Process Book

Li Ye

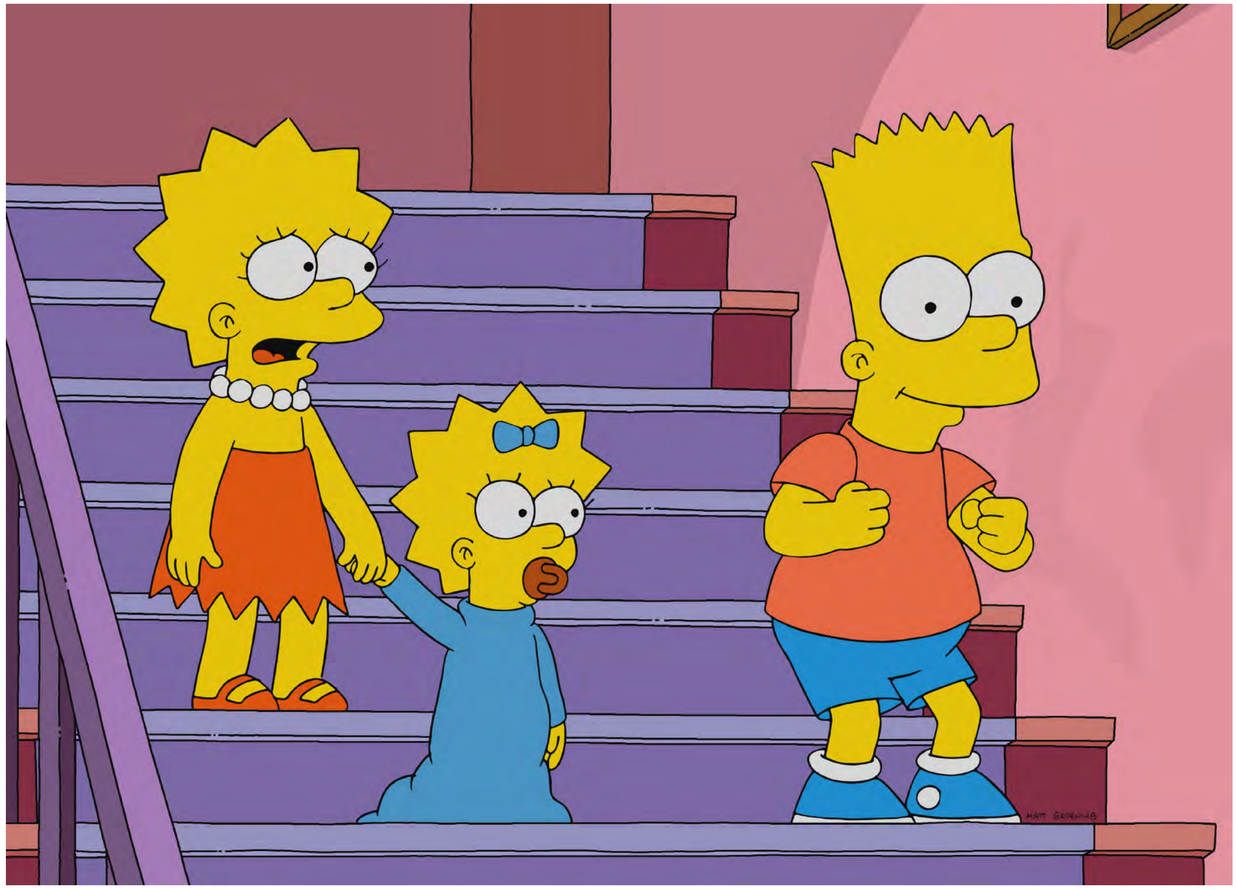
GDVX 734

HOMER SIMPSON

Greedy

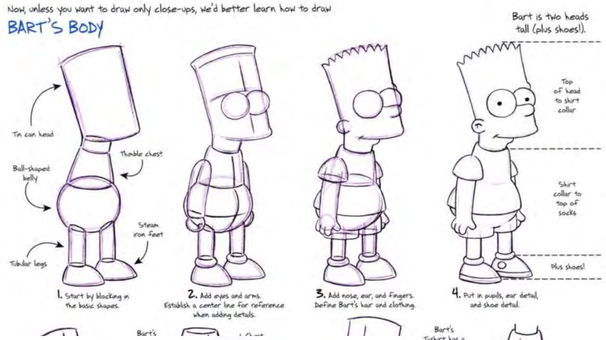
STUPID

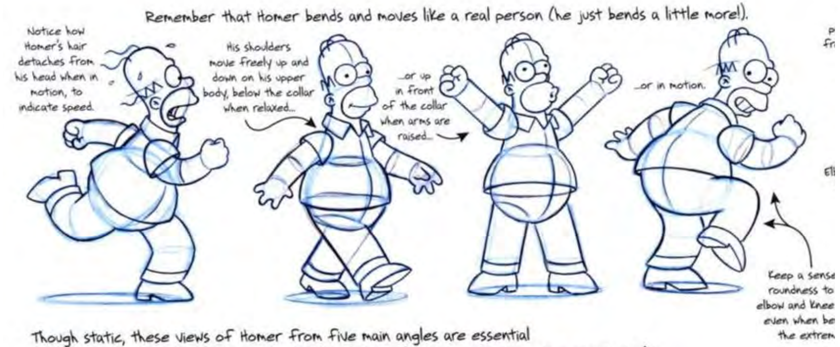
Why Yellow

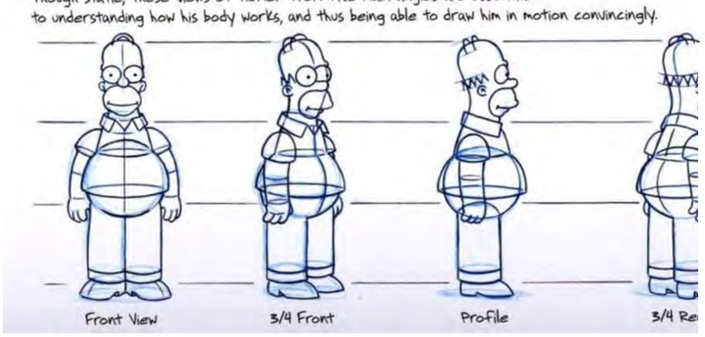


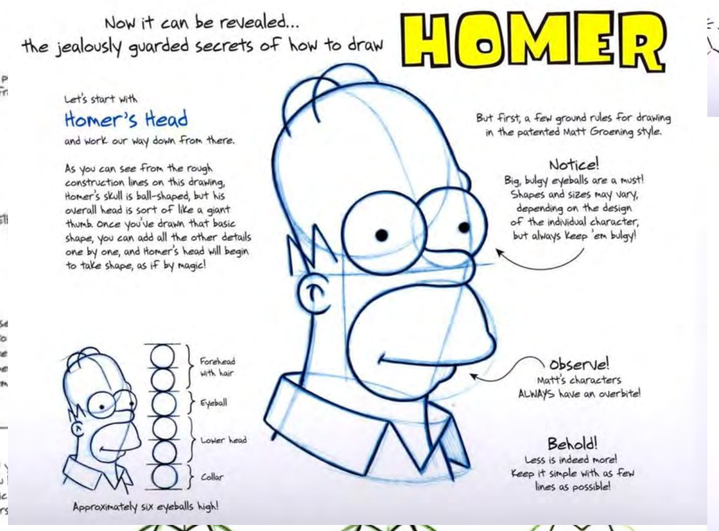
- Eye catching color
- Nothing like skin in reality
- “Kinda skin, kinda hair”

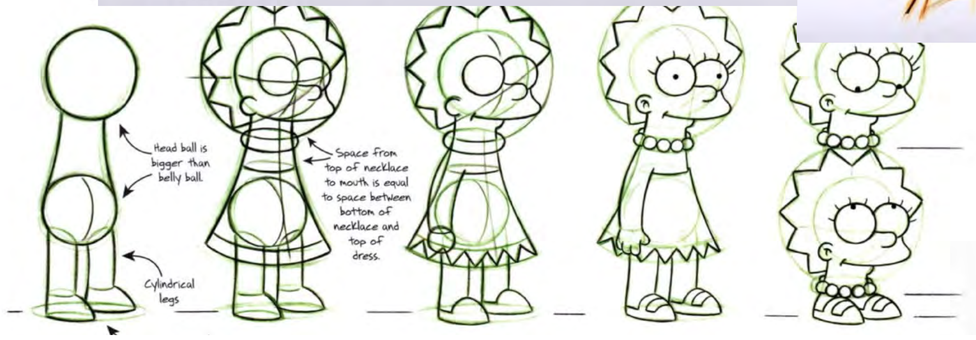

Okay, step by step let's construct a 3/4 front view of HOMER'S HEAD.
Tilted back slightly
Vertical
Eye bisects nose.
Approximately 1/2 "eyes" from top of eye to top of head
2 1/2 "noses" between bottom of nose and mouth
Center line of head connects with back hair loop.
Beard line is even with edge of eye.
Collar sits a trifle below chin line.
Top of ear lines up with bottom of the eye.
1. Start with that basic ball and thumb shape.
2. Establish the position of the forward eye at the bottom of the ball shape and in the center of the "thumb."
3. Add the nose. Then draw the other eye, tucked behind the nose and the forward eye.
4. Draw the mouth/beard shape. Add the ear, centered on the back of the head.
5. Give Homer pupils and add hair to the side and top of the head, then draw his shirt collar.
Homer's hair on top resembles two croquet hoops, one in front of the other!
To determine the size of the pupils, you should be able to fit seven of them end to end from one side of the eyeball to the other.

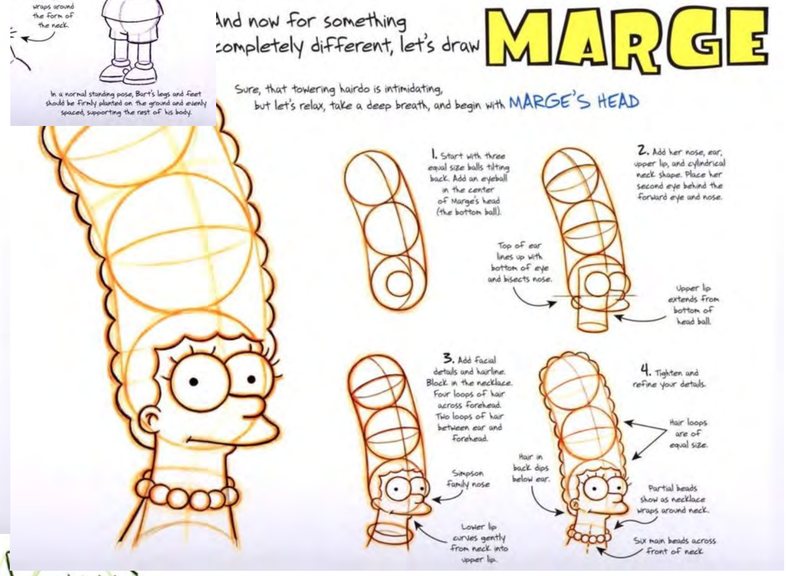

Now, unless you want to draw only close-ups, we'd better learn how to draw
BART'S BODY
Tin can head
Ball-shaped belly
Tubular legs
Thimble chest
Steam iron feet
1. Start by blocking in the basic shapes.
2. Add eyes and arms. Establish a center line for reference when adding details.
3. Add nose, ear, and fingers. Define Bart's hair and clothing.
Bart is two heads tall (plus shoes!).
Top of head to shirt collar.
Shirt collar to top of socks
Plus shoes!
4. Put in pupils, ear detail, and shoe detail.
Bart's T-shirt has a thickness to it. Make sure it wraps around the form of the neck.
In a normal standing pose, Bart's legs and feet should be firmly planted on the ground and evenly spaced, supporting the rest of his body.


Remember that Homer bends and moves like a real person (he just bends a little more!).
Notice how Homer's hair detaches from his head when in motion, to indicate speed.
His shoulders move freely up and down on his upper body, below the collar when relaxed...
...or up in front of the collar when arms are raised...
...or in motion.
Keep a sense roundness to elbow and knee even when be the extrem


Though static, these views of Homer from five main angles are essential to understanding how his body works, and thus being able to draw him in motion convincingly.
Front View
3/4 Front
Profile
3/4 Re


Now it can be revealed...
the jealously guarded secrets of how to draw
HOMER
Let's start with
Homer's Head
and work our way down from there.
As you can see from the rough construction lines on this drawing, Homer's skull is ball-shaped, but his overall head is sort of like a giant thumb. Once you've drawn that basic shape, you can add all the other details one by one, and Homer's head will begin to take shape, as if by magic!
Forehead with hair
Eyeball
Lower head
Collar
Approximately six eyeballs high!
But first, a few ground rules for drawing in the patented Matt Groening style.
Notice!
Big, bulgy eyeballs are a must! Shapes and sizes may vary, depending on the design of the individual character, but always keep 'em bulgy!
Observe!
Matt's characters ALWAYS have an overbite!
Behold!
Less is indeed more! Keep it simple with as few lines as possible!


Head ball is bigger than belly ball.
Cylindrical legs
Space from top of necklace to mouth is equal to space between bottom of necklace and top of dress.


And now for something completely different, let's draw
MARGE
Sure, that towering hairdo is intimidating, but let's relax, take a deep breath, and begin with MARGE'S HEAD
1. Start with three equal size balls tilting back. Add an eyeball in the center of Marge's head (the bottom ball).
2. Add her nose, ear, upper lip, and cylindrical neck shape. Place her second eye behind the forward eye and nose.
Top of ear lines up with bottom of eye and bisects nose.
Upper lip extends from bottom of head ball.
3. Add facial details and hairline. Block in the necklace. Four loops of hair across forehead. Two loops of hair between ear and forehead.
Simpson family nose
Lower lip curves gently from neck into upper lip.
4. Tighten and refine your details.
Hair loops are of equal size.
Hair in back dips below ear.
Partial heads show as necklace wraps around neck.
Six main heads across front of neck

About Homer

Name of Simpons are all based on the creator’s family

“He is A loving father, however he is often ruled by his impulse.”

“One of the greatest examples of American manhood.”

GREEDY

TERRIBLE

HOMER

ARROGANT

NEVER THINK

SELFISH

FATHER

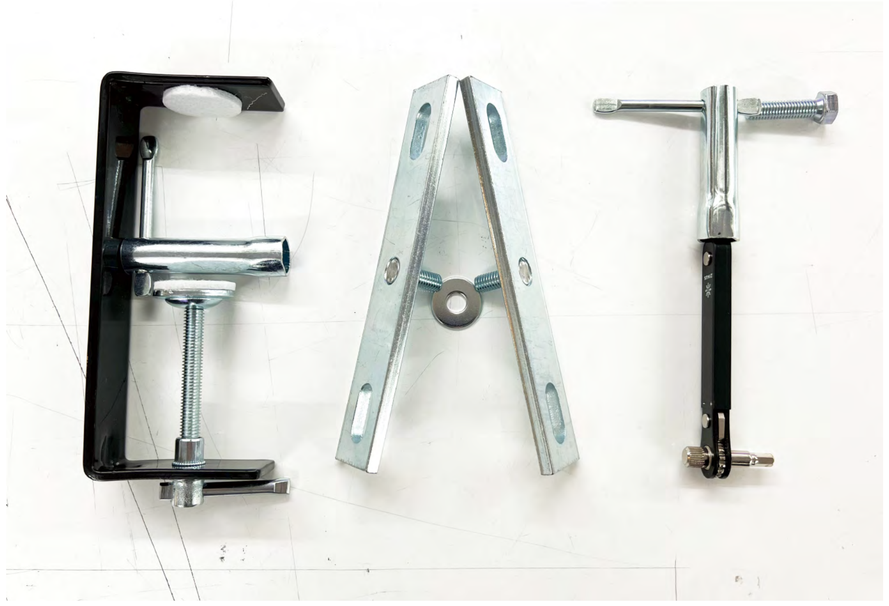
Project 3:

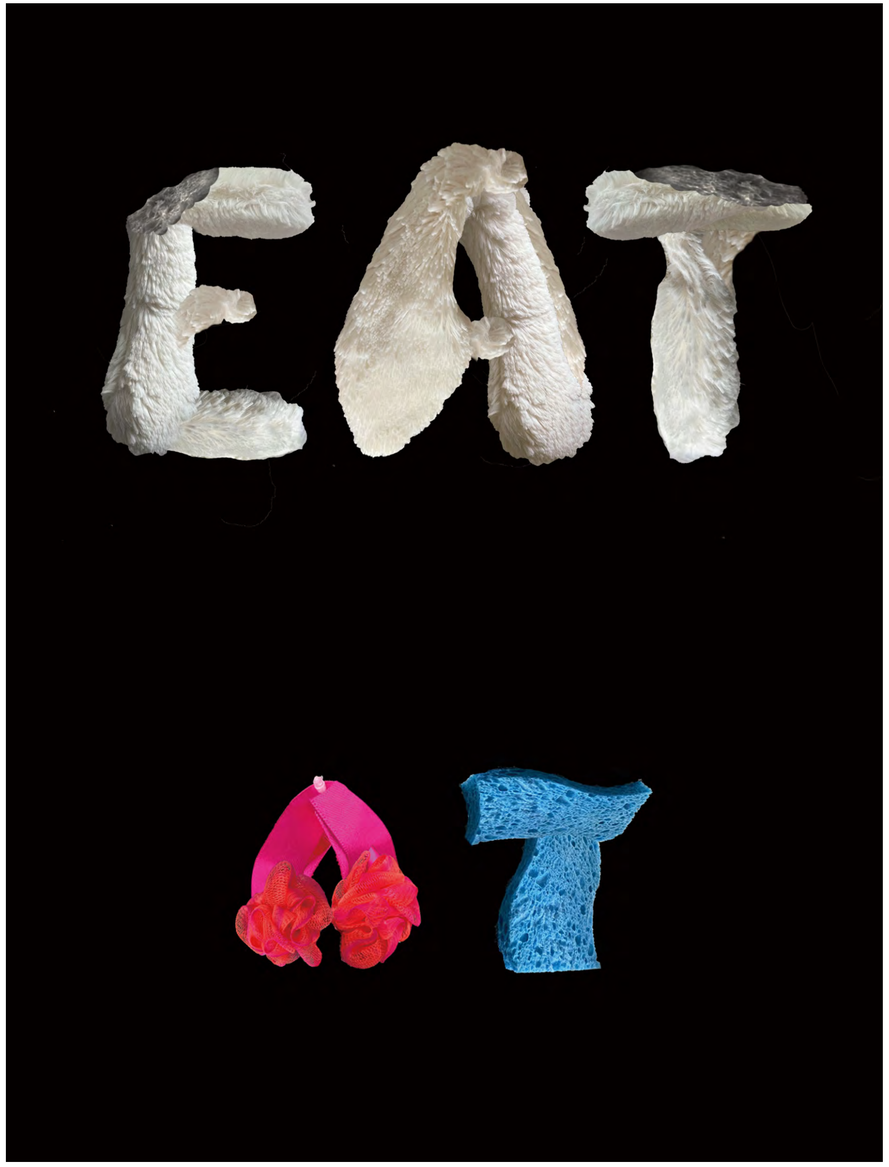
Type & Image

Phrase1:

EAT SOME MORE


EAT




EAT

EAT SOME MORE

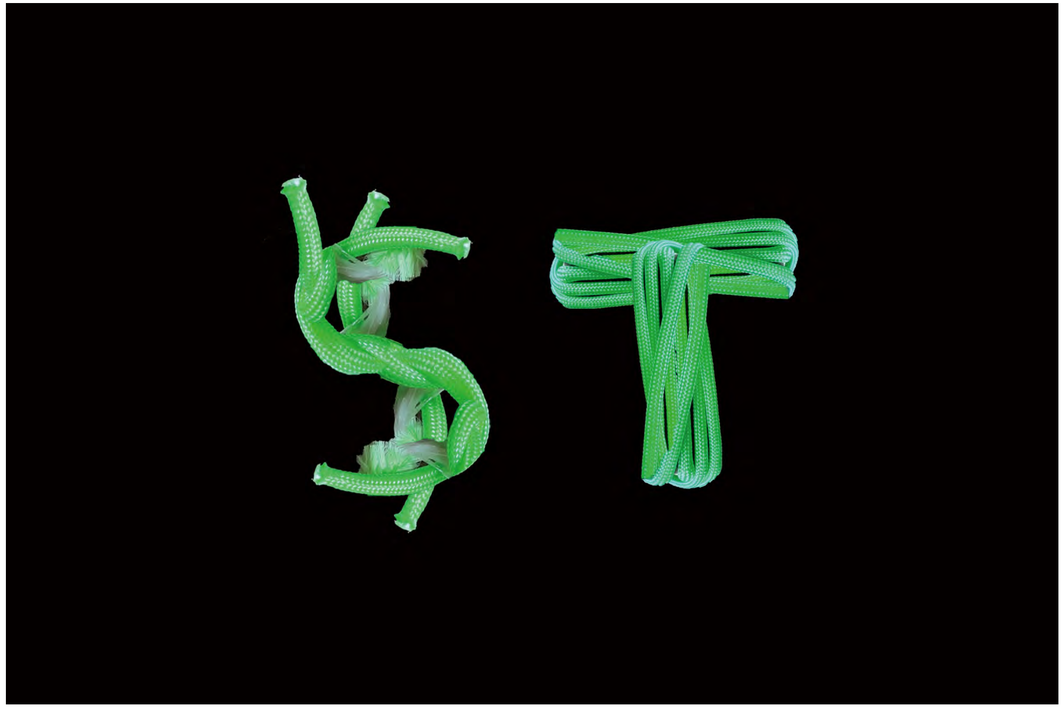
EAT SOME MORE

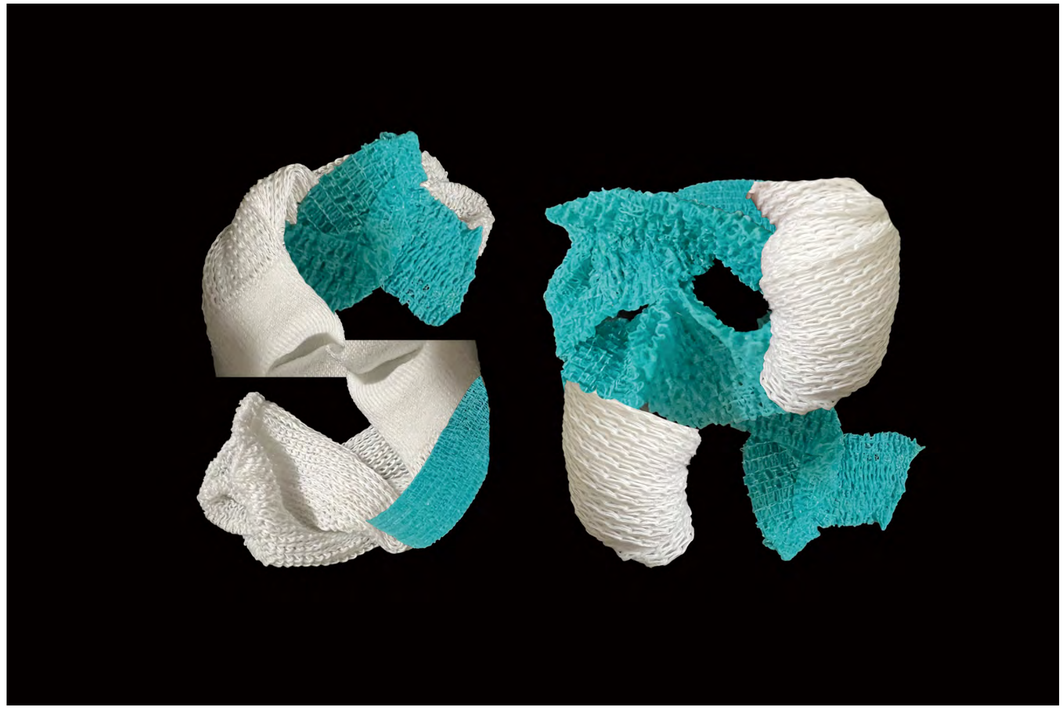

EAT SOME
MORE


EAT SOME
MORE

Phrase2:

I AM SMRT





I AM SO SMRT

I AM SO SMRT


I AM
SMRT


I AM
SMART

Project 4:

Type & Place

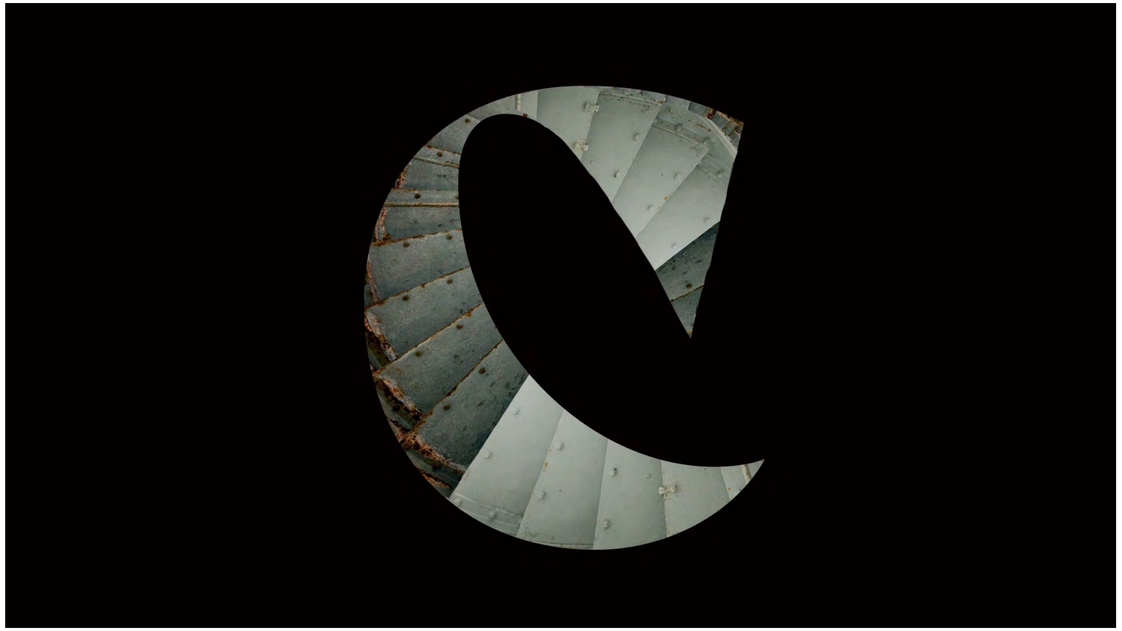
Phrase3:

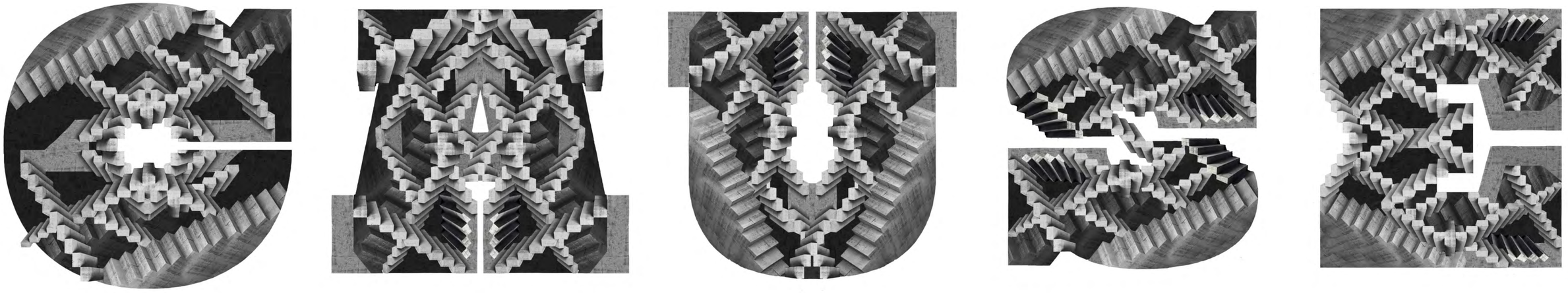
brain my damage


brain

Phrase4:

