

The New Criterion

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The Critic's Notebook

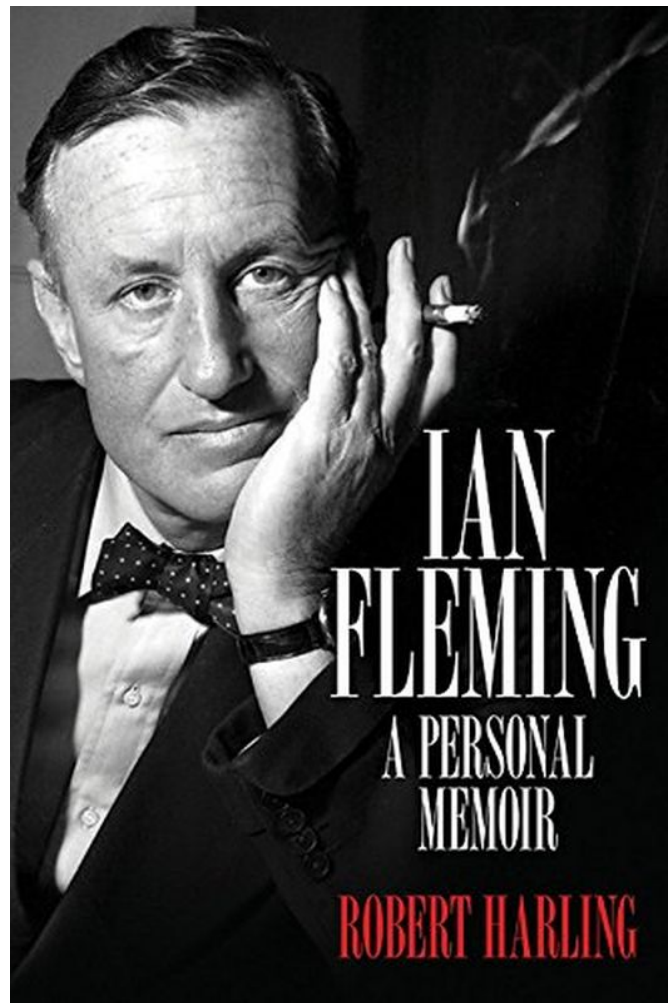
by The Editors



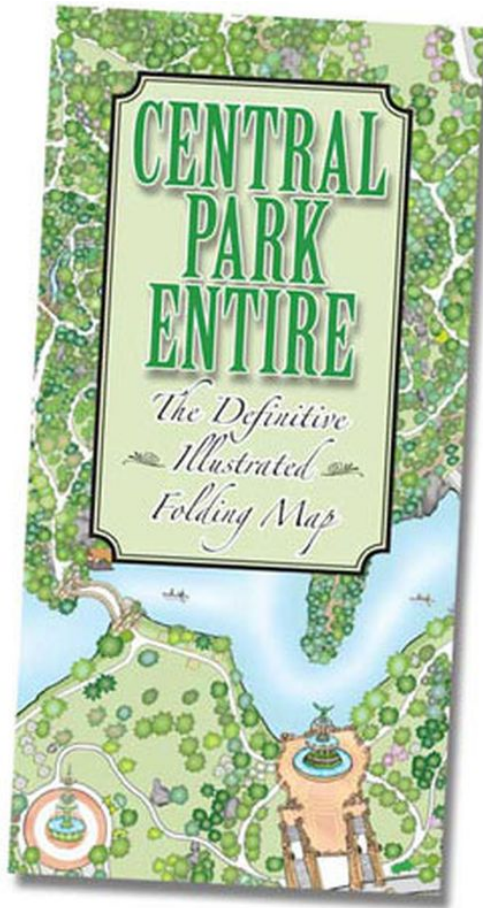
The Woolworth Building, ca. 1913

Sign up to receive “Critic’s Notebook” in your inbox every week—it only takes a few seconds and it’s completely free! “Critic’s Notebook” is a weekly preview of the best to read, see, and hear in New York and beyond, compiled by the editors of *The New Criterion*.

This week: Connections, Cartoons, and Central Park.



