

DECEMBER 2019

preview

magazine

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SPECIAL SECTION

KITCHENS & BATHS



The Gift of
Performance

Local Women in Theater

By Elise Linscott

preview

magazine

table of contents
DECEMBER 2019



5

art When Money Talks

Mt. Holyoke exhibit displays currency's history and power

By *Laura Holland*



9

your art here Facades

By *Jackie Griswold*



15

food Camaraderie, Nostalgia, and a lot of Meat

Damn Yankees BBQ in South Deerfield

By *Tinky Weisblat*



18

calendar On View

Happenings this month



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HOME & DESIGN SPECIAL ISSUE

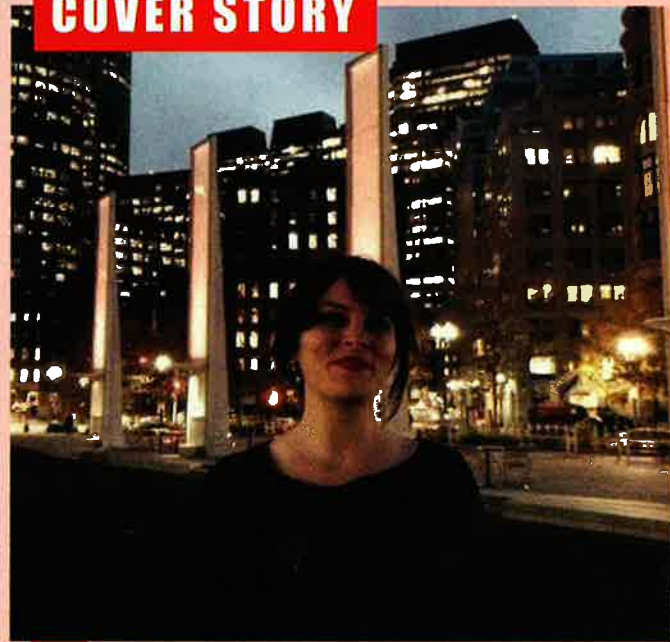
23

home & design Kitchens & Baths

By *Michael Reardon*

ON THE COVER: Jon Crispin Photography

COVER STORY



5

Women in Theater

By *Elise Linscott*

VALLEY **ADVOCATE** | **preview**
magazine

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When **MONEY** Talks

Mt. Holyoke exhibit displays currency's history and power



After Dano Wall, (American)
Twenty Dollar Bill with Harriet Tubman counterstamp, 2019
Ink on linen and cotton
Mount Holyoke College Art Museum Kit Collection

President Donald Trump and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin push their views on public and private finances. Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders advocate alternative economic visions. Bitcoin, Libra, and other cryptocurrencies offer speculative new possibilities. Now, an exhibition at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum sidesteps theory of competing monetary systems to delve into the histories hidden behind various currencies.

The exhibition curators scrutinize money through dissimilar lenses. Professor Desmond Fitz-Gibbon, with expertise in the history of modern Britain, teaches a course at Mt. Holyoke — “Histories of Money” — that inspired the exhibition and that continues to evolve in response to students’ diverse interests. Aaron Miller, Associate Curator of Visual and Material Culture, comes to fine art from the field of historical archeology. Their collaboration extends past a collection of coins [intend-

ing no disrespect to numismatics] to explore the overarching question: “What is Money?” For answers, they sought out currencies both age-old and current, local and world-wide.

Three Mesopotamian clay tablets covered with cuneiform text are the oldest form of money on display. Dating from 2000 to 500 B.C., these tablets record gifts offered to a temple and illustrate an abstract form of credit. Like the plastic rectangle of a modern-day credit card, the clay of Mesopotamia was not valuable in itself, but in what it recorded or represented. [Now, of course, ancient clay tablets are extremely valuable in themselves, as fragile artifacts of human hands from past centuries.] Clustered with cuneiform are other items that add up to a mini-survey of accounting and ways of recording credit. There’s an 18th-century account book from a Belchertown minister and a French colonial IOU scrawled on a playing card. While a single card — the Three of Spades — carries no intrinsic

art



value, the scribbled IOU opens the door to speculation: Who were the players? What were the stakes? Was this a trivial debt or a financial tragedy? And how did this drama end?

