind that Jay-Z owns 7/10 of one percent of the team. It was enough to curry favor via the hip-hop world, the kind of alliance Ratner never bothered to solicit in his previous 20 years of building in Brooklyn.

Many in the black community saw through Ratner's agenda. "We want development," Brooklyn City Council member and former Black Panther Charles Barron said in 2004. "We want job creation. But we cannot allow

developers to front Jay-Z, to front [former NBA star] Bernard King—as if all we care about is basketball and rap—and fool us into accepting a plan that will cost the city, and add to traffic and pollution, without delivering what the community needs. We can't be fooled by promises of jobs and housing that don't pan out."

Ultimately, project supporters saw the battle lines in blunt and race-baiting terms: if you're against this project, you're against the advancement of black Brooklynites. Many of the most vociferous anti-Atlantic Yards elected officials are black and represent the district where the project would be built—Council member Tish James, former Rep. Major Owens, and State Sen. Velmanette Montgomery. At the same time, the most overt supporters among the electeds were white—Mayor Bloomberg, governors George Pataki and Eliot Spitzer, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, and Senator Charles Schumer.

In other words, a classic cultural and political upside-down cake, the kind of baked goods popular since the day George W. Bush first took office. Speak a lie long enough, it becomes a truth.

Another telling dynamic was the "Whose Brooklyn? OUR Brooklyn" divide. Atlantic Yards supporters at the project's few public hearings would taunt opponents with cries of "go back to Pleasantville." Shouting matches erupted over who had been in Brooklyn longer, gentrification, and misidentification. Ownership of the borough, it seemed, was being wielded and self-awarded by those desperate to see the project succeed.

Throughout the six years, much has changed on the political landscape. The Bloomberg administration put spark to a feverish, overheated blitzkrieg to redevelop New York City. Instead of concentrating on rejuvenating small businesses and building

truly affordable housing, Bloomberg has empowered real-estate developers to build luxury housing condos and sports stadiums.

The *New York Times* reported that Bloomberg has re-zoned 20 percent of the city to make it easier for developers to have their way. Controversial projects in Harlem and Morningside Heights, Flushing, Coney Island, the west side of Manhattan, Greenpoint/Williamsburg, and Atlantic Yards have seen developers run roughshod over working-class neighborhoods, with little ability for residents to fight the steam shovels at their door.

Still, communities fight. In Brooklyn, DDDDB and dozens of other groups have fought the Atlantic Yards to a standstill. Community organizing, rallies, bake sales, benefit concerts, tabling, door-to-door talks with neighbors, walkathons, a quickly-learned media operation, political outreach, and court cases have slowed Ratner down.

It may not be enough. DDDDB lost its eminent domain case in New York State's Court of Appeals this past November. Other legal cases have seen similar rulings—the courts settling for the status-quo of state laws that make it impossible for citizens to challenge the cozy, illicit relationships between operatives like Ratner and government officials.

There are still pending legal challenges. But as 2010 nestles into its coming-in-a-lion stage, Bruce Ratner continues to lead a charmed life, which in New York means he's paid for the privilege.

Regardless of the outcome, the struggle between Brooklyn's communities and the Ratner consortium has been unimaginable. Imagine a football game. On one side is the New York Giants' starting 11. That would be Bruce Ratner and the political forces backing him. On the other side, a couple of young students, science-club geeks in street clothes who've never played football. The Giants have the ball on

Please see TURNER page 6



Controversial projects have seen developers continue to run roughshod over working-class neighborhoods that have little ability for residents to fight the steam shovels at their door.

Tracy Collins photo

Albert Flynn DeSilver
Woodacre, Calif.
Desire

A flock of Varied Thrushes is enough. They've made it in life. Onto the cover of *Birders World*. There is no word for individual in Bird or Thrush, no Brittney Thrush, that's a variation on being human, the flock distinct from the individual us, wanting, wanting great flight and a gorgeous orange necklace, obsidian nape, and our face on the front page.

from A Field Guide to the Emotions

The Shivers' Dance Party for Frankensteins Finding a Bump-In-The-Night Rock Groove

BY ISAAC GILLESPIE

In The Morning

The Shivers

Last winter, when I visited The Shivers in their Long Island City practice space, I spied two CD box sets, one by Lou Reed and one by Otis Redding. The Shivers' latest album, *In The Morning*, is the product of a band that's been holed up in post-industrial Queens listening to proto-punk and southern soul. Sonically, it's an album pitting chaotic noise against a driving beat, just as it thematically explores the relationship between pain and time.