CAUSE & SOLUTION



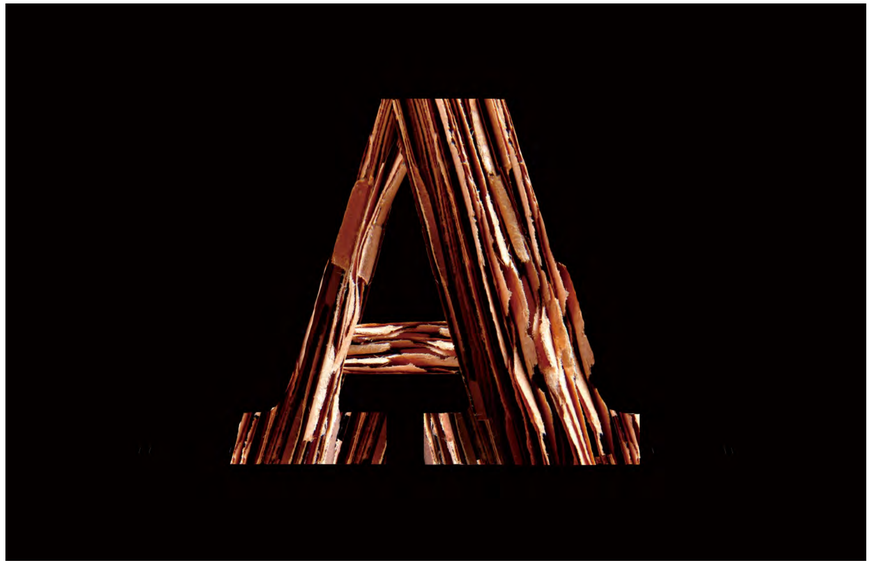


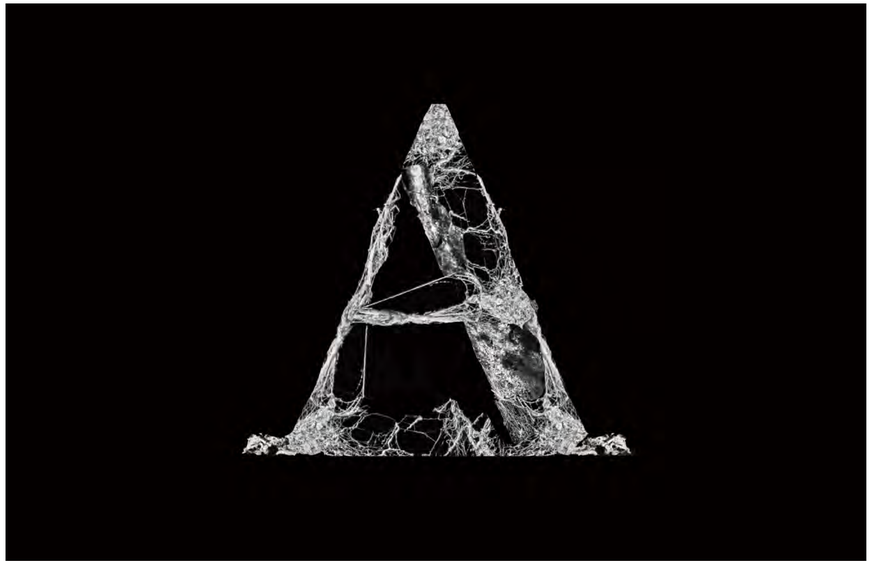
Project 5:

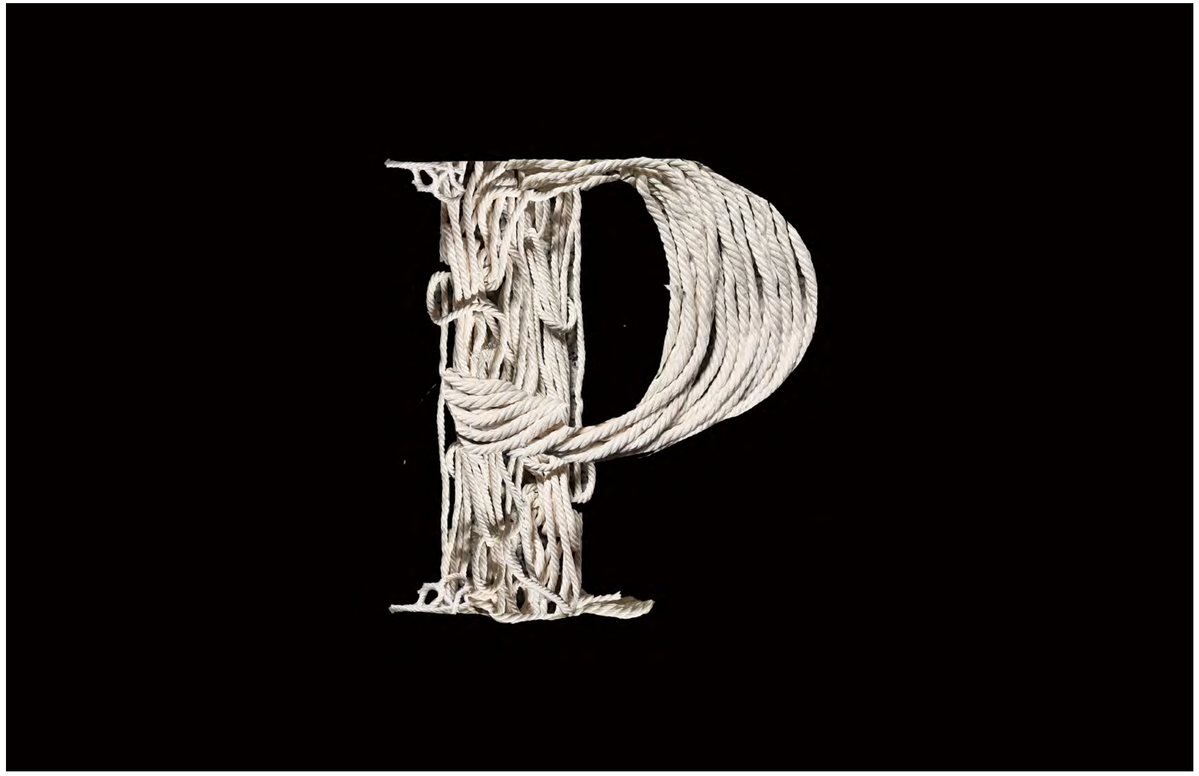
Type & Texture

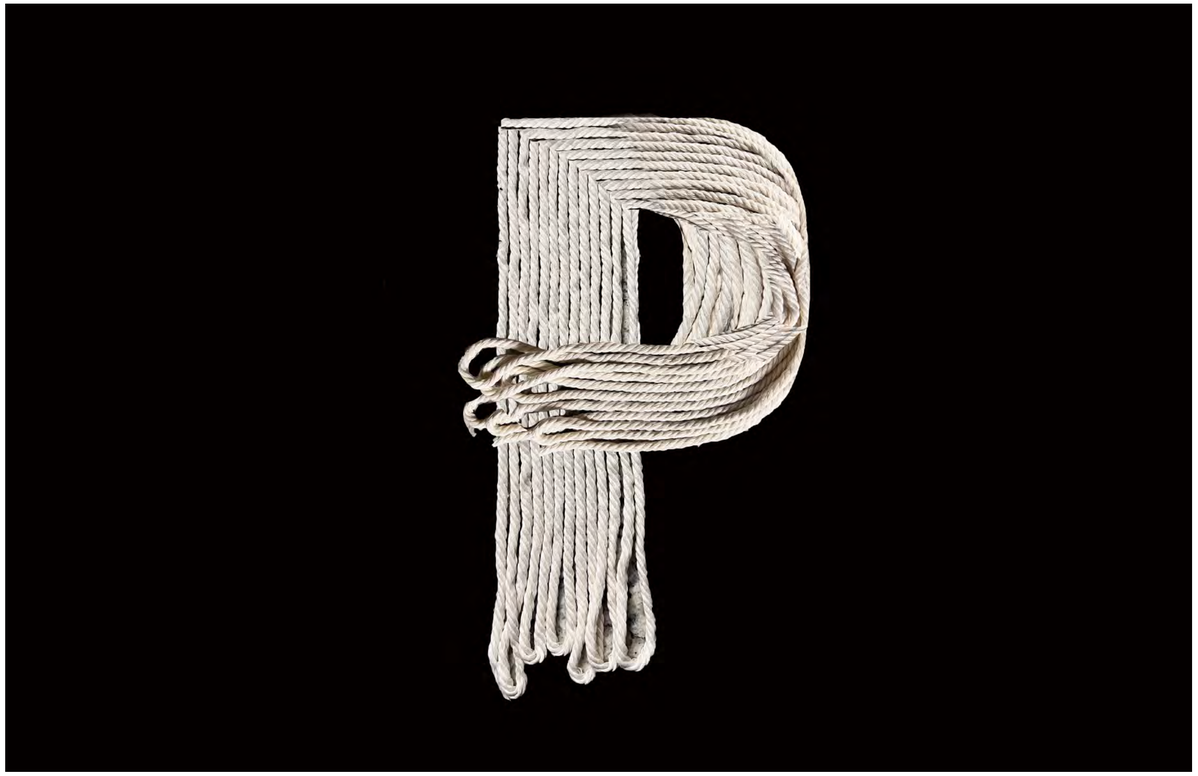
Phrase5:

PAID OFF





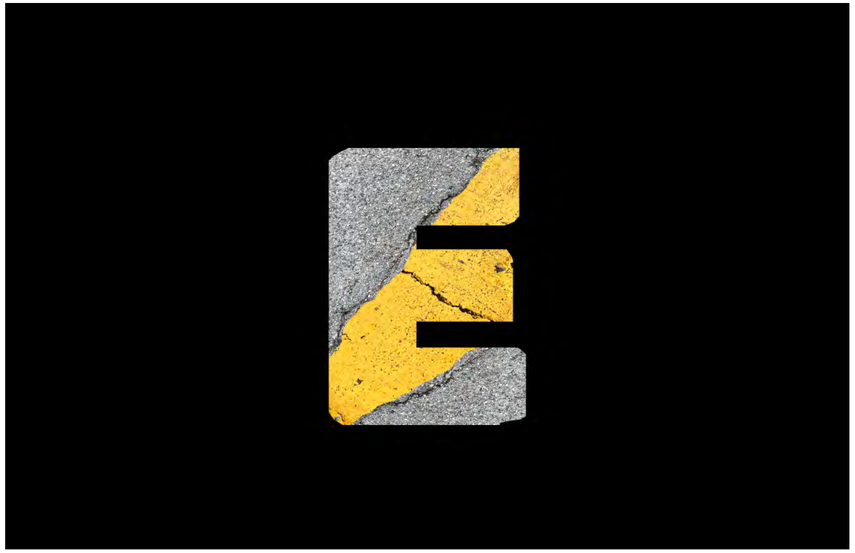


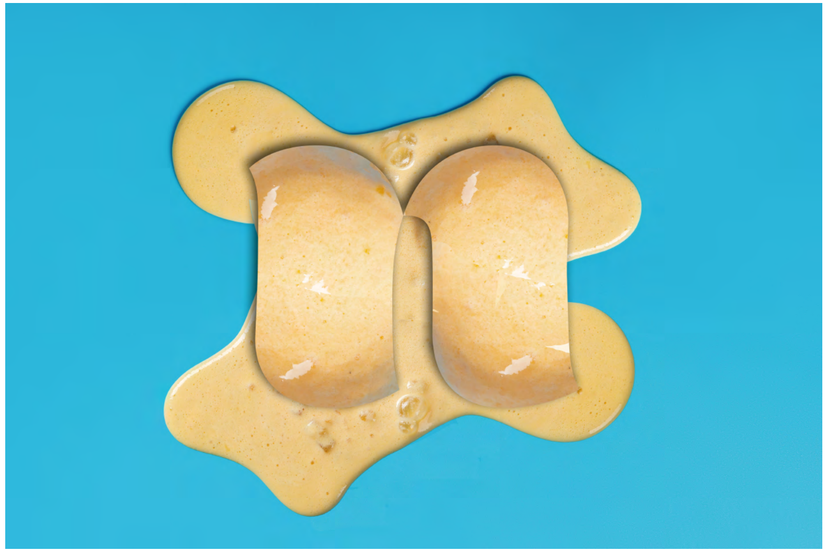


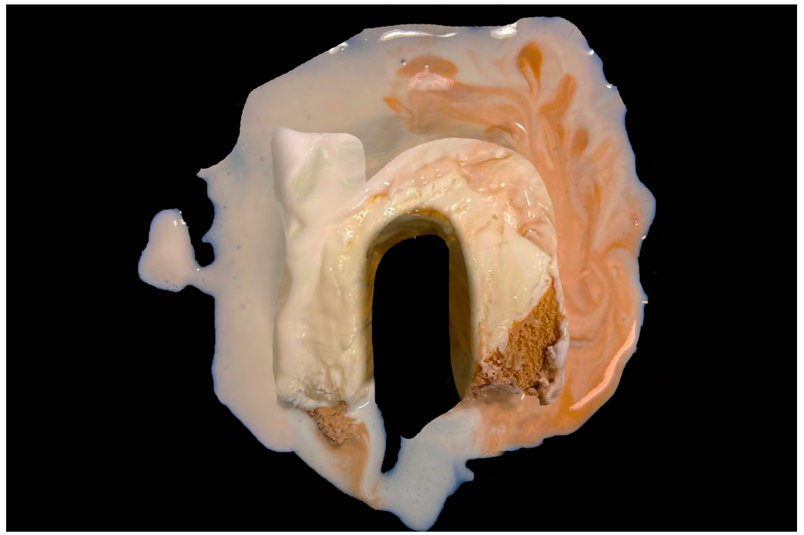

PAID OFF

Phrase6:

Why do my ACTION have consequences








ACT
FOAM

Project 6:

Read & create grids

No Matter the Forum, The Tale Is a Tragedy

Onstage, 'Brokeback Mountain' serves to remind that homophobia is not over.

By DOUGLAS GREENWOOD

LONDON — In 2018, when the theater director Jonathan Butterell was considering a proposal to adapt Annie Proulx's 1997 short story "Brokeback Mountain" for the stage, he wondered how to translate the prose's vast landscape and insular emotions into a play.

Last month, in a central London rehearsal studio, Butterell and Ashley Robinson, who wrote the play, tried to answer that question. To help the cast connect with Proulx's story of a cowboy and a ranch hand falling in love against the wide-stretching landscapes of 1960s Wyoming, black-and-white photographs of American plains and mountain ranges were tacked to the walls during rehearsals.

"The vastness has been there from the very beginning," Butterell said in a recent interview. When it came to evoking the story's emotional landscape, the director had stuck one sepia-toned photograph, of a lone cowboy in a snow-covered Wyoming, behind a pillar. The image "speaks to the bit of us that feels alone in the world," Butterell said. "Maybe he's at peace with this, maybe it's the source of his agony."

Butterell's "Brokeback Mountain" opened in previews May 10 at @sohoplace in London's West End. It's the first time the story has been adapted for theater — an opera by Charles Wuorinen premiered in Madrid in 2014 — and each version now follows in the footsteps of Proulx's text and the film that popularized it: Ang Lee's 2005 Academy Award-winning adaptation, which is often cited as one of the best L.G.B.T.Q. films of all time.

Butterell said he was aware of his audience having expectations based on the film. "They're inevitable," he said, "but I don't mind that."

This theatrical version also has some Hollywood clout. Its lead characters, Jack Twist and Ennis del Mar, are played by the BAFTA-nominated actor Mike Faist and the Oscar-nominated actor Lucas Hedges.

In late 2016, Robinson first wrote a treatment for what he called a "memory play" based on the short story, after speaking with the composer Dan Gillespie Sells and Butterell. Robinson's script stated that the Wyoming setting should not be conveyed "in a purely literal sense," and his story is set in 2013, with an older version of del Mar reflecting on the years he spent with Twist between 1963 and 1983.

Proulx approved of Robinson's vision. She had "high hopes for the play," she said in a recent email interview. "When I read Ashley's script several years ago, I thought he had done a fine job."

In Proulx's story, del Mar and Twist's interior worlds are conveyed by an omniscient narrator. In the stage adaptation, music does much of that work.

"These two men can't sing," Gillespie Sells said, because "they don't have an emotional dialogue." Instead, a character called the Balladeer — played by the Scottish singer-songwriter Eddi Reader — sings with an onstage country and western band. "She takes us through time," Butterell said. "Sometimes it's from night to day. Sometimes it's 10 years."

"Brokeback Mountain" will be the first time its two lead actors have appeared onstage in five years. Faist, who plays Twist, originated the role of Connor Murphy in "Dear Evan Hansen" on Broadway, and has had more recent success in film, including Steven Spielberg's 2021 remake of "West Side Story."

Hedges "hadn't acted in a while" when he was sent the script, he said, having been focusing on writing instead. The "Brokeback" offer and playing del Mar changed that. "There wasn't an angle I didn't love about this," he said.

As the project entered its final week of rehearsals, both actors were grappling with the process in different ways. Hedges said he was experiencing "tragic and triumphant ups and downs" about his own work. "I have a day where I think I've figured it all out, and then a day when it all disappears," he said. The "collective experience" of theater was daunting compared to working in film, he said, adding that onstage, "I can't use tricks to make it through."

Faist concurred: "It's a challenge, and it's terrifying," mainly because of the expectations of having to match the source material and 2005 film, he said. "But as terrifying and frustrating as it is, I really am having the time of my life," he added.

Butterell said that Faist and Hedges were "as men, as actors, very different creatures." Faist, he said, had "a sense of life and vivacity," while Hedges "has this deeply complex interior landscape that's very much of Ennis."

Neither Hedges, Faist nor Butterell had revisited Lee's film since they were approached for the project. "The truth of the matter is, no matter what, he's not Heath Ledger and I'm not Jake Gyllenhaal," Faist said of the film's two lead stars, who both earned Oscar nominations for their performances. He and Hedges, Faist added, would both bring their "own weird things" to the roles.

The production has forced Faist to confront his "traumas," he said. "We can take those traumas, turn them around," he added, and, he hopes, make the audience "think deeply about their own lives."

Following the success of the "Brokeback Mountain" film, Proulx said fans of her text sent her fan fiction that rewrote the ending of her short story, claiming the original was too sad. She told the The Paris Review that those fans had "misunderstood" the story and stated that it was, most important, about "homophobia."

NADIA MELHADO, FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

This is the first adaptation of "Brokeback" to be released since the Supreme Court made gay marriage legal in all 50 U.S. states. Robinson — who lives in Brooklyn but was raised in the tiny town of Lockhart, S.C. — said he wrote it to remind audiences that gay trauma still exists.

"These stories aren't necessarily being told anymore because of a trend to put onstage what we want the world to be," he said, referring to the theater community.

Mike Faist, left, and Lucas Hedges at Soho Place Theater, where they are starring in a theatrical adaptation of Annie Proulx's "Brokeback Mountain."

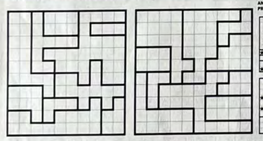
"That's a wonderful thing to do, but we shouldn't cancel out all of the opportunities to talk about what's going on underneath it."

Butterell added that the fight against homophobia was "not over" in Britain either, citing a recent spike in the number of attacks on L.G.B.T.Q. people.

"This is a tragedy," Butterell said of the play. "Of course love exists — I don't want it to be solemn — but the tragedy of this piece is that fear wins."

Two Not Touch

ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS PUZZLES



Put two stars in each row, column and region of the grid. No two stars may touch, not even diagonally.

Brain Tickler

What popular sports do these six-letter words rhyme with?

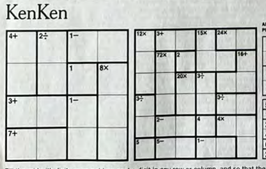
1. BOEING 2. LOCKER 3. PSEUDO 4. SEEING 5. SPLOSH 6. TICKET 7. VENICE

PUZZLE BY WILL SHORTZ

SATURDAY'S ANSWER Cake, recall, cellar

KenKen

ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS PUZZLES



1	4	2	3
4	2	3	1
3	1	4	2
2	3	1	4

5	6	4	1	2	3
1	5	3	6	4	2
3	1	5	2	6	4
4	2	1	3	5	6
6	4	2	5	3	1
2	3	6	4	1	5

Fill the grid with digits so as not to repeat a digit in any row or column, and so that the digits within each heavily outlined box will produce the target number shown, by using addition, subtraction, multiplication or division, as indicated in the box. A 4x4 grid will use the digits 1-4. A 6x6 grid will use 1-6.

For more games: www.nytimes.com/games

Crossword | Edited by Will Shortz

PUZZLE BY TOMAS SPROCK

9/15/23

ACROSS

1 Bovine animals that are raced in Tibet
5 Astronaut's realm
10 Sandwich often stuck with a toothpick
14 Name hiding in "named names"
15 Most abundant noble gas in the earth's atmosphere
16 Assistant
17 Earth of Tatooine
19 Frame of mind
20 German skin care brand
21 Angry
22 Sch. founded by Benjamin Franklin
23 Simple ballroom dance
25 Exhibitions
27 N.B.A. or W.N.B.A.
31 Fiery felonies
34 Some shakeslike fish
35 Communication syst. in the deaf community
36 ___ Kong
37 Bonsai tree holder
38 Inedible part of most fruit
39 Second letter after epsilon
40 CAT ___ (M.R.I. alternative)
42 California basketball team originally located in Minnesota
44 Heineken or Pabst
47 Sort of, informally
48 Get a move on, slangily
52 Questionable
53 "___ no more!"
55 Big muscle for Popeye after he eats spinach
56 Place for an urban garden, maybe
57 Ballerina Or Rockette
58 Great Plains tribe
60 Playful semiaquatic animal
61 The "E" of HOMES
62 Road safety grp.
63 Like some breakups and dorm rooms
64 Rational

DOWN

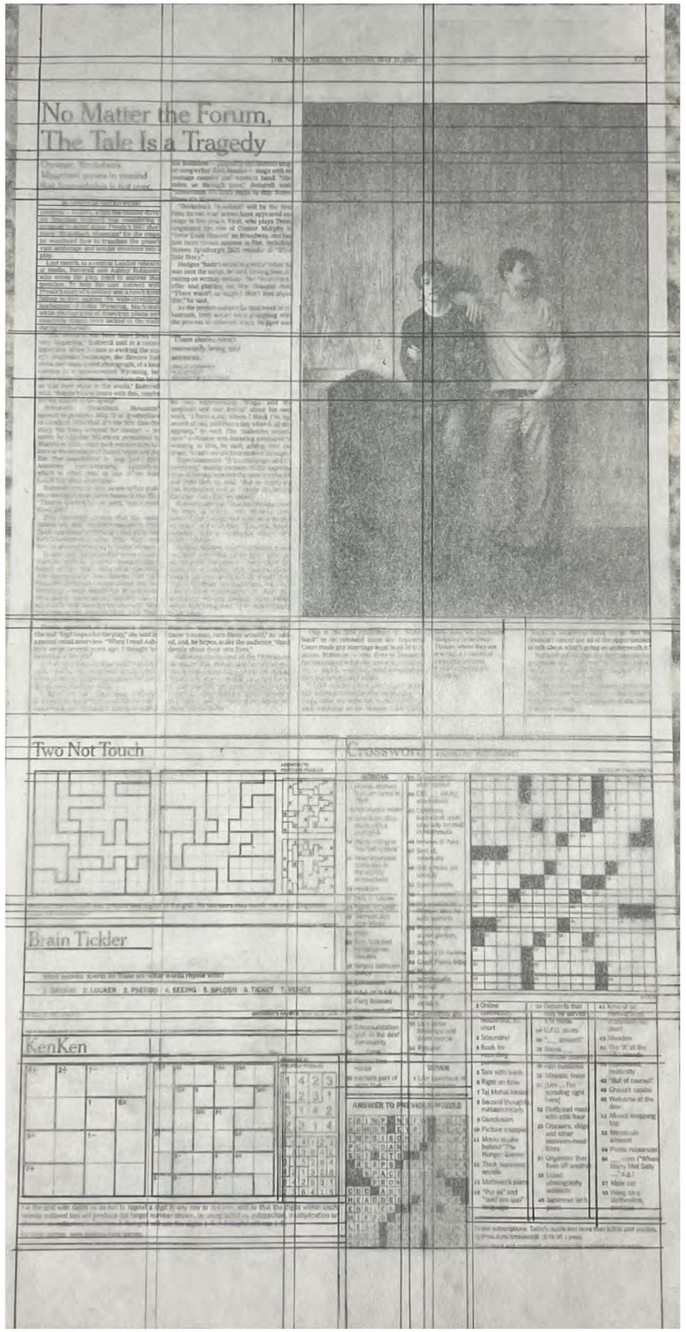
1 Like questions in 20 Questions
2 Online community moderator, for short
3 Scoundrel
4 Book for recording purchases
5 Tool with teeth
6 Right on time
7 Taj Mahal locale
8 Second thoughts, metaphorically
9 Conclusion
10 Picture snapper
11 Movie studio behind "The Hunger Games"
12 Thick Japanese noodle
13 Mattress's place
18 "Per se" and "quid pro quo" language
22 Desserts that may be served à la mode
24 U.F.O. pilots
26 "___ aboard!"
28 Sierra ___ (African country)
29 App customer
30 Majestic trees
31 [Um ... I'm standing right here]
33 Crackers, chips and other between-meal bites
37 Organism that lives off another
39 Urban photography subjects
40 Japanese tech giant
41 Kind of oil derived from marijuana, for short
43 Meadow
43 The "A" of the ABC Islands
45 Improvised, musically
46 "But of course!"
49 Ghana's capital
50 Welcome at the door
51 All-out shopping trip
52 Minuscule amount
54 Picnic nuisances
56 ___-com ("When Harry Met Sally ..." e.g.)
57 Male cat
58 Hang on a clothesline, perhaps

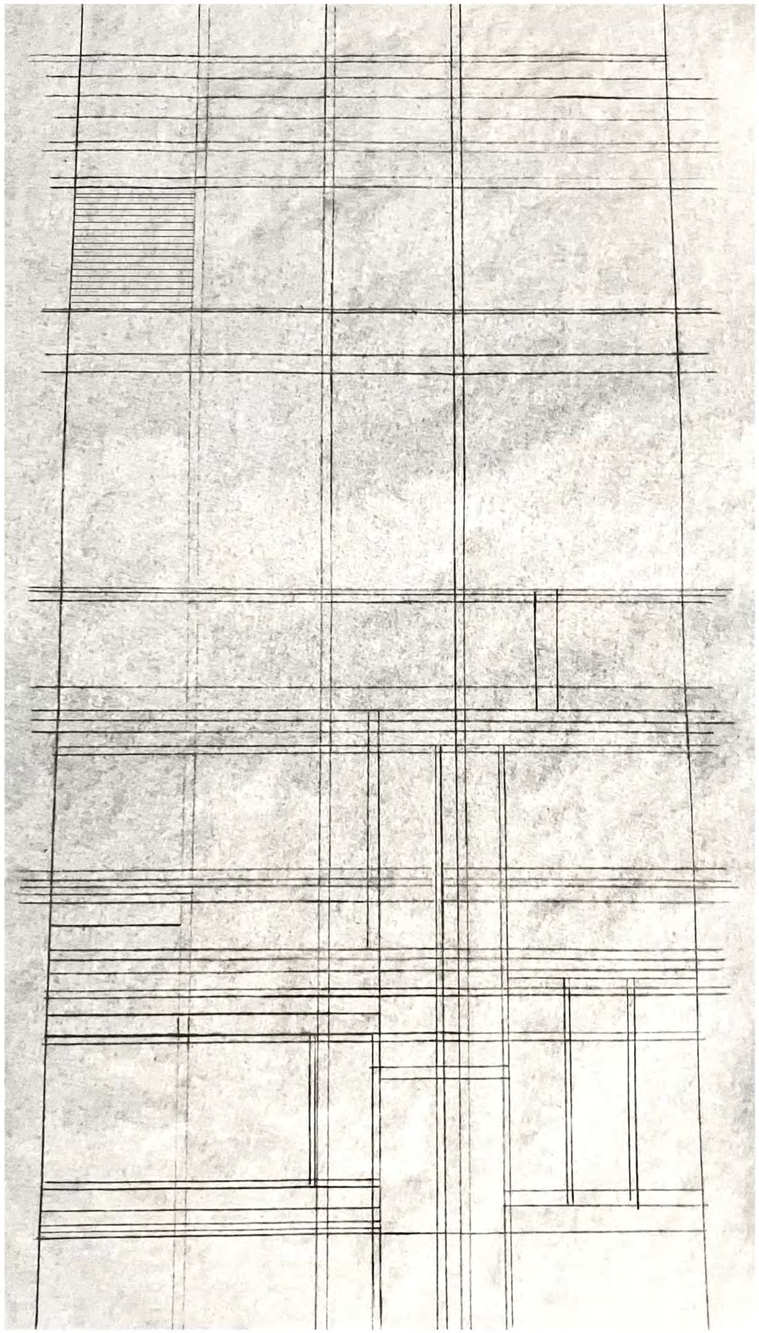
ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

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

Online subscriptions: Today's puzzle and more than 9,000 past puzzles. nytimes.com/crosswords ($39.95 a year).

