In this issue, we take you on journeys into the past and explorations of the here and now that you won’t soon forget.

In the cover feature, Jennifer A. Watts, The Huntington’s curator of photographs, shares remarkable images from the heyday of Fanchon and Marco, a formidable brother-sister team that mass-produced live dance and music shows for movie theaters across the nation in the 1920s and 1930s, building an entertainment empire that helped launch the careers of some of Hollywood’s biggest stars (see pg. 20).

Then we take you right to the frontline of the battle to save Southern California’s trees from the devastating impact of pests and disease, compounded by the state’s long drought. Freelance writer and former Los Angeles Times reporter Lynne Heffley writes about the race to find solutions to this complicated, confounding problem, one led by Huntington staff botanists and area scientists (see pg. 14).

Kevin Salatin, The Huntington’s Hannah and Russel Kully Director of the Art Collections, provides a poignant perspective on the most famous work in The Huntington’s art collection, Thomas Gainsborough’s Blue Boy (see pg. 10). And Andrea Denny-Brown, associate professor of English at University of California, Riverside, recalls her first encounter at The Huntington with a mysterious medieval manuscript of a poem that meditates on Christ’s crucifixion (see pg. 26).

Be sure to check out new departments in this issue, including Social Scene (see pg. 9), a roundup of images and news items from The Huntington’s social media sites, and Back Page (see pg. 36), which features a flip-book animation inspired by the works of Edward Hopper and Alexander Calder.

Here at The Huntington, you can experience the wonders of the past and the innovations of the present succeeding one another with vertiginous rapidity. Turn the pages ahead to experience the whirligig of time.

Kevin Durkin
Kevin Durkin is editor of Huntington Frontiers and managing editor of The Huntington’s Office of Communications and Marketing.

Correction: After the publication of our Spring/Summer 2015 issue, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Hawaii let us know that the photograph of the Nākūa millerbird on page 32 of that issue was not by the USFWS’s Mark MacDonald, as we had originally been told, but by Robby Kohley, working on behalf of American Bird Conservancy. We wish to thank Chris Farmer, Hawaii Program Director for American Bird Conservancy, for alerting the USFWS and us and setting the record straight.

On the Cover: Producers Fanchon and Marco’s “Aerial Ballet Idea,” 1927, featuring 20 young women trained, according to the Los Angeles Times, “in the clock-like work of an aerial performer. They are seen working 60 feet above the stage footlights, dangling at arm’s length on glistening cords, against the background of a mammoth curtain covering the entire stage.” Photograph by Harry Wanger.

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The key to growing edibles in a time of drought: healthy soil.
The head of our Ranch project has some tips for you.
huntingtonblogs.org/2015/06/its-all-about-the-soil/

Nearly two centuries ago, painter David Wilkie left behind an unfinished painting. It’s now part of our European art collection.
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Los Angeles photographer John C. Lewis comes to The Huntington to revisit two panorama photographs from 1915.
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A PEEK AT WHAT WE’RE UP TO ONLINE

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Poignant Portrait of Youth

CONTEMPLATING THE IMPACT OF BLUE BOY’S DEPARTURE FROM ENGLAND

By Kevin Salatino

This fall, Huntington art curators Catherine Hess and Melinda McCurdy unveil Blue Boy & Co., a 179-page book highlighting the richness and diversity of The Huntington’s European collection. The book opens with a foreword by Kevin Salatino, Hannah and Russel Kully Director of the Art Collections, who shares how the departure of Thomas Gainsborough’s Blue Boy from England to Southern California in the 1920s stirred the emotions of the British public not long after the end of World War I. What follows is an excerpt from the foreword.

BLUE BOY BLUES

As a painting you must have heard a lot about me, For I lived here for many happy years; Never dreaming that you could ever do without me Till you sold me in spite of all my tears. It’s a long way from gilded galleries in Park Lane To the Wild West across the winter sea. If you don’t know quite what I mean, Simply ask Sir Joseph Duveen And he’ll tell you what he gave ‘em for me. For I’m the Blue Boy, The beautiful Blue Boy; And I am forced to admit I’m feeling a bit depressed. A silver dollar took me and my collar To show the slow cowboys Just how boys In England used to be dressed.

Cole Porter, the great 20th-century American songwriter, wrote this amusing ditty in 1922, ostensibly for the London revue Mayfair and Montmartre. It lampoons railroad tycoon Henry E. Huntington’s celebrated purchase a few months earlier of what was then arguably the most famous painting in the world: Thomas Gainsborough’s Blue Boy, painted in 1770. Huntington had acquired it through the business-savvy machinations of the most flamboyant art dealer of the day, Joseph Duveen, from its owner the Duke of Westminster for what was said to be the largest price ever paid for a work of art. Duveen, the Duke of Westminster, and the swoon-inducing price Huntington paid are all directly or indirectly mentioned in Porter’s witty and highly topical song, while its references to cowboys and the Wild West flattered an urbane audience quick to equate California with the caricatures found in cheap novels and the nascent film industry.

Before shipping Blue Boy to California, Duveen—ever the showman—arranged for it to be exhibited at London’s National Gallery for a month. An astonishing 90,000 people came to pay their respects, and the Gallery’s director famously wrote “au revoir” on the back of the painting in the hope, no doubt, that it would someday return. It has never, however, left the estate to which Huntington brought it. The public reaction to the painting’s departure for America (and California, of all places!) was a combination of sorrow, anger, dismay, and national pride. To understand this response, we should remember the extraordinary popular fame the
Blue Boy & Co. highlights the richness and diversity of The Huntington’s European collection images of more than 100 of the most impressive works housed at The Huntington—including its British art, especially Thomas Gainsborough’s iconic painting, The Huntington also holds a remarkably wide-ranging collection of European works at The Huntington—including most impressive works housed from the British colonies. Additionally, 2 million British (and British colonial) soldiers were wounded, many grievously. “Indiscriminate slaughter” is a phrase often used to describe the brutality of this, the first fully mechanized war on a massive scale. In a single day of the Battle of the Somme, the British army alone suffered more than 57,000 casualties. By 1921, three years after the war’s conclusion, the wounded were still everywhere in sight, on the streets of every city and village in Britain. The ceremomumial funeral for the “Unknown British Warrior”—the most poignant and cathartic of all post-war commemoratives, attended by hundreds of thousands—had been held in November of 1920, less than a year before Blue Boy’s sale.

