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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Photos: Celebrate The Wacky World Of Rube Goldberg At Queens Museum

BY BEN YAKAS

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TOD SEELIE

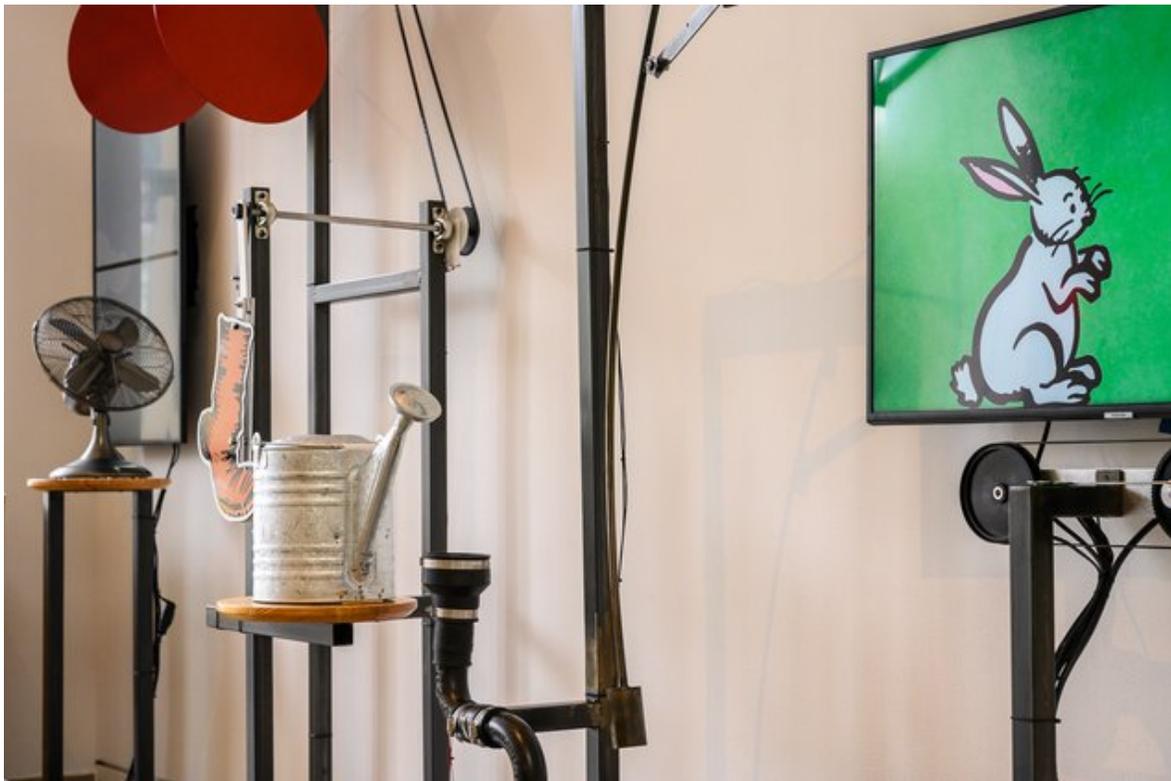
➡ The Wacky World Of Rube Goldberg



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Did you know that Pulitzer Prize-winning political cartoonist and brilliant machine creator [Reuben Lucius Goldberg](#) was born on the fourth of July? There are truly few things more American than the brilliant mind who came up with *Professor Butts and the Self-Operating Napkin*. And a new retrospective exhibit at the Queens Museum is the most comprehensive exploration of his groundbreaking artwork in over four decades.



➡ A Rube Goldberg machine at the exhibit [TOD SEELIE](#)

[The Art of Rube Goldberg](#), which opens October 6th and runs through February 9th, 2020, chronicles all aspects of the artist's 72-year career, from his earliest published drawings to his nationally syndicated comics of the '20s and '30s to his beloved invention drawings. Queens Museum writes, "Highlighting their unique burlesque of our modern age of invention, this section explores how Goldberg's zany contraptions caught the popular imagination and became—as he put it—a symbol of man's capacity for exerting maximum effort to achieve minimal results,' while making him a cultural icon."

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▶ Jennifer George, Goldberg's granddaughter TOD SEELIE

Jennifer George, Goldberg's granddaughter and editor of *The Art of Rube Goldberg*, the 2013 book which ultimately became the exhibition, led a presentation on her grandfather for the press this week. She explained that Goldberg, the son of a San Francisco sheriff, was trained as an engineer. He only worked as one for six months, but was miserable, and soon became a cartoonist for the San Francisco Chronicle, where he got his start sketching various sporting events.