Nonfiction: *Ian Fleming: A Personal Memoir*, by Robert Harling (The Robson Press): In the history of literary exegesis there has been a not-entirely-wrong tendency to associate author with character, ascribing aspects of one to the other. The formulation is: character displays trait, ergo author must have done so, too. (Ignore the psychobabble inversion: character displays trait, author must specifically not have done so.) This is particularly true in cases where the character is iconic. Think James Bond and Ian Fleming—the image we have of the author matches up rather nicely with the character: debonair, hard-drinking, and successful with women. This is certainly the picture given by the 2012 BBC series *Fleming: The Man Who Would Be Bond*. But, as a new memoir of Fleming shows, the syllogism is a bit off. Robert Harling, the author of this posthumous “personal memoir” of his great friend, shows that while Fleming was dashing, the most notable aspect of his relationship with women was his callousness, furthered by his tendency towards melancholy. According to Harling, a noted typographer and longtime journalist, Fleming’s primary interest was books—that he wrote so many, then, should be no surprise. —BR



Landscape architecture: “Spring to Summer: A Study of Nature in Central Park,” with Ken Chaya, in collaboration with the 92nd Street Y (June 15): Central Park serves—at least for those of us with the good fortune to live uptown—as New York’s backyard. But though the designed landscape offers a massively varied and intriguing topography, many New Yorkers (myself included) are guilty of taking the space for granted. Those wishing to reanimate their love of the park could do worse than to be led on a guided nature walk by Ken Chaya. The artist and naturalist is the creator of “Central Park Entire,” a fastidiously detailed folding map with over 19,630 trees illustrated in their exact positions, along with all the other familiar park features. The triumphant result of over two years (and 500 miles) of walking, the map is Chaya’s paean to New York’s foremost outdoor space. For the price of \$35, New Yorkers of all stripes can walk the park with Chaya himself to get a sense for what a treasure this backyard of ours is. —BR



Art: “Roz Chast: Cartoon Memoirs,” at the Museum of the City of New York (Through October 9): There are those who read a magazine cover to cover. Others read Chast to Chast. The cartoonist Roz Chast’s vision of urban anxiety has been appearing in *The New Yorker* since 1978. *Can’t We Talk About Something More Pleasant?*, Chast’s 2014 graphic memoir of her aging parents, showed that such anxiety is not always unfounded. Now at the Museum of the City of New York, “Roz Chast: Cartoon Memoirs” brings two hundred of her best (and most anxious) drawings together. —JP



Music: “Connections,” performed by Ensemble ACJW, at National Sawdust (June 16): One never runs out of praise for Carnegie Hall. In addition to offering New York’s finest musical programming, the legendary institution takes an active role in musical education through a number of programs, including Ensemble ACJW, a musical study program for professional performers. The last chance to hear the ensemble comes this week: their program on Thursday presents music by Paola Prestini, one of the most talented of today’s young contemporary composers, alongside works by Timo Andres, Samuel Barber, and others, at National Sawdust, the newest and most chic venue on Brooklyn’s concert circuit. —ECS



Architecture: Tour of The Woolworth Building with *Untapped Cities* (June 18): The online magazine *Untapped Cities* often offers up a treasure map for urban explorers. This Saturday at 4 o'clock the site is organizing a behind-the-scenes tour of one of our most spectacular but restricted urban landmarks: Cass Gilbert's 1913 Woolworth Building. Led by Gilbert's great-granddaughter Helen Post Curry, the tour will reveal the secrets of New York's first great skyscraper and arguably our greatest neo-gothic structure in what has been called our "cathedral to commerce." —JP

From the archive: Olmsted as author, by Elizabeth Barlow Rogers: On the importance of Frederick Law Olmsted, the visionary of Central Park, as a writer.

From our latest issue: The master propagandist, by Henrik Bering: On Jacques-Louis David's moral foibles.

Broadcast: Ayaan Hirsi Ali on Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' Versus Obama's Wishful Thinking on Islam.

Each week the editors of *The New Criterion* offer recommendations on what to read, see, and hear in the world of culture in the weekly Critic's Notebook. To get it first, subscribe to the free Critic's Notebook email by [clicking here](#).