

EYE VIEW

In the arts this month: flying Venuses and sputtering fountains.



See It

[VENUS] There is a special quality to late-care artistry. As the instrument of genius—the best breaks down, the mode of expression becomes simpler but more potent. Consider Billie Holiday in *Lady in Autumn*, Monet at Giverny and, now **Peter O'Toole** in *Venus*, a wondrous new film from director **Roger Michell. O'Toole plays Maurice, a once famous stage actor who struggles by on bit parts and rascally charm. He's a horrid old coot, even if prostate surgery has rendered him impotent, and he inexplicably falls in love with a teenager from the provinces (**Jodie Whittaker** who stuffs her face with junk food and resents her low lot in life. Maurice wants her, though, and christens her Venus, even as he continues to teeter to his frail, estranged wife, played by **Vanessa Redgrave**. Both actresses are splendid, but it is O'Toole's show. He is elegant and hilarious, and near the end you feel you are actually watching a soul escape from its mortal coil. —KEVIN WESLEY**

Books



WHEN IT COMES TO HOLIDAY GIFTS, COFFEE-TABLE BOOKS ARE ABOUT AS ORIGINAL AS FRUITCAKES (AND ALMOST AS HEAVY). DEMONSTRATE YOUR IMPECCABLE TASTE, AS WELL AS YOUR DEEP AFFECTION FOR THE RECIPIENT, WITH A WELL-PRESERVED VOLUME FROM ONE OF THESE **RARE BOOK** DEALERS.

PETER HARRINGTON
ANTIQUARIAN BOOKSELLER
100 Fulham Road, London;
peter-harrington-books.com.
London's premier antiquarian bookseller takes up four floors in Chelsea; all items are available for purchase online.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone
By J.K. Rowling (about \$37,000)
Publisher Bloomsbury printed only 500 copies in the first edition of the first book in the series (known in the U.S. as *The Sorcerer's Stone*). Of those, 300 went to schools and libraries. This is a pristine copy of one of the rest.

They Got Me Covered
By Bob Hope (about \$4,500)
The comedian's 1941 autobiography—and the source for his first film with Sam Goldwyn. This copy includes a signed note to Bing Crosby (who wrote the foreword) on the inside cover: "To Bing, Without you this book would be pretty stale. Thanks, Bob."

The Fountainhead
By Ayn Rand (about \$80,000)
This first edition, reputedly from Rand's personal library, is in a highly well-preserved dust jacket and appears, miraculously, to be unread.

Interview magazine, Christmas 1977 (about \$700)
The cover, signed by Andy Warhol, pictures Mick Jagger as Santa Claus, carrying Iman and Paul von Ravenstein in his sack.

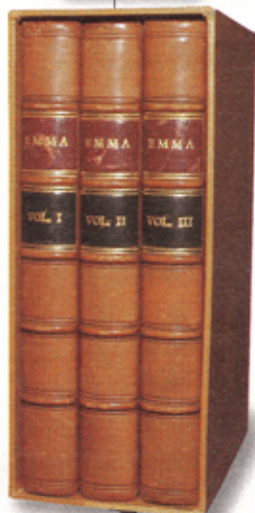
DRAGON BOOKS
2954 Beverly Glen Circle, Bel-Air, California; dragonbooks.com. Located just off Mulholland Drive, this wood-paneled shop is where multimedia entrepreneur Jay Penske moonlights as a bookseller. Be sure to check out the erotica section upstairs.

Emma
By Jane Austen (\$45,000)
One of only 2,000 copies of the first edition of Austen's last and arguably greatest novel, in three leather-bound volumes. The ultimate trophy for the literate socialite.

High Adventure
By Sir Edmund Hillary (\$1,500)
Why buy this memoir from the man who conquered Everest? Because it's there, of course. This 1955 first edition, boldly signed by Sir Edmund on the half-title page, will be a thrill for the adventure seeker and social climber alike.

Baby Doll
By Tennessee Williams (\$450)
A wonderful, near perfect copy of this 1957 favorite, with the vibrant original dust jacket designed by graphic designer Donald Green, who was the Chip Kidd of his day.

The Picture of Dorian Gray
By Oscar Wilde (\$7,000)
Wilde's only novel was roundly criticized as immoral and caused a great scandal upon its release in 1891. This first edition, bound in gilt-stamped Moroccan leather, is beautiful enough for Lady Windermere's drawing room.



Film



Skip It

[THE FOUNTAIN] Pretentious, costly poppycock: **Darren Aronofsky's** latest movie, *The Fountain*, shows what happens when a brilliant imagemaker lets his addled imagination run wild. As the movie's three parallel storylines spanning 1,000 years unfold, it becomes clear that the fountain in question is the fountain of youth. (Or, perhaps, a fountain pen: In one queasy scene, star **Hugh Jackman**—the replacement for Brad Pitt, who sensibly drops out—uses a gold squib to tattoo himself.) But the tagline "What if you could live forever?" begs for the riposte: "I'd make a better movie than Aronofsky has." If the director wants to create a new mythology—and his use of such symbols as a gold ring suggests he does—he might bear in mind that the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy relies on plot, not just camera trickery. If, on the other hand, he wants to make art, then he might just call Matthew Barney's gallery and leave the rest of us alone. *The Fountain*, though, is neither fish nor fowl, and its only blessing is that, at 96 minutes, it doesn't go on forever. —K.W.

holiday  books