The first sound you hear on the album is a throbbing bass drum that lives somewhere between the pumping of a heartbeat and the rhythmically even drone of a SONAR machine. The driving beat defines *In The Morning*. It's a billowing push that drives the action, a dark hollow sound emanating from somewhere below. We're left with no room for circumspection. *In The Morning* is Frankenstein music, an organic collage of bumps in the night smushed together and then filtered through a thick screen of rock 'n' roll.

The Shivers is the name associated with the musical projects of

a song of his reminded me of Devendra Banhart, he said, "Man, why doesn't anyone ever say someone cool like Pearl Jam?"

Last year's *Beaks to the Moon* introduced keyboardist Jo Schornikow as an additional singer and songwriter for the group. Jo's arrival brought a sense of balance and order to The Shivers' often chaotic sound. If Keith is earth and heaviness, Jo is air and light. The result of the collaboration was a sweeping pastoral landscape filled with lyrical open-air sounds framing Keith's pain.

In The Morning is the flip side of that relationship. It's no longer about pain, but instead about its anger. There's no more room for airy pianos or acoustic guitars, there's no room for resonance of any kind. Here as soon as an idea is introduced, it is swept away by the current of the slow steady rock beat.

The songs on *In the Morning* are like abstract pictures cobbled together from fragments. Jo still brings lyricism to Keith's darkness, as when the organ part in "African Passport" dances atop Keith's rumbling guitar and vocals. But more often, the sound of chaos and disorder wins out, as in the Jo-penned "Cold In The Morning #2," where a slow build of dissonant clangy guitar drowns out the carefully structured back and forth waltz of the keys. But in the midst of so much dissonance, the sound never quite feels out of balance. The group is mostly able to keep hold of symmetry in their sound.

The record starts strong with "Just Didn't Need To Know" (as in "there are so many things about you that I ..."). Keith tosses off seemingly unrelated couplets, which are held together by the driving beat and the persistent end rhyme. The first eight lines hold onto the A rhyme—veins, pain, rain, came, blame, same, train all pass by before we get to a B rhyme. The message is clear, this album is about the slow build. The song is a powerful meditation on the hurt that lingers after a relationship ends and how that hurt can fester into anger. The call "There wasn't room in your tomb for a bride and groom"

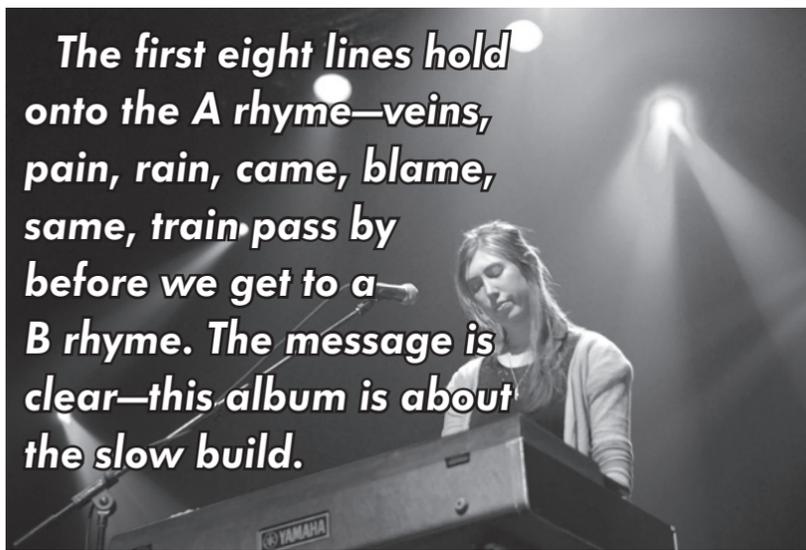
When I said a song reminded me of Devendra Banhart, he said, 'Man, why doesn't anyone



ever say someone cool like Pearl Jam?'

is answered early on in the song with "I know you've been seeing other boys, I just don't know whom." But by the time it's repeated at the end of the song it's met with "And I know you've been fucking other boys I just can't figure out whom." The casual "I don't know" is transformed into the obsessed "I can't figure out."