In contrast to abstract financial records, gold and silver coins carry intrinsic value, literally worth their own weight. Classic examples are coins from ancient Greek city states, proudly stamped with symbols of state or portraits of powerful rulers. So in the 5th century BC, the Athenian owl became the standard across the Aegean Sea, while in the 4th century BC, profiles of Alexander the Great appeared on metal coins in all corners of his kingdom, north, south, east, and west.

But the first truly global currency was the Spanish eight-reales piece, also known as the Spanish Dollar and the peso, as well as being notorious as the Pieces of Eight so romanticized in pirate lore and legend. First minted in 1497, silver eight-reales coins traveled around the world as Spanish trade



Stan Natchez, (Shoshone/Paiute and American, b. 1954)
Geronimo's Cadillac, 2019
 Archival jet print on canvas, oil, glass beadwork
 Purchased with the Ann Nelson Behrman (Class of 1954) Art Acquisition Fund

COINS:
(Left) Spanish and British
8 reales of Charles IV with George III countermark, 1796-1820; Silver
 Purchased with the Marian Hayes (Class of 1925) Art Purchase Fund

(Right) Greek (minted in Tyre, Lebanon)
Tetradrachm of Alexander III, the Great, 336-323 BCE; Silver
 Gift of the Estate of Nathan Whitman

The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art



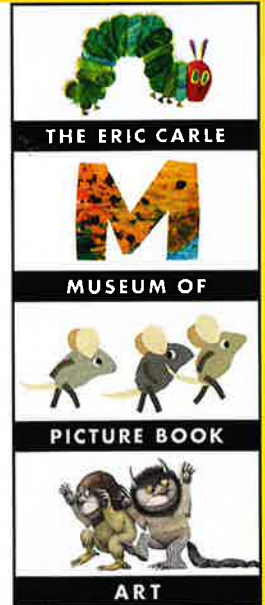
The Pursuit of Everything: Maira Kalman's Books for Children

Through April 5, 2020

Enjoy a colorful panorama of Maira Kalman's picture-book career. Her beautifully crafted paintings and witty word play have delighted audiences of all ages for more than 30 years.

This exhibition is made possible with generous support from Penguin Young Readers and Random House Children's Books.

Maira Kalman, Illustration for *What Pete Ate From A-Z (Really!)* [G. P. Putnam's Sons]. Courtesy of Julie Saul Gallery, New York. © 2001 Maira Kalman.



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routes spread throughout America and on to China and India. The story of "New World" silver ["new" to European explorers, but "home" to indigenous cultures] is shown in stages: the raw material of silver ore mined in Mexico; a silver statue cast by indigenous artisans; a rough coin clipped into shape in Mexico; and a more finely minted eight-reales piece that traveled to Asia, its passage marked by chop marks of Chinese merchants. In "Histories of Money" in Spring 2019, a student who had studied classical Chinese was able to identify and translate many of the historical chop marks.

Another eight-reales piece tells a tale of two kings. The main image, dated 1796, profiles the Spanish ruler, Carlos IV. In the middle of the coin, however, a tiny counter stamp of British King George III repurposes the Spanish coin as British currency in February 1797. But then, scratched text streams from the mouth of Carlos IV— "Thank Heavens for the 11th of May 1797" — imprinting yet another date and imposing another layer of mystery onto the coin.

A British copper penny from 1797 — a big year for coins — also reveals Great Britain's urgent need for coins. But instead of being re-stamped Spanish silver, the copper penny moved into new means of mass production. The large copper coin has a thick, aesthetically clunky rim, due to the mixed promise and limitation of steam power.

