

Datebook

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Galleria Borghese, Rome

Most scholars believe that Raphael painted "Portrait of a Lady With a Unicorn," but that attribution is fairly recent.

CHARLES DESMARAIS *Art*

She's hard to pin down

Portrait now at Legion of Honor has kept scholars guessing for centuries

One of the most visually stunning objects to reside in the city right now may also be the most intellectually vexing.

The exhibition "Sublime Beauty," which opened to the public Saturday, Jan. 9, at the Legion of Honor, comprises a single painting, grandly presented in its own ample room. Seen through a doorway at the end of a procession of museum galleries, barely more than 2 feet in height, "Portrait of a Lady With a Unicorn" (ca. 1505-06) commands attention from 100 yards off. It glows as if lighted from within: a golden-haired pyramid of sensuality, anchored on pillowed sleeves of ruby, cast in a clear, nearly shadowless

Desmarais continues on E2

DATE LINES

Today's picks

Fraenkelab: The venerable Fraenkel Gallery previews its forthcoming Hayes Valley adjunct space (opening in April) with the temporary installation "Reanimation (Snow White)," a 2014 video artwork by British artist Oliver Beer. It will be projected inside the gallery after dark and viewable from the street, Wednesday-Sunday, Jan. 13-17. 1632 Market St., S.F. <https://fraenkelgallery.com/category/news>.

Barry Johnson and Frances Quinlan: Johnson, from the band Joyce Manor, and Quinlan, from Hop Along, play dueling solo sets. 9 p.m. The Chapel, S.F. www.thechapelsf.com.

WATCH BOX

What's on today



Monty Brinton / CBS

CBS broadcasts the 100th episode of "2 Broke Girls," above, tonight at 8, to which I can only say: That's a lot of cupcakes.

The sixth season of "Mob Wives" kicks off with a two-hour episode at 8 p.m. on VH1. After this season, the show sleeps with the fishes.

Season nine of "Duck Dynasty" takes flight on A&E at 9 p.m., to which I can only say: That's a lot of duck calls.

Fox launches the so-so drama "Second Chance" at 10 p.m. Originally called "The Frankenstein Code," it's about an elderly former sheriff who gets murdered and then is not only brought back to life by a couple of techie twins, he's 30 years younger and out to both avenge his own murder and protect his son, an FBI agent who of course doesn't realize Daddy's home.

It's not bad, not great. Robert Kazinsky is pretty good as the reanimated hero.

The fifth season of "American Horror Story" comes to what will no doubt be a bloody good end at 10 p.m. on FX. I don't know about you, but I've been pretty Gaga about this season. The anthology series has been renewed for a sixth season.

TV Land is looking "Younger" every day, now that the solidly funny sitcom is returning tonight with a two-episode package at 10. Sutton Foster stars as Liza Miller, a divorced mom who gets a job in publishing by pretending to be "Younger," and then gets a hot younger boyfriend as an accessory. The show has already been renewed for a third season.

Watch Box continues on E2

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



Chad Batka / New York Times 2015

Jeremih, whose second release is “Late Nights: The Album,” brings needed tempo and texture to R&B.

Singers reinvigorating R&B

By Jon Caramanica

So much of hip-hop’s history has been about absorption and conquering. No other genre in pop has made so much mulch of its enemies and its obstacles. When it came to R&B, the dominant sound of pre-rap black pop, hip-hop was stealthy.

First it played nice by sampling the elder genre, making an intellectual argument for hip-hop’s place in soul’s legacy while also slyly removing its ancestor from the center to the fringe. Later, hip-hop birthed its own class of singers — tough talkers with smooth edges — who did the work of softening that the samples once did while serving up more simpatico subject matter. And, eventually, rappers just cut out the middlemen and began incorporating melody into their verses.

Invigorating the genre

This long road ends at Drake, the biggest hip-hop disrupter of recent years, and also the genre’s biggest star. That the most important rapper of the 2010s is, if you look at him from a different angle, a completely credible R&B singer, is a radical shift and also not much of a surprise.

But something hap-

pened to Drake on his way to the top: He bulked up and began emphasizing muscle over heart. His two 2015 albums were his least tender, suggesting that, at least for now, he’s renouncing his dual citizenship.