The theme of loving and losing is developed further by the previously mentioned "Cold In The Morning #2." It bears mentioning here that Keith sings the song "Cold In The Morning" on *Beaks to the Moon*. *Beaks'* "Cold In The Morning" typifies that album's sound: slow, loose, sentimental, and gorgeous. In contrast, as *In The Morning's* "Cold In The Morning #2" crescendos it develops a thick crust of dissonant distorted guitar. It's an excellent example of what this album does well—showing the strength of a beautiful song by putting it through a fiery crucible of ugliness. Things come to a head with the dance-rock single "Only In It For The \$\$\$", which tells the story of a boy and girl meeting on the dance floor and overcoming their inhibitions through seductive dancing. This is a great song. I gotta say, I was skeptical when Keith told me The Shivers were doing a dance single, but my shuffle-scuffed kitchen floor tells no lies. The song is terse and



The first eight lines hold onto the A rhyme—veins, pain, rain, came, blame, same, train pass by before we get to a B rhyme. The message is clear—this album is about the slow build.

Keith Zarrillo. Keith has a powerful baritone growl filled with hurt and longing that's always right on pitch. When I once told him that

relationship ends and how that hurt can fester into anger. The call "There wasn't room in your tomb for a bride and groom"

**"Dan! Wake up!
Jesus was just here!
He's got a big penis and
he's chasing all the women!"**

A line translated from the Pirahã by Daniel Everett. One of 100 endangered languages in Bob Holman's "Endangered Cento." Support the Endangered Language Poetry Project. vimeo.com/2910357 • holman@bowerypoetry.com

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Song Valuation in the Digital Age

B Y J J H A Y E S

How does one value a song? A few years back I tried to reflect on what the changes in the music industry might reveal to us about our preconceptions about songs and songwriting. I will grant you that "Like a Rolling Stone" is one of the great songs of all time. But that song wouldn't have made it to my ears if not for a particular centralized recording and distribution network known as Columbia Records. "Like A Rolling Stone" could possibly have been just a song by some singer songwriter that never even made it to vinyl. Would it have been any less valuable a song? Would it have been any less revolutionary?

Consider the case of legendary blues singer Robert Johnson. Although his last recorded words may have been "there's a woman here who want a dime and I lacks a nickel," his estate eventually grew to over \$1.3 million dollars in 1998. Does that mean that at his death his 29 songs were worth the equivalent of \$1.3 million 1998 dollars in 1938 dollars? They are, after all, the same songs.

It could be argued that songs grow in value over time, but how could that be? The song remains the same. Maybe it is a case of more people realizing the value of the song. But even that doesn't quite tell the whole story. Look at a hypothetical converse to the Robert Johnson example—a one-hit wonder that was worth millions during the year of its release but has faded into the remainder rack of history. Had a song made \$1.3 million dollars in 1938, does that mean its value is over \$19 million in today's dollars? That doesn't sound right. In the Robert Johnson example, more and more people are recognizing the value over the years. In the one-hit wonder example, fewer and fewer people find the song valuable enough to listen to it again.

Perhaps songs approach their true value over the years. Maybe the years excise variables like advertising or particular cultural phenomenon or popularity of the performer. Does it retain its value based on its one-year earnings, or does the average value over all the years since it was written present us a truer picture of its "real" worth?

Of course, that doesn't take into account the possibility that a song may disappear from public consciousness for reasons that have nothing to do with its inherent qualities. What if a little heard gem, owned by a failed businessman, were to stop being reproduced or disseminated? This very valuable song, had it been continually offered to the listening public, may have someday been recognized. Instead, this paragon of musical worth disappears without a trace.

You will note that the above discussion assumes a sort of monetary value, which is our default way of discussing value. How does one value a song? When I pose this question, I often get the straight economic response—a song's value is a function of how much (and how many) people are willing to pay for it. But that misses the point. It is based on the assumption that the value of a song rests in the willingness of people to pay for it, rather than their desire to listen to it.

