E1

THEArts

The New Hork Times

A Groovy Pad Full of Gods And Gurus

Families can be so embarrassing. Imagine the agonies of an adolescent girl whose house has become infested with India-besotted hippies

WILLIAM GRIMES

BOOKS OF THE TIMES

globe, whose sarcastic father stumbles around in an alcoholic haze and whose mother kneels at the feet of every swami she

from all over the

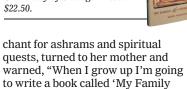
meets. And let us not forget grandma, who holds long conversations with her cow and once met a 1,000year-old cobra with a ruby in its forehead and a mustache on its albi-

Gods, gurus and eccentric relatives compete for primacy in Kirin Narayan's enchanting memoir of her childhood in Bombay (presentday Mumbai). The title, which alludes to Gerald Durrell's "My Family and Other Animals," originated as an act of revenge. Ms. Narayan, fed up with the family pen-

My Family and Other Saints

By Kirin Narayan Illustrated. 236 pages. University of Chicago Press.

And so she did.



The adolescent anger is gone, but the child's sense of wonder remains. Ms. Narayan, now a professor of cultural anthropologist at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, grew up in extraordinary circumstances, the daughter of a bohemian American mother and a deeply unhappy Indi-

and Other Saints' and put you in it."

Continued on Page 14

Photographing The Life That Rockwell Depicted

By KATHRYN SHATTUCK With his allegiance to dewy-eved

innocence and earnest sentimentality, the illustrator Norman Rockwell has often been mocked for creating an America that never was and never will be.

But Kevin Rivoli, a photojournalist in upstate New York, will tell you that's just not true. He knows because he's documented it.

Mr. Rivoli has spent the past 15 years capturing timeless moments in contemporary America — the solemn christenings and squirmy first haircuts, the town meetings and patriotic parades, the youthful shenanigans and the mature reverence symbolized by elderly hands resting on a well-thumbed bible.

He calls his project "In Search of Norman Rockwell's America," and by autumn his photographs will have grown into a book, published by Prestel, and a traveling exhibition, overseen by International Arts and Artists, that juxtaposes Mr. Rivoli's images with Rockwell's.

The project has received the blessing of the Rockwell family; the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Mass.; and Curtis Publishing, owners of The Saturday Evening Post, whose covers Rockwell illustrations adorned. Additionally, some scholars hope that Mr. Rivoli's images will put the old criticism about Rockwell to rest once and for all.

"I cover a lot of small-town America," said Mr. Rivoli, 47, a contract photographer with The Associated Press who occasionally does work for The New York Times. "I'm not a war photographer, I'm not in metropolitan America. I tend to look for Continued on Page 10

An American Primitive, Forged in a Crucible of Blood and Oil



There Will Be Blood with Dillon Freasier, left, and Daniel Day-Lewis, opens on Wednesday.

"There Will Be Blood," Paul Thomas Anderson's epic American nightmare, arrives belching fire and brimstone and damnation to Hell. Set against the backdrop of the Southern California oil boom of the

DARGIS

MANOHLA late-19th and early-20th centuries, it tells a story of greed and envy of biblical proportions — reverberating with Old Tes tament sound and fury

and New Testament evangelicalism - which Mr. Anderson has mined from Upton Sinclair's 1927 novel "Oil!" There is no God but money in this oil-rich desert and his messenger is Daniel Plainview, a petroleum speculator played by a monstrous and shattering Daniel Day-Lewis.

Plainview is an American primitive. He's more articulate and civilized than the crude, brutal title character in Frank Norris's 1899 novel "McTeague," and Erich von Stroheim's masterly version of the same, "Greed." But the two characters are brothers under the hide, coarse and

MORE FILM REVIEWS

"Chuck Close," a documentary, Page 3. "Smiley Face" and "Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem," Page 5.

animalistic, sentimental in matters of love and ruthless in matters of avarice. Mr. Anderson opens his story in 1898, closer to Norris's novel than Sinclair's, which begins in the years leading up to World War I. And the film's opener is a stunner — spooky and strange, blanketed in shadows and nearly wordless. Inside a deep, dark hole, a man pickaxes the hardpacked soil like a bug gnawing through dirt. This is the earth mover,

the ground shaker: Plainview. Over the next two and a half mesmerizing hours Plainview will strike oil, then strike it rich and transform a bootstrapper's dream into a terrifying prophecy about the coming American century. It's a century he plunges into slicked in oil, dabbed

Continued on Page 5

Here, Kiddie, Kiddie: A Witch Is Cooking Up a Treat



Hansel and Gretel at the Metropolitan Opera, with Alice Coote, left; Christine Schäfer, right; and Philip Langridge, center in the oven, as the Witch.