Read about and comment on each puzzle: nytimes.com/wordplay.





After being processed by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, a family picked up shoes at the Sacred Heart Church in El Paso.

In downtown El Paso, a newly arrived migrant bought a bus ticket. A new large influx would tax border processing centers.

While scaling the border wall, Rosmarie Cepeda of Venezuela slipped on the El Paso side of the border, shattering her left foot.

Title 42 is Gone, but Not the Conditions Driving Migrants to the U.S.

By MIRIAM JORDAN

Relative quiet has prevailed along the southern U.S. border since Friday, despite widespread fears that ending a pandemic-era policy to immediately expel most migrants, even asylum seekers, would set off a stampede from Mexico.

A surge in migrants did in fact happen, in the run-up to the expiration of the pandemic-era expulsion policy, known as Title 42. Uncertain of the impact of new deterrent measures, migrants braved turbulent rivers, cut through concertina wire and scaled the steel border wall to reach the United States and turn themselves in to U.S. Border Patrol agents. On some days last week, apprehensions reached about 11,000, among the highest ever recorded.

Alejandro Mayorkas, Homeland Security secretary, said on Sunday that agents apprehended only 6,300 migrants on Friday and 4,200 on Saturday. The Biden administration's new policy, combining the carrot of new legal pathways with the stick of more punitive measures for unlawful crossings, was working, Mr. Mayorkas said in television interviews on Sunday.

Most migrants now must prove that they were first denied asylum in a country they passed through en route to the United States. And they could face criminal prosecution, prolonged detention and a five-year ban from re-entering.

But the lull could be the calm before another storm.

Economic, political and environmental forces driving people to the United States are unlikely to subside in the coming months, and the new U.S. policies may not all survive. Minutes after the administration's new policies took effect last week, immigrant advocacy groups sued to block a key provision, designed to curb asylum seekers from coming to the border, likening it to a transit ban that courts struck down when Donald J. Trump was president. And hours before Title 42 expired, a federal judge in Florida issued an order barring the release of migrants from U.S. custody without hearing dates.

Beyond U.S. borders, political instability and violence will continue to trigger emigration and a search for safe, stable countries.

Much of the developing world, from Africa and Asia to South America and the Caribbean, is still reeling from economic ruin wrought by Covid-19 and exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, which has reduced grain supplies and caused crippling inflation for food staples.

Fertility rates in many developing countries remain relatively high, contributing to resource scarcity, wealth disparities and entrenched poverty that spawn conflict and corruption.

Everyone is looking at the air frontier or the border, but the root of the problem lies in push factors inside countries of origin that are going to persist," said Justin Gest, a political scientist at George Mason University who studies immigration and demographic change.

"Short-term tools, they generate neighbourhood flows," he said.

In recent years, there has been a growing exodus from troubled countries in the Western Hemisphere, such as Venezuela, Cuba and Haiti. Under Europe, where multiple countries are potential destinations for migrants, in the Western Hemisphere, almost all roads ultimately lead to one country: the United States.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JUSTIN HAMEL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Sorting through donated clothes outside Sacred Heart Church. The magnet drawing people to the United States is the labor market.

So she trekked through the treacherous Darien Gap, a jungle that straddles Colombia and Panama, with her son, daughter-in-law and grandchild.

"We are the first generation of our family to come to the United States. We have no one to wait on here," said Ms. Mejias, sitting on the bottom bunk in a shelter in El Paso.

The Mejias family managed to use the government app to book an interview at a port of entry and crossed the border before Title 42 was lifted. Among the frustrated migrants amassed in Mexico, however, patience is fraying and to wear thin. Historically, there is no conclusive evidence that ever-aggressive enforcement are more punitive sanctions deter human migration.

El Paso, one of the most visited border cities in recent months, recorded a sharp drop in migrant arrests, to just 859 on Saturday, according to internal data shared with The New York Times, compared with 2,331 on March. But that masks potential changes ahead.

U.S. intelligence estimates that 60,000 to 65,000 migrants were on the Mexican side of the border, according to Raul Ortiz, the Border Patrol chief. Mexico's president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, said that smuggling networks were spreading misinformation that the border would be open once Title 42 expired.

A renewed surge could deepen both the humanitarian crisis and political headaches for the Biden administration. In recent weeks, shelter operators and politicians in border towns have reported a spike in hospitalizations for injuries sustained by migrants who climbed the border wall in desperate attempt to make it across.

A new large influx would tax border processing centers. To ease overcrowding, migrants have at times been released from custody without a date to report to immigration court for hearings.

That practice is coming under fire from Republicans as they gear up to make immigration a central issue in their 2024 election campaigns.

If legal challenges lead border facilities to become dangerously overcrowded, the optics would hurt the administration, said Tom Anderson, executive director of the National Foundation for American Policy, a think tank. "The American public will blame the president."

The pressures resulting in an influx of asylum seekers are unlikely to subside.

And, beyond the factors pushing migrants out of their home countries, the magnet drawing people to the United States is the labor market. Unemployment stands at its lowest level in decades, yet there are millions of unfilled jobs.

"There has never been a better moment for migrants to seek work in the U.S.," said Wayne Cornelius, an immigration scholar and emeritus professor at the University of California, San Diego.

"Even most of those seeking asylum are motivated powerfully by the prospect of higher-wage employment, and many have contacts who can steer them quickly to job vacancies," he said.

The Biden administration policy aims to dissuade migrants from setting out on the journey to the border.

So while the Trump-era emergency public health policy known as Title 42 is no longer in effect, other, new restrictions are. Migrants are barred from requesting asylum at the border unless they prove that a country they transited through denied them protection. Exceptions will be made only under extraordinary circumstances, such as medical conditions or for asylum seekers who used a mobile app to secure an appointment at an official port of entry. So far, the number of appointments has been extremely limited.

The Biden administration has announced it will open regional centers, starting in Colombia and Guatemala, where migrants can apply for refugee status and undergo initial eligibility screening for legal entry into the United States. Canada and Spain have agreed to accept some of these asylum seekers.

Mr. Gest, the political scientist said the United States wants to spread the responsibility for absorbing so many migrants, "but it's not clear that is going to work."

Since early this year, Washington has been encouraging Venezuelans, Cubans, Nicaraguans and Haitians to apply for a "humanitarian parole" program that allows them to fly directly to the United States and stay for two years, if they have a financial sponsor.

But many migrants hail from countries not covered by the program, such as Colombia, Ecuador and Honduras. And even for the four targeted countries, the number of people trying to gain entry surpasses the 30,000 monthly slots, and many people do not qualify because they lack connections in the United States.

Shaoyuri Mejias, 48, of Venezuela, studied the program but realized she could not participate.

North Carolina Faces Fight Over Veto on Abortion Bill

From Page A1

Override votes in the two chambers, each of which require a three-fifths vote of those present to succeed, have not yet been scheduled. But state lawmakers and lobbyists said over the weekend that they expected to see a vote as early as this week.

Republicans say the bill represents a compromise and is less restrictive than other bans that outlaw the procedure at conception or before most women even realize they are pregnant. Democrats say the bill is a disaster for women's health, and erects all kinds of financial and logistical obstacles that would cut off abortion access for many women. They complained that Republicans rammed the initial votes through their chambers in two marathon sessions over 48 hours.

A Meredith poll in February showed that 57 percent of respondents supported the state's current 20-week ban, or would expand it. About 33 percent wanted the procedure restricted to 15 weeks or less.

Lauren Horsch, deputy chief of staff to Phil Berger, the Senate Republican leader, called the bill "a mainstream approach to limiting elective abortions in the second and third trimesters, supporting women and children, and ensuring that women have options available to them." In a statement, Mr. Berger said he looked forward to "promptly overriding" the veto.

Mallory Finch, who came to Raleigh on Saturday to protest the governor's veto, said, "North Carolina is a state for life, and there are people who want the act to go through."

Democratic officials in districts across the state are trying to mobilize voters to oppose the bill. In New Hanover County, where Wilmington is located, party leaders organized a caller chain that contacted Republicans, including Ted *Davis Jr.*, a Republican House member considered a swing vote, and Michael V. Lee, a Wilmington Republican state senator, every three minutes one day last week. Mr. Cooper believes both men might be movable on the issue.

Mr. Lee, however, said a 12-week restriction is in line with his thinking on abortion. In a text message, he said that Mr. Cooper has mischaracterized his position on the issue.

"I believe a woman should have the right to choose an abortion in the first trimester (3 months) with exceptions," Mr. Lee wrote.

Mr. Davis has said in the past that he supported North Carolina's current law. Mr. Cooper is also targeting the district of a fourth Republican, John Bradford, a House member who said shortly before his election last year that he had "no intention" of rolling back the 20-week law. Mr. Bradford did not respond to a request for comment.

The defection of Ms. Cotham, a former Charlotte-area educator who had served in the state legislature and unsuccessfully ran for Congress before returning to the North Carolina General Assembly this year, stunned Democrats.

In announcing her decision, she said she had been bullied by the party and was no longer aligned with them on some issues, including school choice.

"The modern-day Democratic Party has become unrecognizable to me and to so many others throughout this state and this country," she said when she announced. "They have pushed me out."

Ms. Cotham has historically been an outspoken supporter of abortion rights. When she was a Democrat, she accused Republicans of playing doctor. She also spoke publicly about her own harrowing experience with a lost pregnancy that required medical intervention. "This decision was up to me, my husband, my doctor and my God. It was not up to any of you in this chamber," Ms. Cotham said in 2015. Still, she voted in favor of the 12-week ban after she switched parties.

KATE MUNSEY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Ms. Cotham did not respond to a request for comment.

On Thursday at the Modish Nail Spa in Mint Hill — the Charlotte suburb where Ms. Cotham lives — May Lopez said she was upset by the new abortion restriction.

"I feel terrible about it, because I think they're just stripping the rights away from women. And I remember. I grew up in the days where my girlfriend died because of the hanger abortion and all that kind of stuff," said Ms. Lopez, who votes largely for Democrats.

Frank McCullough, a Charlotte pastor, and his wife, Barbara McCullough, a retired schoolteacher, both voted for Ms. Cotham when she ran as a Democrat last year. Both said they felt betrayed by her decisions to switch parties and help Republicans pass more restrictions on abortion.

"I don't believe in abortion, but I believe in the rights of a lady to make that choice between her and God," Mr. McCullough said. "We voted for you and here you go turning your back on us."

People who live in Ms. Cotham's district said that while it leans Democratic, it also features a healthy presence of conservatives who back abortion restrictions.

On Wednesday afternoon in Wilmington, part of Mr. Davis's district, swimmers at the Y.W.C.A. aquatic center were divided.

"I'm a Christian, and I believe that life begins at conception, and I'm against abortion altogether," said Joyce Woodard, a retiree.

Emma Evans, a college student who was watching a swim lesson of the 4-year-old she was babysitting, said she was baffled by the Roy Cooper, the Democratic governor of North Carolina, vetoed on Saturday a bill to ban abortion at 12 weeks. Now he aims to block an override

passage of the abortion ban.

"I don't know much about it at all, but I do know I'm for abortion rights, she said. "A bunch of men are just making rules for these women's bodies? It makes no sense to me."

In an interview on Friday, Mr. Cooper appeared troubled by the political state of play. During more than six years in office, he had successfully vetoed more than 50 bills. The November midterms, which left Republicans just one vote shy of a supermajority in North Carolina, had threatened his control over the legislative process, which can be upended by a single lawmaker's absence. Mr. Cotham's party exodus has much deprived him of any remaining comfort.

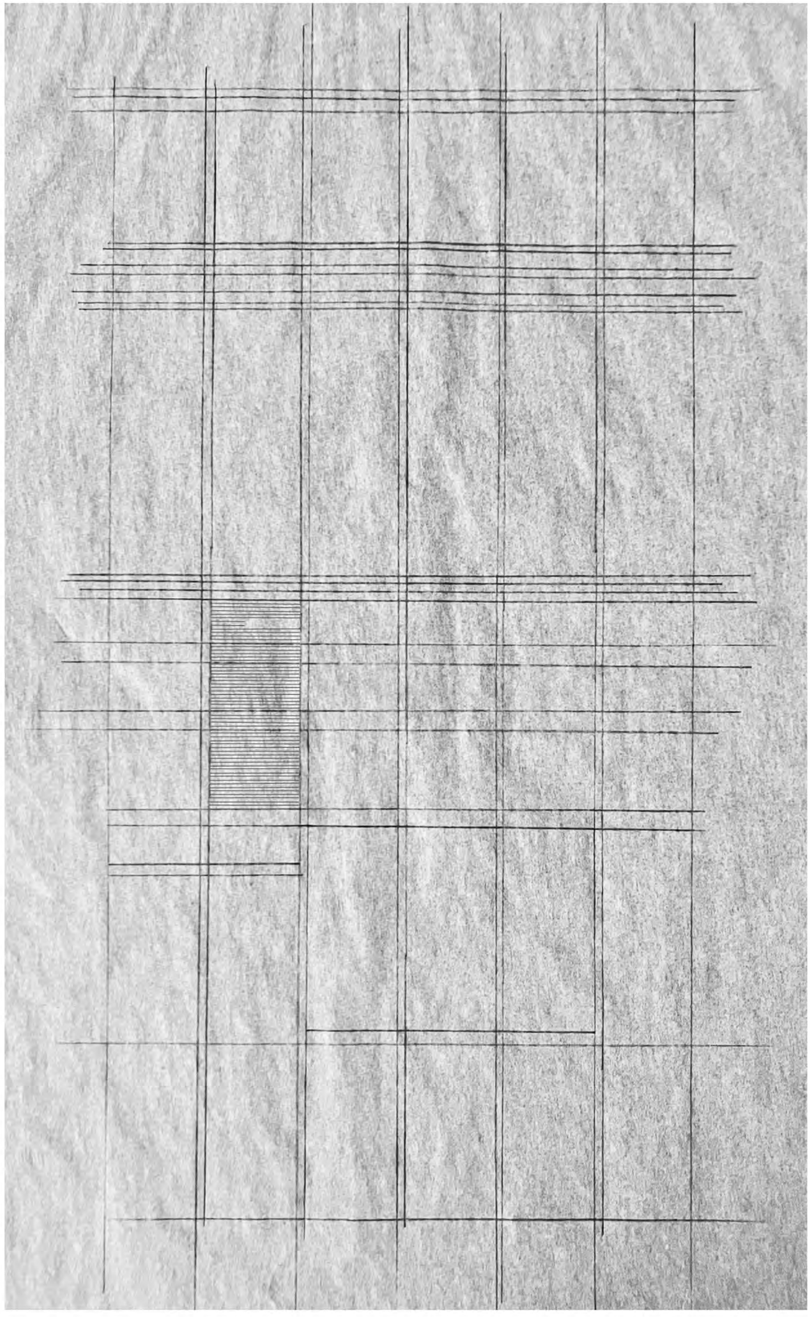
"I knew things were precarious," he said. "But then when Representative Cotham switched and made it a supermajority for one vote in each chamber, you know that it was going to be a much tougher fight."

"I'm worried that women will die," he said.

Motivating voters is no easy task: A number of people at the past week said they were only dimly aware of the fight, or if they felt strongly for or against abortion access.

Nick Decker was waiting for friends Thursday at the Cape Fear Pig, a barbecue joint in Mr. Bradford's district. He said he was aware the governor had been in town that week "to try to sway some state legislators."

He said he was not aware of the position of his Republican representative, Mr. Bradford, but he added, "I'm very pro-choice."



Slava Zaitsev, 85, Dies; A Soviet-Era Couturier Who Dressed the Elite

By PENELOPE GREEN

Slava Zaitsev, an effervescent and enduring Soviet-era fashion designer, once called the "red Dior" by the Western press, whose over-the-top theatrical evening and personal style made him a pop culture figure at home and abroad in the middle to late 1980s, died on March 30 in Moscow. He was 85.

His longtime friend Tatiana Korolko, a Russian-born model and journalist, said his death, in a hospital, was caused by internal bleeding that resulted from an ulcer.

Mr. Zaitsev died just two days before Valentin Yudashkin, a good friend who was also known for his sumptuous creations, and who found greater success in the West than he did, died of cancer at 70.

Mr. Zaitsev gave color, sparkle and opulence to a generation raised in drab Soviet gray, the latest form of the product he by combining Western bling with much more flamboyant Russian folk costumes and nostalgic references to Pasternak and Tolstoy. He was the first designer in pre-perestroika days to be allowed to put his name on his work, which he did in 1982.

He would go on to design for pop stars, politicians, ballerinas and Olympic athletes. He designed uniforms for Aeroflot, the Russian airline, and for Moscow's traffic police, whom he dressed in crisp navy blue with light-reflecting stripes.

He loved pomp and spectacle — for a time in the 1980s his fashion business was known as the Theater of Fashion — and he oversaw sold-out weekly shows like a circus maestro, dancing down the runway dressed in bright silks and waving his hands in the air.

"Don't be afraid to look plump," he told the audience at one show, The New York Times reported in 1986. "Russia has always been associated with plump women who embody kindheartedness, hospitality and good food."

For most Russians during the Gorbachev years, fashion would remain a spectator sport. In 1984, when the average monthly wage was about 180 rubles, a Zaitsev blouse cost 300 rubles, or $400 (about $1,100 in today's dollars). But admittance to Theater of Fashion shows, which were open to the public, was just a few rubles.

Still, nothing seemed like overkill after decades of hardship, said Karina Dobrotvorskaya, a former president of Condé Nast Russia, which suspended operations there in March 2022. And, she said, because for much of his life Mr. Zaitsev was isolated from the West, his flamboyant clothes were not exactly practical.

When he showed his work at the Waldorf Astoria in 1988, during his first visit to New York, he learned that his billowing wool skirts and coats were out of sync with American taste and behaviors: too warm for the climate and unbelievably ominous for a modern working woman who was dashing in and out of subways and taxis.

"The Soviet Union's first fashion show flopped," Vogue declared. "Nice thought for defense, the clothes didn't do much for women."

Yet the stylish and urbane Raisa Gorbachev, the wife of the Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev and perhaps the most effective ambassador for his reforms, wore Mr. Zaitsev's more restrained outfits to great effect as she toured Russia and abroad in the middle to late 1980s. And she was not the only politician to turn to Mr. Zaitsev.

In 1996, when the ultranationalist firebrand Vladimir V. Zhirinovsky waged a failed campaign for the presidency, he dressed exclusively in splashy custom-made Zaitsev suits that seemed to fit his bombast, favoring in particular a crimson tunic with gold buttons (the designer was reported to have voted for the incumbent, Boris Yeltsin). And in 2003, when Lyudmila Putin, then the wife of President Vladimir V. Putin, met Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace, she sported a wide-brimmed Zaitsev hat.

"It's not that he was the greatest designer," said Alessandra Stanley, co-editor of the online weekly magazine Air Mail and a former foreign correspondent for The New York Times who was based in Moscow from 1994 to 1998. "It's the fact that he could do it at all, the fact that Russians could have their own name designer. He was like the Bolshoi, something they could look to with pride and affection even if it was a little out of date."

In 1994, Ms. Stanley, writing in The Times about Russia's search for a coherent national identity in the post-Gorbachev era, described the nostalgic vision Mr. Zaitsev presented in a showing of his winter collection that year. Models were dressed like Tolstoy heroines, in ringlets, bonnets and billowing coats, and they pirouetted down the runway to music by Tchaikovsky.

"Most of us never knew such a culture existed," Mr. Zaitsev told Ms. Stanley. "We were only shown movies about the construction of channels and the conquest of Siberia."

His show, he added, was like "a dream, something that reassures Russia that a time will come when we can return to something we had in the past, but in a new version."

Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Zaitsev was born on March 2, 1938, in Ivanovo, a gritty city of textile mills northeast of Moscow. His mother, Maria Ivanovna Kokurina, was a laundress and house cleaner, and his father, Mikhail Yakovlevich Zaitsev, was an entertainer and a poet before he was drafted into the Soviet Army during World War II.

Upon his return, Mikhail Zaitsev was sent to one of the many camps set up by Stalin for "traitors to the Motherland, spies and terrorists," as prisoners of war were described, and as the son of a "traitor to the Motherland," Slava was not permitted to attend the better schools and universities. He attended a local technical school and graduated from Moscow State Textile University in 1962.

His first work was designing uniforms for laborers, but he was soon branching out. A collection of minidresses printed with patterns drawn from traditional folk costumes earned him a rebuke from the authorities but excited a delegation of visiting fashion designers, including Pierre Cardin. It was a risky move, those minis, a salvo against the official policy at the time, which declared that "an imitation of Western fashions, harmless at first sight, may lead to a real spiritual bankruptcy and moral degradation."

When in the mid-1960s a Paris newspaper called Mr. Zaitsev "the Red Dior," the authorities were once again not amused. They banned him from traveling to the West for two decades, declaring that "we do not have one Dior in this fashion house; we have 60."

Still, he prevailed, and in 1982 he was given permission to affix his name to his work, a first for a Russian designer. Yet for years, shortages of textiles and dyes — as well as shoulder pads, lining and buttons — often curtailed his more fanciful visions, as did a garment industry designed for mass production. And for years, he fit his work on a dressmaker's dummy dating from World War II.

For his first show under his own name, he recalled in a BBC radio interview in 2018, he designed a women's collection made from men's underpants. It was all he could find, he said, and he had them dyed in bright colors by the workshops of the Bolshoi.

"So the models went out wearing nothing but underwear, but no one even noticed that," he said. "The collection was beautiful, full of color. My models were dancing. It was great."

Mr. Zaitsev is survived by his son, Yegor, and two granddaughters. His marriage to Marina Goteeman ended in divorce.

After Mr. Zaitsev's death, President Putin issued a statement of condolence to the designer's friends and family that was posted on the Kremlin's website, according to Tass, the Russian news agency. The statement credited Mr. Zaitsev with turning the domestic fashion industry "into fine art."

"Through his unique and original works," Mr. Putin said, "Vyacheslav Zaitsev created a festive atmosphere, bringing joy and the gift of beauty to the people."

In an interview, Ms. Korolko said that the festivity of Mr. Zaitsev's designs would especially be missed amid the continuing war between Russia and Ukraine. "With his passing," she said, "it seems the only form of fashion that will remain in Russia for quite some time is military uniforms."

PAVEL LISITSYN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Slava Zaitsev, above, a fashion designer, during Fashion Week in 2018 in Moscow. He was as theatrical as his creations, at left, which mixed nostalgic references to Tolstoy with opulent details.

PAVEL LISITSYN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Designs that blended Western bling with traditional attire.

ANIS MAKSOUD/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

DAN BURSTEIN/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Raisa Gorbachev, second from left, wore one of Mr. Zaitsev's outfits when she and Mikhail S. Gorbachev met the Reagans. Lyudmila Putin, with her husband, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, wore a Zaitsev hat to meet Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip.

Pema Tseden, 53, Tibetan Author and Filmmaker Who Eluded Chinese Censors

By TIFFANY MAY

Pema Tseden, a filmmaker and author who presented an honest look at contemporary Tibetan life despite intense scrutiny from Chinese censors, died on May 8 in Tibet. He was 53.

His death was announced in a statement by the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, where he was a professor. The statement did not specify a cause or say where he died.

Tibet and its people have often been misrepresented with clichés. For the West, it was utopia, a fantasy based on the depiction of Shangri-La in the British author James Hilton's 1933 novel, "Lost Horizon." For the Communist Party of China, Tibetans were serfs or barbarians in need of rescue and rehabilitation, with propaganda films portraying Han cadres as liberators.

Pema Tseden (pronounced Wa-ma TSAY-den in his native dialect), who like most Tibetans had no family name and went instead by his two given names, said that as a child, he had longed for accurate representations of his home, people and culture that existing Hollywood and Chinese films didn't provide.

"Whether it was the clothes, the customs, the manners, every element, even the smallest, was inaccurate," he said in a 2019 interview. "Because of that, at the time, I thought that later on, if someone made films with even a little knowledge of the language of my people, the culture, the traditions of my people, it would be completely different."

In his films, Pema Tseden rarely depicted Tibet's Chinese population, which swelled after the Red Army seized Tibet in 1951. To elude Chinese censors, he eschewed references to the Dalai Lama, who has been seen in China as supporting Tibetan independence. This allowed him to avoid overtly political critiques while still tackling broader themes, like the loss of traditions and identity in the face of modernization.

He was the first Tibetan filmmaker working in China to shoot a feature film entirely in the Tibetan language. He was also the first Tibetan director to graduate from the prestigious Beijing Film Academy, which cultivated the country's leading directors. But like all artists in China exploring ethnic minorities and religion, he was subject to additional vetting from state censors and required to submit scripts in Chinese for review.

"His challenge, of course, was to make films that would reflect a Tibetan sense of identity, a Tibetan cultural sensibility, while not upsetting the Chinese authorities," Tenzing Sonam, a Tibetan filmmaker and writer living in Dharamshala, India, said by phone. "Pema Tseden navigated that fine line incredibly well."

Films that depicted everyday experiences, devoid of stereotypes.

In "The Silent Holy Stones" (2005), he depicted everyday Tibetan experiences: monks becoming engrossed with television, villagers rehearsing for a New Year's opera performance. And in "Old Dog" (2011), images of barbed-wire fences stretching across the Tibetan grasslands examined the power of the state and the complexities of privatizing ancestral lands.