In our age of free streaming media and downloads, the value of the song need not be represented monetarily. Every time someone comes back to a MySpace or iLike or Facebook fan page to listen to a free streaming song, that is, in terms of intrinsic worth, quite parallel to a vinyl consumer of a bygone age purchasing a single to hear the song. That raises the question of whether those tunes that people are willing to purchase on iTunes or elsewhere are really more valuable as songs than those which are downloaded for free. After all, these are tunes which people are willing to spend money on. The willingness to spend money (and believe me, as a neophyte manager, I'm all for the willingness of people to spend money) might be an indication that a song is that much better, since it takes a bite out of the consumer's wallet. But listeners of music don't just go around and pick up stuff for free because they can. It's not like they can resell it. A listener taking the time to download a song for free, or to sit and to listen to it stream for free, are investing three to six minutes of their lives because they think the song is—or might be—worth their time.

This raises deep questions about perceptions, judgment, and potential subjectivity. I can name, for example, at least three singer-songwriters whose names have graced these pages but are perhaps little known elsewhere and who have produced songs and albums that I perceive to be far more valuable, as songs, than the entire Michael Jackson catalog. This can easily be put down to sheer subjectivity, except that it doesn't feel like simply a matter of taste. Some of these seem to me to be quite objectively better works of art—and thus more valuable.

The question is whether what seems to me to be more valuable is in fact more valuable. In the olden days (by which I mean a few years ago), this would have been in many ways an untestable proposition, since the test of getting the music before a sufficient number of people, over a sufficiently long time, meant first having to get the music heard by a limited number of people who had the connections and money to place the music into mass circulation. Only a subset of the songs actually written would have the chance of either being one-hit wonders or classics.

This has changed, to some extent, but not as much as we'd like to think. Television shows, big record labels, and Hollywood still wield an enormous amount of power, and, like capital punishment, every step of the selection process is a combination of chance, hard work, capricious decisions, and decision makers speculating as to what the masses want. There are still those who listen to what is offered to them through the mass channels of distribution, and those who can't believe so many people listen to that crap.

Hope remains. It may be a slow process, but maybe there is a way to value songs by some function of repeated listenings from the population exposed to a song. This would also include cover versions, for it is the song, not the particular performance of the song, we're attempting

to value. What is the percentage of people who, when they hear a song, want to hear it again? What is the percentage of people who, upon hearing it again, want to obtain the song so they can listen to it again and again? Does that percentage stay constant over time, so that the number of people repeatedly listening to a song increases as the years go by, or does it precipitously drop?

To hell with the dollars, I'm going for the Voluntary Repeat Listening Unit as the currency of songs-valuation. In the days of free downloads and file sharing, all this raises the specter of another disconnect. While it is true that the value of a song cannot be represented accurately in dollars, there does appear to be a bit of injustice that a song which is valuable enough to be listened to repeatedly should result in no remuneration to its maker. This has nothing to do with intellectual property and copyright law enforcement. It just seems rude to walk away, rewarded with all the value of art, but not give something in return. So what happens? Will we replace the tragic Robert Johnson, who died penniless after producing monumental recordings that later sold in the millions, with the tragic hypothetical artist who will die penniless after producing monumental recordings that millions listened to, but paid nothing for?

JJ Hayes tried to find a pen-pal, but Osama never wrote back.



dark and eminently danceable. With Jo singing in her best deadpan rocker chick voice, it has the sound that most James Bond themes aspire to.

"Only In It For The \$\$\$" is followed up by the gorgeous little instrumental "Early Bird Special." It features a little rapid-fire Morse code like robot sound on melody and provides a lonely little respite.

Kicking off what I like to think of as Side B is the album's only misstep. "Insane" and "Sad Excuse" are two really beautiful little Keith ballads that are unfortunately sequenced right after one another. That might make sense on most records, but here it feels a little like breaking character to abandon the signature throbbing beat. "Sad Excuse" uses the device of layering chirpy little business voicemails on top of the song, which gives it a ghostliness characteristic of this album. Both songs are really well put together, but they take you out of the mood of the album.

