

one-hour call-in show every Friday night on Bloomberg Radio; a fifteen-minute gig with D'Amato that's broadcast several times each weekend on Bloomberg; and two I-pay-for-my-ticket-like-everybody-else weekend visits to movie theatres.

Viewable this February at a theatre near you—provided you reside within the gravitational pull of the Ed Koch Queensboro Bridge—will be “Koch,” a ninety-five-minute documentary directed by Neil Barsky. Three years ago, Barsky, a former *Daily News* and *Wall Street Journal* reporter turned securities analyst turned hedge-fund manager turned guy who does whatever he pleases, approached Koch's former chief of staff, Diane Coffey, with a proposal to make a film about his mayoralty, which he pitched as “a love letter to New York.” Though the two men hadn't previously met, Koch agreed to cooperate, with the stipulation that he could see the film before its release and register any complaints.

It turned out that he didn't have any. Barsky had rendered an engaging and evenhanded accounting of Koch's three terms (1978-89): his success in restoring the city's fiscal health; his appetite for argument; his evolution from reformer to ally of the clubhouse bosses; his occasionally fractious relationship with African-Americans; ditto with rightly aggrieved AIDS activists; his refusal to entertain questions about his sexuality.

Midmorning one day recently, after an appearance on a local news-and-talk show, the Mayor rode in the back of a luxury sedan to an advance screening of “Koch” on Long Island. He wore a pin-striped charcoal-gray suit, a blue-and-white checked shirt, a red-and-blue striped tie, and two hearing aids. A cane rested against the seat, and he had a pillow and a blanket for whenever it felt like nap time. He has a wispy fringe of white hair, his quota of liver spots, and a remarkable late-onset resemblance to Isaac Bashevis Singer. During a mid-journey pit stop at a McDonald's, he ordered a cup of vanilla soft-serve ice cream, then allowed Coffey to fix a handkerchief in his collar, to protect his necktie.

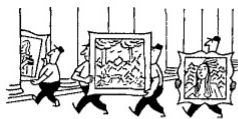
In the car, he talked about his successes, his successors (Dinkins: nice guy, undone by Crown Heights. Giuliani: “very able mayor” but “very mean guy.” Bloomberg: thumbs-up), the cataloguing of his archives (“enormous, just enor-

mous”), his plans to be buried in the Washington Heights section of Trinity Church Cemetery (headstone already engraved and in place, plus marble bench for visitors), and the benefits of growing old (“There are *no* benefits”). One early scene in “Koch” shows its subject at home, preparing his breakfast, and includes a shot of his prescription medications. “I take about ten pills every day,” Koch says. “Remember, I had a stroke and a heart attack and a quadruple bypass. Ain't bad for one guy.”

As his driver pulled up at the theatre, Koch revised his appraisal of aging. “I might make one little change,” he said. “You find out how nice people are. They hold doors and offer me seats. In the beginning, I wouldn't do it, I wouldn't sit. But now I do. After I had my bypass, I spent five weeks in intensive care. My chest filled with fluid. Ultimately, twenty-one doctors at New York-Presbyterian looked at me. When I got out, I took them all to dinner with their spouses. To Peter Luger. And I said to them, ‘If any of you order fish, I will give your name to the press.’”

—Mark Singer

R.I.P. DEPARTMENT ZOMBIE ART



When the Hudson surged through Chelsea, in late October, at least forty million dollars' worth of art was destroyed or damaged beyond repair: rendered a total loss, in insurance-company parlance. Such works—those for which the cost of conservation and the subsequent loss in market value are greater than the amount for which the works are insured—will enter into a strange netherworld. Removed from the marketplace, these objects will live on in warehouses, unseen and unappreciated, becoming what has been called “dead art” or “zombie art.”

A group of works that were damaged before Sandy are the subject of an exhibition, “No Longer Art,” which has been on display at Columbia University. The show was put together by Elka Krajewska, a Polish artist based in New York, and Mark Wasiuta, who teaches architecture at Columbia. Krajewska ex-

plained her motivation for conducting a postmortem during a panel discussion at the opening. “I assumed that when a work is destroyed it somehow disappears physically,” she told a crowd crammed into the Arthur Ross Architecture Gallery. “But when I learned that, actually, there are inventories in storage of work that for me, as an artist, would seem not to exist, that interested me and moved me, and I felt a responsibility to deal with this material.”

The deceased works were not hanging on the walls—Krajewska did not want to aestheticize their demise—but were mounted on dollies that were placed in an alcove and could be pulled out individually, like refrigerated drawers in a morgue. Among them was a Jeff Koons porcelain balloon dog that had fallen off a shelf and shattered, its severed head still in a brown padded envelope that was marked with the word “broken.” There was a Linda Bond graphite-and-gunpowder drawing of kaffiyehs that, while on display in a museum, had been smeared by the hand of a small boy. There were two perfect parts of a triptych painted by Helmut Dorner: the third part had been lost in transit. On shelves were catalogues containing correspondence by the insurance company leading up to the declaration of total loss. The names of the art works' owners had been redacted, but not the manner in which the works had been damaged. These ranged from “Something incredibly heavy, or a conveyor belt had to have done something like this” to “The box looked like it was used as an accordion.”

All the works were donated or loaned by the German-based Axa Art Insurance Corporation to the Salvage Art Institute, which was founded by Krajewska in 2010 to be, as a wall text put it, “a refuge for salvaged work while offering a platform for confronting the regulation of its financial, aesthetic and social value.” (Krajewska prefers the term “salvage art” to “dead art.”) Christiane Fischer, the president and C.E.O. of Axa Art, was a participant in the panel discussion. “Ultimately, value is a market force,” she said. But, Fischer went on, just because works were financially worthless did not mean they were without value, or might not one day have a market value restored to them. “Just imagine all the damaged works from Roman times and Greek times,” she said.