His movies were "not just about Tibet," Tsering Shakya, a Tibetan historian and scholar at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, said in an interview. "This is about China and people who are left behind by China's economic miracle."

As Pema Tseden's clout grew, China's film industry and its auditors began to accept Tibetan as a language used on the big screen. And by combining Tibetan traditions of oral storytelling and song with modern filmmaking formats, his movies gave rise to an entirely new genre that some called the Tibetan New Wave.

"The stories his films contained — which are always meticulously framed and exquisitely modulated — speak powerful truths in the gentlest of voices," said Shelly Kraicer, a Chinese cinema curator and researcher who wrote subtitles for some of Pema Tseden's work. "He's a key world filmmaker."

He sought to build a tight-knit network of Tibetan filmmakers, including Sonthar Gyal, Dukar Tserang, Lhapal Gyal and Pema Tseden's son, Jigme Trinley, who went on to direct their own films. Drivers, assistants and other members of the crew sometimes juggled more than one role, appearing as extras and coaching actors in regional dialects.

"He created from scratch an embryonic Tibetan film circle, film industry," Françoise Robin, a professor of Tibetan language and literature at the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations in Paris who knew Pema Tseden for over two decades, said by phone. "He's very faithful in friendship. Some people worked with him for 10 years."

Pema Tseden was born on Dec. 3, 1969, in Qinghai Province, part of a northeastern region of Tibet traditionally known as Amdo. His parents were farmers and herders.

He was raised by his grandfather, who asked him to copy out Buddhist scriptures by hand after school, a practice that instilled in him an early appreciation for Tibetan language and culture. He worked as a teacher for four years before studying Tibetan literature and translation at the Northwest University for Nationalities in Lanzhou. He then worked for several years as a civil servant in his home province.

Starting in 1991, he published short stories set in Tibet, written in both Tibetan and Chinese, about individuals confronted with sweeping changes. They underscored the importance of forging a connection with nature and animals, showing "the complexity of life in the simplest language," said Jessica Yeung, a professor at Hong Kong Baptist University who knew Pema Tseden for a decade and translated his work. He later adapted some of his stories into films.

After attending the Beijing Film Academy in the early 2000s, he released "The Silent Holy Stones" to critical acclaim, as well as several other films. A decade later, "Tharlo" (2015), about the journey of a shepherd who must travel outside his isolated village to register for a government ID, premiered at the Venice Film Festival. It won numerous awards, including a Golden Horse Award for best adapted screenplay in Taiwan. Among Tibetans, it also became a seminal work for aspiring filmmakers within a few years.

"A Tibetan film should show Tibetan life," Pema Tseden said in an undated interview that was recently released by Xangha TV, a Tibetan-language broadcaster. "In my case, from my first film onward, I wanted my movies to absolutely include characters who are Tibetan, who would all speak Tibetan, and whose behavior and way of thinking were Tibetan. This is what makes Tibetan films different."

Pema Tseden's subsequent films benefited from his higher profile. "Jinpa" (2018), about a truck driver who runs over a sheep and then picks up a hitchhiker, was produced by the Hong Kong auteur Wong Kar-wai's Jet Tone Films and premiered at the Venice Film Festival, where it won the Orizzonti Award for best screenplay. "Balloon" (2019), about a family coping with an unexpected pregnancy amid China's family planning laws, also premiered in Venice. A forthcoming film, "Snow Leopard," about the tense relationship between humans and predatory animals, is currently in postproduction. At his death, he was working on another film.

Information on survivors in addition to his son was not immediately available.

GILLES SABRIE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Pema Tseden tackled broad themes, like the loss of Tibetan traditions and identity, in his films.

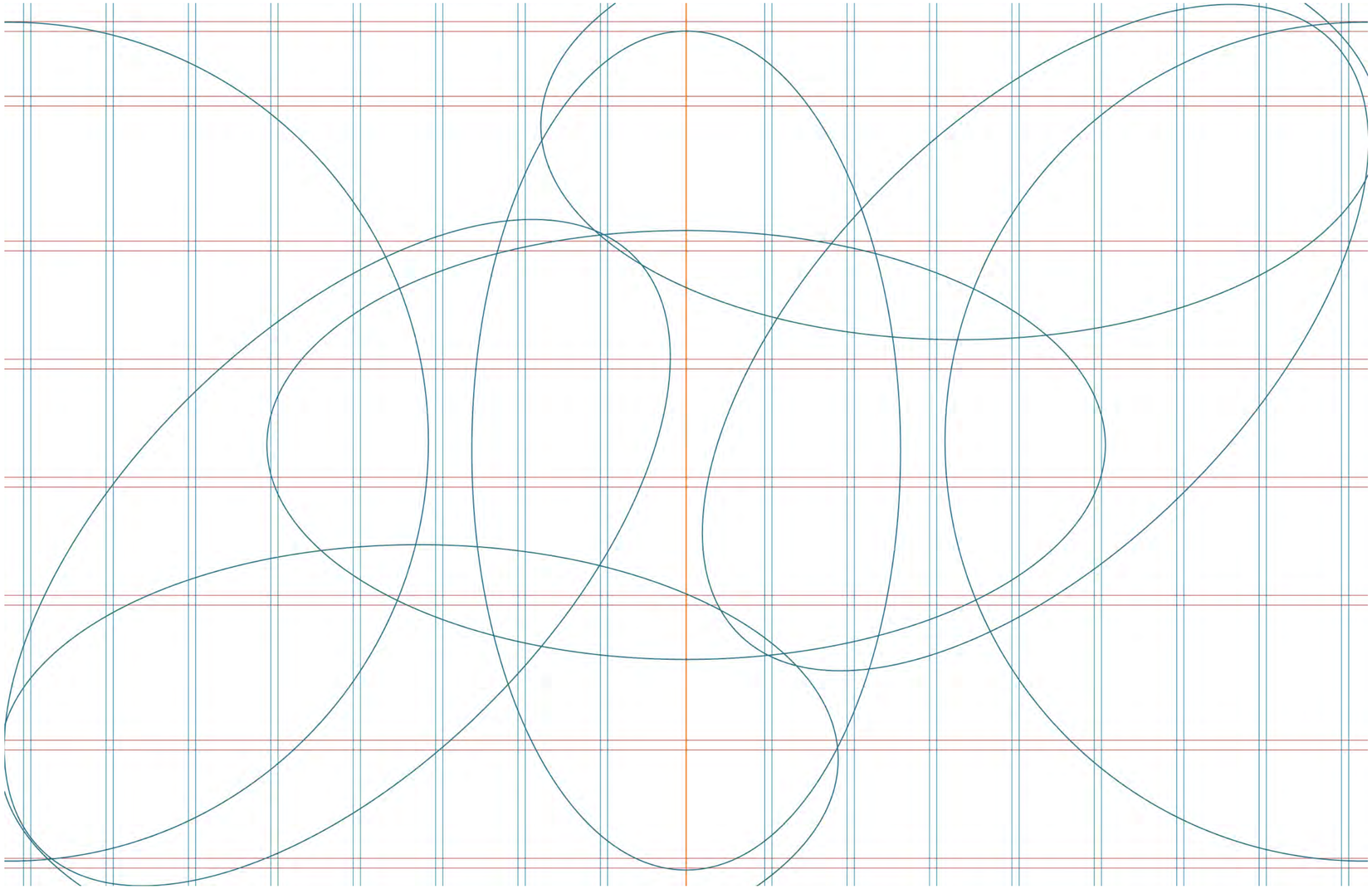
Li You contributed research.

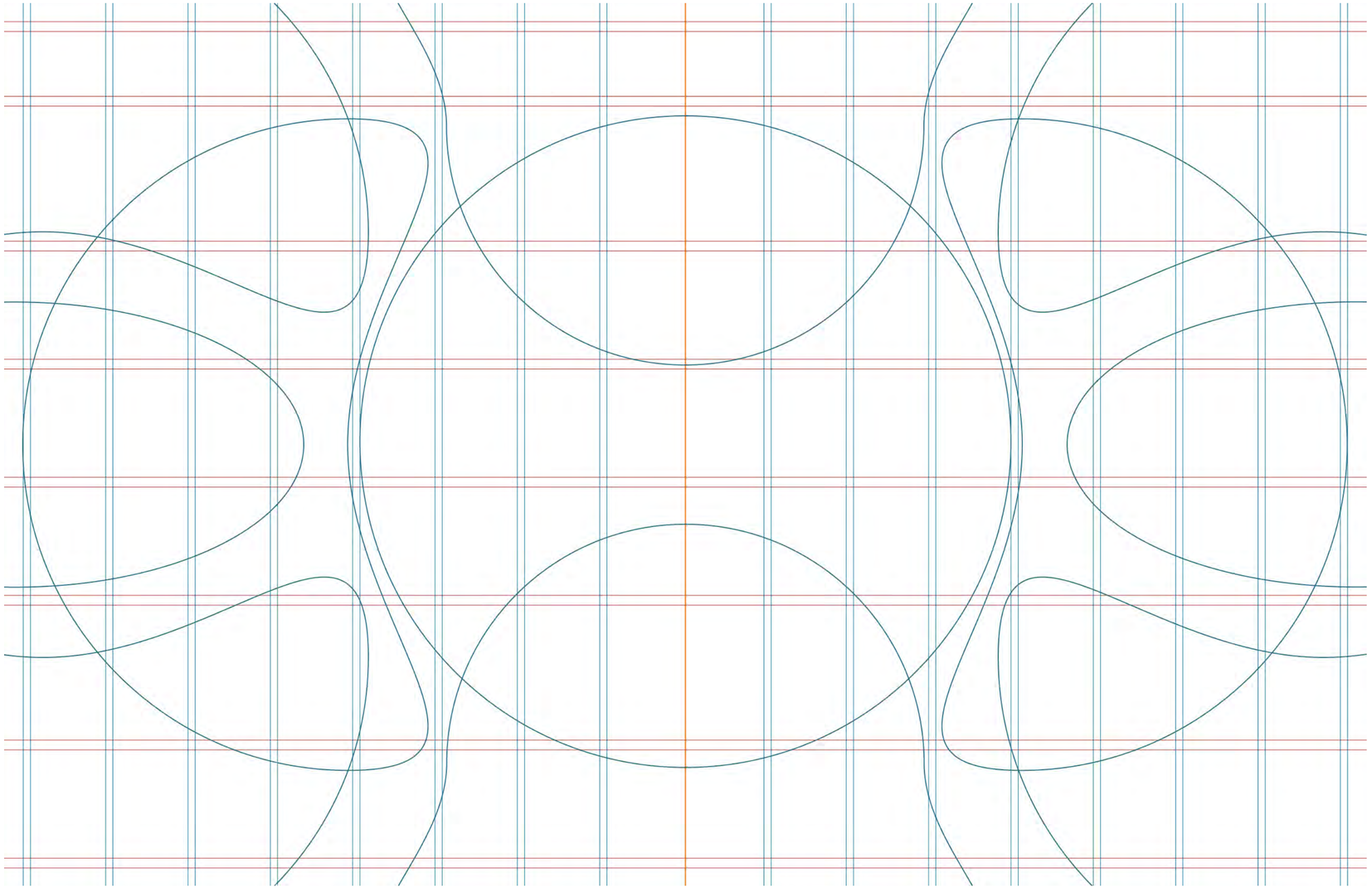
More Obituaries appear on Page B7.

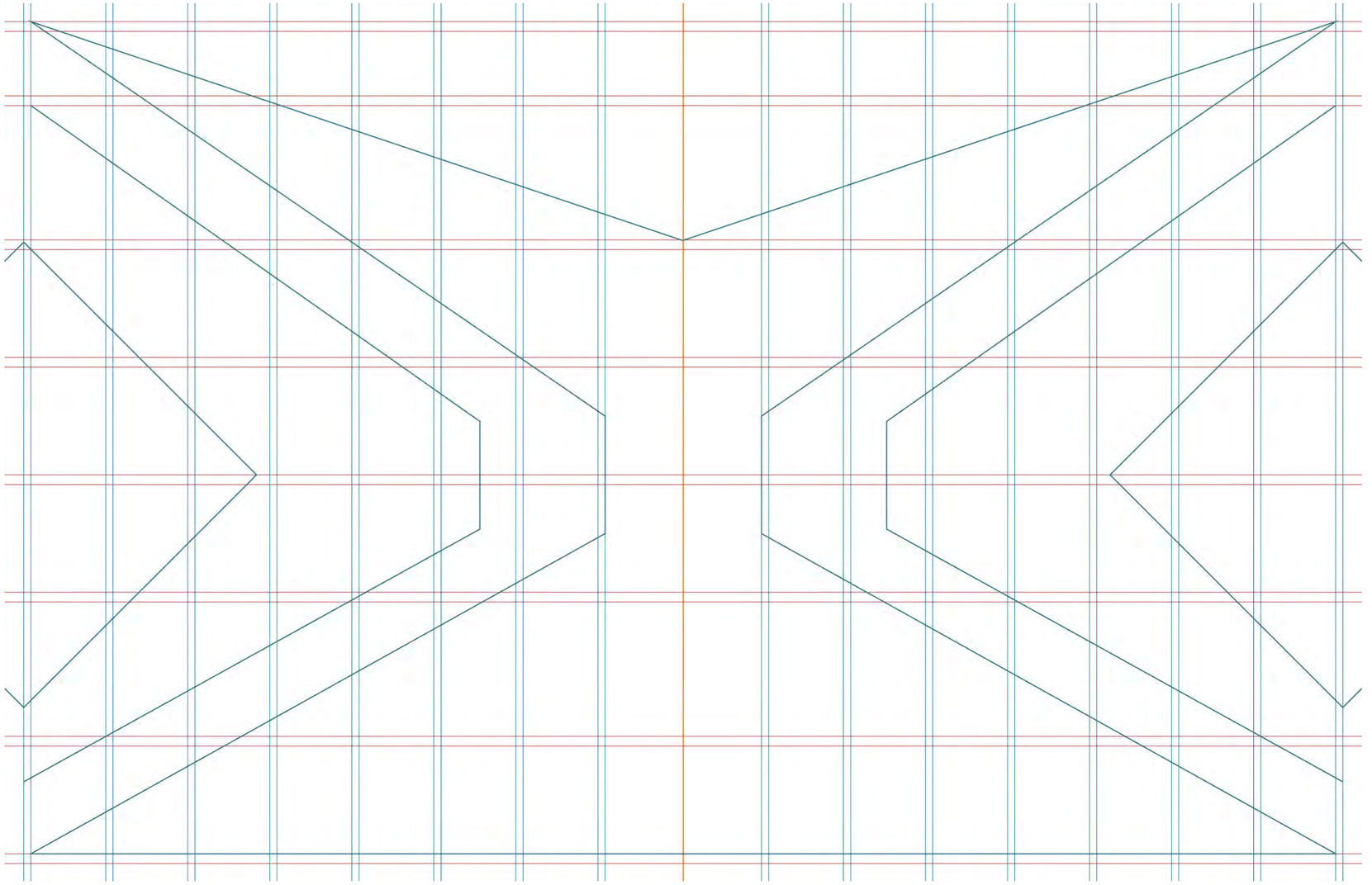
Project 7:

Newspaper

Three grids







2 Experimental Variation

WHAT MAKES THE SIMPSONS

Since December 1989

They're arguably the most famous family in television, and have been on our screens for more than three decades – but when you think about it, it's quite weird that Matt Groening decided to make the Simpsons yellow.
Well, it turns out there was an understandable thought process behind the choice to make the Simpsons yellow – and it may have given the show its cult status.
Groening revealed in an interview back in 2007 that an animator came up with the idea of yellow. He said that he wanted his cartoon to be eye-catching. When someone is flipping through channels, he wanted the bright yellow color of theSimpsons to catch the eye and make them go back to watch it. And so, the iconic yellow Simpsons family was created.
"An animator came up with the Simpsons' yellow and as soon as she showed it to me I said, 'This is the answer! When you're flipping through channels with your remote control, and a flash of yellow goes by, you'll know you're watching The Simpsons," he told CBBC.
That wasn't the only reason behind the show's yellow hue.
In the book, show writer Mike Reiss shared a lot of the show's secrets and according to him, the decision to make the family yellow was also to do with hair lines.
Matt Groening immediately liked the idea of the Simpsons being yellow when he saw it (Getty)
He said: "Bart, Lisa and Maggie have no hairlines — there's no line that separates their skin from their hair points. So the animators chose yellow— it's kinda skin, kinda hair."
Furthermore, there seems to be some scientific logic
and benefit behind the colour choice.
Esquire reports that the color yellow has a unique psychological effect on the human brain, and represents optimism and joy.
It's also the most visible color to the human eye because of the way our eyes process light, which is why taxis and warning signs are yellow.
So there you have it, a whole host of reasons why Springfield's most famous family have their recognisable skin color.
Along with being yellow and it being one of the best television shows of all time, The Simpsons has also become famous for another thing – predicting the future.
Whether it's Donald Trump's presidency, the Super Bowl lineup or last summer's fuel shortages, it's incredible how many times the show has foreseen what's in store for humanity.
What makes The Simpsons fun JOHN SWARTZWELDER, THE prolific, admired and reclusive comedy writer best known for his work on The Simpsons, talked about his life and career in his first major interview, published in the Groening and producer/writer Sam Simon. He praised executive producer James Brooks for securing a deal with Fox that prevented the network from meddling too much in the show and allowing the writers to run wild. He also spoke about how animation allowed The Simpsons to be more subversive than other programs on TV at the time, citing the excessively violent "Itchy and Scratchy" segments. "We could show horrendous things to the children at home, as long as we portrayed them being shown to the Simpsons' children first," Swartzwelder said. Elsewhere, Swartzwelder spoke about how he always enjoyed writing Mr. Burns episodes and said he thought The Simpsons' third season was its best individual season. He also confirmed showrunner Mike Reiss' claim that Swartzwelder wrote Homer as if he were a big dog: "Yes, he is a big talking dog. One moment he's the smartest man in the world, because he's just lost his job, or dropped his sandwich, or accidentally killed his family. Then, the next moment, he's the happiest man in the world, because he's just found a penny — maybe under one of his dead family members. He's not — actually a dog, of course — he's smarter than that. But if you write him as a dog you'll never get it wrong."
Swartzwelder spoke a bit about his reclusiveness as well asfacts there are few pictures of him, he was drawn into an episode as a David Crosby-looking figure in a psychiatric hospital in "Hurricane Neddy"). He confirmed that he got permission to work from home after Season Four, not because — as long rumored — he wanted to be able to smoke, but for a far more simple reason: "I didn't want to go in to work every day anymore. Getting old, I guess."
Swartzwelder offered some insight into his writing process as well, saying he would often rush through a first draft, pack it with filler jokes and pattern dialogue, but when I go back and rewrite, I'm more careful. "I'm not writing a novel, I'm writing a script. The hard part is done. It's like a crappy little elf has snuck into my office and badly done all my work for me, and then left with a tip of his crappy hat. All I have to do from that point on is fix it. So I've taken a very hard job, writing, and turned it into an easy one, rewriting, overnight. I advise all writers to do their scripts and other writing this way. And be sure to send me a small royalty every time you do it."
The making of Simpsons
Born in 1954 in Portland, Oregon, The Simpsons creator Matt Groening had, in many ways, an idyllic childhood. As described in

WHAT MAKES THE SIMPSONS

Since December 1989

They're arguably the most famous family in television, and have been on our screens for more than three decades – but when you think about it, it's quite weird that Matt Groening decided to make the Simpsons yellow.
Well, it turns out there was an understandable thought process behind the choice to make the Simpsons yellow – and it may have given the show its cult status.
Groening revealed in an interview back in 2007 that an animator came up with the idea of yellow. He said that he wanted his cartoon to be eye-catching. When someone is flipping through channels, he wanted the bright yellow color of theSimpsons to catch the eye and make them go back to watch it. And so, the iconic yellow Simpsons family was created.
"An animator came up with the Simpsons' yellow and as soon as she showed it to me I said, 'This is the answer! When you're flipping through channels with your remote control, and a flash of yellow goes by, you'll know you're watching The Simpsons," he told CBBC.
That wasn't the only reason behind the show's yellow hue.
In the book, show writer Mike Reiss shared a lot of the show's secrets and according to him, the decision to make the family yellow was also to do with hair lines.
Matt Groening immediately liked the idea of the Simpsons being yellow when he saw it (Getty)
He said: "Bart, Lisa and Maggie have no hairlines — there's no line that separates their skin from their hair points. So the animators chose yellow— it's kinda skin, kinda hair."
Furthermore, there seems to be some scientific logic and benefit behind the colour choice.
Esquire reports that the color yellow has a unique psychological effect on the human brain, and represents optimism and joy.
It's also the most visible color to the human eye because of the way our eyes process light, which is why taxis and warning signs are yellow.
So there you have it, a whole host of reasons why Springfield's most famous family have their recognisable skin color.
Along with being yellow and it being one of the best television shows of all time, The Simpsons has also become famous for another thing – predicting the future.
Whether it's Donald Trump's presidency, the Super Bowl lineup or last summer's fuel shortages, it's incredible how many times the show has foreseen what's in store for humanity.
What makes The Simpsons fun JOHN SWARTZWELDER, THE prolific, admired and reclusive comedy writer best known for his work on The Simpsons, talked about his life and career in his first major interview, published in The New Yorker on Sunday.
Swartzwelder worked on The Simpsons between 1989 and 2003, writing 59 episodes, far more than any other writer in the show's long history. His credits on the show include a number of classic episodes, and that's of personal favorites Swartzwelder gave in the interview serves as a solid primer: "Itchy & Scratchy & Marge," "Bart the Murderer," "Dog of Death," "Homer at the Bat," "Homie the Clown," "Bart Gets an Elephant" and "Homer's Enemy." Asked about the latter episode, in which Homer obliviously but assuredly drives an upstanding new colleague, Frank Grimes, insane, Swartzwelder joked, "Grimey was asking for it the whole episode. His didn't approve of our Homer. Was asking for it, and he got it."
Swartzwelder's jokes – succinct, simple and just the right amount of absurd — were so singular they spawned an honorific compliment: "Swartzweldian." When asked what he thought of the compliment, Swartzwelder seemed flattered enough, but said the term was "the most awkward-sounding word in the English sentence." The next moment, when asked to describe his sense of humor, he replied, "Swartzweldian."
Swartzwelder worked as a writer on Saturday Night Live for one season in the mid-Eighties, while he also spent time in advertising (he now writes and self-publishes comedic novels). But it was his work on a little-known comedy magazine, Army Man, that got him the interview with Simpsons creator Matt Groening and producer/writer Sam Simon. He praised executive producer James Brooks for securing a deal with Fox that prevented the network from meddling too much in the show and allowing the writers to run wild. He also spoke about how animation allowed The Simpsons to be more subversive than other programs on TV at the time, citing the excessively violent "Itchy and Scratchy" segments. "We could show horrendous things to the children at home, as long as we portrayed them being shown to the Simpsons' children first," Swartzwelder said. Elsewhere, Swartzwelder spoke about how he always enjoyed writing Mr. Burns episodes and said he thought The Simpsons' third season was its best individual season. He also confirmed showrunner Mike Reiss' claim that Swartzwelder wrote Homer as if he were a big dog: "Yes, he is a big talking dog. One moment he's the smartest man in the world, because he's just lost his job, or dropped his sandwich, or accidentally killed his family. Then, the next moment, he's the happiest man in the world, because he's just found a penny — maybe under one of his dead family members. He's not — actually a dog, of course — he's smarter than that. But if you write him as a dog you'll never get it wrong."
Swartzwelder spoke a bit about his reclusiveness as well asfacts there are few pictures of him, he was drawn into an episode as a David Crosby-looking figure in a psychiatric hospital in "Hurricane Neddy"). He confirmed that he got permission to work from home after Season Four, not because — as long rumored — he wanted to be able to smoke, but for a far more simple reason: "I didn't want to go in to work every day anymore. Getting old, I guess."
Swartzwelder offered some insight into his writing process as well, saying he would often rush through a first draft, pack it with filler jokes and pattern dialogue, but when I go back and rewrite, I'm more careful. "I'm not writing a novel, I'm writing a script. The hard part is done. It's like a crappy little elf has snuck into my office and badly done all my work for me, and then left with a tip of his crappy hat. All I have to do from that point on is fix it. So I've taken a very hard job, writing, and turned it into an easy one, rewriting, overnight. I advise all writers to do their scripts and other writing this way. And be sure to send me a small royalty every time you do it."
The making of Simpsons
Born in 1954 in Portland, Oregon, The Simpsons creator Matt Groening had, in many ways, an idyllic childhood. As described in