Then we're soon back in—and how! In keeping with the "from the dungeon" aesthetic, "Diamonds" is treated with a chains dragging across the floor percussion track. This is followed up by "Cheree," a nearly six-minute Suicide cover that has Keith working out his vocal chops and penchant for chaos. I've already had the neighbor lady knocking on my door begging me to turn it down.

"Firenze" is another solid Keith strummer, with soul roots leading nicely into "Warm In The Morning." This album closer reprises the driving bass drum of the opener, but at half speed. If the steady pulse of "Just Didn't Need To Know" is about feeling rushed by the pace of the world, the mellow backbeat of "Warm In The Morning" reflects the fractured peace that comes with acquiescence. This song is a real gem, and it's the perfect closer to this record. It has Keith running through a laundry list of failed affairs—"Heather was a bad idea ... Allison was all wrong ... Janie was a big mistake." The tone captures perfectly that resigned-yet-unresolved feeling of an ended love affair. Just keep plodding along, it's as close as we come to resolution. True in art, true in life—a solid album all around.

www.theshiversnyc.com
Isaac Gillespie is a songwriter and all-around media guy. Look out for his upcoming video series Site&Sound.

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The School of Opaque, Honest, Musical Glee John Coletti Delivers With Mum Halo

BY EDMUND BERRIGAN

Mum Halo
John Coletti
Rust Buckle Books

Mum Halo by John Coletti is a book I've been looking forward to for a while, at least since the appearance of his previous chapbooks *Same Enemy Rainbow* (Fewer and Further Press), *Physical Kind* (Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs), and *The New Normalcy* (Boog Literature). Coletti's poems often combine brevity and emotional resonance on a balance of opacity in measured detail. An image like "Tarzan kickball" from the poem "St. John the Divine" pops out and dives right into the imagination, hinting at an entire possible scene without

image in the first line, a still life in the second line, a quick dash of character evaluation to bounce off until pushing the personal perspective out into the social (not too far) before an indulgent (like breakfast is indulgent) retreat into an image of antique solitude. Or whatever the hell a larder is—I'm not sure how to relate to that word specifically, but it feels perfect in its place, and poetry is essentially an art of vague precision. Coletti's poetry keeps you uncomfortable in a familiar way.

Similarly styled scenarios play out in myriad ways thereafter in *Mum Halo*, including moments of poetic bar music: "Just saw a bulldog slug a martini"; nature poetry: "Dear, permanent, koala indigestion"; poetry of everyday life: "My landlord just said he wanted to/ elbow me in the face"; mysticism: "angry yoga in an eastern town"; and surreal self-reflection: "a place to

Coma Alaska head of a penny
Toughened up mittens
Reinforcing blown kisses
Pretend I'm breaks
All a clover world's seams

There are poems and there are works, and this is a work. "Thoughts of you racing your own erasing" might offer a nod to compositional methods. "Adjusting your altitude/ Based on seasons of flowers" sounds like found folklore, but "Coma Alaska head of a penny" is a line from the great beyond. He escapes the poem more than ends it right after that with the help of some

A little admission, a little blurriness, a little bravado—you get the feeling Coletti is comfortable with the role of underdog, though not without something in his back pocket: "You are her cinders/ feeding on blue light/

cabbage" either, but after some further nature-based contradiction, "bird-rabbits punch breeze," we get a little more revelation: "I like my little secret/ only hurts myself". It's a secret he keeps.

Coletti's poetry takes its point with a number of influences behind it. It'd be too narrowing and tedious to cite them, but if he's from a school it's the school of opaque honest musical glee, not necessarily in that order. Take the closing poem "Me & My Falcon." Is that possibly an allusion to Duncan's "My Mother Would be a Falconess"? Nah. Maybe just an echo. This poem disturbs me a little, especially the conflict in the last four lines. It has the haunt of a childhood or adolescent portrait of a comrade one had to transition away from. I'll leave you with it.



Arlo Quint photo

I'm reserving a copy of *Half-shaved Head* for you Clay who haven't looked into your own face for five lives now just send back

cupcake
cups of water
flattened down Wonder Bread
scripture & Guidelines
will I leave a half glass
on the counter?
I won't. I'll always
drink it up.
www.rustbucklebooks.blogspot.com
Edmund Berrigan is the author of *Disarming Matter* (Owl Press) and *Glad Stone Children* (Farfalla Press).