Children were everywhere at the Metropolitan Opera on Monday afternoon for a special Christmas Eve mati-

TOMMASINI

nee, the premiere of a new production of Engelbert Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel." As patrons entered the house, some children scurried up and

MUSIC

down the stairs of the grand promenade, while others peered over the rim of the orchestra pit to watch the musicians warm up. As the house

lights dimmed, and the Met's low-hanging crystal chandeliers ascended to the ceiling, impressionable children applauded. Indeed, applause broke out all through the performance, especially when the plucky Hansel and Gretel pushed the glutinous Witch into the oven during the final scene.

This new production, a surreal, sometimes baffling yet intriguing staging by the British director Richard Jones, was created for the Welsh National Opera and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. It was brought to the Met by the general manager, Peter Gelb, as this season's special family fare. Last season's family offering was Julie Taymor's production of Mozart's "Magic Flute," trimmed to 100 minutes and performed in English. Humperdinck's compact opera needs no trimming; with an intermission the performance lasts just over two hours. It is performed in a very free English translation of the German by David Pountney, filled with clever rhymes and snappy vernacular.

The German soprano Christine Schäfer, whose only previous work at the Met was a string of shattering performances in the 2001-2 season as Berg's voluptuous Lulu, makes a girlish and not-so-innocent Gretel. The duskyvoiced British mezzo-soprano Alice Coote, who in the last two years has won admirers at the Met for her portrayals of Mozart's Cherubino and Handel's Sesto, sings Hansel, played as a boisterous, fid-

Continued on Page 13

Even If His Own Work Isn't Broken, a Brazilian Architect Fixes It

What to do with our aging architectural heroes? What if their genius deteriorates and they begin tinkering with their own masterpieces?

NICOLAI OUROUSSOFF

A powerful case in point is the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, who celebrated his 100th birthday this month. In the 1940s, '50s and '60s he established himself as one of Modernism's

ARCHITECTURE greatest luminaries, infusing stark abstract forms with a beguiling tropical hedonism that reshaped Brazil's identity in the popular imagination and mesmerized architects around the globe.

In Brasilía, a city that rose out of a jungle in the span of four years, he created at least a half dozen architectural masterpieces — a mind-boggling accomplishment by today's standards. Today Mr. Niemeyer is held up as

one of Brazil's greatest national treasures, and he seems as spry as ever. He is at work on a cultural center in Aviles, Spain, and another in Niteroi, just south of Rio de Janeiro. He recently unveiled a new line of furniture at the Art Basel Miami fair. And last year he married his longtime secretary, Vera Lúcia Cabreira.

In recognition of the heroic scale of his accomplishments, Brazil's president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, recently proposed legislation that would confer special landmark status on all of his buildings.

But the greatest threat to Mr. Niemeyer's remarkable legacy may not be the developer's bulldozer or insensitive city planners, but Mr. Niemever himself.

It is not simply that his latest buildings have a careless, tossed-off quality. It's that Continued on Page 8



The Museum of Contemporary Art, overlooking Guanabara Bay in Niteroi, Brazil, was completed by Oscar Niemeyer in 1996.



E10

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Dennis Dermody, PAPER

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"A THING OF BEAUTY AND GRACE — 'JUNO' IS A PERFECT MOVIE AND IT ONLY GETS BETTER WITH EACH VIEWING." Robert Wilonsky, THE VILLAGE VOICE

"ELLEN PAGE IS SIMPLY SENSATIONAL IN THIS MARVELOUSLY OFFBEAT COMEDY, WHICH IS SHEER JOY FROM BEGINNING TO END."

"ONE OF MY FAVORITE FILMS OF THE YEAR AND ONE THAT'S **SURE TO ENDURE AS A SMART-COMEDY CLASSIC."** Richard Roeper, AT THE MOVIES WITH EBERT & ROEPER

A WONDERFULLY SURPRISING COMEDY FILLED WITH **CRISP WIT AND RADIATING WARMTH."** loe Morgenstern, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

> 'JUNO' IS HIP AND HILARIOUS AND WILL MAKE YOU LAUGH DEEPLY."

eter Travers, ROLLING STONE A CLEVER GEM OF A FILM, OVERFLOWING

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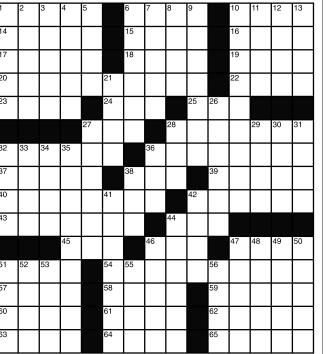
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Kevin Rivoli caught the interplay of "Election Day," above, in 1995 in a firehouse in Sennett, N.Y.