It is difficult not to conclude that at least part of the anguish of Blue Boy’s leave-taking was its commingling in the public’s mind with the leave-taking of their sons and brothers for the war, many of whom never to return. An entire generation of young, healthy, handsome boys killed or mutilated, and now this: another son, another brother, symbolizing unutterable loss. And though the association of Blue Boy with Britain’s heroic fighting men may strike us as improbable, given Blue Boy’s undeniably androgynous appearance to modern eyes, it is useful to note that in the 19th century the painting was described as “the most firm, spirited, and manly portrait of youth ever painted.” “Youth” is the operative word here, for youth is what the Great War utterly smashed, and this beautiful boy—pretty enough to appeal to both sexes—struck a nationalist and deeply emotional chord.

Blue Boy’s fame remained undiminished for generations, its elegant form gracing every imaginable consumer product from tea towels to Christmas ornaments, devolving finally to kitsch, the surest sign of celebrity. But that fame, while not yet on life support, has been compromised in recent years, and what was once universally recognized now just as easily elicits a blank stare.

This volume—the first ever devoted to a wide-ranging overview of The Huntington’s collection of European art—hopes, in part, to reverse this trend. Blue Boy & Co. presents its eponymous subject in the reinvigorating context of its distinguished kin—paintings, sculpture, furniture, and decorative art of the highest quality—collected first by Henry and Arabella Huntington and substantially enlarged by subsequent curators and directors of the Huntington Art Collections from the 1930s to the present. And yet while Gainsborough’s Blue Boy and Thomas Lawrence’s Pinkie retain their minor celebrity status, and while The Huntington’s collection of 18th-century British “Grand Manner” portraits is rightly known by many as the finest in the world, large parts of The Huntington’s holdings of European art remain unfamiliar to the wider public.

At the same time, the “meaning” of Blue Boy—a painting once nearly as iconic as the Mona Lisa—has shifted and continues to shift over time. What, to contemporary audiences, do Blue Boy, or Joshua Reynolds’ Sarah Siddons as the Tragic Muse, or John Constable’s View on the Stour near Dedham, or Madame de Pompadour’s tea service mean to today’s audience? What, for that matter, does it mean to have a major collection in Southern California of 18th- and 19th-century British art, accompanied by superb, if smaller, collections of Italian Renaissance, French 18th-century, and a smattering of Dutch and Flemish art? This book will not answer those questions. What it will do, we hope, is invite a second look at and a rethinking of these beautiful and compelling objects. It is gratifying that artists from Robert Rauschenberg (whose first acquaintance with Blue Boy, Pinkie, and Sarah Siddons as the Tragic Muse was transformational) to Kehinde Wiley (whose artistic practice is informed by his early experience of The Huntington’s Grand Manner portrait) have found inspiration in The Huntington Art Collections. It is our hope that every visitor will have such epiphanies at The Huntington; this book is a tool in the service of that goal.

Kevin Salatino is Hannah and Russel Kully Director of the Art Collections at The Huntington.

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“As we get further and further into the severe drought,” Goyette says, “we’re seeing different species here start to die off. The European white birch trees were the first to start to go. Alder trees. Some Southern magnolias are going.”

Over the next half hour, Goyette points out numerous areas of concern. Water-intensive stands of bamboo, Japanese cedars, turning brown without moisture they are used to in their native country. Some historic redwoods, too, are showing their distress.

“Lack of humidity, lack of rainfall,” Goyette says. “They need a deep soaking, and that’s the only thing we can replicate well, by getting some drip irrigation out along the drip line of those trees and allowing it to percolate into the ground.”

A combination of drought and increased heat seems to be creating a “tipping point” for the state’s native oaks as well, says Rosi Dagit, senior conservation biologist for the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains and an arborist for the California Oak Foundation (as well as author of the children’s book Grandmother Oak).

Oaks are “inordinately well-evolved to adapt to drought conditions,” she says. “What’s changed is the number of days that are over 90 degrees. You can have lack of rain for months on end, and if the temperatures are not extreme, that is one level of stress. Increase the temperatures and number of days and months over which those high temperatures are found, and you’ve added a whole other layer of stress.”

The stubby remains of an oak tree at The Huntington, its dying limbs lopped off, illustrate Dagit’s point. “Now it is more a tall oak shrub than an oak tree,” Goyette says. “At some point, we’re going to have to say we’ve spent enough time and energy on it. Is the tree worth saving? Can we put something in its place that will be less susceptible to drought and pests?”

Losing it will be “a sad day,” he says. Like home- and landowners up and down the state, The Huntington is under a mandate to cut water usage—in its case, by a third. It is in the process of installing water-conserving drip irrigation systems, part of a conversion that includes eliminating sections of lawn and revamping current irrigation methods.

“Unfortunately, in the fourth year of drought,” says Tim Thibault, The Huntington’s curator of woody plant materials, “we’ve got some significant pests on the grounds here.”

“It’s a challenging situation,” he says. “We have trees that are already drought stressed, so they have pests and disease; in turn, the continued drought stress is making the problems with those pests worse.”