A little admission, a little blurriness, a little bravado—you get the feeling Coletti is comfortable with the role of underdog, though not without something in his back pocket.

excess verbiage. The line that follows, "In drunk yellow broccoli," functions the same way, perhaps fast-forwarding from childhood to adulthood with back-pocket resonance. His individual lines are compact and often distinct enough from each other to create an effect of stacking, but *Mum Halo* shows a number of ways through a line while maintaining a continuity of sound.

"Champ Little Groom" leads off the book, seven one-and-a-half spaced lines that keep the music tight.

shin". Coletti shares a tinkerer's hand in the vein of poets like Simon Pette—he's not a poet of excess. The one-and-a-half line spacing used in most of the poems help create a very sculpted feel in poems like this one:

"Raw Milk"

Wee still green periodic O
Braiding trouble
The trouble with boys
Paying down goblins at a fisherman's prom
Folding paper in dunce twists
Playing fathers-to-be
Empty calories full of non-verbal words
Thought of you racing your own erasing
Adjusting your altitude
Based on seasons of flowers
Very gently do what I do

double consonants while sliding out on ess sounds and landing on the word "seams"—that's a pretty handy word when you've been sewing all your lines together. The perfectly incongruous title seals it.

I don't want to convey the impression that these poems are totally opaque—there are a lot of windows into everyday life. "Ice House" offers us one bit of self-analysis: "I am not the best looking of us/ not the poorest neither/ though I may be the blurriest." The poem "Truce" goes a little further:

like to complicate my life no I don't
sleep all day full pail &
feather your hair grinding sea
for Texas decades, sure
I might be a fuck-up
awesome fuck-up

mum halo/ several sets of/ structured sails." There are lots of dedications and names throughout these poems, though I would call this a poetics of friendship rather than one of coterie. There's a lot of humor in these poems too. The first few lines of "Flower Pot Inlay" come to mind: "I do not accept lawnmower turtles in love/ progress inanimate buzz wings no/ jasmine cabbage and bark life for me/ feet asleep in California". It sounds like a classic urban rejection of ... something. I guess I can't say much about "jasmine

20 Questions With John Coletti

POSED BY ARLO QUINT

Is it the fig-newton playing the horn? With a delicate leash.

O say to what blind region flee these shapes of awful phantasy? Do I trust you?

Where could I spend all those dimes in this desert? Playing Super Beast.

All you guys bliss out behind the carrot and raisin salad? Smearing Crest on the mirror, yes.

Why do you live the way that you do? Trust. Impatience.

When is a boat like a heap of snow? Plugging your ears & nose, in an ice pool.

Why screw unlocked proteins? If I admit I'm in love with myself is that proud?

Do you accept lawnmower turtles in love? Verily, I do not!

Where lies the land to which yon ship must go? Click click click

What's with art anyway, that we give it such precedence? You count.

What's in those pills? Hydrati-on-on.

Did you know that Vanilla is an orchid? I love that movie.

How do you get out of the Baths of Caracalla? Perform a wedding.

Beyond what figure(s) will you refuse to go? Wobbly. Underwater. Cowboy.

How did you feel about underwater tea parties? I missed gravity.

We're not our own grandfathers, are we? Families can be together forever.

Haven't you held that street-light up long enough? Neither wished to be lonely.

Western civilization? Still clicking.

How obscure can woods get? Wigs before noon.

Who is the happy warrior? A dandelion.

mushroomland

Jim Behrle



POETRY

Rachel Loden

Palo Alto, Calif.

How Should Chicago Be Governed?¹

*I walk through the valley of Chi where death is
Top floor, the view alone will leave you breathless Uhhhh!
—Kanye West*

Oh Chicago never stop being weird with your Casimir Pulaski
oh Chicago! Current mood: excited

Glitter is a killa in Chi tizzle
You are such a flirt with your Loose Leaf Lounge

Chicago you make me silly with your lake effect
If I walk my dog in Wrigleyville

And a green river in March is strangely pleasing
All mysteries are explained by the phrase "Oh, we must be in Cicero!"