The Simpsons: An Uncensored, Unauthorized History, he grew up next to the old Portland Zoo, which, after reopening in a new location in 1959, became a wonderland for Groening and his friends with its abandoned animal enclosures.
He also enjoyed a happy home life, with his dad, Homer, mom, Margaret, and four siblings, including younger sisters Lisa and Maggie. It was Homer, a cartoonist and filmmaker, who showed his precocious son that a career of creative fulfillment was possible.
But the continuity of a suburban existence soon proved dull, even to a young Groening. Acting out in school, he recalled having to write "I must be quiet in class" 500 times on at least one occasion and having his doodles torn up by teachers.
As a third-grader, he entered a short-story contest set up, with the premise that a child walks into his attic, bumps his head and then knows what he wants to become when he grows up. In Groening's version, the boy dies from his head injury and returns as a ghost every Halloween, a morbid tale that surprisingly became the winning entry.
Groening delivered biting commentary as a school paper editor.
By high school, Groening had learned to channel his subversive leanings in a manner that engaged his classmates. He ran for student body president on the Teens for Decency ticket, with the tongue-in-cheek slogan, "If you're against decency, then what are you for?" Again, to his surprise, he won.
Groening went on to the liberal Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, where he bulked heads with the more extreme countercultural types that populated the campus. He gleefully zinged their sensibilities after becoming editor of the school paper, at one point instigating a petition that condemned his satirization of communal life, while also training his ire on mainstream targets like the Washington state legislature.
He also invited the off-the-wall submissions of campus cartoonists, finding himself inspired by the original works of fellow undergrad Lynda Barry.
His "Life in Hell" comic was inspired by his struggles in Los Angeles.
After graduating in 1977, Groening headed to Los Angeles with the idea of pursuing a writing career. He found some work along those lines, whipping up slogans for greeting cards, but ended up with a series of jobs that included chauffeur, dishwasher and record store clerk to make a living.
Groening's rough-and-tumble early days in Tinseltown provided endless fodder for a comic he titled Life in Hell, featuring the anthropomorphic rabbit Binky.
Along with mailing the comics to friends and family back in Portland, he attempted to sell his stapled-together books from his record store.
That effort saw his first non-self-published comic appear in a 1978 issue of Wet magazine. That year, he also began working for the alternative-weekly newspaper the L.A. Reader through an ever-shifting array of responsibilities that included reporter, distribution manager, punk-rock critic and assistant editor. He finally added staff cartoonist to his resume when Life in Hell first appeared in the paper in the spring of 1980.
The strip gained traction after a shift in tone, with Binky becoming less preachy and more of a victim of the cultural and social forces that browbeat dissidents into submission. With a developing cast of characters that included Binky's girlfriend Sheba, his one-eared son Bongo and the gay entrepreneurs Akbar and Jeff, and recurring components like "The 16 Types of Sisters" and "The 9 Secret Love Techniques That Could Possibly Turn Men Into Putty in Your Hands," the minimally drawn but meticulously written Life in Hell found its niche between the underground comics and mainstream fare.
His girlfriend built a business around his artwork.
Groening's career got a boost in the early 1980s when the L.A. Reader hired sales rep Deborah Caplan, who observed that the Life in Hell strips were "a major selling point" of the paper. After the two became romantically involved, Caplan began promoting her future husband's work, negotiating syndication arrangements with other publications and a book deal with Pantheon.
Meanwhile, Groening was up to his old tricks of rocking the boat, writing silly reviews of bands based on their publicity photos and even making up phony acts to cover. He was fired from the L.A. Reader in 1986, after writing a letter to the editor over a fellow writer's dismissal, but by then Life in Hell was already appearing in other alt-weeklies and providing extra income through merchandise sales.
Furthermore, the once-struggling artist was about to be presented with the business offer that would change his life forever.
Groening created "The Simpsons" for "The Tracey Ullman Show."
In 1987, producers of the soon-to-be-launched sketch comedy program The Tracey Ullman Show, headed by the legendary James L. Brooks, contacted Groening about developing short animated cartoons to accompany the show. Groening would go on to credit Brooks that characters with the deal. Groening quickly created a new cartoon family named after his own siblings and parents, albeit with a "Bart" in lieu of a character named after himself.
The early iteration of The Simpsons was a crude, Neanderthal version of the family that would become ubiquitous in pop culture; both Bart and Lisa were troublemakers, and Homer was a barely controlled cauldron of rage. But the short clips were a hit with fans, and producers began exploring a standalone series as Tracey Ullman foundered in the ratings.
Brooks selected his longtime colleague Sam Simon to help Groening develop the animated series, and The Simpsons would premiere as a half-hour series on Fox on December 17, 1989, when the first episode aired.
However, the show's collection of memorable supporting characters and winking, multilayered nods to popular culture, arguably owes more to Simon and the original stable of writers than to Groening.
Yet Groening's DNA is all over the show, from the characters named after the streets of his hometown (Flanders, Lovejoy, etc.), to his selection of Danny Elfman to composer the theme song, to his insistence on the cartoon adhering to the normal laws of physics despite the liberties taken with continuity.
Most importantly, The Simpsons retained this subversive undercurrent that has driven its creator since he was a bored grade school student. "If there's a message that runs through the show," he told The New York Times in 2001, well after he had become wealthy and influential beyond his wildest dreams, "it's that maybe the authorities don't have your best interests at heart."
Last year, the Simpsons
Last year, the team behind The Simpsons produced a video for the French luxury fashion house Balenciaga that debuted in October at Paris Fashion Week. (There's a sentence I never thought I'd write.)
It featured the show's characters walking a runway in Balenciaga designs, and was, depending on your worldview, what you might call a long commercial for the brand or a short episode of the show. David Silverman, a veteran Simpsons producer and animator who directed the video, called it "one of the most bizarre things I ever did." Owing to Balenciaga's artistic director and, like a lot of 40-somethings, a fan of The Simpsons since childhood, gave note after note, trying to strike the right balance between caricature and Kawsi presentation of his clothing. "Simpsons characters," Silverman says, are "quite different from human proportions, so in some respects we took great liberties. Cheating, we call it." It took a year's worth of work and in the end gave the people something they didn't know they needed: an officially licensed Simpsons collectible set who now garner $1,000 on eBay. It qualify for disability let he could work from home—posing in a red Balenciaga puffer jacket, a more recent iteration of which costs $2,850.
That the fashion industry now looks to The Simpsons for inspiration is old

He is A loving father, however he is often ruled by his impulse

"The kind of character who never use his brain"

The Simpsons: An Uncensored, Unauthorized History, he grew up next to the old Portland Zoo, which, after reopening in a new location in 1959, became a wonderland for Groening and his friends with its abandoned animal enclosures.
He also enjoyed a happy home life, with his dad, Homer, mom, Margaret, and four siblings, including younger sisters Lisa and Maggie. It was Homer, a cartoonist and filmmaker, who showed his precocious son that a career of creative fulfillment was possible.
But the continuity of a suburban existence soon proved dull, even to a young Groening. Acting out in school, he recalled having to write "I must be quiet in class" 500 times on at least one occasion and having his doodles torn up by teachers.
As a third-grader, he entered a short-story contest set up, with the premise that a child walks into his attic, bumps his head and then knows what he wants to become when he grows up. In Groening's version, the boy dies from his head injury and returns as a ghost every Halloween, a morbid tale that surprisingly became the winning entry.
Groening delivered biting commentary as a school paper editor.
By high school, Groening had learned to channel his subversive leanings in a manner that engaged his classmates. He ran for student body president on the Teens for Decency ticket, with the tongue-in-cheek slogan, "If you're against decency, then what are you for?" Again, to his surprise, he won.
Groening went on to the liberal Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, where he bulked heads with the more extreme countercultural types that populated the campus. He gleefully zinged their sensibilities after becoming editor of the school paper, at one point instigating a petition that condemned his satirization of communal life, while also training his ire on mainstream

forces that browbeat dissidents into submission. With a developing cast of characters that included Binky's girlfriend Sheba, his one-eared son Bongo and the gay entrepreneurs Akbar and Jeff, and recurring components like "The 16 Types of Sisters" and "The 9 Secret Love Techniques That Could Possibly Turn Men Into Putty in Your Hands," the minimally drawn but meticulously written Life in Hell found its niche between the underground comics and mainstream fare.
His girlfriend built a business around his artwork.
Groening's career got a boost in the early 1980s when the L.A. Reader hired sales rep Deborah Caplan, who observed that the Life in Hell strips were "a major selling point" of the paper. After the two became romantically involved, Caplan began promoting her future husband's work, negotiating syndication arrangements with other publications and a book deal with Pantheon.
Meanwhile, Groening was up to his old tricks of rocking the boat, writing silly reviews of bands based on their publicity photos and even making up phony acts to cover. He was fired from the L.A. Reader in 1986, after writing a letter to the editor over a fellow writer's dismissal, but by then Life in Hell was already appearing in other alt-weeklies and providing extra income through merchandise sales.
Furthermore, the once-struggling artist was about to be presented with the business offer that would change his life forever.
Groening created "The Simpsons" for "The Tracey Ullman Show."
In 1987, producers of the soon-to-be-launched sketch comedy program The Tracey Ullman Show, headed by the legendary James L. Brooks, contacted Groening about developing short animated cartoons to accompany the show. Groening would go on to credit Brooks that characters with the deal. Groening quickly created a new cartoon family named after his own siblings and parents, albeit with a "Bart" in lieu of a character named after himself.
The early iteration of The Simpsons was a crude, Neanderthal version of the family that would become ubiquitous in pop culture; both Bart and Lisa were troublemakers, and Homer was a barely controlled cauldron of rage. But the short clips were a hit with fans, and producers began exploring a standalone series as Tracey Ullman foundered in the ratings.
Brooks selected his longtime colleague Sam Simon to help Groening develop the animated series, and The Simpsons would premiere as a half-hour series on Fox on December 17, 1989, when the first episode aired.
However, the show's collection of memorable supporting characters and winking, multilayered nods to popular culture, arguably owes more to Simon and the original stable of writers than to Groening.
Yet Groening's DNA is all over the show, from the characters named after the streets of his hometown (Flanders, Lovejoy, etc.), to his selection of Danny Elfman to composer the theme song, to his insistence on the cartoon adhering to the normal laws of physics despite the liberties taken with continuity.
Most importantly, The Simpsons retained this subversive undercurrent that has driven its creator since he was a bored grade school student. "If there's a message that runs through the show," he told The New York Times in 2001, well after he had become wealthy and influential beyond his wildest dreams, "it's that maybe the authorities don't have your best interests at heart."
Last year, the Simpsons
Last year, the team behind The Simpsons produced a video for the French luxury fashion house Balenciaga that debuted in October at Paris Fashion Week. (There's a sentence I never thought I'd write.)
It featured the show's characters walking a runway in Balenciaga designs, and was, depending on your worldview, what you might call a long commercial for the brand or a short episode of the show. David Silverman, a veteran Simpsons producer and animator who directed the video, called it "one of the most bizarre things I ever did." Owing to Balenciaga's artistic director and, like a lot of 40-somethings, a fan of The Simpsons since childhood, gave note after note, trying to strike the right balance between caricature and Kawsi presentation of his clothing. "Simpsons characters," Silverman says, are "quite different from human proportions, so in some respects we took great liberties. Cheating, we call it." It took a year's worth of work and in the end gave the people something they didn't know they needed: an officially licensed Simpsons collectible set who now garner $1,000 on eBay. It qualify for disability let he could work from home—posing in a red Balenciaga puffer jacket, a more recent iteration of which costs $2,850.
That the fashion industry now looks to The Simpsons for inspiration is old

He is A loving father, however he is often ruled by his impulse

way.
And
let
us
send me
a small
royalty every
time you do it."

The making of
Simpsons

Born in 1954 in
Portland, Oregon, The
Simpsons creator Matt
Groening had, in many
ways, an idyllic childhood. As
described in The Simpsons: An
Uncensored, Unauthorized History,
he grew up next to the old Portland Zoo,
which, after reopening in a new location in
1959, became a wonderland for Groening and his
friends with its abandoned animal enclosures.
He also enjoyed a happy home life, with his dad, Homer, mom,
Margaret, and four siblings, including younger sisters Lisa and Maggie. It
was Homer, a cartoonist himself, who showed his precocious son
that a career of creative fulfillment was possible.
But the conformity of a suburban existence soon proved dull, even to a
young Groening. Acting out in school, he recalled having to write "I must
be quiet in class" 500 times on at least one occasion and having his
doodles torn up by teachers.
As a third-grader, he entered a short-story contest set up with the
premise that a child walks into his attic, bumps his head and then knows
what he wants to become when he grows up. In Groening's version, the
boy dies from his head injury and returns as a ghost every Halloween, a
morbid tale that surprisingly became the winning entry.
Groening delivered biting commentary as a school paper editor
days in Tinseltown provided
endless fodder for a comic he
titled Life in Hell, featuring
the anthropomorphic
rabbit Binky. Along with
mailing the comics to friends
and family back in Portland,
he attempted to sell his stapled-
together books from his record
store.
The artist saw his first non-self-
published comic appear in a 1978
issue of Wet magazine. That year,
he also began working for the
alternative-weekly newspaper the
L.A. Reader through an ever-shifting
array of responsibilities that included
reporter, distribution manager, punk
rock critic and assistant editor. He
finally added staff cartoonist to
his resume when Life in Hell first
appeared in the paper in the spring
of 1980.
The strip gained traction after a
shift in tone, with Binky becoming
less preachy and more of a victim
of the world around him, a move
that boulevardi discbeck into
submission. With a developing cast
of characters that included Binky's
girlfriend Sheba, his one-eared son
Bongo and the gay entrepreneurs
Akbar and Jeff, and recurring
components like "The 16 Types of
Sisters" and "The 9 Secret Love
Techniques That Could Possibly
Turn Men Into Putty in Your Hands,"
the minimally drawn but meticulously
written Life in Hell found its niche
between the underground comics
and mainstream fare.
His girlfriend built a business around
his artwork.
Groening's career got a boost in the
early 1980s when the L.A. Reader
hired sales rep Deborah Caplan,
who observed that the Life in Hell
strips were "a major selling point" of
the paper. After the two became
romantically involved, she established a business to promote her future
husband's work, negotiating syndication arrangements with other
publications and a book deal with
Pantheon.
Meanwhile, Groening was up to
his old tricks of rocking the boat,
writing silly reviews of bands
based on their publicity photos
and even making up phony acts
to cover. He was fired from the
L.A. Reader in 1986, after writing
a letter to the editor over a fellow
writer's dismissal, but by then Life
in Hell was already appearing in
other alt-weeklies and providing
extra income through merchandise
sales.
Furthermore, the once-struggling
artist was about to be presented
with the business offer that would
change his life forever.
Groening created 'The Simpsons'
for 'The Tracey Ullman Show'
in 1987, producers of the soon-
to-be-launched sketch comedy
program The Tracey Ullman Show,
headed by the legendary James
L. Brooks, contacted Groening
about developing short animated
cartoons to air between skits.
Realizing that he would lose the
rights to his Life in Hell characters
with the deal, Groening quickly
created a new cartoon family
featuring a smart girl, Matt and
parents, albeit with a "Bart" in lieu
of a character named after himself.
The early iteration of The Simpsons
was a crude, Neanderthal version
of the family that would become
ubiquitous in pop culture; both
Bart and Lisa were troublemakers,
and Homer was a barely controlled
cauldron of rage. But the short clips
were a hit with fans, and producers
began exploring a standalone series
as Tracey Ullman floundered in the
ratings.
Brooks selected his longtime
colleague Sam Simon to help
Groening develop the animated
series, and The Simpsons dynasty
began on December 17, 1989, when
the first episode aired. However,
the show's collection of memorable
supporting characters and winking,
multilayered nods to popular culture,
arguably owes more to Simon and
the original stable of writers than to
Groening.
Yet Groening's DNA is all over the
show, from the characters named
after the streets of his hometown
(Flanders, Lovejoy, etc.), to his
selection of Danny Elfman to
compose the iconic theme song, to
insistence on the cartoon adhering to
the normal laws of physics despite the
liberties taken with continuity.
Most importantly, The Simpsons
retained the subversive undercurrent
that has driven its creator since he
was a bored grade school student.
and Homer was a barely controlled cauldron of
rage. But the short clips were a hit with fans, and
producers began exploring a standalone series
as Tracey Ullman floundered in the ratings.
Brooks selected his longtime colleague Sam
Simon to help Groening develop the animated
series, and The Simpsons dynasty began
on December 17, 1989, when the
first episode aired. However, the
show's collection of memorable
supporting characters and winking,
multilayered nods to popular culture,
arguably owes more to Simon and the
original stable of writers than to Groening.
Yet Groening's DNA is all over the show,
from the characters named after the streets
of his hometown (Flanders, Lovejoy,
etc.), to his selection of Danny Elfman to
compose the iconic theme song, to his
insistence on the cartoon adhering to
the normal laws of physics despite the
liberties taken with continuity.
Most importantly, The Simpsons
retained the subversive undercurrent
that has driven its creator since he
was a bored grade school student.
the
paper.
Since the
two became romantically involved,
she established a business to
promote her future husband's
work, negotiating syndication
arrangements with other
publications and a book deal with
Pantheon.
Meanwhile, Groening was up to
his old tricks of rocking the boat,
writing silly reviews of bands
based on their publicity photos
and even making up phony acts
to cover. He was fired from the
L.A. Reader in 1986, after writing
a letter to the editor over a fellow
writer's dismissal, but by then Life
in Hell was already appearing in
other alt-weeklies and providing
extra income through merchandise
sales.
Furthermore, the once-struggling
artist was about to be presented
with the business offer that would
change his life forever.
Groening created 'The Simpsons'
for 'The Tracey Ullman Show'
in 1987, producers of the soon-
to-be-launched sketch comedy
program The Tracey Ullman Show,
headed by the legendary James
L. Brooks, contacted Groening
about developing short animated
cartoons to air between skits.
Realizing that he would lose the
rights to his Life in Hell characters
with the deal, Groening quickly
created a new cartoon family
featuring a smart girl, Matt and
parents, albeit with a "Bart" in lieu
of a character named after himself.
The early iteration of The Simpsons
was a crude, Neanderthal version
of the family that would become
ubiquitous in pop culture; both
Bart and Lisa were troublemakers,
and Homer was a barely controlled
cauldron of rage. But the short clips
were a hit with fans, and producers
began exploring a standalone series
as Tracey Ullman floundered in the ratings.
Brooks selected his longtime colleague Sam Simon to help
Groening develop the animated
series, and The Simpsons dynasty began
on December 17, 1989, when
the first episode aired. However,
the show's collection of memorable
supporting characters and winking,
multilayered nods to popular culture,
arguably owes more to Simon and
the original stable of writers than to
Groening.
Yet Groening's DNA is all over the
show, from the characters named
after the streets of his hometown
(Flanders, Lovejoy, etc.), to his
selection of Danny Elfman to
compose the iconic theme song, to
insistence on the cartoon adhering to
the normal laws of physics despite the
liberties taken with continuity.
Most importantly, The Simpsons
retained the subversive undercurrent
that has driven its creator since he
was a bored grade school student.
"If there's a message that runs
through the show," he told The
New York Times in 2001, well
after he had become wealthy
and influential beyond his wildest
dreams, "it's that maybe the
authorities don't have your best
interests at heart."
Influence of The Simpsons
Last year, the team behind The
Simpsons produced a video for
the French luxury fashion house
Balenciaga that debuted in October
at Paris Fashion Week. (There's a
sentence I never thought I'd write.) It
featured the show's characters walking
a runway in Balenciaga designs, and
was, depending on your worldview,
what you might call a long commercial
for the brand or a short episode of
the show. Kanye West, a veteran of
Simpsons product placement, directed the short, described it as "one
of the hardest things I ever did." Demna,
Balenciaga's artistic director and, like a lot
of 40-somethings, a fan of The Simpsons
since childhood, gave note after note,
trying to strike the right balance between
caricature and sincere presentation of his
clothing. "Simpsons characters," Skerman
says, are "quite different from human
proportions, so in some respects
we took great liberties. Cheating,
we call it." It took a year's worth
of work and in the end gave the
people something they didn't know
they needed: an animated Homer
Simpson—a lovable oaf who once
gained 61 pounds to qualify for
disability so he could work from
home—posing in a red Balenciaga
puffer jacket, a more recent
iteration of which costs $2,850.
That the fashion industry now
looks to The Simpsons for
inspiration is odd for a group of
characters who have, for the most
part, never changed outfits. But
Bart—with his skateboard and
backward baseball cap—is
hypebeast if there ever was
one. And in a recent episode,
parodying contemporary fashion,
The Weeknd voiced the owner
of a white-hot new streetwear
company, Slipmore. Adidas has a
Simpsons sneaker line, and Nike
has made a shoe with a Marge
Simpson color-way (featuring
swaths of blue, like her hair, and
light green, like her dress), which
fetches an ungodly average price
of $813 on the resale market.
From the outset, the show's
creators always understood its
business cachet. In the '90s, The
Simpsons shilled Butterfingers and
plastic key chains—and mocked
the practice in episodes.
As one Springfieldian says after
encountering the latest example
of the Simpson family selling out
(an ad for a record, The Simpsons
"He love his family, but he just don't have the brain to understand that"

Even for a culture that's obsessed with recycling intellectual property—with more than eight live-action movies starring Spider-Man in the past 20 years—The Simpsons is ubiquitous. In a bizarrely sincere music video for the Bad Bunny single "Te Deseo Lo Mejor," the pop star, animated in the classic Simpsons style, reunites Homer and Marge after an argument. Artists mine the show for material, as its imagery, like Mickey Mouse and the McDonald's arches, has become a stand-in for American materialism. In 2019, the designer NIGO sold a pair hoodie for the Japanese KAWS partnership that featured a reworking of a 1998 album performed by the show's characters; the extended cast of The Simpsons posed like the cover of the Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. (The CD was priced at $11.98; the KAWS pairing went for $14.8 million at Sotheby's.) And the conceptual artist Tom Sachs made a series of paintings of Krusty the Clown, the cynical, burnt-out host of Bart and Lisa's favorite TV show, some featuring the hucksterish Krusty Brand Seal of Approval slogan that graces all the dubious products that he shills, others with the same downbeat, pregnancy tests, crowd-control barriers, et cetera). "It's not just good. It's good enough," which America might as well adopt as its motto.

We're now at a point in history when generations of people have scarcely known a world without The Simpsons. "The first 10 seasons were a defining cultural phenomenon," Sachs tells me. "Why was it so important? It was mainstream and subversive. It was mainstream and out of punk culture and represented a popular mistrust of government and police, and the corporations who control them. Because it was animated, it got away with murder. It could say and show things that were too violent, outrageous, or anarchistic for broadcast television. And it happened every week for a decade." At the height of the show's popularity, in 1990, some 28 million people tuned in each Sunday night. Sachs recalls a moment when he realized just how influential the show had become, even in the rarefied realms. One night in the '90s, he was at a dinner party at the National Arts Club, housed in a Victorian Gothic Manhattan mansion opposite Gramercy Park, when Roy Lichtenstein, the 20th-century painter known for his appropriations of comic book imagery, was awarded the institution's medal of honor. It was a Sunday night, and what did Lichtenstein do in his acceptance speech? He thanked everyone for opting to miss a new episode of The Simpsons to support him.

Lichtenstein broke down the barriers between high and low art, helping make the mundane a maiming/full source of inspiration—a vision The Simpsons would expand on for a time. Perhaps The show debuted just as the Berlin Wall was coming down, and today, 33 years later, it's still on the same network, at the same coveted time slot—Sundays at 8 p.m. Die-hard fans tend to acknowledge that The Simpsons' first decade was its classic era, and yet there is still no limit to the show's vast influence.

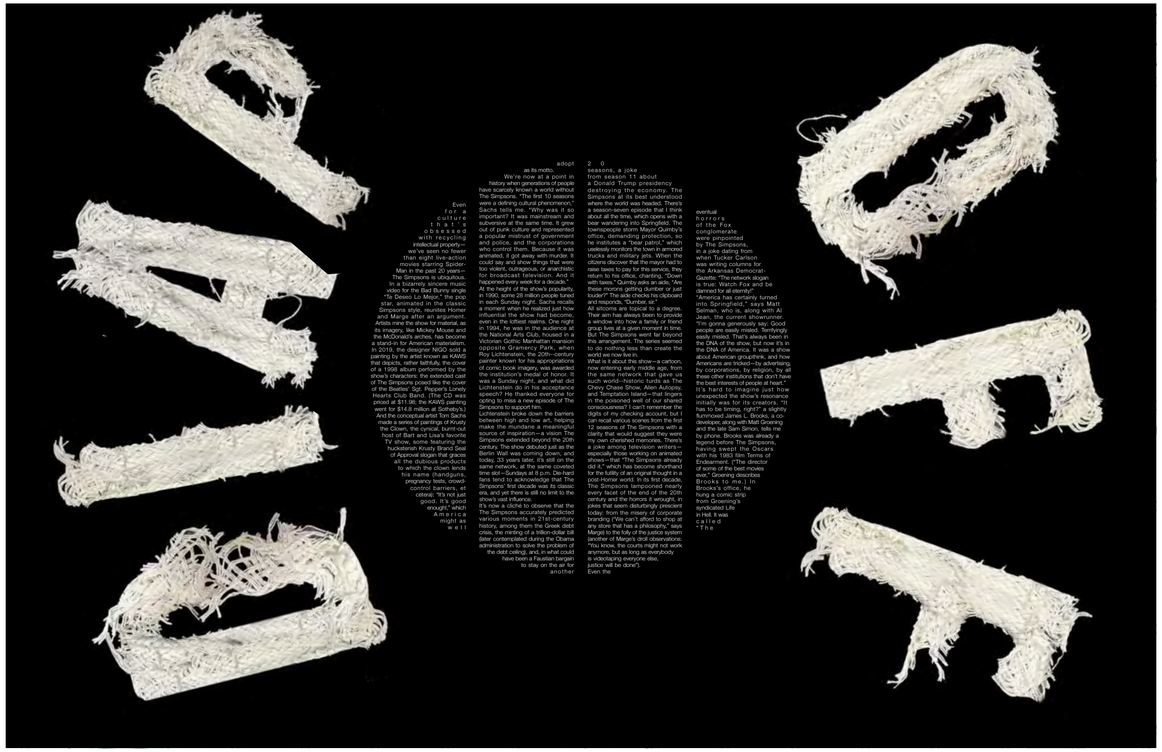
It's now a cliché to observe that the The Simpsons accurately predicted various moments in 21st-century history, among them the Greek debt crisis, the minting of a trillion-dollar bill (later contemplated during the Obama administration to solve the problem of the debt ceiling), and the fact that we have been a fountain bargain to stay on the air for another 2 0 seasons, a joke from season 11 about a Donald Trump presidency destroying the economy. The Simpsons at its best understood where the world was headed. There's a season-seven episode that I think about all the time, which opens with a town-wide panic. Mayor Quimby's constituents storm Mayor Quimby's office, demanding protection, so he institutes a "bear patrol," which ostensibly monitors the town in armored trucks and military jets. When the citizens discover that the mayor had to raise taxes to pay for this service, they return to his office, chanting, "Down with taxes." Quimby asks an aide, "Are those morons getting dumber or just louder?" The aide checks his clipboard and responds, "Dumber, sir."

All sitcoms are topical to a degree. Their aim has always been to provide a window into how a family or friend group or co-worker unit navigates a world. But The Simpsons went far beyond this arrangement. The series seemed to do nothing less than create the world as now live in.

What is it about this show—a cartoon, now entering early middle age, from the same network that gave us such world–historic turds as The Chevy Chase Show, Allen Autopsy, and Temptation Island—that lingers in the poisoned well of our shared consciousness? I can't remember the digits of my checking account, but I can recall various scenes from the first 12 seasons of The Simpsons with a clarity that would suggest they were my own cherished memories. There's a sense that the show's writers—especially those working on animated shows—that "The Simpsons already did it," which has become shorthand for the futility of an original thought in a post-Homer world. In its first decade, The Simpsons lampooned nearly every facet of the end of the 20th century and the horrors it wrought, in jokes that seem disturbingly prescient today: from the misery of corporate branding ("We can't afford to shop at any store that has a philosophy," says Marge) to the folly of the justice system (another of Marge's droll observations: "You know, the courts might not work perfectly, but as long as everybody is unbelievably grumpy, justice will be done"). Even the eventual horrors of the Fox conglomerate were pinpointed by The Simpsons, whose production when Tucker Carlson was writing columns for the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette: "The network slogan is true: Watch Fox and be damned for all eternity!"

"America has certainly turned into Springfield," says Matt Selman, who is, along with Al Jean, the current showrunner. "I'm gonna generously say: Good people are easily misled. Terrifyingly easily misled. That's always been in the DNA of the show, but now it's in the DNA of America. It was a show about American groupthink, and how Americans are ready to acquiesce to whatever authority-by-risk-averse-these-other-institutions that don't have the best interests of people at heart."

It's hard to imagine just how unexpected the show's resonance initially was for its creators. "It has to be timing, right?" a slightly furrowed James L. Brooks, a co-developer, along with Matt Groening and the late Sam Simon, tells me by phone. Brooks was already a legend before The Simpsons, having swept the Oscars with his 1983 film Terms of Endearment. (The director of some of the best movies of the 1980s and then Brooks, to me, in Brooks's office, he hung a comic strip from Groening's syndicated Life in Hell. It was called "The



Development

THE STORY OF HOMER SIMPSONS

WHY ARE SIMPSONS YELLOW?

They're arguably the most famous family in television, and have been on our screens for more than three decades – but when you think about it, it's quite weird that Matt Groening decided to make the Simpsons yellow.

Well, it turns out there was an understandable thought process behind the choice to make the Simpsons yellow – and it may have had a whole host of benefits.

Groening revealed in an interview back in 2007 that an animator came up with the idea of yellow.

He said that he wanted his cartoon to be eye-catching. When someone is flipping through channels, he wanted the bright yellow color of theSimpsons to catch the eye and make them go back to watch it. And so, the iconic yellow Simpsons family was created.

"An animator came up with the Simpsons' yellow and as soon as she showed it to me I said, 'This is the answer!' When you're flicking through channels with your remote control, and a flash of yellow goes by, you'll know you're watching The Simpsons."

Along with being yellow and it being one of the best television shows of all time, The Simpsons has also become famous for another thing – predicting the future.

Whether it's Donald Trump's presidency, the Super Bowl lineup or last summer's fuel shortages.

MAKING OF THE SIMPSONS

That wasn't the only reason behind the yellow choice though. In his book, show writer Mike Reiss shared a lot of the show's secrets and according to him, the decision to make the family yellow was also to do with hair lines.

