

[The Washington Post]

Style & Arts

SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2009

AX FN FS LF PW DC BD PG AA FD HO MN MS SM R



Stork's 3-D model of "Girl With a Pearl Earring" gives insight, he says, into Vermeer's light sources and suggests that the artist worked more from direct observation than from imagination.

Shedding New Light

You love Vermeer's "Girl With a Pearl Earring." But what do you really know about it? What is it — *who* is it — that you're really seeing there, beyond the surface of the paint? David Stork knows. He's been through Vermeer's looking glass and seen the other side. He's floated beside the painting's beauty and he's ridden its light, Tinker Bell-style, as it flashes on her pearl, then bounces from cheek to nose to liquid eyes.

Stork is a physicist, and he's used modern optical science and a good bit of computing power to make a virtual, 3-D copy of the world that Vermeer gave us in two dimensions in about 1665. Stork gives the painter's "girl" a kind of Second Life avatar, which he has used to solve some of the painting's puzzles, such as whether Vermeer could have painted his subject from life, and how he might have lighted her

David Stork Uses Science To See a World of Art Through Old Masters' Eyes

By **BLAKE GOPNIK**
Washington Post Staff Writer

if he did. "When people look and say, 'Look how impressive his lighting is?' they don't know *how* impressive," says Stork. His techniques do for art historians, he says, "just what a microscope does for biologists. We can now reveal things in art that we didn't see before."

Or at least that's what he'll be trying to prove in a lecture he gives Friday at the National Gallery of Art.

Stork will be talking about how his knowledge of vision, optics and computers — an entire 30-page CV's worth of scientific achievements — has let him look into Vermeer's light, and discover just how closely it matches reality.

Stork's science has let him step into Caravaggio's great "Calling of

See **STORK**, Page E8

ROBIN GIVHAN

On Culture

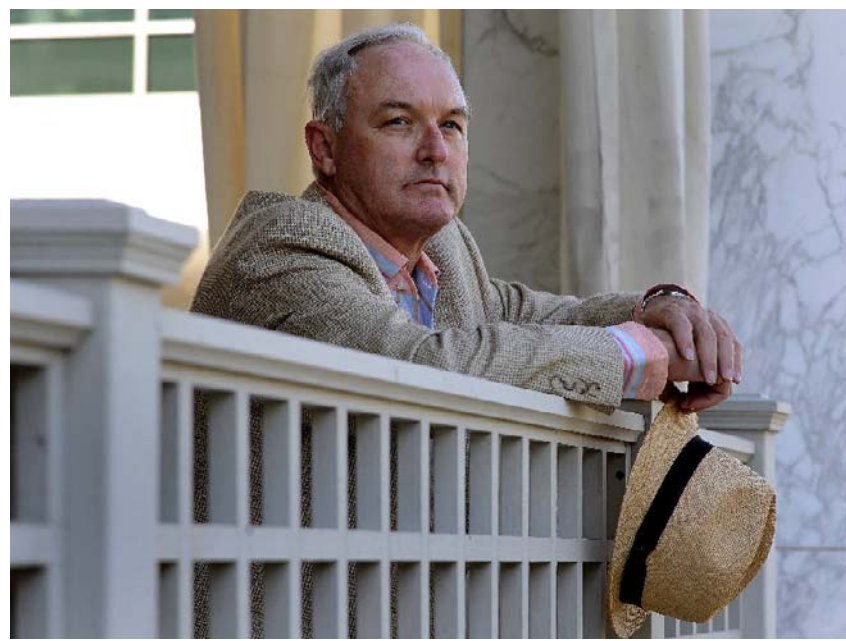
First Lady's Designers Want A © Change

The fashion industry has been reveling in the fact that first lady Michelle Obama has steered clear of the boxy suits worn by recent occupants of the East Wing and has instead chosen to wear clothes with undeniable personality. Love her J. Crew cardigans and Azzedine Alaïa belt or hate them, either way the debate has delighted a fashion industry that is pleased to have someone other than a starlet drawing attention to its wares. Here is someone a broad swath of women can relate to: a professional, a mother, a grown-up.

The benefit of having such a high-profile woman wearing designer brands has translated into a windfall of publicity for small houses that cannot afford lavish advertising campaigns. To show its affection, the fashion industry will pay homage to Obama in June with an award from the Council of Fashion Designers of America.

All that free publicity, however, has had an unintended consequence for the designers. They've become a more tempting target for copycats. If the Oscars, with all of those dazzling gowns, serve as a once-a-year jackpot of "inspiration" for mass marketers looking to cash in on the prom scene, then the first lady's wardrobe promises at least four years' worth of ideas for sheaths, cardigans and swing

See **GIVHAN**, Page E5



Christopher Buckley's "fingers went in another direction" after starting his latest book.

'Mum and Pup,' and Son, Face a Different Firing Line

By **HOWARD KURTZ**
Washington Post Staff Writer

The book is not even out and already, Christopher Buckley says, he is hearing about certain Manhattan society ladies sniffing that he should "never darken their dinner table again."

He sums up his painfully intimate portrait in "Losing Mum and Pup" this way: "He was impossible. She was impossible. And sometimes their impossibilities acted like great magnetic force fields." Which is to say, William F. Buckley and Patricia Buckley had a stormy marriage and an equally volatile relationship with their only child.

The Washington novelist goes beyond a mere warts-and-all rendering of his fa-

ther, who died 14 months ago, and his mother, who passed away a year before that. He includes such cringe-inducing revelations as how Pup would relieve himself through the opened door of a moving car, or how, while hooked up to an oxygen machine, the ailing icon summoned him at 2:30 a.m. to plan an immediate lunch for "very important players in the conservative community" — including someone who happened to be dead. Why yank back the curtain that far?

"You mean," says Buckley, clad in a peach-and-blue striped shirt, over a bowl of Yucatan tuna soup at a Foggy Bottom restaurant, "am I drawing a mustache on the portrait?" He ponders the question,

See **BUCKLEY**, Page E9

Inside

SCREENS

In a Sweet Spot

Two filmmakers step up to the plate with "Sugar." **E3**

STAGES

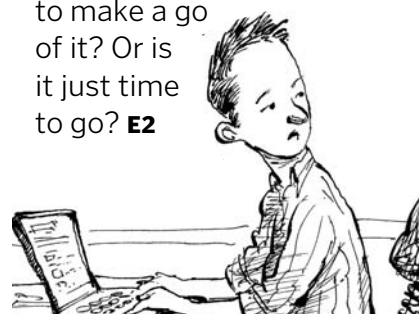
Bard to Mod

Classical actors shine in the spotlight at Studio. **E4**

CAROLYN HAX

Breakup Point

Is there still time to make a go of it? Or is it just time to go? **E2**



WIDE ANGLE

A Big Day to Play

Major League or Little, the first home game's the same. **E6-7**



CONVERSATIONS

When an orchestra tours in China, "one has to get used to certain little details." **IVÁN FISCHER, E2**