Okay Chicago you're not making me happy
I guard my parking space with an old chair and an unusable broom

O most beautiful and most ungovernable of cities
And then it was like, oh, Chicago. So I think it's just Chicago's turn

¹ Title of a book by my great-grandfather, Bartow A. Ulrich (Hazlitt & Co., 1893).

About the Poets

Albert Flynn DeSilver (cover) is the editor and publisher of The Owl Press, and the author, most recently, of *Letters to Early Street* (La Alameda/University of New Mexico Press) and *Walking Tooth & Cloud* (French Connection Press). **Joseph Lease** is the author of *Broken World* (Coffee House Press) and *Human Rights* (Talisman House Press), among others. His poem "'Broken World' (For James Assatly)" was selected for *The Best American Poetry 2002* (Scribner). He is associate professor of writing and literature and chair of the M.F.A. program in writing at California College of the Arts in San Francisco. **Rachel Loden** is the author of *Dick of the Dead* (Ahsakta Press) and *Hotel Imperium* (University of Georgia Press). Her work has appeared twice in the Best American Poetry series, and she is the recipient of a Pushcart Prize, an &NOW award, a fellowship from the California Arts Council, and a grant from the Fund for Poetry.

TURNER

from page 1

the kids' 10-yard line, and all they
need to win the game is to run the

ball in for a touchdown.

That was the dynamic when the Atlantic Yards battle commenced in late 2003. With the rules customized for Atlantic Yards' success, with government supporters constantly moving the goalposts, and with billions of dollars at his disposal (a good chunk of it taxpayers' dough), Ratner hasn't been able to score that game-winning touchdown. At points in the struggle, he's actually lost ground.

Ratner, of course, could care less. Money and misery are of no concern for him, as confident of undiscerning political support as ever. Having lost \$500 million on the Nets since 2003, he's sold the team to Mikhail Prokhorov, a Russian billionaire oligarch. Prokhorov, whose business dealings cannot proceed without Kremlin approval, was detained in France in 2007 on prostitution charges; leads a rich-kid, bad-boy lifestyle; and has even less interest in the lives of Brooklynites than Ratner.

The end-game is even more astonishing than the communities' fight. A bottomless pit of political favors; sweetheart deals; and the twisting of arms, laws, and emotions has led to a wealthy developer's luxury condo project being heavily subsidized by the public, and a taxpayer-funded basketball arena and eminent-domain evictions for a team now owned by Russia's wealthiest man.

If you tried to sell this script in Hollywood, you'd be laughed out onto the street. But in Brooklyn, it's the shape of things to come.

For more info, and to stay involved:
Atlantic Yards Report: www.atlanticyardsreport.com
Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn: www.dddb.net
NoLandGrab: www.nolandgrab.org
The UNITY Plan: www.unityplan.org

Scott M.X. Turner is a staff member of *Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn*. He also plays guitar in the band *RebelMart*. His dogs *Sirius* and *Tikkanen* are even more steamed about the Atlantic Yards project than he is.

Joseph Lease

Oakland, Calif.

From X

1
flowing over her face and green light flowing up
into her hair—the past is wilderness—Fifteenth
Century France is wilderness—tree trunks wet
under a violet sky, streets overflow—you can't
afford to go to Baja, Nieman-Marcus, Small Planet,
Rizzoli, or Crate and Barrel—snow clicking in
black branches, on mailboxes, tanbark, garbage—
daylight's long torso moves slowly—

2
Mug of wine, try for sunlight, pieces of trash,
pieces of wind: pigeons fight for chicken wings,
dream his body bent in half—he can't see, but
he's driving—dust
means dust

3
this room I can't breathe
the
rain
and streams of dust fall on the floor, later our
faces (later our faces), you drank that book,
drank it down (her face like sun like rain like
what)

Dear You,

4
in soft air soft
air

We could
Fool around I'll be even
Louder than usual you're
Happy

5
—cream moon—deer—Hamlet isn't playing—
he's mad to see—

moon wobbled leaves of sound, rain: this is the
story of a little commercial: the AK went on TV:
"I'm looking for my father"—paint God, shadows
in the shadows, "no one's mind is "right"—night,
empty house—whole place just past the edge of
it's so sad—hard sky writing pink and violet—in
case of emergency, orange light—

in soft air soft

air

to be continued—

Jen P Harris

Brooklyn Heights and Hudson, N.Y.

