

December 2009

“To be an American is a complex fate.”—Henry James

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Signals in the Static: Michelle Obama will star in an episode of *Iron Chef* in January. Actor **Gary Busey**, 65, is going to be a dad again. **Kirk Douglas** turns 93. Author **Frederick Pohl** turns 90. Baseball Hall of Famer **Stan Musial** turns 89. **Ken Griffey, Jr.** turns 41. The **Sony PlayStation** turns 15. *The Matrix* turns 10. The **Segway** turns 8. Died: Procter & Gamble’s last TV soap opera, *As the World Turns*, 54.

The Atlantic will sell individual short fiction on Amazon’s **Kindle** (\$3.99/story). **Wisk-it** allows Facebook users to remove unwanted photos from profiles. Fresno, Calif.’s NBC affiliate **KSEE-TV** cancels newscasts for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day, so that its staff can be home with their families. **The Marcel at Gramercy Hotel** in NYC now offers a resident tattoo artist. Denver’s **Ganga Gourmet** serves food laced with medical marijuana. The menu includes lasagna, gourmet pizza, jambalaya, chocolate mousse and flavored cheesecakes. Diners at SF, LA, and San Diego’s **Opaque** restaurants eat in total darkness.

A Box Life from the **Columbia Sportswear Company** allows consumers to receive their purchases in used boxes and to track the boxes’ history. They enter a box’s **QR Code** on a website to see where it’s been and how far it has traveled. After one month, over 66% of all Columbia’s orders were being shipped in reused boxes. **Senseaware** is FedEx’s cellular-connected sensor-package for high-value items like human organs. For \$120/month it will tell you its real-time location, whether it’s been dropped, its current temperature, etc. **IKEA’s SUNNAN** desk lamp is powered by solar cells (\$20). For every unit sold, one will be donated to UNICEF for children without electricity in refugee camps. **The Salvation Army** is testing kettles that take debit and credit cards in 30 cities.

When You Care Enough: Hallmark expands its Christmas card category, “Difficult Times,” from five to 24 selections. One new Hallmark message: “We can say it, this wasn’t the year that any of us had hoped for.” In April, Hallmark **announced layoffs** of 8% of its workforce. *Wall St. Journal*.

Butcher Parties: Foodies and voyeurs in NYC and the SF Bay area are gathering in **bars** and restaurants to watch a butcher dismember a pig, goat, or lamb carcass with knives and saws prior to serving it for dinner. Fans claim it promotes sustainability, food awareness, and reflects the rise of the DIY (“Do It Yourself”) aesthetic. *North Bay Bohemian*.

New Dancing: “**Jerkin**” is a LA dance phenomenon featuring high-tempo, simple beats, moving your legs in and out with extreme bending at the knees, skinny jeans, fat gold chains, caps, and T-shirts featuring characters like SpongeBob SquarePants and Oscar the Grouch. Key bands: the New Boyz, the **Rej3ctz**, and the Bangz.



Obama-brand LSD blotters (\$3-\$10/dose).

Happy Holidays to readers around the world. JOHO thanks you for your support in 2009 and wishes you an amazing 2010!

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The Best of JOHO, 2009

With the launch of a new quarter, [Duke Ellington](#) becomes the first African-American to be featured on a U.S. coin. [Donna Sachet](#) becomes the first drag queen to sing the U.S. national anthem at a major-league baseball game. Third place CBS anchor [Katie Couric's](#) annual salary (\$15MM) is [more than the entire annual budgets](#) of NPR's *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered* combined.

Six months after troubled GMAC became a bank in order to receive TARP funds, it renamed itself [Ally Bank](#) and uses the ad slogan, "Straightforward." Shares in the [New York Times Co.](#) slumped to a low of \$3.90 on March 9, less than the price of the Sunday paper (\$5). [Ray Bradbury's](#) classic *Fahrenheit 451* is published as a [comic book](#). In his 1953 novel, all books are burned—except for comic books which authorities consider shallow enough to be allowed to be read. [American Girl](#) introduces "[Gwen](#)," a "homeless doll." Her accompanying story says she is a friendless girl whose father abandoned her and whose mother lost her job and then their home ((\$95). [Bob Dylan](#) and [Will.i.am](#) star in a [Pepsi commercial](#). Ironically, onetime PepsiCo CEO [Donald Kendall](#) was close friends with [President Richard Nixon](#), which branded Pepsi in the early 1970s with the reputation as the "Republican soda."

For the first time, ad rates for popular shows like *The Simpsons* and *CSI* are higher online (Hulu or TV.com) than they are on prime-time TV. [Google](#) launches a pilot program to segment Web users by their FICO credit scores. Point your bag of [Late Night Doritos](#) to a web cam and see virtual performances that seem to pop out of the bag. [Tweet My Bumper](#) sells a bumper sticker with your Twitter name and the tag line, "Follow me in traffic. Follow me on Twitter."(\$6). San Francisco

residents can send messages to the city government via Twitter at [@SF311](#) for help with street cleaning, graffiti removal, potholes, and abandoned vehicles. The [U.S. Army](#) establishes an online and social media division within its public affairs office. [The Library of Congress](#) launches its own [YouTube](#) channel. [Current.tv](#) uses the [first Twitter RFP](#) to find a new ad agency. The [USAA](#) bank now allows customers to deposit checks by iPhone.

"Augmented Reality": This blending of real-world and computer-generated data is showing up in consumer applications. The [U.S. Postal Service](#) launches a [Virtual Box Simulator](#), allowing you to identify which box best fits your shipment by holding your item up to a webcam. [Papa John's Pizza](#) box turns into a [virtual car](#) when held up to a webcam. Microsoft announces [Natal](#), a depth-sensing camera for controller-less gaming.

Casual Dining Trends: LA chef Susan Feniger has opened [Street](#), a restaurant inspired by street vendors from across the globe, featuring Asian and Middle Eastern dishes like Singapore-style kaya toast and Indian-style fritters topped with yogurt, mint sauce and tamarind chutney. [Burgerville](#), a Pacific Northwest fast food chain, uses only locally-sourced produce and hormone-free beef and cheese. They also recycle their used canola oil into biodiesel fuel.

Matrix-style Body Armor: IBM was recently granted a patent for [bionic body armor](#) that gives the wearer the power to dodge bullets. The device works by constantly emitting electromagnetic waves that bounce off any fast-moving projectiles, using the data to calculate risky trajectories. If the object in question is determined to be a threat, muscle stimulators cause the wearer's body to contort in such way to avoid being hit.

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