Matt Groening immediately liked the idea of the Simpsons being yellow when he saw it (Getty)

He said: "Bart, Lisa and Maggie have no hairlines — there's no line that separates their skin from their hair points. So the animators chose yellow— it's kinda skin, kinda hair." Furthermore, there seems to be some scientific logic and benefit behind the colour choice.

Esquire reports that the color yellow has a unique psychological effect on the human brain, and represents optimism and joy.

It's also the most visible color to the human eye because of the way our eyes process light, which is why taxis and warning signs are yellow.

So there you have it, a whole host of reasons why Springfield's most famous family have their recognisable skin color.Along with being yellow and it being one of the best television shows of all time, The Simpsons has also become famous for another thing predicting the future.

Whether it's Donald Trump's presidency, the Super Bowl lineup or last summer's fuel shortages, it's incredible how many times the show has foreseen what's in store for humanity That wasn't the only reason behind the yellow choice though.

In his book, show writer Mike Reiss shared a lot of the show's secrets and according to him, the decision to make the family yellow was also to do with hair lines.

Matt Groening immediately liked the idea of the Simpsons being yellow when he saw it (Getty)

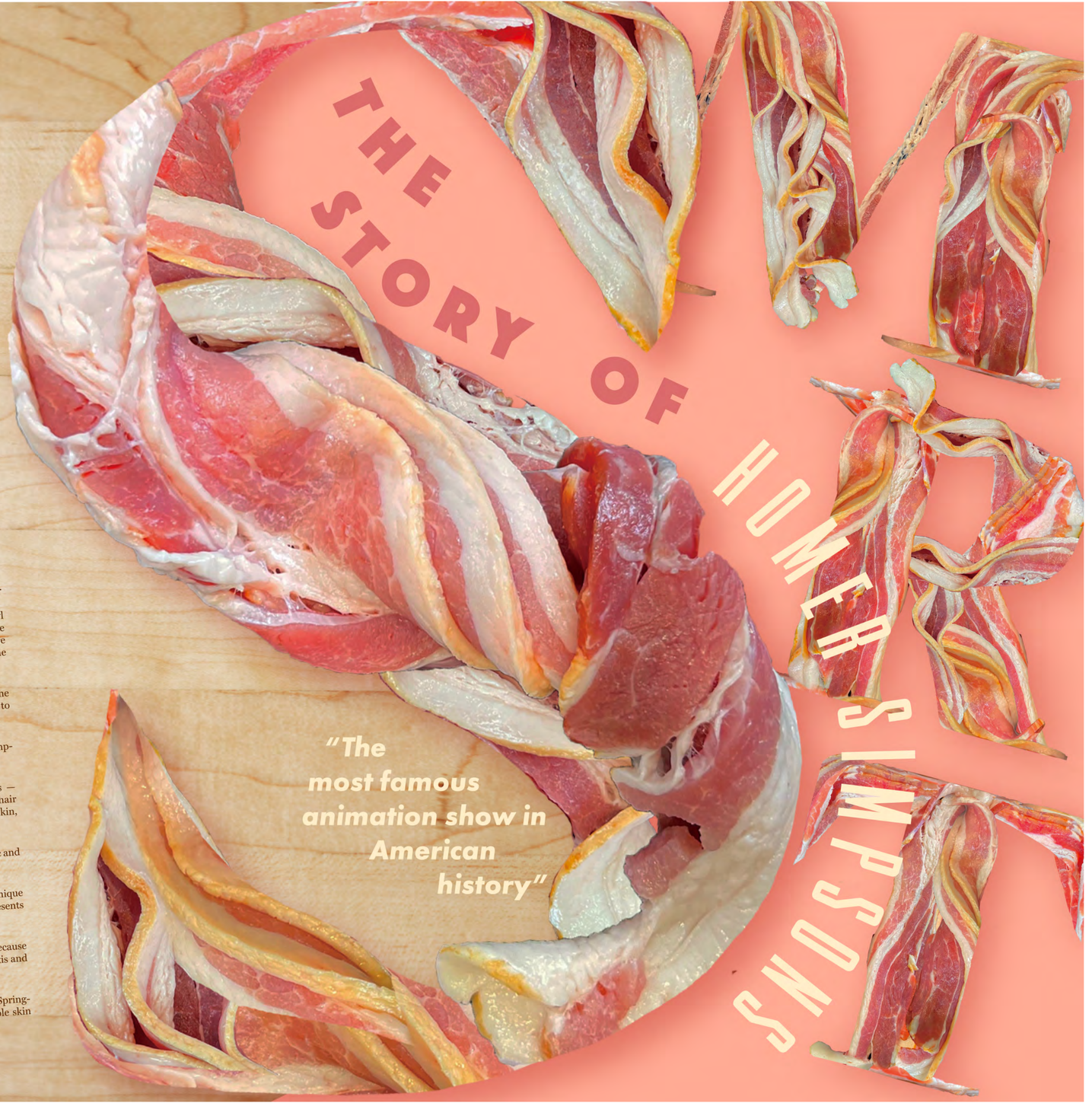
He said: "Bart, Lisa and Maggie have no hairlines — there's no line that separates their skin from their hair points. So the animators chose yellow— it's kinda skin, kinda hair."

Furthermore, there seems to be some scientific logic and benefit behind the colour choice.

Esquire reports that the color yellow has a unique psychological effect on the human brain, and represents optimism and joy.

It's also the most visible color to the human eye because of the way our eyes process light, which is why taxis and warning signs are yellow.

So there you have it, a whole host of reasons why Springfield's most famous family have their recognisable skin color.



"The most famous animation show in American history"

WHAT MAKES SIMPSONS FUN

SMART

Mhhhhhh Donuts....

WOOOOOHOOOOOO

I AM SO SMRT

"A loving father, that often ruled by his impulse"

"He love his family, but he just too stupid to understand that."

"One of the greatest example of American manhood."

JOHN SWARTZWELDER, the prolific, admired and reclusive comedy writer best known for his work on The Simpsons, spoke about his life and career in his first major interview, published in The New Yorker on Sunday.

Swartzwelder worked on The Simpsons between 1989 and 2003, writing 59 episodes, far more than any other writer in the show's long history. His credits on The Simpsons include a litany of classic episodes, and the list of personal favorites Swartzwelder gave in the interview serves as a solid primer: "Itchy & Scratchy & Marge," "Bart the Murderer," "Dog of Death," "Homer at the Bat," "Homie the Clown," "Bart Gets an Elephant" and "Homer's Enemy." (Asked about the latter episode, in which Homer obliviously but assuredly drives an upstanding new colleague, Frank Grimes, insane, Swartzwelder joked, "Grimey was asking for it the whole episode... He didn't approve of our Homer. He was asking for it, and he got it.")

Swartzwelder's jokes — succinct, simple and just the right amount of absurd — were so singular they spawned an honorific compliment: "Swartzweldian." When asked what he thought of the compliment, Swartzwelder seemed flattered enough, but said the term was "the most awkward-sounding word in the English sentence." The next moment, when asked to describe his sense of humor, he replied, "Swartzweldian."

Swartzwelder worked as a writer on Saturday Night Live for one season in the mid-eighties, while he also spent time in advertising (he now writes and self-publishes comedic novels), but it was his work on a little-known comedy magazine, Army Man, that got him the interview with Simpsons creator Matt Groening and producer/writer Sam Simon. He praised executive producer James Brooks for securing a deal with Fox that prevented the network from meddling too much in the show and allowing the writers to run wild. He also spoke about how animation allowed The Simpsons to be more subversive than other programs on TV at the time, citing the excessively violent "Itchy and Scratchy" segments.

"We could show horrendous things to the children at home, as long as we portrayed them being shown to the Simpsons' children first," Swartzwelder said. "Somehow this extra step baffled our critics and foiled the mobs with torches. We agreed with them that this was wrong to show to children. Didn't we just show it being wrong? And look, here's more wrong stuff!"

Elsewhere, Swartzwelder spoke about how he always enjoyed writing Mr. Burns episodes and said he thought The Simpsons' third season was its best individual season. He also confirmed showrunner Mike Reiss' claim that Swartzwelder wrote Homer as if he were a big dog: "Yes, he is a big talking dog. One moment he's the saddest man in the world, because he's just lost his job, or dropped his sandwich, or accidentally killed his family. Then, the next moment, he's the happiest man in the world, because he's just found a penny — maybe under one of his dead family members. He's not actually a dog, of course — he's smarter than that — but if you write him as a dog you'll never go wrong."

The Simpsons didn't create this kind of humor—Groening credits Buster Keaton—but they did perfect it.

Swartzwelder spoke a bit about his reclusiveness as well (while there are few pictures of him, he was drawn into an episode as a David Crosby-looking figure in a psychiatric hospital in "Hurricane Neddy"). He confirmed that he got permission to work from home after Season Four, not because — as long rumored — he wanted to be able to smoke, but for a far more simple reason: "I didn't want to go in to work every day anymore. Getting old, I guess."

Swartzwelder offered some insight into his writing process as well, saying he would often rush through a first draft, pack it with filler jokes and pattern dialogue, but come out with a script nonetheless. "Then the next day, when I get up, the script's been written," he said. "It's lousy, but it's a script. The hard part is done. It's like a crappy little elf has snuck into my office and badly done all my work for me, and then left with a tip of his crappy hat. All I have to do from that point on is fix it. So I've taken a very hard job, writing, and turned it into an easy one, rewriting, overnight. I advise all writers to do their scripts and other writing this way. And be sure to send me a small royalty every time you do it."

Born in 1954 in Portland, Oregon, The Simpsons creator Matt Groening had, in many ways, an idyllic childhood. As described in The Simpsons: An Uncensored, Unauthorized History, he grew up next to the old Portland Zoo, which, after reopening in a new location in 1959, became a wonderland for Groening and his friends with its abandoned animal enclosures. He also enjoyed a happy home life, with his dad, Homer, mom, Margaret, and four siblings, including younger sisters Lisa and Maggie. It was Homer, a cartoonist and filmmaker, who showed his precocious son that a career of creative fulfillment was possible.

But the conformity of a suburban existence soon proved dull, even to a young Groening. Acting out in school, he recalled having to write "I must be quiet in class" 500 times on at least one occasion and having his doodles torn up by teachers.

As a third-grader, he entered a short-story contest set up with the premise that a child walks into his attic, bumps his head and then knows what he wants to become when he grows up. In Groening's version, the boy dies from his head injury and returns as a ghost every Halloween, a morbid tale that surprisingly became the winning entry. Groening delivered biting commentary as a school paper editor.

By high school, Groening had learned to channel his subversive leanings in a manner that engaged his classmates. He ran for student body president on the "Vets for Decency" ticket, with the tongue-in-cheek slogan, "If you're against decency, then what are you for?" Again, to his surprise, he won.

Groening went on to the liberal Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, where he butted heads with the more extreme counter-cultural types that populated the campus. He gleefully zinged their sensibilities after becoming editor of the school paper, at one point instigating a petition that condemned his satirization of communal life, while also training his ire on mainstream targets like the Washington state legislature.

He also invited the off-the-wall submissions of campus cartoonists, finding himself inspired by the original works of fellow undergrad Lynda Barry. His 'Life in Hell' comic was inspired by his struggles in Los Angeles

After graduating in 1977, Groening headed to Los Angeles with the idea of pursuing a writing career. He found some work along those lines, whipping up slogans for horror movies, but also took on a

THE INFLUENCES OF THE SIMPSONS

Last year, the team behind The Simpsons produced a video for thFrench luxury fashion house Balenciaga that debuted in October at Paris Fashion Week. (There's a sentence I never thought I'd write.) It featured the show's characters walking a runway in Balenciaga designs, and was, depending on your worldview, what you might call a long commercial for the brand or a short episode of the show. David Silverman, a veteran Simpsons producer and animator who directed the short, describes it as "one of the hardest things I ever did." Demna, Balenciaga's artistic director and, like a lot of 40-some-things, a fan of The Simpsons since childhood, gave note after note, trying to strike the right balance between caricature and sincere presentation of his clothing. "Simpsons characters," Silverman says, are "quite different from human proportions, so in some respects we took great liberties. Cheating, we call it." It took a year's worth of work and in the end gave the people something they didn't know they needed: an animated Homer Simpson—a lovable oaf who once gained 61 pounds to qualify for disability so he could work from home—posing in a red Balenciaga puffer jacket, a more recent iteration of which costs $2,850.

That the fashion industry now looks to The Simpsons for inspiration is odd for a group of characters who have, for the most part, never changed outfits. But Bart—with his skateboard and his malleable mind—is a proto-hypebeast if there ever was one. And in a recent episode parodying contemporary fashion, The Weeknd voiced the owner of a white-hot new streetwear company, Slipreme. Adidas has a Simpsons sneaker line, and Nike has made a shoe with a Marge Simpson color-way (featuring swaths of blue, like her hair, and light green, like her dress), which fetches an ungodly average price of $873 on the resale market. From the outset, the show's creators always understood its business cachet. In the '90s, The Simpsons shilled Butterfingers and plastic key chains—and mocked itself for its craven commercialism. As one Springfieldian says after encountering the latest example of the Simpson family selling out

(an ad for a record, The Simpsons Go Calypso!), "Man, this thing's really getting out of hand." Three decades later, it's a testament to the show's longevity, not to mention American progress, that the Simpsons still appear on key chains, only now they're made out of calfskin, by a luxury fashion house, and cost $260.

Even for a culture that's obsessed with recycling intellectual property—we've seen no fewer than eight live-action movies starring Spider-Man in the past 20 years—The Simpsons is ubiquitous. In a bizarrely sincere music video for the Bad Bunny single "Te Deseo Lo Mejor," the pop star, animated in the classic Simpsons style, reunites Homer and Marge after an argument. Artists mine the show for material, as its imagery, like Mickey Mouse and the McDonald's arches, has become a stand-in for American materialism. In 2019, the designer NIGO sold a painting by the artist known as KAWS that depicts, rather faithfully, the cover of a 1998 album performed by the show's characters: the extended cast of The Simpsons posed like the cover of the Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. (The CD was priced at $11.98; the KAWS painting went for $14.8 million at Sotheby's.) And the conceptual artist Tom Sachs made a series of paintings of Krusty the Clown, the cynical, burnt-out host of Bart and Lisa's favorite TV show, some featuring the hucksterish Krusty Brand Seal of Approval slogan that graces all the dubious products to which the clown lends his name (handguns, pregnancy tests, crowd-control barriers, et cetera): "It's not just good. It's good enough!," which America might as well adopt as its motto.

We're now at a point in history when generations of people have scarcely known a world without The Simpsons. "The first 10 seasons were a defining cultural phenomenon," Sachs tells me. "Why was it so important? It was mainstream and subversive at the same time. It grew out of punk culture and represented a popular mistrust of government and police, and the corporations who control them. Because it was animated, it got away with murder. It could say and show things that were too violent, outrageous, or anarchistic for broadcast television. And it happened every week for a decade."

At the height of the show's popularity, in 1990, some 28 million people tuned in each Sunday night. Sachs recalls a moment when he realized just how influential the show had become, even in the loftiest realms. One night in 1994, he was in the audience at the National Arts Club, housed in a Victorian Gothic Manhattan mansion opposite Gramercy Park, when Roy Lichtenstein, the 20th--century painter known for his appropriations of comic book imagery, was awarded the institution's medal of honor. It was a Sunday night, and what did Lichtenstein do in his acceptance speech? He thanked everyone for opting to miss a new episode of The Simpsons to support him.

Lichtenstein broke down the barriers between high and low art, helping make the mundane a meaningful source of inspiration—a vision The Simpsons extended beyond the 20th century. The show debuted just as the Berlin Wall was coming down, and today, 33 years later, it's still on the same network, at the same coveted time slot—Sundays at 8 p.m. Die-hard fans tend to acknowledge that The Simpsons' first decade was its classic era, and yet there is still no limit to the show's vast influence.

"We're now at a point in history when generations of people have scarcely known a world without The Simpsons"

It's now a cliché to observe that the The Simpsons accurately predicted various moments in 21st-century history, among them the Greek debt crisis, the minting of a trillion-dollar bill (later contemplated during the Obama administration to solve the problem of the debt ceiling), and, in what could have been a Faustian bargain to stay on the air for another 20 seasons, a joke from season 11 about a Donald Trump presidency destroying the economy. The Simpsons at its best understood where the world was headed. There's a season-seven episode that I think about all the time, which opens with a bear wandering into Springfield. The townspeople storm Mayor Quimby's office, demanding protection, so he institutes a "bear patrol," which uselessly monitors the town in armored trucks and military jets. When the citizens discover that the mayor had to raise taxes to pay for this service, they return to his office, chanting, "Down with taxes." Quimby asks an aide, "Are these morons getting dumber or just louder?" The aide checks his clipboard and responds, "Dumber, sir."

All sitcoms are topical to a degree. Their aim has always been to provide a window into how a family or friend group lives at a given moment in time. But The Simpsons went far beyond this arrangement. The series seemed to do nothing less than create the world we now live in.

What is it about this show—a cartoon, now entering early middle age, from the same network that gave us such world--historic turds as The Chevy Chase Show, Alien Autopsy, and Temptation Island—that lingers in the poisoned well of our shared consciousness? I can't remember the digits of my checking account, but I can recall various scenes from the first 12 seasons of The Simpsons with a clarity that would suggest they were my own cherished memories. There's a joke among television writers—especially those working on animated shows—that "The Simpsons already did it," which has become shorthand for the futility of an original thought in a post-Homer world. In its first decade, The Simpsons lampooned nearly every facet of the end of the 20th century and the horrors it wrought, in jokes that seem disturbingly prescient today: from the misery of corporate branding ("We can't afford to shop at any store that has a philosophy," says Marge) to the folly of the justice system (another of Marge's droll observations: "You know, the courts might not work anymore, but as long as everybody is videotaping everyone else, justice will be done"). Even the eventual horrors of the Fox conglomerate were pinpointed by The Simpsons, in a joke dating from when Tucker Carlson was writing columns for the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette: "The network slogan is true: Watch Fox and be damned for all eternity!"

"America has certainly turned into Springfield," says Matt Selman, who is, along with Al Jean, the current showrunner. "I'm gonna generously say: Good people are easily misled. Terrifyingly easily misled. That's always been in the DNA of the show, but now it's in the DNA of America. It was a show about American groupthink, and how Americans are tricked—by advertising, by corporations, by religion, by all these other institutions that don't have the best interests of people at heart. It's hard to imagine just how unexpected the show's resonance initially was for its cre-

Last year, the team behind The Simpsons produced a video for the French luxury fashion house Balenciaga that debuted in October at Paris Fashion Week. (There's a sentence I never thought I'd write.) It featured the show's characters walking a runway in Balenciaga designs, and was, depending on your worldview, what you might call a long commercial for the brand or a short episode of the show. David Silverman, a veteran Simpsons producer and animator who directed the short, describes it as "one of the hardest things I ever did." Demna, Balenciaga's artistic director and, like a lot of 40-somethings, a fan of The Simpsons since childhood, gave note after note, trying to strike the right balance between caricature and sincere presentation of his clothing. "Simpsons characters," Silverman says, are "quite different from human proportions, so in some respects we took great liberties. Cheating, we call it." It took a year's worth of work and in the end gave the people something they didn't know they needed: an animated Homer Simpson—a lovable oaf who once gained 61 pounds to qualify for disability so he could work from home—posing in a red Balenciaga puffer jacket, a more recent iteration of which costs $2,850.

That the fashion industry now looks to The Simpsons for inspiration is odd for a group of characters who have, for the most part, never changed outfits. But Bart—with his skateboard and his malleable mind—is a proto-hypebeast if there ever was one. And in a recent episode parodying contemporary fashion, The Weeknd voiced the owner of a white-hot new streetwear company, Slipreme. Adidas has a Simpsons sneaker line, and Nike has made a shoe with a Marge Simpson color-way (featuring swaths of blue, like her hair, and light green, like her dress), which fetches an ungodly average price of $873 on the resale market. From the outset, the show's creators always understood its business cachet. In the '90s, The Simpsons shilled Butterfingers and plastic key chains—and mocked itself for its craven commercialism. As one Springfieldian says after encountering the latest example of the Simpson family selling out (an ad for a record, The Simpsons Go Calypso!), "Man, this thing's really getting out of hand." Three decades later, it's a testament to the show's longevity, not to mention American progress, that the Simpsons still appear on key chains, only now they're made out of calfskin, by a luxury fashion house, and cost $260.

Even for a culture that's obsessed with recycling intellectual property—we've seen no fewer than eight live-action movies starring Spider-Man in the past 20 years—The Simpsons is ubiquitous. In a bizarrely sincere music video for the Bad Bunny single "Te Deseo Lo Mejor," the pop star, animated in the classic Simpsons style, reunites Homer and Marge after an argument. Artists mine the show for material, as its imagery, like Mickey Mouse and the McDonald's arches, has become a stand-in for American materialism. In 2019, the designer NIGO sold a painting by the artist known as KAWS that depicts, rather faithfully, the cover of a 1998 album performed by the show's characters: the extended cast of The Simpsons posed like the cover of the Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. (The CD was priced at $11.98; the KAWS painting went for $14.8 million at Sotheby's.) And the conceptual artist Tom Sachs made a series of paintings of Krusty the Clown, the cynical, burnt-out host of Bart and Lisa's favorite TV show, some featuring the hucksterish Krusty Brand Seal of Approval slogan that graces all the dubious products to which the clown lends his name (handguns, pregnancy tests, crowd-control barriers, et cetera): "It's not just good. It's good enough!," which America might as well adopt as its motto.

We're now at a point in history when generations of people have scarcely known a world without The Simpsons. "The first 10 seasons were a defining cultural phenomenon," Sachs tells me. "Why was it so important? It was mainstream and subversive at the same time. It grew out of punk culture and represented a popular mistrust of government and police, and the corporations who control them. Because it was animated, it got away with murder. It could say and show things that were too violent, outrageous, or anarchistic for broadcast television. And it happened every week for a decade."

At the height of the show's popularity, in 1990, some 28 million people tuned in each Sunday night. Sachs recalls a moment when he realized just how influential the show had become, even in the loftiest realms. One night in 1994, he was in the audience at the National Arts Club, housed in a Victorian Gothic Manhattan mansion opposite Gramercy Park, when Roy Lichtenstein, the 20th-century painter known for his appropriations of comic book imagery, was awarded the institution's medal of honor. It was a Sunday night, and what did Lichtenstein do in his acceptance speech? He thanked everyone for opting to miss a new episode of The Simpsons to support him.

Lichtenstein broke down the barriers between high and low art, helping make the mundane a meaningful source of inspiration—a vision The Simpsons extended beyond the 20th century. The show debuted just as the Berlin Wall was coming down, and today, 33 years later, it's still on the same network, at the same coveted time slot—Sundays at 8 p.m. Die-hard fans tend to acknowledge that The Simpsons' first decade was its classic era, and yet there is still no limit to the show's vast influence.

It's now a cliché to observe that the The Simpsons accurately predicted various moments in 21st-century history, among them the Greek debt crisis, the minting of a trillion-dollar bill (later contemplated during the Obama administration to solve the problem of the debt ceiling), and, in what could have been a Faustian bargain to stay on the air for another 20 seasons, a joke from season 11 about a Donald Trump presidency destroying the economy. The Simpsons at its best understood where the world was headed. There's a season-seven episode that I think about all the time, which opens with a bear wandering into Springfield. The townspeople storm Mayor Quimby's office, demanding protection, so he institutes a "bear patrol," which uselessly monitors the town in armored trucks and military jets. When the citizens discover that the mayor had to raise taxes to pay for this service, they return to his office, chanting, "Down with taxes." Quimby asks an aide, "Are these morons getting dumber or just louder?" The aide checks his clipboard and responds, "Dumber, sir."

All sitcoms are topical to a degree. Their aim has always been to provide a window into how a family or friend group lives at a given moment in time. But The Simpsons went far beyond this arrangement. The series seemed to do nothing less than create the world we now live in.

What is it about this show—a cartoon, now entering early middle age, from the same network that gave us such world-historic turds as The Chevy Chase Show, Alien Autopsy, and Temptation Island—that lingers in the poisoned well of our shared consciousness? I can't remember the digits of my checking account, but I can recall various scenes from the first 12 seasons of The Simpsons with a clarity that would suggest they were my own cherished memories. There's a joke among television writers—especially those working on animated shows—that "The Simpsons already did it," which has become shorthand for the futility of an original thought in a post-Homer world. In its first decade, The Simpsons lampooned nearly every facet of the end of the 20th century and the horrors it wrought, in jokes that seem disturbingly prescient today: from the misery of corporate branding ("We can't afford to shop at any store that has a philosophy," says Marge) to the folly of the justice system (another of Marge's droll observations: "You know, the courts might not work anymore, but as long as everybody is videotaping everyone else, justice will be done"). Even the eventual horrors of the Fox conglomerate were pinpointed by The Simpsons, in a joke dating from when Tucker Carlson was writing columns for the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette: "The network slogan is true: Watch Fox and be damned for all eternity!"

"America has certainly turned into Springfield," says Matt Selman, who is, along with Al Jean, the current showrunner. "I'm gonna generously say: Good people are easily misled. Terrifyingly easily misled. That's always been in the DNA of the show, but now it's in the DNA of America. It was a show about American groupthink, and how Americans are tricked—by advertising, by corporations, by religion, by all these other institutions that don't have the best interests of people at heart."

It's hard to imagine just how unexpected the show's resonance initially was for its creators. "It has to be timing, right?" a slightly flummoxed James L. Brooks, a co-developer, along with Matt Groening and the late Sam Simon, tells me by phone. Brooks was already a legend before The Simpsons, having swept the Oscars with his 1983 film Terms of Endearment. ("The director of some of the best movies ever," Groening describes Brooks to me.) In Brooks's office, he hung a comic strip from Groening's syndicated Life in Hell. It was called "The Los Angeles Way of Death." (The methods were, in order: gun, car, drug, sea, air, cop, war, failure, and success.) Brooks called a meeting with Groening, who, unwilling to part with Life in Hell, created The Simpsons right there in the reception area, using his own family as models. He didn't even change their names except for his own—the oldest boy on the show went from Matt to Bart, "which I thought was a funny name," he tells me.

Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa, and Maggie began life in the waning days of Ronald Reagan's presidency as short segments on The Tracey Ullman Show, a variety series that never quite found an audience itself. They were spun off into their own show in December 1989, and things moved quickly from there. "Do you remember the movie Tootsie?" Brooks says. "There was a moment when she became a celebrity, and they show this montage of magazine covers? That actually happened to us. There was a magazine called Satellite Times, and they put us on the cover. And I put that on my wall. Because we were actually on the cover of something! And the next minute, the entire wall was covered. And then the show became whatever it was and is. There's a moment that can happen to you when you're pulling at something and it goes past you, and you're just trying to keep up."

Fox was then a new network, trying to gain traction, and Brooks was a producer with clout, so the suits let the creators do whatever they wanted—the kind of perfect storm that allowed The Simpsons to become so popular. During the creation of the first season, the idea that the show would continue for decades and become a part of the pop-culture ether was so remote a possibility that Simon, the pessimist among the show's creators, had a philosophy of "13 and out": 13 episodes and then on to the next thing. It was one of the animators—Silverman, whom Groening now describes as "the soul" of The Simpsons' animation team—who met Brooks at a Christmas party and convinced him the show needed to be its own series. "He got drunk," Brooks says, "pinned me against the wall, and told me passionately how much he felt that we had a chance to be a half-hour show, how there hadn't been one in 25 years, and how important it would be for animation." The last primetime animated sitcom to run for more than three seasons was The Flintstones, which debuted during the Eisenhower administration. "He was two inches away from my face and you saw the caring," Brooks continues. "It was a key moment for me. It put this kind of religious thing in it." ("I might have gotten a little carried away," says Silverman, adding, "I'm glad I spoke up.")