And that’s fine, because R&B is no longer taking hip-hop’s assault lying down. Male singers, in particular, are finding new ways to invigorate the genre, and in the case of Bryson Tiller, it’s by holding up a mirror to

Drake and using his tricks in reverse.

Tiller’s debut, “Trapsoul” (RCA), is perhaps the first truly post-Drake R&B album. Tiller is a lover man fluent in hip-hop gesture, a soul singer whose cadences privilege rhythm over croon. He even gives himself an alter ego nickname: Pen Griffey.

“Trapsoul,” which was released in October, is a logical response to the years of death throes R&B has been enduring at hip-hop’s hand. Tiller is thin-voiced but flexible, more in the vein of danceable early 1990s R&B than classic soul.

To say he sings like a rapper is no insult — on “Let ‘Em Know” and “Exchange,” he basically delivers his own guest rap verses for songs that don’t bother relying on bellow or shout or any of the old-school R&B tricks.

His nods to Drake are both literal and winking. On “Ten Nine Fourteen,” Tiller thanks him by name, remembering the importance of “the recognition from Drizzy alone,” then adds, “I remember when they slept on me —

memory foam,” using the hashtag-rap rhyme pattern that Drake helped popularize. On songs like “502 Come Up,” Tiller sings and then pulls up short at the end of a bar, leaving a blank space — another Drake tic. And the production on “Trapsoul” is meticulously slurry, taking in the chopped-and-screwed R&B Drake dabbled in four or so years ago and smoothing it out, making it sound like hazy meditation.

These choices would seem to make Tiller an outsider, but in truth, he’s as close to a centrist as there is in contempo-

rary R&B. His single “Don’t” has been a radio staple the last couple of months, in an environment generally hostile to R&B singers not named the Weeknd. One of the few other R&B singers leaving a similar mark is Jeremih, who released his second album, “Late Nights: The Album” (Def Jam), last month, five years after his first. It’s confident and impressive, and shows off some directions in which R&B can assert its individuality: namely, tempo and texture.

Honing dance chops

For example, “Pass Dat” could pass for experimental house music — unsurprising, given that Jeremih hails from Chicago, and also because he’s spent large parts of the downtime since his last album collaborating with dance music producers.

“Oui” showcases his uncommonly nasal voice, which, at a slow pace, feels ineffectual but sounds electric and percussive at quicker speeds. There are several songs like those on “Late Nights,” which is a relief, because on the first single from the album, “Planez,” Jeremih was phoning in an R. Kelly impression.

Jon Caramanica writes for the New York Times.

Bryson Tiller’s “Trapsoul” is a response to the death throes R&B has been enduring at hip-hop’s hand.

What’s on today

Watch Box from page E1

so tune in to see what all the laughter is about.

Then you might want to stick with TVLand for the series premiere of “Teachers,” airing at a special time of 11 p.m. A six-member comedy group known as the **Katydids** created and

star in the sitcom about elementary school teachers whose personal lives become part of the curriculum. It’s funny for a while but never quite goes anywhere. After two episodes of “Younger,” watching “Teachers” is like being sent to detention on a sunny day.

— David Wiegand



Molly Bernard and Hilary Duff in TV Land’s comedy “Younger.”

TV Land

Portrait hard to pin down

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light and set against a glowing horizon of blue.

If you had the good fortune to see the work without the crowds that will inevitably attend, you might study the picture for a half hour or more: its crystalline, almost mineral quality of detail and color; its startling sense of shared space with the sitter, close on a small porch, together at the edge of a vast and almost featureless terrain.

She is lovely, certainly, but the perfection of her skin and the classic balance of her features heighten the soundless, surreal moment: It is the tiny animal in her arms that has seen more, and that knowledge shows in its expressive face. The unnatural slope of her shoulders, a fiction often maintained by Renaissance artists, softens her steely posture, just as the unicorn’s feline paws — not hooves — confirm that it is capable of being tamed.

The narrative mysteries of the picture’s content and the technical attractions of its execution are enough to recommend it as an experience not to be missed. But the puzzles it has presented to art history for more than 500 years are more than worth noting.