Left: The leaf canopy of a healthy cork oak (Quercus suber), with its wonderfully craggy bark, provides green shade for visitors to The Huntington during a time of intense drought. Below: Daniel Goyette, The Huntington’s arborist, measures the circumference of a diseased Liquidambar tree and takes notes on its condition before the tree is removed. Yellow stains on the trunk indicate the presence of the destructive Fusarium fungus introduced by the polyphagous shot hole borer, a tiny invasive beetle. Photographs by Lisa Blackburn.

**Trees in a Time of Drought**

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**THE HUNTINGTON SERVES AS GROUND ZERO IN A RACE TO RESEARCH, AND ULTIMATELY KILL, THE PESTS THAT THREATEN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA’S TREES**

By Lynne Heffley

Four years of historic drought. Restricted water use. The Darth Vader of tree pests and assorted other destructive bugs, diseases, fungi, and root rot. To protect and maintain the health of the thousands of trees on its property, The Huntington faces urgent challenges on multiple fronts.

During a golf-cart tour, The Huntington’s arborist Daniel Goyette spots one victim of California’s sustained drought: a dead pine tree rising from a stand of leafy carrotwoods. Minutes later, he indicates a Chinese mahogany, between 10 and 20 years old, that has succumbed and is slated for removal.

(Word limits are a concern, too, for The Huntington’s Valencia orange and avocado groves and recently established grapevines. Since 2011, more than 81,000 pounds of the Valencias have gone to Food Forward, picked by the nonprofit organization’s volunteers for distribution to charitable groups across Southern California.)

As a microcosm of trees and plants that grow all over the world, The Huntington must also maintain a meticulous lookout for harmful insects, bacteria, and diseases on its grounds—and monitor those that turn up in surrounding urban, park, and wild landscapes.

Watering restrictions translate to 15 minutes of above ground irrigation, two days a week, Goyette says. Any new drip irrigation system must take into account the varied amounts of water required by different species of trees, their location, and the competition for water that will come from nearby plants. And because windblown dirt and dust remain on dry leaves, inhibiting life-sustaining photosynthesis, some overhead irrigation must continue.

“We’re doing our best to irrigate within the guidelines we’ve been given,” Goyette says. “We’re in reevaluation mode right now.”

(As author of the children’s book Grandmother Oak (Water limits are a concern, too, for The Huntington during a time of intense drought. Below: Daniel Goyette, The Huntington’s arborist, measures the circumference of a diseased Liquidambar tree and takes notes on its condition before the tree is removed. Yellow stains on the trunk indicate the presence of the destructive Fusarium fungus introduced by the polyphagous shot hole borer, a tiny invasive beetle. Photographs by Lisa Blackburn.)
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“It’s a challenging situation,” he says. “We have trees that are already drought stressed, so they have pests and disease; in turn, the continued drought stress is making the problems with those pests worse.”
Among them: the twig girdler (it gnaws the ends of tree branches), the defoliating lepi lepild (a eucalyptus pest), spider mites, root rot fungi, and the Asian citrus psyllid, which can vector bacteria, but “thankfully,” Thibault says, “it is not that much of a problem here.” More serious, he feels, is a drought-driven infestation of the California five-spined ips, or bark beetle.

In an overgrown area north of the Chinese Garden—where there are plans to replicate a mountainous pine forest in China—truncated, barren pines produce an uncanny graveyard feel. Dead trees have succumbed to the drought, but two Canary Island pines and a Torrey pine are victims of the opportunistic ips.

“We’ve been trying to remove trees as they are identified as being affected,” Thibault says, “but we’re at a point now in the Los Angeles Basin where we’ve got both drought-stressed trees and a population of bark beetles that is high enough to take them out, even if they weren’t drought stressed.”

“It’s a bad time to be a pine tree,” he adds.

Bark beetles, says Tom Coleman, a Southern California forest entomologist with the USDA Forest Service, “kill more trees than wildfire does every year, basically throughout North America. When a healthy tree has enough water and enough resin, it can push these beetles out when they start to attack. When they’re extremely drought stressed, they can’t do that.”

Aerial surveys of forest areas in Southern California reveal an all-you-can-eat bark beetle smorgasbord: an estimated 2 million dead trees, mostly pines, lost to the drought.

With some pests, vigilance and tried-and-true remedies aren’t enough.

Along a winding path through The Huntington’s Desert Garden, it is hard to miss: the enormous stump of a sycamore, one lone branch remaining of its once-lofty height of 80 feet. After some 100 years of growth, the venerable tree was felled by an insect smaller than a sesame seed: the polyphagous shot hole borer.

This tiny invader, a new species of ambrosia borer beetle not identified until 2012, is a carrier of pathogenic fungi. It has wiped out all but one of The Huntington’s box elders, and has oaks, sycamores, and numerous other tree species in its indiscriminate sights.

It is spreading its destruction over wide and growing swaths throughout San Diego, Los Angeles, and Riverside Counties. For plant pathologists and entomologists from the University of California, Riverside, The Huntington, home to virtually every tree species of interest to the bug, has become ground zero for research as they work feverishly in collaboration with Thibault, his Huntington colleagues, Coleman, and others to find ways to curb or neutralize the threat it poses.

This beetle was first identified as coming into California as the tea shot hole borer,” says Timothy Payne, UC Riverside professor of entomology. “It’s been in the state for probably 10 years or so, but it wasn’t recognized as a problem here until two or three years ago.”

Plant pathologist Akif Eskalen, head of UC Riverside’s Eskalen Lab, made the link in early 2012 when he was asked to examine a South Gate homeowner’s damaged backyard avocado tree. Eskalen found the trunk riddled with tiny holes and stained by an unfamiliar fungal infection.

UC Riverside entomologist Richard Stouthamer’s DNA analysis of the beetle responsible showed that, while morphologically identical to the tea shot hole borer (a wide-ranging Asian ambrosia beetle) and of the same genus, it had “94 percent genetic differences in the so-called barcoding gene.” These variations, Stouthamer said, proved it to be a separate species.