At the time of the 1989–1990 season, the most popular primetime network television shows in the country, according to the Nielsen ratings, were Roseanne, The Cosby Show, and Cheers. The first season of The Simpsons was popular enough to make the top 30—one of the only reasons Fox survived its early days. The show's balance of sincerity and satire resonated with an audience whose lives had been shaped by two disparate threads: nearly four decades of popular network television, and the ever-present fear of nuclear holocaust. That Homer works at a nuclear power plant where the pipes drip radioactive waste and the whole place teeters on the brink of a Chernobyl-like meltdown keeps him grimly topical.

Even very good shows from this time must be defended for being of their era, but an early Simpsons episode can still feel like a comedy about the present, or a message from a possible future. "Animation is a real evergreen medium," Jean says. "If there was a real Bart, he'd be 40 now. But in animation you're forever young."

Groening says it was Brooks who told everyone to try to forget they were working on a cartoon altogether—to strive for emotional resonance rather than plain silliness. This is another reason why the show is, as Selman puts it, "the only thing from the '90s that still exists." It helped to have an immensely talented cast. Brooks points to a season-two episode in which Lisa falls for a charming substitute teacher, voiced by Dustin Hoffman, who by the end of the episode leaves town for his next gig. The two have a tearful farewell, and Brooks insisted that Hoffman and Yeardley Smith (who voices Lisa) get in the same room together, acting face-to-face, to record the scene. It's a heartbreaking moment, as Lisa says goodbye to the only teacher to ever take her seriously. With that episode, says Groening, "We realized, like, look what we can do."

Development in details

THE STORY OF HOMER SIMPSONS

WHY ARE SIMPSONS YELLOW?

They're arguably the most famous family in television, and have been on our screens for more than three decades – but when you think about it, it's quite weird that Matt Groening decided to make the Simpsons yellow.

Well, it turns out there was an understandable thought process behind the choice to make the Simpsons yellow – and it may have had a whole host of benefits.

Groening revealed in an interview back in 2007 that an animator came up with the idea of yellow.

He said that he wanted his cartoon to be eye-catching. When someone is flipping through channels, he wanted the bright yellow color of theSimpsons to catch the eye and make them go back to watch it. And so, the iconic yellow Simpsons family was created.

"An animator came up with the Simpsons' yellow and as soon as she showed it to me I said, 'This is the answer!' When you're flicking through

MAKING OF THE SIMPSONS

That wasn't the only reason behind the yellow choice though. In his book, show writer Mike Reiss shared a lot of the show's secrets and according to him, the decision to make the family yellow was also to do with hair lines.

Matt Groening immediately liked the idea of the Simpsons being yellow when he saw it (Getty)

He said: "Bart, Lisa and Maggie have no hairlines — there's no line that separates their skin from their hair points. So the animators chose yellow— it's kinda skin, kinda hair." Furthermore, there seems to be some scientific logic and benefit behind the colour choice.

Esquire reports that the color yellow has a unique psychological effect on the human brain, and represents optimism and joy.

It's also the most visible color to the human eye because of the way our eyes process light, which is why taxis and warning signs are yellow.

So there you have it, a whole host of reasons why Springfield's most famous family have their recognisable skin color.Along with being yellow and it being

Along with being yellow and it being one of the best television shows of all time, The Simpsons has also become famous for another thing – predicting the future.

Whether it's Donald Trump's presidency, the Super Bowl lineup or last summer's fuel shortages.

one of the best television shows of all time, The Simpsons has also become famous for another thing predicting the future.

Whether it's Donald Trump's presidency, the Super Bowl lineup or last summer's fuel shortages, it's incredible how many times the show has foreseen what's in store for humanity That wasn't the only reason behind the yellow choice though.

In his book, show writer Mike Reiss shared a lot of the show's secrets and according to him, the decision to make the family yellow was also to do with hair lines.

Matt Groening immediately liked the idea of the Simpsons being yellow when he saw it (Getty)

He said: "Bart, Lisa and Maggie have no hairlines — there's no line that separates their skin from their hair

"The most famous animation show in American history"

WHAT IS THE SECRET TO MAKE SIMPSONS FUN

"A loving father that often ruled by his impulse"

"One of the greatest example of American manhood"

"He love his family, but he just too stupid to understand that."

The Simpsons didn't create this kind of humor—Groening credits Buster Keaton—but they did perfect it.

JOHN SWARTZWELDER, THE prolific, admired and reclusive comedy writer best known for his work on The Simpsons, spoke about his life and career in his first major interview, published in The New Yorker on Sunday.

Swartzwelder worked on The Simpsons between 1989 and 2003, writing 59 episodes, far more than any other writer in the show's long history. His credits on The Simpsons include a litany of classic episodes, and the list of personal favorites Swartzwelder gave in the interview serves as a solid primer: "Itchy & Scratchy & Marge," "Bart the Murderer," "Dog of Death," "Homer at the Bat," "Homie the Clown," "Bart Gets an Elephant" and "Homer's Enemy." (Asked about the latter episode, in which Homer obliviously but assuredly braves an upstanding new colleague, Frank Grimes, insane, Swartzwelder joked, "Grimey was asking for it the whole episode. He didn't approve of our Homer. He was asking for it, and he got it.")

Swartzwelder's jokes — succinct, simple and just the right amount of absurd — were so singular they spawned an honorific compliment: "Swartzweldian." When asked what he thought of the compliment, Swartzwelder seemed flattered enough, but said the term was "the most awkward-sounding word in the English sentence." The next moment, when asked to describe his sense of humor, he replied, "Swartzweldian."

Swartzwelder worked as a writer on Saturday Night Live for one season in the mid-Eighties, while he also spent time in advertising (he now writes and self-publishes comedic novels). But it was his work on a little-known comedy magazine, Army Man, that got him the interview with Simpsons creator Matt Groening and producer/writer Sam Simon. He praised executive producer James Brooks for securing a deal with Fox that prevented the network from meddling too much in the show and allowing the writers to run wild. He also spoke about how animation allowed The Simpsons to be more subversive than other programs on TV at the time, citing the excessively violent "Itchy and Scratchy" segments.

"We could show horrendous things to the children at home, as long as we portrayed them being shown to the Simpsons' children first," Swartzwelder said. "Somehow this extra step baffled our critics and foiled the mobs with torches. We agreed with them that this was wrong to show to children. Didn't we just show it being wrong? And, look, here's more wrong stuff."

Elsewhere, Swartzwelder spoke about how he always enjoyed writing Mr. Burns episodes and said he thought The Simpsons' third season was its best individual season. He also confirmed showrunner Mike Reiss' claim that Swartzwelder wrote Homer as if he were a big dog. "Yes, he is a big talking dog. One moment he's the saddest man in the world, because he's just lost his job, or dropped his sandwich, or accidentally killed his family. Then, the next moment, he's the happiest man in the world, because he's just found a penny — maybe under one of his dead family members. He's not actually a dog, of course — he's smarter than that — but if you write him as a dog you'll never go wrong."

Swartzwelder spoke a bit about his reclusiveness as well (while there are few pictures of him, he was drawn into an episode as a David Crosby-looking figure in a psychiatric hospital in "Hurricane Neddy"). He confirmed that he got permission to work from home after Season Four, not because — as long rumored — he wanted to be able to smoke, but for a far more simple reason: "I didn't want to go in to work every day anymore. Getting old, I guess."

Swartzwelder offered some insight into his writing process as well, saying he would often rush through a first draft, pack it with filler jokes and pattern dialogue, but come out with a script nonetheless. "Then the next day, when I get up, the script's been written," he said. "It's lousy, but it's a script. The hard part is done. It's like a crappy little elf has snuck into my office and badly done all my work for me, and then left with a tip of his crappy hat. All I have to do from that point on is fix it. So I've taken a very hard job, writing, and turned it into an easy one, rewriting, overnight. I advise all writers to do their scripts and other writing this way. And be sure to send me a small royalty every time you do it."

Born in 1954 in Portland, Oregon, The Simpsons creator Matt Groening had, in many ways, an idyllic childhood. As described in The Simpsons: An Uncensored, Unauthorized History, he grew up next to the old Portland Zoo, which, after reopening in a new location in 1959, became a wonderland for Groening and his friends with its abandoned animal enclosures. He also enjoyed a happy home life, with his dad, Homer, mom, Margaret, and four siblings, including younger sisters Lisa and Maggie. It was Homer, a cartoonist and filmmaker, who showed his precocious son that a career of creative fulfillment was possible.

But the conformity of a suburban existence soon proved dull, even to a young Groening. Acting out in school, he recalled having to write "I must be quiet in class" 500 times on at least one occasion and having his doodles torn up by teachers. As a third-grader, he entered a short-story contest set up

WOOOOO HOOOOOO SMRT MHH WOOOOO HOOOOOO SMRT MHH WOOOOO HOOOOOO WOOOOO HOOOOOO

THE INFLUENCES OF THE SIMPSONS

Last year, the team behind The Simpsons produced a video for the French luxury fashion house Balenciaga that debuted in October at Paris Fashion Week. (There's a sentence I never thought I'd write.) It featured the show's characters walking a runway in Balenciaga designs and was, depending on your worldview, what you might call a long commercial for the brand or a short episode of the show. David Silverman, a veteran Simpsons producer and animator who directed the short, describes it as "one of the hardest things I ever did." Dennis Balenciaga's artistic director and, like a lot of 40-somethings, a fan of The Simpsons since childhood, gave him a right but precise note after note, trying to strike the right balance between caricature and realism in the presentation of the characters. "Silverman says are quite different from human proportions, so in some respects we took great liberties. Cheating—we call it." It took a year's worth of work and 60 artists to get the people animated in the end gained 61 pounds to qualify for disability so he could work from Homer Simpson—a lovable oaf who once home—posing in a red Balenciaga puffer jacket, a more recent iteration of which costs $2,850.

That the fashion industry now looks to The Simpsons for inspiration is odd for a group of characters who have, for the most part, never changed outfits. But Bart—with his skateboard and his m a l e a b l e mind—is a

"The only thing that is from 90s that still exists"

proto-hypebeast if there ever was one. And in a recent episode parodying contemporary fashion, The Weeknd voiced the owner of a white-hot new streetwear company, Supreme. Adidas has a Simpsons sneaker line, and Nike has made a shoe with a large green, like her dress), which fetches in the high-average price of $573 on the resale market. From the outset, the show's creators showed understood its business acumen. Key chains—and pinched itself for its Butterfingers and plastic keychains—and pinched itself for its craven commercialism. As one Springfieldian says after encountering the latest example of the Springfield family selling out (an ad for a record, The Simpsons Go Calypso!), "Man, this things really getting out of hand." Three decades later, it's a testament to the show's longevity not to mention American progress, that the Simpsons still appear on key chains, only now they're made out of cutlesh, by a luxury fashion house, and cost $260.

Even for a culture that's obsessed with recycling intellectual property—we've seen no fewer than eight live-action movies starring Spider-Man in the past 20 years—The Simpsons is ubiquitous. In a jiggerly-sincere music video for the Bad Bunny single "Te Deseo Lo Mejor," the pop star, animated in the classic Simpsons style, reunites Homer and Marge after an argument. Artists mine the show for material, as its imagery, like Mickey Mouse and the McDonald's skeleton, has become a stand-in for American materialism. In 2019, designer KIDO sold a painting by the artist known as KAWS that depicts, rather faithfully, the entered cast of The Simpson posed like the cover of the Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. (The CD was priced at $11,98; the KAWS painting went for $14.8 million at Sotheby's.) And the conceptual artist Tony Sachs made a series of paintings of Krusty the Clown, the cynical, burnout host of Bart and Lisa's favorite TV show, some featuring the fuckesterish Krusty Brand Seal of Approval slogan that graces all the dubious products which the clown lends his name (bandgluns, pregnancy tests, crowd-control barriers, et cetera). "It's not just good. It's good enough!" which America might as well adopt as its motto.

"We're now at a point in history when generations of people have scarcely known a world without The Simpsons."

We're now at a point in history when generations of people have scarcely known a world without The Simpsons. "The first 10 seasons were a defining cultural phenomenon," Sachs tells me. "Why was it so important? It was mainstream and subversive at the same time. It grew out of punk culture and it represented a popular mistrust of government and police, and the corporations who control them. Because it was animated, it got away with a lot. It could say and show things that were not violent, outrageous, or anarchistic at the height of the show's popularity, in 1990, some 26 million people tuned in each Sunday night. Sachs recalls a moment when he realized just how influential the show had become, even in the

Why was it so important? It grew out of punk culture and represented a popular mistrust of government and police, and the corporations who control them.

flummoxed James L. Brooks, a co-developer, along with Matt Groening and the late Sam Simon, tells me by phone. Brooks was already a legend before The Simpsons, having swept the Oscars with his 1983 film Terms of Endearment ("The director of some of the best movies ever," Groening describes Brooks to me.) In Brooks's office, he hung a comic strip from Groening's syndicated Life in Hell. It was called "The Los Angeles Way of Death" (The methods were in order: gun, car, drug, sea, air, cop, war, failure, and success). Brooks called a meeting with Groening, who, unwilling to part with Life in Hell, created the Simpsons right there in the reception area using his own family as models. He didn't even change their names except for his own—the oldest boy on the show went from Matt to Bart, which I thought was a funny

'America has certainly turned into Springfield," says Matt Selman, who is, along with Al Jean, the current showrunner. "I'm going generously say: Good people are easily misled. Terrifyingly easily misled. That's always been in the DNA of the show, but now it's in the DNA of America. It was a show about American groupthink, and how Americans are tricked—by advertising, by corporations, by religion, by all these other institutions that don't have the best interests of people at heart."

It's hard to imagine just how unexpected the show's resonance initially was for its creators. "It has to be a right?" timing, slightly

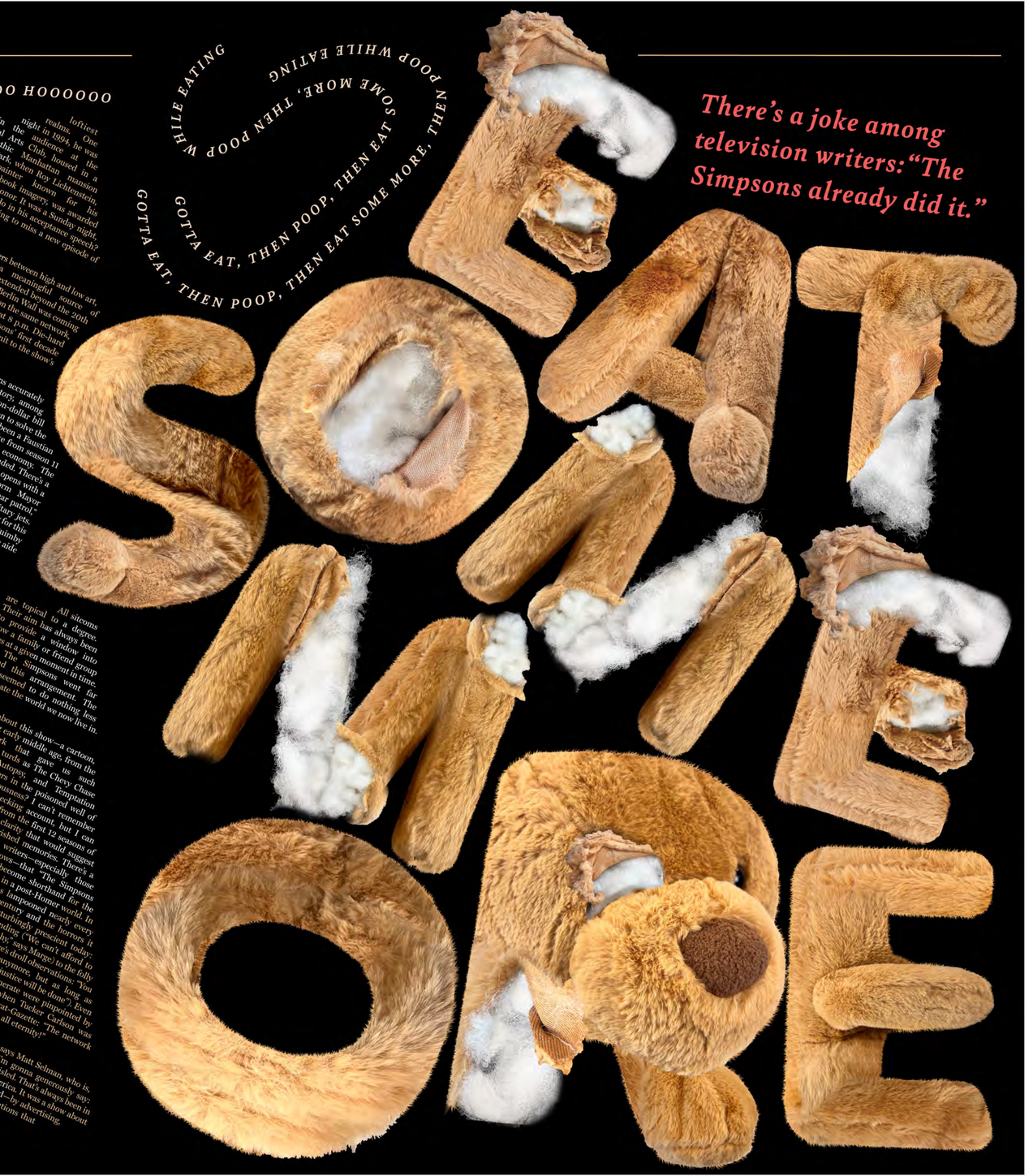
lofti'est realms. One night in 1994, he was in the audience at the National Arts Club, housed in a Victorian Gothic mansion opposite Gramercy Park, when Roy Lichtenstein, the 20th-century painter known for his appropriations of comic book imagery, was awarded the institution's medal of honor. It was a Sunday night, and when did Lichtenstein do in his acceptance speech? He thanked everyone for opting to miss a new episode of The Simpsons to support him.

Lichtenstein broke down the barriers between high and low art, helping make the mundane a meaningful source of inspiration—a vision The Simpsons extended beyond the 20th century. The show debuted just as the Berlin Wall was coming down and today, 33 years later, it's still on the same network at the same coveted time slot—Sundays at 8 p.m. Die-hard fans tend to acknowledge that The Simpsons' first decade was its classic era, and yet there is still no limit to the show's vast influence.

It's now a cliché to observe that the The Simpsons accurately predicted various moments in 21st-century history, among them the Greek debt crisis, the Obama administration's $1 trillion-dollar bill (later contemplated during the Obama administration to solve the problem of the debt ceiling), and in what could have been a Faustian bargain to stay on the air for another 20 seasons, a Joke from season 11 about a Donald Trump presidency destroying the economy. The Simpsons at its best understood where the world was headed. There's a season-seven episode, Bart's Dog Gets an F, in which Principal Skinner's office, which uselessly monitors the town in armored trucks and military jets. When the citizens discover that the mayor had to raise taxes to pay for this service, they return to his office, chanting, "Down with taxes!" Quimby asks an aide, "Are these morons getting dumber or just louder?" The aide checks his clipboard and responds, 'Dumber, sir.'

All sitcoms are topical to a degree. Their aim has always been to provide a window into how a family or friend group lives at a given moment in time. But The Simpsons went far beyond this arrangement. The series seemed to do nothing less than create the world we now live in.

What is it about this show—a cartoon, now entering early middle age, from the same network that gave us such world-historic turds as The Chevy Chase Show, Alien Autopsy, and Temptation Island—that lingers in the poisoned well of our shared consciousness? I can't remember a single episode from the first 12 seasons of The Simpsons with a clarity that would suggest recall various scenes from the first 12 seasons of my own cherished memories. There's a joke, among television writers—especially those working on animated shows—that The Simpsons already did it, which has become shorthand for the futility of all original thought in a post-Homer world. In its first decade, The Simpsons lampooned nearly every trope, in jokes that seem depressingly prescient today: from the 20th century and the horrors it wrought, in jokes that seem depressingly prescient today: from the patsery of corporate branding ("We can't afford to shop at any store that has a philosophy," says Marge) to the folly of the justice system (another of Marge's droll observations: "You know, the courts might not work anymore, but as long as everybody is videotaping everyone else, justice will be done"). Even the eventual horrors of the Fox conglomerate were pinpointed by The Simpsons in a joke dating from when Tucker Carlson was writing columns for the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette: "The network slogan is true: Watch Fox and be damned for all eternity!"



THE MAKING OF THE SIMPSONS

Last year, the team behind The Simpsons produced a video for the French luxury fashion house Balenciaga that debuted in October at Paris Fashion Week. (There's a sentence I never thought I'd write.) It featured the show's characters walking a runway in Balenciaga designs, and was, depending on your worldview, what you might call a long commercial for the brand or a short episode of the show. David Silverman, a veteran Simpsons producer and animator who directed the short, describes it as "one of the hardest things I ever did." Demna, Balenciaga's artistic director and, like a lot of 40-somethings, a fan of The Simpsons since childhood, gave note after note, trying to strike the right balance between caricature and sincere presentation of his clothing. "Simpsons characters," Silverman says, are "quite different from human proportions, so in some respects we took great liberties. Cheating, we call it." It took a year's worth of work and in the end gave the people something they didn't know they needed: an animated Homer Simpson—a lovable oaf who once gained 61 pounds to qualify for disability so he could work from home—posing in a red Balenciaga puffer jacket, a more recent iteration of which costs $2,850.

That the fashion industry now looks to The Simpsons for inspiration is odd for a group of characters who have, for the most part, never changed outfits. But Bart—with his skateboard and his malleable mind—is a proto-hypebeast if there ever was one. And in a recent episode parodying contemporary fashion, The Weeknd voiced the owner of a white-hot new streetwear company, Slipreme. Adidas has a Simpsons sneaker line, and Nike has made a shoe with a Marge Simpson color-way (featuring swaths of blue, like her hair, and light green, like her dress), which fetches an ungodly average price of $873 on the resale market. From the outset, the show's creators always understood its business cachet. In the '90s, The Simpsons shilled Butterfingers and plastic key chains—and mocked itself for its craven commercialism. As one Springfieldian says after encountering the latest example of the Simpson family selling out (an ad for a record, The Sim Man, this thing's really getting out of
tament to the show's longevity,
The Simpsons still appear on
calfskin, by a

Even for a culture that's obsessed with recycling intellectual property—we've seen no fewer than eight live-action movies starring Spider-Man in the past 20 years—The Simpsons is ubiquitous. In a bizarrely sincere music video for the Bad Bunny single "Te Deseo Lo Mejor," the pop star, animated in the classic Simpsons style, reunites Homer and Marge after an argument. Artists mine the show for material, as its imagery, like Mickey Mouse and the McDonald's arches, has become a stand-in for American materialism. In 2019, the designer NIGO sold a painting by the artist known as KAWS that depicts, rather faithfully, the cover of a 1998 album performed by the show's characters: the extended cast of The Simpsons posed like the cover of the Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. (The CD was priced at $11.98; the KAWS painting went for $14.8 million at Sotheby's.) And the conceptual artist Tom Sachs made a series of paintings of Krusty the Clown, the cynical, burnt-out host of Bart and Lisa's favorite TV show, some featuring the huckster-ish Krusty Brand Seal of Approval slogan that graces all the dubious products to which the clown lends his name (handguns, pregnancy tests, crowd-control barriers, et cetera): "It's not just good. It's good enough!," which America might as well adopt as its motto.

We're now at a point in history when generations of people have scarcely known a world without The Simpsons. "The first 10 seasons were a defining cultural phenomenon," Sachs tells me. "Why was it so important? It was mainstream and subversive at the same time. It grew out of punk culture and represented a popular mistrust of government and police, and the corporations who control them. Because it was animated, it got away with murder. It could say and show things that were too violent, outrageous, or anarchistic for broadcast television. And it happened every week for a decade."

At the height of the show's popularity, in 1990, some 28 million people tuned in each Sunday night. Sachs recalls a moment when he realized just how influential the show had become, even in the loftiest realms. One night in 1994, he was in the audience at the National Arts Club, housed in a Victorian Gothic Manhattan mansion opposite Gramercy Park, when Roy

Lichtenstein, the 20th–century painter known for his appropriations of comic book imagery, was awarded the institution's medal of honor. It was a Sunday night, and what did Lichtenstein do in his acceptance speech? He thanked everyone for opting to miss a new episode of The Simpsons to support him.

Lichtenstein broke down the barriers between high and low art, helping make the mundane a meaningful source of inspiration—a vision The Simpsons extended beyond the 20th century. The show debuted just as the Berlin Wall was coming down, and today, 33 years later, it's still on the same network, at the same coveted time slot—Sundays at 8 p.m. Die-hard fans tend to acknowledge that The Simpsons' first decade was its classic era, and yet there is still no limit to the show's vast influence.

It's now a cliché to observe that the The Simpsons accurately predicted various moments in 21st-century history, among them the Greek debt crisis, the minting of a trillion-dollar bill (later contemplated during the Obama administration to solve the problem of the debt ceiling), and, in what could have been a Faustian bargain to stay on the air for another 20 seasons, a joke from season 11 about a Donald Trump presidency destroying the economy. The Simpsons at its best understood where the world was headed. There's a season-seven episode that I think about all the time, which opens with a bear wandering into Springfield. The townspeople storm Mayor Quimby's office, demanding protection, so he institutes a "bear patrol," which uselessly monitors the town in armored trucks and military jets. When the citizens discover that the mayor had to raise taxes to pay for this service, they return to his office,

chanting, "Down with taxes." Quimby asks an aide, "Are these morons getting dumber or just louder?" The aide checks his clipboard and responds, "Dumber, sir."

All sitcoms are topical to a degree. Their aim has always been to provide a window into how a family or friend group lives at a given moment in time. But The Simpsons went far beyond this arrangement. The series seemed to do nothing less than create the world we now live in.

What is it about this show—a cartoon, now entering early middle age, from the same network that gave us such world–historic turds as The Chevy Chase Show, Alien Autopsy, and Temptation Island—that lingers in the poisoned well of our shared consciousness? I can't remember the digits of my checking account, but I can recall various scenes from the first 12 seasons of The Simpsons with a clarity that would suggest they were my own cherished memories. There's a joke among television writers—especially those working on animated shows—that "The Simpsons already did it," which has become shorthand for the futility of an original thought in a post-Homer world. In its first decade, The Simpsons lampooned nearly every facet of the end of the 20th century and the horrors it wrought, in jokes that seem disturbingly prescient today: from the misery of corporate branding ("We can't afford to shop at any store that has a philosophy," says Marge) to the folly of the justice system (another of Marge's droll observations: "You know, the courts might not work anymore, but as long as everybody is videotaping everyone else, justice will be done"). Even

the eventual horrors of the Fox conglomerate were pinpointed by The Simpsons, in a joke dating from when Tucker Carlson was writing columns for the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette: "The network slogan is true: Watch Fox and be damned for all eternity!"

"America has certainly turned into Springfield," says Matt Selman, who is, along with Al Jean, the current showrunner. "I'm gonna generously say: Good people are easily misled. Terrifyingly easily misled. That's always been in the DNA of the show, but now it's in the DNA of America. It was a show about American groupthink, and how Americans are tricked—by advertising, by corporations, by religion, by all these other institutions that don't have the best interests of people at heart."