Remarkably, the work was heavily over-painted in the 17th century, turning it into a depiction of St. Catherine of Alexandria, complete with a cloak covering her shoulders and sleeves, a palm frond and — replacing the unicorn — the broken torture wheel with which Catherine is traditionally associated. In the 1930s these painted additions were removed, creating new debate about the quality of the restoration;

Sublime Beauty: Raphael’s “Portrait of a Lady With a Unicorn”: 9:30 a.m.-5:15 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday, Saturday, Jan. 9-April 10. Legion of Honor, 100 34th Ave., S.F. (415) 750-3600. www.legionofhonor.famsf.org.

then X-rays revealed that before the unicorn, a dog symbolizing fidelity was shown in her arms.

Even authorship of the work has been debated for centuries. Experts now seem to agree widely that the painting is by Raffaello Sanzio, the artist we know as Raphael. Strangely, though, that attribution is relatively recent. Other famous artists, including Pietro Perugino, Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio, Francesco Granacci, Andrea del Sarto, and “the Florentine School,” have been credited. It was not until 1927 that serious argument was made for Raphael.

A good deal of art history has always been speculative — educated guessing is the stock-in-trade of the profession — and few in the field would blush at what is now thought to be a 400-year mistake. Indeed, the exhibition catalog includes two essays that each confidently surmise that a different woman was the painting’s subject. You can call her Laura Orsini della Rovere (who was, or was not, the illegitimate child of Pope Alexander VI), or Madelena Strozzi.

In either case, though, you will certainly want to make her acquaintance. The exhibition continues through April 10.

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Crossword Puzzle

S	M	S	A	M	P	E	D	S	A	T	C	H		
T	I	E	M	A	R	L	O	C	A	R	L	A		
E	N	A	M	A	I	L	L	C	A	R	R	I	E	R
P	I	N	T	A	G	E	I	C	O	V	A	L		
D	O	P	I	N	G	L	U	D	D	I	T	E		
A	R	E	A	O	N	S	E	T	E	A	S	Y		
D	E	N	S	O	A	P	E	S	S					
O	N	L	I	N	E	A	U	C	T	I	O	N		
I	R	A	W	R	A	P	R	I	D					
T	A	R	A	T	U	N	E	R	I	D	L	E		
E	N	E	M	I	E	S	E	M	C	E	E	S		
M	C	M	R	A	N	I	S	S	E	R	B	S		
P	H	O	N	E	R	E	C	O	R	D	N	L	E	
L	O	R	E	N	W	A	H	O	O	U	R			
E	R	A	S	E	S	N	O	B	S	W	E	T		

Today’s Crossword

O	D	E	S	D	I	N	T	L	O	R	A	N	
S	O	L	E	E	R	I	E	E	V	A	D	E	
L	O	A	M	B	I	B	S	T	E	N	D	S	
O	M	N	I	B	U	S	T	O	U	R	I	S	T
				N	I	G	H	T	L	P	S		
M	O	L	A	R	S	A	N	I	S	E	T	E	
A	W	A	R	D	D	L	I	V	E	R	A	L	
S	L	Y	S	W	O	L	L	E	N	A	I	L	
K	E	L	P	I	L	E	S	E	D	I	N	A	
S	T	A	R	T	L	E	S	E	V	E	N	T	S
				Q	U	D	T	A	X	E	S		
L	A	B	O	R	E	D	S	T	R	E	A	K	S
A	L	O	F	T	R	I	C	A	R	U	E	S	
P	A	N	E	L	I	R	O	N	V	E	N	T	
S	N	A	R	E	B	A	T	T	E	R	O	S	

Sudoku Puzzle

6	5	9	1	3	8	7	2	4
2	8	1	6	4	7	3	9	5
3	4	7	5	2	9	8	6	1
1	2	3	9	8	4	6	5	7
4	6	8	7	5	3	2	1	9
9	7	5	2	1	6	4	3	8
5	1	6	8	7	2	9	4	3
7	3	2	4	9	1	5	8	6
8	9	4	3	6	5	1	7	2

Challenger Chess

							9
2	1	1	1	1	5		
2	1	3	1	7			
1	2	2	2	7			
3	3	1	2	9			
8	7	7	8	7			

1. ... Rh4ch!
2. Rxf4 gxh4!
(the threat of ... Rh2 mate is unstoppable).