DNA fingerprinting would show, too, that this same species, deemed a threat to California’s multi-million-dollar avocado industry, previously had wreaked havoc in Israel’s avocado orchards (where it had also been misidentified as the tea shot hole borer.) When Eskalen began a survey of trees affected by the newly identified and newly named polyphagous shot hole borer, an effort first funded by the California Department of Agriculture, his scoping led to The Huntington. (Los Angeles County Arboretum is another research site for the UC Riverside scientists.)

“We had called [Eskalen] out to look at our avocados,” Thibault says, “and we had a large English oak by the entry that was dying and asked him to look at that.” The culprit in both cases was Fusarium dieback, vectored by the polyphagous shot hole borer through the pathogenic species of Fusarium (fungi) that it carries.

“This is where Akif got really interested, and my life changed,” says Thibault. As a result of their joint findings, Thibault coauthored with Eskalen, Stouthamer, and other UC Riverside scientists a paper on the beetle and its symbiotic Fusarium, published in the July 2013 issue of Plant Disease, a journal of the American Phytopathological Society.

As the research continues, other surprises have turned up.

Stouthamer has found that the polyphagous shot hole borer in Los Angeles differs genetically from the San Diego invaders. Eskalen’s recent research reveals that it also carries and disseminates not one but three types of fungi (Fusarium eucauliae, Graphium p., and Acremonium p.). The beetle population in San Diego carries two.

“The Los Angeles beetle has spread from Sylvan to close to Dana Point,” says Stouthamer. “At some point, the two are going to meet, and we’re worried about that, because then you can get new combinations of beetles and fungi. And we don’t know what that’s going to do.”

Essentially “fungi farmers,” these beetles are not wood-eaters but symbiotic vectors for the pathogenic fungi they carry. Inoculating the tree with fungal spores, they grow the fungi—the sole diet of both adults and larvae. In the process, the fungi colonize the tree’s vascular tissues and compromise, often fatally, its ability to transport water and nutrients from its roots.

(Readers of the bug/fungi presence include leaf discoloration, branch die-off, moist, dark staining and, in severe cases, exit holes around the tiny, precision-drilled holes.)

“In the sense that you have the perfect storm, this beetle is the perfect pest,” says Stouthamer. Once in the tree, it is inaccessible, and the com-
Among them: the twig girdler (it gnaws the ends of tree branches), the defoliating leaf psyllid (a eucalyptus pest), spider mites, root rot fungi, and the Asian citrus psyllid, which can vector bacteria, but “thankfully,” Thibault says, “it is not that much of a problem here.” More serious, he feels, is a drought-driven infestation of the California five-spined ips, or bark beetle.

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Plant pathologist Akif Eskalen, head of UC Riverside’s Eskalen Lab, made the link in early 2012 when he was asked to examine a South Gate homeowner’s damaged backyard avocado tree. Eskalen found the trunk riddled with tiny holes and stained by an unfamiliar fungal infection.

UC Riverside entomologist Richard Stouthamer’s DNA analysis of the beetle responsible showed that, while morphologically identical to the tea shot hole borer (a wide-ranging Asian ambrosia beetle) and of the same genus, it had “14 percent genetic differences in the so-called barcoding gene.” These variations, Stouthamer said, proved it to be a separate species.

DNA fingerprinting would show, too, that this same species, deemed a threat to California’s multi-million dollar avocado industry, previously had wreaked havoc in Israel’s avocado orchards (where it had also been misidentified as the tea shot hole borer.)

When Eskalen began a survey of trees affected by the newly identified and newly named polyphagous shot hole borer, an effort first funded by the California Avocado Commission, his scouting led to The Huntington. (The Los Angeles County Arboretum is another research site for the UC Riverside scientists.)

“We had called [Eskalen] out to look at our avocados,” Thibault says, “and we had a large English oak by the entry that was dying and asked him to look at that.” The culprit in both cases was Fusarium dieback, vectored by the polyphagous shot hole borer through the pathogenic species of Fusarium (fungi) that it carries.

“Thibault and I got really interested, and my life changed,” says Thibault. As a result of their joint findings, Thibault courthoused with Eskalen, Stouthamer, and other UC Riverside scientists to paper on the beetle and its symbiotic Fusarium, published in the July 2013 issue of Plant Disease, a journal of the American Phytopathological Society.

As the research continues, other surprises have turned up. Stouthamer has found that the polyphagous shot hole borer in Los Angeles differs genetically from the San Diego invaders. Eskalen’s recent research reveals that it also carries and disseminates not one but three types of fungi (Fusarium roseum, Graphium sp., and Acremonium sp.). The beetle population in San Diego carries two.

“The Los Angeles beetle has spread from Sylmar to as close to Dana Point,” says Stouthamer. “At some point, the two are going to meet, and we’re worried about that, because then you can get new combinations of beetles and fungi. And we don’t know what that’s going to do.”

Essentially “fungi farmers,” these beetles are not wood-eaters but symbiotic vectors for the pathogenic fungi they carry. Inoculating the tree with fungal spores, they grow the fungi—the sole diet of both adults and larvae. In the process, the fungi colonize the tree’s vascular tissues and compromise, often fatally, its ability to transport water and nutrients from its roots.

(“Signs of the beetle/fungi presence include leaf discoloration, branch die-off, moist, dark staining and/or deep yellow exudates around the tiny, precision-drilled holes.”)

“In the sense that you have the perfect storm, this beetle is the perfect pest,” says Stouthamer. Once in the tree, it is inaccessible, and the compromised transport system inhibits pesticides or fungicides from reaching either the beetle or its source of nourishment.

The search for an effective pesticide and/or a parasitic fungus, however, is still on. “There are a lot of different ways we may be able to kill these darn things,” Stouthamer says, “but it’s a process that takes time. In the meantime, 100-year-old sycamores go.” Determining what effect, if any, the drought has on the infestations is another area of exploration. UC Riverside entomology graduate student Colin Umeda is running an experiment at a field at The Huntington to see if the beetle is drawn to well-hydrated or drier trees. He has brought in 64 young box elders, staked them out in an inviting grid, and is using tensiometers to measure soil moisture levels.