This work is currently on display at Leslie/Lohman Gallery until April 10 in the show 'When Girls Were Boys and Boys Were Girls.'

Untitled, 2009. (American Kiss 12), Ink on Paper, 38" x 28".



Untitled, 2009. (American Kiss 14), Ink on Paper, 38" x 28".



Untitled, 2009. (American Kiss 13), Ink on Paper, 38" x 28".



Untitled, 2009. (American Kiss 15), Ink on Paper, 38" x 28".



About the Artist

Jen P Harris makes formally driven paintings and works on paper that explore ideas about gender, sexual identity, and the self and other. Harris received her M.F.A. from Queens College, City University of New York, and her B.A. from Yale University. She has had solo exhibitions at the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts (Wilmington); the Mooney Center Exhibit Hall at The College of New Rochelle (N.Y.); Paul Klapper Gallery, Queens College, City University of New York (Flushing); and Studio 56 (New Haven, Conn.).

Her work has been included in numerous group exhibitions at venues including the Rockland Center for the Arts (West Nyack, N.Y.), the Summer Festival in Wassaic, N.Y.; Gallery 151 (New York City); Coagula Projects and The Getty Center (Los Angeles); and Antelope Valley College (Lancaster, Calif.). She's the recipient of a grant from the E.D. Foundation, the Robert C. Bates Traveling Fellowship; the Maryland Artists Equity Foundation Exhibition Award; and a residency from the Vermont Studio Center, and she was selected for the Drawing Center Viewing Program.

www.jenpharris.com

Project Statement

With American Kiss, I have continued my investigation of interacting figures in pictorial space with an interest in collapsing binary notions about gender and sexuality. This project re-imagines a well-known and prevalent image in pop culture, presenting androgynous and queer couples in a cinematic light.

The paintings draw from kitsch representations of romance (pulp novel covers, movie posters) and pastoral art. Rather than depicting the heterosexual stereotype, I obscured the features of the faces and bodies to make them androgynous. Saturated colors and a skewed gravitational and perspectival scheme speak to the psychosomatic aspects of human intimacy: feelings of unreality, loss of balance, and heightened perceptual experience.

The black-and-white works are counterpoints to the paintings, answering the garish palette with a monochromatic emotiveness. Close cropping and simplification reveals something about the abstraction of the figures, the dissolution of two separate identities inside the moment of intimacy. In these works, I wanted to draw a connection between the proverbial image of romance—the kiss—and homosexual love and desire.

**Poets at The Poet's Salon
The Rainbow Book Fair
Saturday March 27
11:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.**

**CUNY Graduate Center
Fifth Avenue and 34th Street, NYC**

FREE ! OPEN TO THE PUBLIC !

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Nathaniel A. Siegel & Regie Cabico
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- Ana Bozicevic
- Julian T. Brolaski
- Philip Clark
- Steven Cordova
- Mina Pam Dick
- Ron Drummond
- Jameson Fitzpatrick
- Davidson Garrett
- Nicholas Glastonbury
- Octavio Gonzalez
- Rigoberto Gonzalez
- Stephanie Gray
- Scott Hightower
- Walter Holland
- Paul Foster Johnson
- Saeed Jones
- Amy King
- Jee Leong Koh
- Bill Kushner
- Daniel Lau
- Gregory Laynor
- Timothy Liu
- Douglas A. Martin
- David Messineo
- Debrah Morkun
- Angelo Nikolopoulos
- Tim Peterson (Trace)
- Elizabeth Reddin
- Vittoriar repetto
- Jason Roush
- Moonshine Shorey
- Richard Tayson
- Vega
- Ronaldo V. Wilson
- Emanuel Xavier
- Rachel Zolf

Also featuring poems from "persistent voices Poetry By Writers Lost to AIDS" edited by Philip Clark & David Groff, presented by Philip Clark. Poets books available for purchase!



from top, left column:
David Bergman
Ana Bozicevic
Julian T. Brolaski
Regie Cabico
Philip Clark
Steven Cordova
Mina Pam Dick
Ron Drummond
Jameson Fitzpatrick
Davidson Garrett

from top, right column:
Nicholas Glastonbury
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