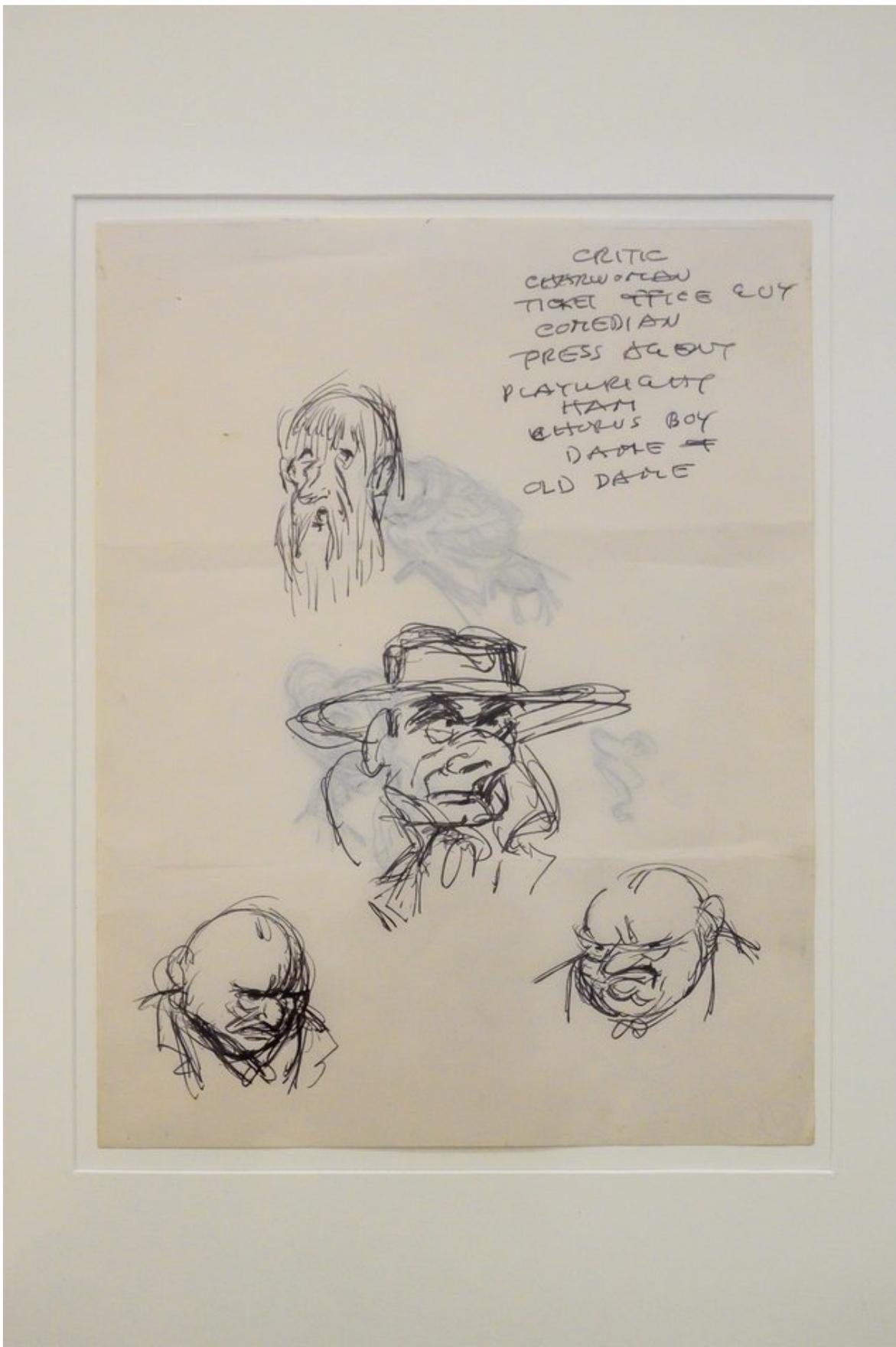
"His hand really evolved into the great work of his life" by the 1930s and 1940s, she noted, pointing to his classic invention cartoons, many of which featured Professor Butts or Boob McNutt as main characters.



Professor Butts TOD SEELIE

Goldberg won the Pulitzer Prize for political cartooning in 1948, and a few of these are featured in the exhibit, including one of Stalin, and another on the dangers of "dope." He also drew "wearables," which were absurdist contraptions meant to make life "easier," but didn't actually work—it was part of his career-long critique of the new age of efficiency and the mechanization of basic household tasks.

Goldberg referred to New York as the "front row," and besides a brief, unhappy stint in Hollywood, spent much of his working life here. When he'd need inspiration, he and his wife Irma would ride the subway, where he'd sketch people's faces.



➡ Some of Goldberg's subway drawings TOD SEELIE

The exhibit is filled mostly with his cartoon work and sketches, along with some other ephemera (including books and toys), but there is only one actual "Rube

Goldberg machine" up in the space as you enter, which you can see here:



[The Art of Rube Goldberg](#) runs through February 9th, 2020 at the Queens Museum of Art.

#RUBE GOLDBERG

#QUEENS MUSEUM

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