Box elders are “one of the most susceptible hosts for the beetle,” says Paine, chosen because “we want to be sure the beetles are going to attack at some point. It’s unfortunate as far as the tree goes, but it does let us get additional information that we might not be able to get otherwise.”

Umeda is also monitoring the rate of beetle development under different temperatures in a quarantine facility at the UC Riverside Center for Invasive Species Research to “identify which temperature limits the beetle can reproduce in, and in which the beetles perform especially well,” he says.

The discovery of a bait attractive to the beetles in their flying phase enabled the creation of odor-emitting funnel traps at The Huntington. Counting the number of beetles in the traps is providing an estimate of beetle population development.
“We’ve also tried some ‘things that are so crazy they just might work,’ ” Thibault says. Bioacoustical control, for example, involves the playback of recorded sounds made by the beetles; researchers at Northern Arizona University have had some success with this bark beetle control in their laboratory.

While it isn’t clear how the polyphagous shot hole borer migrated to Southern California via two separate routes, the human factor is likely, Paine says.

“People don’t recognize what serious problems they might cause by not being careful about bringing in plant material from overseas. I mean, the signs at the international terminals at airports are not there by accident.”

At present, just under four dozen tree species are the beetle’s favored reproductive hosts. The number of tree species that it targets? More than 350 and counting.

There is one promising development. During trips to Vietnam and Taiwan—home to genetic matches for the L.A. and San Diego polyphagous shot hole borer populations, respectively—Eskalen, Stouthamer, and Thibault have found species of a predatory wasp and a fly that seem to target this beetle. The insects require further study in the field and in the lab (a process of years, not months, considering quarantine and permission requirements), but Stouthamer has hopes that the wasp, in particular, may be the key to substantially reducing Southern California’s beetle populations.

(UC Riverside, which has a long history with plant management through biological controls, has also identified a parasitic wasp that successfully targets the Asian citrus psyllid, a major threat to California’s citrus industry and home growers.)

Long committed to the limited use of chemical pesticides, The Huntington would certainly prefer a biocontrol solution, Thibault says.

“We’ve got 700,000 visitors a year, not to mention concerns for our own safety,” he points out. “The current theory in integrated pest management is to spray as little as possible, and we do as little as we possibly can.”

Meanwhile, Goyette canvases the gardens daily for drought and pest damage. In any given week, he walks and drives—via golf cart—around all 207 acres of The Huntington property, “just to be sure nothing new is dying, staying aware of what’s happening.”

“Something I need to look at now,” he says, “is a willow in the Shakespeare Garden. Apparently there is something attacking that. It could be,” he adds with optimistic cheer, “just a nuisance pest that will come and go.”

For his part, Thibault, even as the hunt for a solution to the polyphagous shot hole borer and its killer fungi continues with crime scene urgency, is concerned about two bad bugs not yet on site: the South American palm weevil—“it is right on the border in Tijuana,” he notes—and the gold-spotted oak borer.

The latter “is now in Orange County, and there’s a continuity of oak trees, coupled with the flight range of the insect, that could ladder it to us.”

“And you never know,” Thibault says, “when somebody is going to throw a load of infected firewood in the back of their pickup and bring it right to Pasadena.”

Lynne Heffley is a freelance writer based in South Pasadena, Calif.

Top: Tim Thibault (left), curator of wood plant materials at The Huntington, and Richard Stouthamer, entomologist at University of California, Riverside, collect polyphagous shot hole borers from adobe emitting funnel traps to estimate the size of their populations. Bottom: Colin Umeda, an entomology graduate student at UC Riverside, conducts an experiment with Saphire leaf beetles at The Huntington, recording self-replicating behavior to determine whether the beetles and their hole borers are drawn to self-replicating or brown reps. Photographs by Lisa Blackburn.
Let Us Entertain You

FANCHON AND MARCO’S BIG “IDEAS” REVOLUTIONIZED THE 1920S THEATER WORLD

By Jennifer A. Watts

Chances are you’ve never heard of Fanchon and Marco. But in the 1920s, millions of Americans had. A wildly successful theatrical firm founded in 1923 by Fanchon Wolff Simon (1892–1965) and her brother, Marco Wolff (1894–1977), produced live stage shows that dazzled moviegoers from Los Angeles to New York. The Fanchon and Marco brand became synonymous with fast-paced extravaganzas that featured elaborate sets and row upon row of winsome chorus girls. In 1932, at the height of the Great Depression, the outfit reported earnings in the seven figures, and Fanchon estimated that she had trained more than 10,000 dancers all told, including some who would go on to become big-time stars, such as Shirley Temple and Ginger Rogers. The press dubbed the sister and brother the “Henry Fords of entertainment” for their assembly-line approach to mass-producing shows. With the recent acquisition of 1,400 photographs donated by the family, The Huntington now has a rare group of pictures depicting hundreds of Fanchon and Marco sets and performers between 1923 and 1935, the organization’s heyday.
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Born and raised in a large Jewish family in turn-of-the-century Los Angeles, Fanchon and Marco Wolff caught the show business bug early on. As teenagers, they cut their teeth on the vaudeville circuit performing a violin and ballroom dance act. By 1919, they had migrated behind the scenes to produce musical revues. An epiphany came with their 1920 California-themed production “Sun-Kist,” starring a line of high-kicking beauties. A frenetic mash-up, according to one contemporary critic, “Sun-Kist” whirled between burlesque and grand opera, “with dashes of musical comedy and vaudeville in between.”