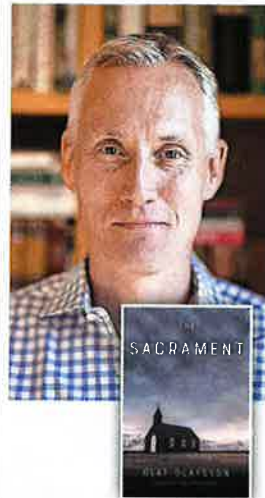
Matthew Boulton and James Watt invented the Watt Steam En-



Felipe Jesus Consalvos (American, born Cuba, 1891-1960s)
One Wild Girl, ca. 1920-1950
 Double-sided mixed media collage on canvas
 International Collage Center Collection

ODYSSEY BOOKSHOP

Upcoming events brought to you by Odyssey Bookshop



**Olaf Olafsson,
The Sacrament**

**Book Talk & Signing,
Saturday, December 7
at 3:00pm**

Odyssey Bookshop's First Editions Club December Selection, *The Sacrament*, is a haunting, vivid story of a nun whose past returns to her in unexpected ways, all while investigating a mysterious death and a series of harrowing abuse claims



Young Readers Book Signing Day

**Saturday, December 14 from
1:00pm — 3:30pm**

Join us for a day of special storytimes and book signings with some amazing children, middle grade, and young adult book authors, including Padma Venkatraman, Victoria J. Coe, Elly Swartz, Jessica Peill-Meininghaus, and more!

To RSVP for the above events, please visit
<https://www.odysseybks.com/event-rsvp>



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FRONT AND BACK OF PAPER MONEY
Bank of Papua New Guinea
5 Kina note, 2009

Ink on polymer
 Purchased through prior Bequest of Helene
 Brosseau Black (Class of 1931)



gine, which helped power the whole industrial revolution. The enterprising Boulton also lobbied to use a steam-powered press to manufacture coins, and in 1797, received a contract to mint copper pennies at a factory in Birmingham. But his steam-powered press could not imprint deeply into the metal. And the resultant shallower, flatter image raised concerns that the design would quickly wear away as the coin passed hand to hand. The solution? A thick border for fingers to grasp leaves the central royal portrait relatively untouched.

While many currencies, like the coins of Greek city states and the Spanish eight-reales, are deeply woven into national identity, others exist outside the state, like the transnational euro or the digital currencies that float globally over the Internet. Still others turn local: for us by us. Often a critique of capitalism, local currencies keep wealth close to home and anchor value in the community. The Brixton pound is one local currency, valid only in the south of London suburb, and featuring David Bowie, born and raised in Brixton, on the 10-pound note.

Along with the intricate art pressed and printed onto money, there are, conversely, also artworks that adapt money's design. The self-taught artist Felipe Jesus Consalvos (1891-1960) also worked as a factory cigar roller. In his mixed media collage *One Wild Girl*, he cuts and collages cigar bands, magazine photographs, and iconic fragments of United States currency, such as a close-clipped head of George Washington. *Geronimo's Cadillac, 2019*, by Stan Natchez, is a print on canvas with oil and glass beadwork (itself used in transactions between early traders and indigenous people). Natchez combines background imagery of an 1899 Silver Certificate featuring the Hunkpapa, Lakota leader Running Antelope, with a Pop-art interpretation of a 1905 photograph of the Apache leader Geronimo, incongruously seated behind the wheel of a Locamobile Model C. Revealing a degree of surrealism as well as a problematic relationship, the photograph documents a press event arranged while Geronimo was actually a United States prisoner of war.

Another uneasy relationship with images on money emerges in to-



British
Brixton ten pound note, 2017
 Ink on polymer
 Purchased through prior Bequest of
 Helene Brosseau Black (Class of 1931)

day's 20-dollar bill, portraying President Andrew Jackson — who forced the relocation of Cherokee, Chickasaw, Muscogee, and other indigenous people along the infamous Trail of Tears. Harriet Tubman is due to replace Jackson, but Treasury Secretary Mnuchin delayed production until 2028. Jackson remains in place. However, artists have designed a stamp to print Tubman's face over Jackson's, and one of these re-branded bills is displayed in *Money Matters*. [You, too, can have a Tubman 20. At Tubmanstamp.com, find directions on how to make your own stamp using a 3-D printer or how to buy one, plus where to find an official Stamping Station.] With Tubman's eyes aligned exactly over Jackson's, the re-stamped bill still serves as legal tender.

Beyond the gleam of metal coins, the exhibition inspires a crisscross of connections and conversations among different types of currencies. So as "Money Talks," stop, look, and listen — to the wealth of stories that reach back to the past and look toward a possible future.

Money Matters: Meaning, Power, and Change in the History of Currency, curated by Desmond Fitz-Gibbon and Aaron Miller, at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, South Hadley, through June 21, 2020.