It's hard to imagine just how unexpected the show's resonance initially was for its creators. "It has to be timing, right?" a slightly flummoxed James L. Brooks, a co-developer, along with Matt Groening and the late Sam Simon, tells me by phone. Brooks was already a legend before The Simpsons, having swept the Oscars with his 1983 film Terms of Endearment. ("The director of some of the best movies ever," Groening describes Brooks to me.) In Brooks's office, he hung a comic strip from Groening's syndicated Life in Hell. It was called "The Los Angeles Way of Death." (The methods were, in order: gun, car, drug, sea, air, cop, war, failure, and success.) Brooks called a meeting with Groening, who, unwilling to part with Life in Hell, created The Simpsons right there in the reception area, using his own family as models. He didn't even change their names except for his own—the oldest boy on the show went from Matt to Bart, "which I thought was a funny name," he tells me.

Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa, and Maggie began life in the waning days of Ronald Reagan's presidency as short segments on The Tracey Ullman Show, a variety series that never quite found an audience itself. They were spun off into their own show in December 1989, and things moved quickly from there. "Do you remember the movie Tootsie?" Brooks says. "There

Final

Influences of THE SIMPSONS

SINCE DECEMBER 1989

Last year, the team behind The Simpsons produced a video for the French luxury fashion house Balenciaga that debuted in October at Paris Fashion Week. There's a sentence I never thought I'd write.) It featured the show's characters walking a runway in Balenciaga designs and was, depending on your worldview, what you might call a long commercial for the brand or a short Simpsons episode of the show. David Silverman, a veteran Simpsons producer and animator who directed the short, describes it as "one of the hardest things I've ever did." Penina Balenciaga's artistic director Simpsons since childhood, gave note after note, trying to strike the right balance between caricature and sincere presentation of his clothing. "Simpsons characters," Silverman says, are "quite different from human proportions, so in some respects we took great liberties. Cheating, we call it." It took a year's worth of work and in the end gave the people something they didn't know they needed: an animated Homer Simpson—a lovable oaf who once gained 61 pounds to qualify for disability so he could work from home—posing in a red Balenciaga puffer jacket, a more recent iteration of which costs $2,850.

That the fashion industry now looks to The Simpsons for inspiration is odd for a group of

part, characters who have, for the most never changed outfits. But Bart, with his skateboard and his malleable mind—is a proto-hypebeast if there ever was one. And in a recent episode parodying contemporary fashion, The Weeknd voiced the owner of a white-hot new streetwear company, Slipreme. Adidas has a Simpsons sneaker line, and Nike has made a shoe with a Marge Simpson color-way (featuring swaths of blue, like her hair, and light green, like her dress), which fetches an ungodly average price of $673 on the resale market. From the outset, the show's creators always understood it: business cachet. In the '90s, The Simpsons shilled Butterfingers and plastic key chains—and mocked itself for its craven commercialism. As one Springfieldian says after encountering the latest example of the Simpson family selling out (and for a record), The Simpsons Go Calypso!), "Man, this thing's really getting out of hand." Three decades later, it's a testament to the show's longevity, not to mention American progress, that the Simpsons still appear on key chains, only now they're made out of calfskin, by a luxury fashion house, and cost $260.

Even for a culture that's obsessed with recycling intellectual property—we've seen no fewer than eight live-action movies starring Spider-Man in the past 20 years—The Simpsons is ubiquitous. In a bizarrely sincere music video for the Bad Bunny single "Te Deseo Lo Mejor," the pop star, animated in the classic Simpsons style, reunites Homer and Marge after an argument. Artists mine the show for material as its imagery, like Mickey Mouse and the McDonald's arches, has become a stand-in for American materialism. In 2019, the designer XIGO sold a painting by the artist known as KAWS that depicts, rather faithfully, the extended cast of The Simpsons posed like the cover of The Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. (The CD was priced at $11.98; the KAWS painting went for $14.8 million at Sotheby's.) And the conceptual artist Tim Sachs made a series of paintings of Krusty the Clown, the cynical, burnt-out host of Bart and Lisa's favorite TV show, some featuring the buckskirish Krusty Brand Seal of Approval slogan that graces all the dubious products to which the clown lends his name (handguns, pregnancy tests, crowd-control barriers, et cetera): "It's not just good. It's good enough!," which America might as well adopt as its motto.

We're now at a point in history when generations of people have scarcely known a world without The Simpsons, "The first 10 seasons were a defining cultural phenomenon," Sachs tells me. "Why was it so important? It was mainstream and subversive at the same time. It grew out of punk culture and represented a populist mistrust of government and police, and the corporations who control them. Because it was animated, it got away with murder. It could say and show things that were too violent, outrageous, or anarchistic for broadcast television. And it happened every week for a decade."

At the height of the show's popularity, in 1990, some 28 million people tuned in each Sunday night. Sachs recalls a moment when he realized just how influential the show had become, even in the loftiest realms. One night in 1994, he was in the audience at the National Arts Club, housed in a Victorian Gothic Manhattan mansion opposite Gramercy Park, when Roy Lichtenstein, the 20th-century painter known for his appropriations of comic book imagery, was awarded the institution's medal of honor. It was a Sunday night and what did Lichtenstein do in his acceptance speech? He thanked everyone for opting to miss a new episode of The Simpsons to support him.

Lichtenstein broke down the barriers between high and low art, helping make the mundane a meaningful source of inspiration—a vision The Simpsons extended beyond the 20th century. The show debuted just as the Berlin Wall was coming down, and today, 33 years later, it's still on the same network, at the same coveted time slot—Sundays, at 8 p.m. Die-hard fans tend to acknowledge that The Simpsons' first decade was its classic era, and yet there is still no limit to the show's vast influence.

It's now a cliché to observe that the The Simpsons accurately predicted various moments in 21st-century history, among them the Greek debt crisis, the minting of a trillion-dollar coin (to solve the problem of the debt ceiling), and, in what could have been a Faustian bargain to stay on the air for another 20 seasons, a joke from season 11 about a Donald Trump presidency destroying the economy. The Simpsons got the best understood when, in season seven, Homer headed to Springfield. The episode, which opens with a storm Mayor Quimby's office, demanding protection, so he institutes a "bear patrol" which uselessly monitors the town in armored trucks, and inflator jets. When the citizens discover that the mayor had to raise taxes to pay for this service, they return to his office, chanting, "Down with taxes. Quimby must go!" Off to the side, Quimby's aide checks his clipboard and responds, "Dumber, sir."

All sitcoms are topical to a degree. Their aim has always been to provide a window into how a family or friend group lives at a given moment in time. But The Simpsons went far beyond this arrangement. The series seemed to decipher nothing less than the whole world we now live in. It's now a cliché to observe that The Simpsons in its prime accurately predicted everyone else, in a joke, consigned every body is videotaping everyone else, in a joke, to the dustbin of history. (Even the eventual horrors of the Fox News era were pinpointed by The Simpsons, in a joke, in which Tucker Carlson was writing columns for the Springfield Shopper-Gazette. "The network slogan is 'Watch Fox,' and he damned for all eternity?"

"America has certainly turned into Springfield," says Matt Selman, who is along with Al Jean, the current showrunner. "I'm gonna generously say. Good people are easily misled. Terrifyingly easily misled. That's always been in the DNA of the show.

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

EVERYTHING ABOUT THE SIMPSON SMRT TIMES

VOL #01 ISSUE #01

MAY 23, 2023

www.IAMSMRT.com

WHAT IS THE START OF THE SIMPSONS

By high school, Groening had learned to channel his subversive leanings in a manner that engaged his classmates. He ran for student body president on the Teens for Decency ticket, with the tongue-in-cheek slogan, "If you're against decency, then what are you for?" Again, to his surprise, he won.

Groening went on to the liberal Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, where he butted heads with the more extreme countercultural types that populated the campus.

He gleefully zinged their sensibilities after becoming editor of the school paper, at one point instigating a petition that condemned his satirization of communal life, while also training his ire on mainstream targets like the Washington state legislature.

He also invited the off-the-wall submissions of campus cartoonists, finding himself inspired by the original works of fellow undergrad Lynda Barry.

WHAT HAS THE SIMPSONS BECOME

The Simpsons maintain a middle-class income, they are content with a present situation. Instead of the media creates the perfect American dream. The Simpsons more clearly tell the same working-class audience that they are helping to build a normal standard towards the real socio-economic condition of society. The Simpsons has become a symbol of American life that depicts blue-collar American social reality. Also, as an animated sitcom, The Simpsons not only attracts the young people.

DOH!

THE JOKES THAT NEVER GETS OLD

THE SECRET TO MAKE SIMPSONS FUN

"A loving father that often ruled by his impulse"

JOHN SWARTZWELDER THE prolific, admired and reclusive comedy writer best known for his work on The Simpsons, spoke about his life and career in his first major interview, published in The New Yorker on Sunday.

Swartzwelder worked on The Simpsons between 1989 and 2003, writing 59 episodes, far more than any other writer in the show's long history. His credits on The Simpsons include a litany of classic episodes, and the list of personal favorites Swartzwelder gave in the interview serves as a solid primer: "Itchy & Scratchy & Marge," "Bart the Murderer," "Dog of Death," "Homer at the Bat," "Homie the Clown," "Bart Gets an Elephant" and "Homer's Enemy." (Asked about the latter episode, in which Homer obliviously but assuredly braves an upstanding new colleague, Frank Grimes, insane, Swartzwelder joked, "Grimey was asking for it the whole episode. He didn't approve of our Homer. He was asking for it, and he got it.")

Swartzwelder's jokes — succinct, simple and just the right amount of absurd — were so singular they spawned an honorific compliment: Swartzweldian." When asked what he thought of the compliment, Swartzwelder seemed flattered enough, but said the term was "the most awkward-sounding word in the English sentence." The next moment, when asked to describe his sense of humor, he replied, "Swartzweldian."

Swartzwelder worked as a writer on Saturday Night Live for one season in the mid-Eighties, while he also spent time in advertising (he now writes and self-publishes comedic novels), but it was his work on a little-known comedy magazine, Army Man, that got him the interview with Simpsons creator Matt Groening and producer/writer Sam Simon. He praised executive producer James Brooks for securing a deal with Fox that prevented the network from meddling too much in the show and allowing the writers to run wild. He also spoke about how animation allowed The Simpsons to be more subversive than other programs on TV at the time, citing the excessively violent "Itchy and Scratchy" segments.

"One of the greatest example of American manhood"

"We could show horrendous things to the children at home, as long as we portrayed them being shown to theSimpsons' children first," Swartzwelder said. "Somehow this extra step baffled our critics and foiled the mobs with torches. We agreed with them that this was wrong to show to children. Didn't we just show it being wrong? And look, here's more wrong stuff!"

Elsewhere, Swartzwelder spoke about how he always enjoyed writing Mr. Burns episodes and said he thought The Simpsons' third season was its best individual season. He also confirmed showrunner Mike Reiss' claim that Swartzwelder wrote Homer as if he were a big dog. Yes, he is a big talking dog. One moment he's the saddest man in the world, because he's just lost his job, or dropped his sandwich, or accidentally killed his family. Then, the next moment, he's the happiest man in the world, because he's just found a penny — maybe under one of his dead family members. He's not actually a dog, of course — he's smarter than that — but if you write him as a dog you'll never go wrong."

Swartzwelder spoke a bit about his reclusiveness as well (while there are few pictures of him, he was drawn into an episode as a David Crosby-looking figure in a psychiatric hospital in "Hurricane Neddy"). He confirmed that he got permission to work from home after Season Four, not because — as long rumored — he wanted to be able to smoke, but for a far more simple reason: "I didn't want to go in to work every day anymore. Getting old, I guess."

Swartzwelder offered some insight into his writing process as well, saying he would often rush through a first draft, pack it with filler jokes and pattern dialogue, but come out with a script nonetheless. "Then the next day, when I get up, the script's been written," he said. "It's lousy, but it's a script. The hard part is done. It's like a crappy little elf has snuck into my office and badly done all my work for me, and then left with a tip of his crappy hat. All I have to do from that point on is fix it. So I've taken a very hard job, writing, and turned it into an easy one, rewriting, overnight. I advise all writers to do their scripts and other writing this way. And be sure to send me a small royalty every time you do it."

The Simpsons didn't create this kind of humor—Groening credits Buster Keaton—but they did perfect it.

"He love his family, but he just too stupid to understand that"

Born in 1954 in Portland, Oregon, The Simpsons creator Matt Groening had, in many ways, an idyllic childhood. As described in The Simpsons: An Uncensored, Unauthorized History, he grew up next to the old Portland Zoo, which, after reopening in a new location in 1959, became a wonderland for Groening and his friends with its abandoned animal enclosures. He also enjoyed a happy home life, with his dad, Homer, mom, Margaret, and four siblings, including younger sisters Lisa and Maggie. It was Homer, a cartoonist and filmmaker, who showed his precocious son that a career of creative fulfillment was possible.

But the conformity of a suburban existence soon proved dull, even to a young Groening. Acting out in school, he recalled having to write "I must be quiet in class" 500 times on at least one occasion and having his doodles torn up by teachers. As a third-grader, he entered a short-story contest set up

WHY THE CREATOR MAKE SIMPSONS YELLOW ?

Along with being yellow and it being one of the best television shows of all time, The Simpsons has also become famous for another thing – predicting the future.

They're arguably the most famous family in television, and have been on our screens for more than three decades – but when you think about it, it's quite weird that Matt Groening decided to make the Simpsons yellow.

Well, it turns out there was an understandable thought process behind the choice to make the Simpsons yellow – and it may have had a whole host of benefits.

Groening revealed in an interview back in 2007 that an animator came up with the idea of yellow.

He said that he wanted his cartoon to be eye-catching. When someone is flipping through channels, he wanted the bright yellow color of theSimpsons to catch the eye and make them go back to watch it. And so, the iconic yellow Simpsons family was created. "An animator came up with the Simpsons' yellow and as soon as she showed it to me I said, 'This is the answer!' When you're flicking through channels with your remote control, and a flash of yellow goes by, you'll know you're watching The Simpsons." That wasn't the only

They're arguably the most famous family in television, and have been on our screens for more than three decades – but when you think about it, it's quite weird that Matt Groening decided to make the Simpsons yellow.

Well, it turns out there was an understandable thought process behind the choice to make the Simpsons yellow – and it may have had a whole host of benefits.

Groening revealed in an interview back in 2007 that an animator came up with the idea of yellow.

He said that he wanted his cartoon to be eye-catching. When someone is flipping through channels, he wanted the bright yellow color of theSimpsons to catch the eye and make them go back to watch it. And so, the iconic yellow Simpsons family was created.

"An animator came up with the Simpsons' yellow and as soon as she showed it to me I said, 'This is the answer!' When you're flicking through channels with your remote control, and a flash of yellow goes by, you'll know you're watching The Simpsons." That wasn't the only

BEFORE HE CREATE THE SIMPSONS

Born in 1954 in Portland, Oregon, The Simpsons creator Matt Groening had, in many ways, an idyllic childhood. As described in The Simpsons: An Uncensored, Unauthorized History, he grew up next to the old Portland Zoo, which, after reopening in a new location in 1959, became a wonderland for Groening and his friends with its abandoned animal enclosures.

He also enjoyed a happy home life, with his dad, Homer, mom, Margaret, and four siblings, including younger sisters Lisa and Maggie. It was Homer, a cartoonist and filmmaker, who showed his precocious son that a career of creative fulfillment was possible.

But the conformity of a suburban existence soon proved dull, even to a young Groening. Acting out in school, he recalled having to write "I must be quiet in class" 500 times on at least one occasion and having his doodles torn up by teachers. As a third-grader, he entered a short-story contest set up with the premise that a child walks into his attic, bumps his head and then knows what he wants to become when he grows up. In Groening's version, the boy dies from his head

GROENING DELIVERED BITING COMMENTART AS A SCHOOL PAPER

By high school, Groening had learned to channel his subversive leanings in a manner that engaged his classmates. He ran for student body president on the Teens for Decency ticket, with the tongue-in-cheek slogan, "If you're against decency, then what are you for?" Again, to his surprise, he won.

Groening went on to the liberal Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, where he butted heads with the more extreme countercultural types that populated the campus. He gleefully zinged their sensibilities after becoming editor of the school paper, at one point instigating a petition that condemned his satirization of communal life, while also training his ire on mainstream targets like the Washington state legislature.

He also invited the off-the-wall submissions of campus cartoonists, finding himself inspired by the original works of fellow undergrad Lynda Barry. After graduating in 1977, Groening headed to Los Angeles with the idea of pursuing a writing career. He found some work along those lines, whipping up slogans for horror movies, but also took on a series of jobs that included chauffeur, dishwasher and record store clerk to make a living.

Groening's rough-and-tumble early days in Tinseltown provided endless fodder for a comic he titled Life in Hell, featuring the anthropomorphic rabbit Binky. Along with mailing the comics to friends and family back in Portland, he attempted to sell his stapled-together books from his record store.

The artist saw his first non-self-published comic appear in a 1978 issue of Wet magazine. That year, he also began working for the alternative-weekly newspaper the L.A. Reader through an ever-shifting array of responsibilities that included reporter, distribution manager, punk rock critic and assistant editor. He finally added staff cartoonist to his resume when Life in Hell first appeared in the paper in the spring of 1980.

The strip gained traction after a shift in tone, with Binky becoming less preachy and more of a victim of the cultural and social forces that browbeat dissidents into submission. With a developing cast of characters that included Binky's girlfriend Sheba, his one-eared son Bongo and the gay entrepreneurs Akbar and Jeff, and recurring components like "The 16 Types of Sisters" and "The 9 Secret Love Techniques That Could Possibly Turn Men Into Putty in Your Hands," the minimally drawn but meticulously written Life in Hell found its niche between the underground comics and mainstream fare."Somehow this extra step baffled our critics and foiled the mobs with torches. We agreed with them that this was wrong to show to children. 'Didn't we just show it being

GROENING CREATED 'THE SIMPSONS' FOR 'THE TRACEY ULLMAN SHOW'

In 1987, producers of the soon-to-be-launched sketch comedy program The Tracey Ullman Show, headed by the legendary James L. Brooks, contacted Groening about developing short animated cartoons to air between skits. Realizing that he would lose the rights to his Life in Hell characters with the deal, Groening quickly created a new cartoon family named after his own siblings and parents, albeit with a "Bart" in lieu of a character named after himself.

The early iteration of The Simpsons was a crude, Neanderthal version of the family that would become ubiquitous in pop culture; both Bart and Lisa were troublemakers, and Homer was a barely controlled cauldron of rage. But the short clips were a hit with fans, and producers began exploring a standalone series as Tracey Ullman floundered in the ratings.

Brooks selected his longtime colleague Sam Simon to help Groening develop theanimated series, and The Simpsons dynasty began on December 17, 1989, when the first episode aired. However, the show's collection of memorable supporting characters and winking, multilayered nods to popular culture, arguably owes more to Simon and the original stable of writers than to Groening.

Yet Groening's DNA is all over the show, from the characters named after the streets of his hometown (Flanders, Lovejoy, etc.), to his selection of Danny Elfman to compose the iconic theme song, to his insistence on the cartoon adhering to the normal laws of physics despite the liberties taken with continuity.

Most importantly, The Simpsons retained the subversive undercurrent that has driven its creator since he was a bored grade school student. "If there's a message that runs through the show," he told The New York Times in 2001, well after he had become wealthy and influential beyond his wildest dreams, "it's that maybe the authorities don't have your best interests at heart."

Last year, the team behind The Simpsons produced a video for the French luxury fashion house Balenciaga that debuted in October at Paris Fashion Week. (There's a sentence I never thought I'd write.) It featured the show's characters walking a runway in Balenciaga designs, and was, depending on your worldview, what you might call a long commercial for the brand or a short episode of the show. David Silverman, a veteran Simpsons producer and animator who directed the short, describes it as "one of the hardest things I ever did." Demna, Balenciaga's artistic director and, like a lot of 40-somethings, a fan of The Simpsons since childhood, gave note after note, trying to strike the right balance between caricature and sincere presentation of his clothing. "Simpsons characters," Silverman says, are "quite different from human proportions, so in some respects we took great liberties. Cheating, we call it." It took a year's worth of work and in the end gave the people something they didn't know they needed: an animated Homer Simpson—a lovable oaf who once gained 61 pounds to qualify for disability so he could work from home—posing in a red Balenciaga puffer jacket, a more recent iteration of which costs $2,850.

That the fashion industry now looks to The Simpsons for inspiration is odd for a group of characters who have, for the most part, never changed outfits. But Bart—with his skateboard and his malleable mind—is a proto-hypebeast if there ever was one. And in a recent episode parodying contemporary fashion, The Weeknd voiced the owner of a white-hot new streetwear company, Slipreme. Adidas has a Simpsons sneaker line, and Nike has made a shoe with a Marge Simpson color-way (featuring swaths of blue, like her hair, and light green, like her dress), which fetches an ungodly average price of $873 on the resale market. From the outset, the show's creators always understood its business cachet. In the '90s, The Simpsons shilled Butterfingers and plastic key chains—and mocked itself for its craven commercialism. As one Springfieldian says after encountering the latest example of the Simpson family selling out (an ad for a record, The Simpsons Go Calypso!), "Man, this thing's really getting out of hand." Three decades later, it's a testament to the show's longevity not to mention American progress, that the Simpsons still appear on key chains, only now they're made out of calfskin, by a luxury fashion house, and cost $260.

Even for a culture that's obsessed with recycling intellectual property—we've seen no fewer than eight live-action movies starring Spider-Man in the past 20 years—The Simpsons is ubiquitous. In a bizarrely sincere music video for the Bad Bunny single "Te Deseo Lo Mejor," the pop star, animated in the classic Simpsons style, reunites Homer and Marge after an argument. Artists mine the show for material, as its imagery, like Mickey Mouse and the McDonald's arches, has become a stand-in for American materialism. In 2019, the designer NIGO sold a painting by the artist known as KAWS that depicts, rather faithfully, the cover of a 1998 album performed by the show's characters: the extended cast of The Simpsons posed like the cover of the Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. (The CD was priced at $11.98; the KAWS painting went for $14.8 million at Sotheby's.) And the conceptual artist Tom Sachs made a series of paintings

THE MAKING OF THE SIMPSONS

Born in 1954 in Portland, Oregon, The Simpsons creator Matt Groening had, in many ways, an idyllic childhood. As described in The Simpsons: An Uncensored, Unauthorized History, he grew up next to the old Portland Zoo, which, after reopening in a new location in 1959, became a wonderland for Groening and his friends with its abandoned animal enclosures.

He also enjoyed a happy home life, with his dad, Homer, mom, Margaret, and four siblings, including younger sisters Lisa and Maggie. It was Homer, a cartoonist and filmmaker, who showed his precocious son that a career of creative fulfillment was possible.

But the conformity of a suburban existence soon proved dull, even to a young Groening. Acting out in school, he recalled having to write "I must be quiet in class" 500 times on at least one occasion and having his doodles torn up by teachers.

As a third-grader, he entered a short-story contest set up with the premise that a child walks into his attic, bumps his head and then knows what he wants to become when he grows up. In Groening's version the boy dies from his head injury and returns as a ghost every Halloween, a morbid tale that surprisingly became the winning entry.

Groening delivered biting commentary as a school paper editor

By high school, Groening had learned to channel his subversive leanings in a manner that engaged his classmates. He ran for student body president on the Teens for Decency ticket, with the tongue-in-cheek slogan, "If you're against decency, then what are you for?" Again, to his surprise, he won.

Groening went on to the liberal Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, where he butted heads with the more extreme countercultural types that populated the campus. He gleefully zinged their sensibilities after becoming editor of the school paper, at one point instigating a petition that condemned his satirization of communal life, while also training his ire on mainstream targets like the Washington state legislature.

He also invited the off-the-wall submissions of campus cartoonists, finding himself inspired by the original works of fellow undergrad Lynda Barry.

His 'Life in Hell' comic was inspired by his struggles in Los AngelesAfter graduating in 1977, Groening headed to Los Angeles with the idea of pursuing a writing career. He found some work along those lines, whipping up slogans for horror movies, but also took on a series of jobs that included chauffeur, dishwasher and

"Here's to alcohol: the cause of, and solution to, all of life's problems."

BEHIND THE STORY OF SIMPSONS

record store clerk to make a living.Groening's rough-and-tumble early days in Tinseltown provided endless fodder for a comic he titled Life in Hell, featuring the anthropomorphic rabbit Binky. Along with mailing the comics to friends and family back in Portland, he attempted to sell his stapled-together books from his record store.

The artist saw his first non-self-published comic appear in a 1978 issue of Wet magazine. That year, he also began working for the alternative-weekly newspaper the L.A. Reader through an ever-shifting array of responsibilities that included reporter, distribution manager, punk rock critic and assistant editor. He finally added staff cartoonist to his resume when Life in Hell first appeared in the paper in the spring of 1980.

The strip gained traction after a shift in tone, with Binky becoming less preachy and more of a victim of the cultural and social forces that browbeat dissidents into submission. With a developing cast of characters that included Binky's girlfriend Sheba, his one-eared son Bongo and the gay entrepreneurs Akbar and Jeff, and recurring components like "The 16 Types of Sisters" and "The 9 Secret Love Techniques That Could Possibly Turn Men Into Putty in Your Hands," the minimally drawn but meticulously written Life in Hell found its niche between the underground comics and mainstream fare.

Groening's career got a boost in the early 1980s when the L.A. Reader hired sales rep Deborah Caplan, who observed that the Life in Hell strips were "a major selling point" of the paper. After the two became romantically involved, she established a business to promote her future husband's work, negotiating syndication arrangements with other publications and a book deal with Pantheon.

Meanwhile, Groening was up to his old tricks of rocking the boat, writing silly reviews of bands based on their publicity photos and even making up phony acts to cover. He was fired from the L.A. Reader in 1986, after writing a letter to the editor over a fellow writer's dismissal, but by then Life in Hell was already appearing in other alt-weeklies and providing extra income through merchandise sales.

"I hope I didn't brain my damage."

WHAT IS IT ABOUT

Furthermore, the once-struggling artist was about to be presented with the business offer that would change his life forever.

In 1987, producers of the soon-to-be-launched sketch comedy program The Tracey Ullman Show, headed by the legendary James L. Brooks, contacted Groening about developing short animated cartoons to air between skits. Realizing that he would lose the rights to his Life in Hell characters with the deal, Groening quickly created a new cartoon family named after his own siblings and parents, albeit with a "Bart" in lieu of a character named after himself.

Last year, the team behind The Simpsons produced a video for the French luxury fashion house Balenciaga that debuted in October at Paris Fashion Week. "There's a sentence I never thought I'd write," It featured the show's characters walking a runway in Balenciaga designs, and was, depending on your worldview what you might call a long commercial for the brand or a short episode of the show. David Silverman, a veteran Simpsons producer and animator who directed the short, describes it as "one of the hardest things I ever did." Demna, Balenciaga's artistic director and, like a lot of 40-somethings, a fan of The Simpsons since childhood, gave note after note, trying to strike the right balance between caricature and sincere presentation of his clothing. "Simpsons characters," Silverman says, are "quite different from human proportions, so in some respects we took great liberties. Cheating, we call it." It took a year's worth of work and in the end, gave the people something they didn't know they needed: an animated Homer Simpson—a lovable oaf who once gained 61 pounds to qualify for disability so he could work from home—posing in a red Balenciaga puffer jacket, a more recent iteration of which costs $2,850.

That the fashion industry now looks to The Simpsons for inspiration is odd for a group of characters who have, for the most part, never changed outfits. But Bart—with his skateboard and his malleable mind—is a proto-hypebeast if there ever was one. And in a recent episode parodying contemporary fashion, The Weeknd voiced the owner of a white-hot new