West Coast audiences gobbled it up. The two sensed a lucrative opportunity at the historic crossroads where vaudeville overlapped with the movie industry’s meteoric rise and huge audiences. A movie ticket to a big-city theater in the early 1920s often included a full-fledged musical revue with live song and dance. Called “prologues,” these stage shows preceded and often promoted the film. Audiences loved them—often more than the silent film itself. Movie executives and savvy theater owners saw them as a high-profile way to keep filling seats. The problem? A show was cost-ly and fleeting, as it often related to a specific film. A prologue typically closed when a movie left the theater after a brief one- to two-week run. Smaller houses simply could not afford them, given the logistics and expense. Enter Fanchon and Marco. These two vaudevillians-turned-producers hit upon an enterprising scheme to generate hundreds of touring prologues, meeting a nationwide demand for them in a big way.

“The secret to a good prologue,” Fanchon told one reporter who had asked for an accounting of F&M’s success, “is to have the most entertainment grist for the mill in the least amount of time.” Fanchon and Marco entered the prologue business in 1923 with an innovation they called the “Idea,” a compressed entertainment grab bag based on a broad and innovation they called the “Idea,” a compressed entertainment grab bag based on a broad and

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Above all else, chorus lines of young women became the signature Fanchon and Marco touch. There were the Junket Beauties and San Francisco Beauties, small troupes of six to eight. Yet, the Fanchonettes were the pièce de résistance. The groups of two dozen dancers—enough to fill a stage—were the company’s pride and joy. In Los Angeles, Fanchon openly credited the company’s Southern California locale: “If you need a Japanese knife thrower or a Hindu snake charmer, or a rainmaker or a long-haired prophet—there they are, as quick as you can get them on the phone…”

Clockwise from upper left: A dancer wearing an “asparagus top” headpiece for the “Salad idea,” photograph by Harry Wenger; a dancer in the “Peacock Idea,” 1927; photograph by Paralta Studios; a dancer in the “Masks idea,” 1927; photograph by Paralta Studios; Norma Wilson in the “Masks idea,” 1927; photograph by Paralta Studios; a dancer in the “Masks idea,” 1927; photograph by Paralta Studios; and a dancer in the “Salad idea,” photograph by Harry Wenger.
“The Lollipop” remembered whirling from a “spectacular peacock number in a very scanty costume” to a Red Riding Hood number to a frenetic grand finale in which her tin-soled shoes threw off blue sparks! In the popular naval-themed “Gobs of Joy” (gob being a slang term for a sailor), a pair of Fanchonettes sat astride enormous battle-ship guns that discharged a pyrotechnic finish (see opposite, top right).

The life of a Fanchon and Marco performer could be grueling, and never more so than when out on the road. By 1928, F&M Ideas were playing in more than 100 theaters from San Diego to Vancouver on the West Coast, and across the country in Colorado, Montana, Illinois, Missouri, and New York, in cities large and small. A show complete with sets, costumes, and a cast of 40 to 50 would arrive at a venue to perform four to five shows each day. After a week or two, the production would take an overnight train, repeating the entire process at a new venue with rarely a day off. Dancers were paid a little more than $30 per week and typically made the six-month circuit two times, three at the most. Even so, one wide-eyed Fanchonnette from Iowa expressed the sentiments of many an up-and-coming young dancer in appraising her F&M tour as “glamorous and well-paying.”

Despite the ascendency of the “talkies” and the catastrophic Great Depression, Fanchon and Marco continued to do surprisingly well into the 1930s. F&M opened a theatrical school in 1933, training myriad wannabes and budding stars, including the likes of Judy Garland, Bing Crosby, and Cyd Charisse, among others. Even so, by 1936, entertainment appetites had shifted, and F&M shuttered the Hollywood production facility for good.

Fanchon and Marco may have burned brightly as the impresarios of those strange theatrical amalgams called “prologues,” but demand for the genre was over in a flash. While neither the first nor only people in the prologue business, the two cornered the niche market with efficient panache and grand, go-for-broke style. Today little F&M business history exists: no records, receipts, ledgers, or files, despite F&M’s having employed thousands of people in its day. This fact makes The Huntington’s 15 volumes of photographs and small group of clippings and programs an indispensable resource for scholars. The volumes, which appear to have been organized chronologically, contain images—often four to a page—that served as a corporate inventory of hundreds of the Ideas, both sets and performers. Though accompanying information is scant, several theater and dance specialists have already begun to identify members of specific casts, such as the Mexican-American Romero brothers, called the “Aristocrats of Dance,” who appeared in many Spanish-themed Ideas.

In later years, Reva Howitt reminisced that she and many fellow performers considered their brief time with F&M to be a labor of love. “I speak for my hundreds of counterparts... who are lost in obscurity but who provided entertainment for the public with zest, enthusiasm, proficiency, responsibility, and color,” she wrote. “Hurrrah for us!”

Jennifer A. Watts is curator of photographs at The Huntington.
Idea” required shoot-outs, ladder climbing, and a grand finale that included doing the splits. The aforementioned Lollipop remembered whirling from a “spectacular peacock number in a very scanty costume” to a Red Riding Hood number to a frenzied grand finale in which her tin-soled shoes threw off blue sparks! In the popular naval-themed “Gobs of Joy” (gob being a slang term for a sailor), a pair of Fanchonettes sat astride enormous battleship guns that discharged a pyrotechnic finish (see opposite, top right).

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A s a graduate student doing research in the library at The Huntington in the summer of 2002, I examined a manuscript that surprised me so much that it would take me more than 10 years to fully articulate my response. At the time, I was writing a doctoral dissertation on the symbolic nature of clothing in medieval English poetry, and I knew that this particular manuscript recorded a unique Middle English poem I had recently begun to study. I asked to see it, along with a series of other rare manuscripts, because I knew from its catalogue description that it had illustrations to accompany the poem, which was about various sacred objects associated with Christ’s life and death.