Photographing the Life Rockwell Drew

From First Arts Page

connections between people. "Rockwell did a lot of that in his artwork," he said.

Mr. Rivoli connected with Rockwell 18 years ago when he and his future wife, Michele, visited the Rockwell Museum. There they learned of critics' contentions that Rockwell's images were trite and kitschy figments of their creator's nostalgic imagina-

"Kevin immediately said, 'He's not creating an America that doesn't exist," Ms. Rivoli, a former reporter, recalled. "'Those moments do exist, and I have them on film." Over time Mr. Rivoli collected

more than 120 such images, mostly the result of spontaneous moments snapped during assignments in upstate New York. For example, a photo of altar boys at a 1996 wedding in Otisco recalls the "Choirboy" cover Rockwell drew for the Post in 1954. "When I go into an assignment

that could be boring, I try to look for the picture within the picture, the essence of Norman Rock-well," he said. "I always think, 'How would he paint this?'' For a while the Rivolis owned a

gallery near their home outside Auburn, in the Finger Lakes region. But they closed shop two and a half years ago to spend more time with their small twin

"My concern was that Kevin wasn't going to have a creative



© CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY

Norman Rockwell's "Which One?" was a Saturday Evening Post cover in 1944.

outlet for people to enjoy what he did," Ms. Rivoli said. So she suggested that he compile his images into a book. "One day we started looking at

Rockwell's artwork, and it was kind of uncanny, in that the pictures would match up," Mr. Rivoli said. "There were a lot of parallels between what I was shooting over the years and what he paint-

The Rivolis sent the images to the Rockwell Museum and to John Rockwell, Norman's grandson, who granted the Rivolis the rights to use the artist's art and

thought it was nice that he was inspired by Norman's pictures,"



Mr. Rivoli's "Wedding Day," left, taken in Otisco, N.Y., in 1996, recalls Rockwell's 1954 "Choirboy" cover illustration for the Post, above.

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"I thought it looked great, and I morous elements of everyday

life," Mr. Mendelson said, a Rockwell twist that sometimes drew

derision from art photographers and photojournalists, who found his images banal and contrived. "Photographers like to say that they're finding real moments,' Mr. Mendelson said. "They want to think that they're finding something new." "But when I look at awardwinning photographs within jour-

ONLINE: NORMAN ROCKWELL

paintings:

nytimes.com/design

that still exists."

the 1950s and '60s.

Temple University.

nalism History.

or fantasy scenes.

Additional photographs and

John Rockwell said. "I think the

moments in Norman's pictures, if

they actually didn't take place,

they could have taken place. I

think Kevin's pictures do show

that there's a side of America

buttress the argument that Rock-

well's illustrations helped to give

rise to feature photojournalism in

"Rockwell really taught pho-

tographers to see those common

everyday moments, which he de-

fined through his covers for The

Saturday Evening Post," said An-

drew L. Mendelson, chairman of

the journalism department at

"The era of illustrators is really

over, and in my argument that

era has been replaced by photo-

journalism," said Mr. Mendelson,

who has written about Rockwell's

impact for publications like Jour-

lustrations in the 1910s, before the

advent of hand-held cameras in

the '20s made it easier for pho-

tographers to capture their sub-

jects in motion rather than have them pose before a tripod.

women and children as his subjects at a time when illustration

veered toward celebrity portraits

That trend also emerged in Depression-era photography com-

missioned by the United States government in the 1930s, though

not with "the juxtaposition of hu-

He also chose average men,

Rockwell began selling his il-

Mr. Rivoli's images may help

nalism, almost every photograph that wins is a Rockwell moment.' he said. "He has taught us how to see what is really important to News isn't always about the

bad things, Mr. Mendelson noted. Sometimes it's about events that make people happy.

Perhaps it's just that most of the time people aren't paying attention, Mr. Rivoli said.

"There are these subtle, quiet traditions that we don't care about or pay attention to because maybe we're too busy to notice or are inundated with the politics of daily life," he said. "But as a photojournalist we chronicle our lives, our communities, our fam-

"Rockwell did the same thing."

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