"If they would have been thrown out, how empty would the Met be?"

After the discussion, gallerygoers circulated among the art works. One viewer thumbed through photographs of rock stars by Jim Marshall that had been damaged in transit, as if he were riffling through vinyl records at a yard sale. Another peered at a painting by the Cuban artist Miguel Florido, which had a violent slash in its center. The viewer leaned in close, as one might do to examine an artist's brushwork, although in this case it was the handiwork of what seemed to be an overenthusiastic art handler unpacking the painting. "The knife was too long," Christian Scheidemann, a conservator who appeared on the panel, explained.

Scheidemann's conservation studio, which is far enough uptown to have been spared by Sandy, is now filled with possible future accessions for the Salvage Art Institute. He is working to revive what he can, while urging collectors to stay away from the operating room. "These images of post-flood stay in your mind, and, even if the work afterwards is in total perfect condition, you have this memory of 'Oh, it must have been in the water somewhere,'" he said. "So we just tell art lovers the damage is minor, and they should probably not come to see it."

—Rebecca Mead

TRIBUTE HIT PARADE



Alert viewers of "Hitchcock," the new film about the director's struggle to remain relevant, may notice a pair of evocative but elusive music cues. Hitchcock's wife and script doctor, Alma, played by Helen Mirren, goes for a spin in a convertible with a male friend to "Tweedle Dee," a bouncy bit of fifties folderol ("Jiminy cricket, jiminy jack, / You make my heart go clickety-clack"). And when Alma discovers her friend with another woman we hear the same pure voice purring a tango: "Kiss of Fire." Could it be Rosemary Clooney? Peggy Lee?

It's actually Georgia Gibbs, a once indelible star made delible by the passing years. In the fifties, the brassy pixie with

the huge smile was "Her nibs, Miss Georgia Gibbs!"—a variety-show fixture who'd belt her hits, then smoke and banter with Frank Sinatra and Milton Berle. She was also, as it happens, the beloved step-grandmother of "Hitchcock"'s director, Sacha Gervasi. "My private tribute works for the film," he said, "because she, like Alma, is the forgotten woman."

On a rainy Tuesday recently, Gervasi toured Gibbs's Manhattan from the back of a town car. Resplendent in a black top-



Georgia Gibbs

coat and a knotted wool scarf, he exuded the brio of one who, at forty-six, has checked all the boxes of the well-rounded life. He was a teen-age roadie for Anvil, and later made the documentary "Anvil! The Story of Anvil"; he worked for Ted Hughes; he was in a band with Gavin Rossdale; he interviewed Hervé Villechaize six days before the dwarf actor committed suicide; he was the voice of Jaguar cars; and he fathered an out-of-wedlock child named Bluebell with one of the Spice Girls, in this case, Ginger.

As the car nosed through traffic, Gervasi recalled flying in from London as a child to visit Gibbs and his grandfather on the Upper East Side. "She was really, really small"—five feet one—"but when she would belt out 'Arrivederci Roma,' standing in the kitchen with a chocolate milkshake in one hand and a cigarette in the other, the crystal would rattle." He said that she often spoke about a live show that she did with Danny Kaye at the Paramount Theatre, and the professionalism that was demanded: "She loved Danny,

and he gave her her big break, but if she missed her cue to laugh he'd come down on her like a ton of bricks."

Triple-parked by the Plaza Hotel, Gervasi recalled that Gibbs came here to buy back her freedom, after she'd been blacklisted for appearing in a concert to benefit Russian war orphans. "She told me she met the lawyer Edward Bennett Williams in the lobby, and that he took her envelope with five thousand dollars cash, shook her hand, stone-faced, and vanished. And that Sunday Ed Sullivan, who'd cancelled her, put her back on. That was the business, and it made her sick."

An even darker episode took place at the Gotham Hotel. "After she taped 'Your Hit Parade,' the agent invited her to discuss another show up in his room, where he raped her. Then he blackballed her from the show. That really dented her spirit, and her career. It didn't help that she refused to do what producers wanted, and pick one kind of singing. She grew up in an orphanage, she was on the road by age thirteen—she didn't take any shit from anyone." He sighed. "A lot of it is about playing the game—same as in Hollywood."

En route to Gibbs's apartment, as the rain came down harder, Gervasi said, "Even when she was dying of leukemia, in 2006, she would put on lipstick and an Hermès scarf for my arrival. I asked to film her a number of times, and she really wanted to do it, but she was worried she wouldn't be *brilliant*. And she didn't want to be remembered only as a sad old woman remembering the way it was."

At 965 Fifth Avenue, Gervasi ducked inside and asked the doorman, a white-haired man in blue livery named Armando, if he recollected his grandmother, in 10-C. "Oh, sure," Armando said. "Her nibs, Miss Georgia Gibbs!" His younger colleague, Elvis, chimed in: "She had the piano! She was very spunky!"

"She started on 'The Garry Moore Show,'" Armando recalled. "And she had a hit on the Lucky Strike 'Hit Parade'..."

"Tweedle Dee?" Gervasi suggested.

"That's it!" Armando began singing the tune and dancing to it, a little stiffly and shyly. Then he subsided onto his stool with a reminiscent look.

"Well," Gervasi said, smiling at a turn of events that didn't always happen for Georgia Gibbs, "I don't see how this could be more delightful."

—Tad Friend