That manuscript ended up being a tiny roll identified by the call number HM 26054. When I went to pick it up from the librarian at the call desk in the reading room, it arrived in an emerald green silk bag with golden drawstrings, the whole thing not much larger than the palm of my hand.

I should admit that in this early period of my archival research, I didn’t always have a full grasp of the size or shape of the manuscript I had called up to examine, and I was often surprised by the material presence of an item as I brought it back to my desk for closer study. But this object was even more startling than usual; the delicate 19th-century silk bag implied that the mysterious manuscript inside was to be treated like a precious piece of jewelry. More used to carrying heavy, slightly bulky, brown leather books back to my research station, I felt this time like I was carrying an intimate possession—a lady’s reticule with unknown personal items inside.
CURIOS OBJECT ABOUT CURIOUS OBJECTS

The so-called arma Christi poem—a Latin phrase meaning the “arms” or “instruments” of Christ—was written in Middle English in the 15th century and survives in 20 manuscripts, two of which are housed at the Huntington Library (HM 26054 and HM 142). This fascinating poem is simultaneously a prayer, an ode, and a visual study of the many material objects associated with Christ’s Passion. Some of these objects presented in the poem are clearly miraculous, such as Veronica’s veil and the famously “seamless” garment worn by Christ, but most, such as the pillar, ropes, and blindfold used in Christ’s mocking, and the ladder, hammer, and nails used during and after the crucifixion, are more mundane—a cluster of otherwise unremarkable things made spectacular by their role in this singular event.

My interest in this poem originated in one particular stanza, the verses that deal with Christ’s garments. In the Bible, Christ wears two main items of clothing: the tunica inconsutilis, or “unseamed tunic,” and Christ’s own garment, so called because it was made without a seam, meaning that it was not made by a human hand; the vestis purpurea, or “purple garment,” is the garment in which he is dressed during his mocking, when his captors ridicule him by costuming him like a king. Each of the four gospels in the New Testament tells the story of the soldiers who play lots (gamble) for Christ’s garment. As the story goes, right after the crucifixion itself, the soldiers decide to divide the seamless garment among themselves; when they realize that it has no seams (and thus cannot easily be divided), they instead play lots to see who will take the whole garment. The episode is a crucial one in the story of the Passion, and it is usually understood to symbolize the indivisible unity of the body of Christ and of the Church.

But in the arma Christi poem, this biblical episode takes on new meaning. The poem mentions the seamless garment, but it insists that the purple garment is the one the soldiers gambled for. This

That day in the library, as I somewhat self-consciously opened the silk bag and unrolled the narrow but unexpectedly long manuscript (roughly four inches wide and five feet long), I became painfully aware of the vast and often obscuring difference between reading a medieval poem in a modern edition and reading it in its original format. While my initial interest in the poem written in this manuscript was its curious fixation with the material objects of Christ’s Passion, I had until that moment been blind to just how curious the poem’s own material circumstances were. Why was this manuscript so narrow and long? Why was it in roll format at all, a form used primarily for administrative court documents and royal genealogies? Why were its 24 illustrations, while charming in their simplicity, so crudely drawn?

All worthy questions, but unfortunately not related to the topic of my dissertation. Most of the analysis I originally wrote on this poem was dropped from the final draft of my doctoral work, and what I did manage to keep in that document was eventually cut from my first monograph. But I always planned to return to the arma Christi manuscripts—I was on intimate terms with it now, and its mystery would not let me go.

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This manuscript pulls out all the stops—it synchronizes the power of words, images, and objects—to ask for, and to offer, spiritual guidance and protection for a human life necessarily lived among material things.
was an easy switch to make: Christ’s seamless robe was, we are to understand, simple and unadorned, whereas the purple robe used to mock him was made of the most luxurious and valuable materials—those only a king could afford. If the soldiers were going to fight over a garment, the purple one seems like the more obvious choice. The poem offers up the contrast between Christ’s two very different garments, therefore, as a point of contemplation for people who might desire beautiful but morally dubious things. A related stanza is reproduced here in its original Middle English and in a modern English translation:

Thyn own coat þt had sem noon
The purpure þt þey layd lot upon
Lorde be my socoure & my helpynge
Þt my body hath used mys clothynge.

Your own coat that had seams none,
The purple one that they laid lots upon:
Lord, be my succor and my helping
That my body has misused clothing.

Here the speaker’s description of Christ’s garments (he or she speaks directly to Christ, calling the garment “Your coat”) invokes a kind of protection against the vice of “misused clothing,” which could have meant anything from coveting beautiful clothing to wearing clothes that were expensive, luxurious, or fashionable. Look at Christ’s clothing, the stanza says, and contemplate more carefully the clothes that you yourself wear or covet.

This stanza is especially interesting because of the image that accompanies it. Unlike most English poems written during this time, the arma Christi poem is almost always illustrated. Christ’s purple garment is one of the larger illustrations in HM 26054, and the dice associated with it (dice, in the Middle Ages, having replaced the lots described in the biblical narrative) have been superimposed on the garment itself, as if meant to represent buttons or brooches. Like the nails illustrated later on in the poem, the dice are depicted as life-size—the size of actual medieval dice—ostensibly to enhance their effect as objects of meditative concentration.

A STARTLING REALIZATION

The roll format of manuscripts of this poem has always intrigued and mystified scholars. One of its earliest critics, Rossell Hope Robbins, suggested in 1939 that the roll format was meant for congregational use, to be hung in churches for public worship. Most recent scholars have rejected this understanding, arguing that the poem’s form, words, and images seem best suited for private devotion such as prayer, introspection, and meditation. For one thing, the various manuscripts of the poem are relatively small—too small for their images and words to be observed from the congregation if they were hung on a church wall. The poem’s language, including the personal way the speaker of the poem addresses Christ as “you,” also suggests a more intimate reading experience. Many stanzas invoke the reader’s experience of his or her five senses, yet another personal element: the blindfold that was used to cover Christ’s eyes during his mocking, for example, offers contemplation of vices experienced through the reader’s eyes and nose; the nails used in the crucifixion serve as objects of meditation about sins perpetrated by one’s hands and feet. The tongs used to remove the nails after Christ’s death are also included in the poem, portrayed as instruments that can help “loosen” any sins from the poem’s speaker or reader, just as they helped physically to loosen Christ from the cross.

By Lisa H. Cooper

Published by Ashgate

This manuscript pulls out all the stops—it synchronizes the power of words, images, and objects—to ask for, and to offer, spiritual guidance and protection for a human life necessarily lived among material things. Such a call for supernatural protection is equally apt for a mother facing the very real dangers of illness or death during labor and for a child about to enter the world for the first time. As a birth girdle, the Huntington manuscript known as HM 26054 would have served both purposes admirably, and—in my somewhat biased opinion—exquisitely.

OUT OF THE PURSE AND INTO PRINT

Almost 10 years after encountering my first arma Christi manuscript, I finally started a book project with my colleague and co-editor Lisa H. Cooper in an attempt to explain not only HM 26054, but also all kinds of other curious medieval and Renaissance objects that used the arma Christi as their central unifying theme: manuscripts, heraldic shields, tombstones, sculptures, textiles, paintings, and prints. We invited junior and senior scholars from many disciplines to think through the cultural and artistic uses of these objects, and with them, we produced the first critical volume to address the arma Christi as its own cultural phenomenon. Part of this project was to produce, with scholar Ann Eljenholm Nichols, a new critical edition of the poem I first encountered in that green silk purse—now renamed “O Vernicle,” for the opening line of the poem, which is about Veronica’s veil. The book, published by Ashgate and titled The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture: With a Critical Edition of “O Vernicle,” represents a very happy conclusion to one of my most felicitous early encounters with The Huntington’s medieval manuscripts.

Andrea Denny-Brown is associate professor of English at University of California, Riverside, and a former Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellow at The Huntington.

This manuscript seems to have had an even more unique personal use. Scholar Mary Agnes Edsall has recently published evidence that the most narrow arma Christi rolls were likely used for an astonishing purpose: as birth girdles, rectal talismans that could be wrapped around a woman’s belly to protect her and her baby during labor. Such girdles were made from long strips of parchment sewn together, like The Huntington’s manuscript, and they usually included prayers, charms, and spiritual symbols, such as the arma Christi. This would explain not only the curiously long and narrow size and shape of The Huntington’s manuscript, but also its obvious portability and well-used physical condition: this manuscript had a practical function. It likely belonged to a medieval midwife or a female family member, perhaps passed down through generations of women in the same family or line of work.

But this manuscript seems to have had an even more unique personal use. Scholar Mary Agnes Edsall has recently published evidence that the most narrow arma Christi rolls were likely used for an astonishing purpose: as birth girdles, rectal talismans that could be wrapped around a woman’s belly to protect her and her baby during labor. Such girdles were made from long strips of parchment sewn together, like The Huntington’s manuscript, and...
In Medieval Robots: Mechanism, Magic, Nature, and Art (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), E.R. Truitt, assistant professor of history at Bryn Mawr College, recovers the forgotten history of real and imagined automata—including talking statues, mechanical animals, and silent metal guardians—that captivated Europe between the 9th and 14th centuries. Variously ascribed to artisanal genius, cosmic forces, or demonic powers, these fabrications raised fundamental questions about knowledge, nature, and divine purpose in the Middle Ages.


Winner of the award for Best First Book from the United Kingdom’s Society for Army Historical Research, Erica Charters’ Disease, War, and the Imperial State: The Welfare of the British Armed Forces during the Seven Years’ War (University of Chicago Press, 2014) demonstrates how disease played a vital role in shaping strategy, British state policy, and imperial relations during the Seven Years’ War (1756–63). Charters is associate professor of the history of medicine at the University of Oxford.

David Samuel Torres-Rouff, assistant professor of history at the University of California, Merced, expands borderlands history by examining the past and original urban infrastructure of Los Angeles in Before L.A.: Race, Space, and Municipal Power in Los Angeles, 1781–1894 (Yale University Press, 2013). His study reveals how an innovative intercultural community developed along racial lines, and how immigrants from the United States engineered a profound shift in civic ideals and the physical environment, creating a social and spatial rupture that endures to this day.

In Loren Miller: Civil Rights Attorney and Journalist (University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), independent historian Amina Hassan tells the story of one of the nation’s most prominent civil rights attorneys from the 1940s through the early 1960s in the fields of housing and education. With co-counsel Thurgood Marshall, Miller argued two landmark civil rights cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, whose decisions effectively abolished racially restrictive housing covenants. Hassan also describes Miller’s early career as a radical journalist and his ownership of the California Eagle, one of the longest-running African-American newspapers in the West.

You’re Gonna Flip!

**BREAK OUT THE SCISSORS—IT’S TIME TO ANIMATE THE HOPPER**

By Kate Lain

Flash back to April Fool’s Day, 2015. To celebrate the day on our Tumblr site, we posted a short animated loop I’d made showing what might sit atop the distant hill obscured by the boat in Edward Hopper’s painting *The Long Leg*—could it possibly be an Alexander Calder sculpture? You can now make your own flip-book version of the animation using the images on this page.

1. Cut along the dotted lines. Be sure not to cut off the white strip on the left side of each image.
2. Stack the images in order, with 1 on top. (Or with 1 on bottom, to play them in reverse.)
3. Secure the stack along the white strip with a binder clip, rubber band, heavy-duty staple, or your finger and thumb.
4. Flip away!

You can find the original animation at huntingtonlibrary.tumblr.com by typing “hopper calder” in the search bar.

*Kate Lain is the new media developer at The Huntington.*

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