



## WELCOME TO THE CULTURE ISSUE

**T**his year's issue is complete with our annual and very own A TO Z list (page 135) of what matters now, curated by senior features editor Julian Sancton, our own in-house Charlie Rose, an enlightened emcee who also steers "The Culture Conversation" (page 99) from video games to the importance of a classical education by bringing together eight of the best and the brightest culturists of the moment—from *Lion King* director Julie Taymor, who believes that everything begins with The Story, to literary critic James Wolcott, who has a thing or two to say about Whatever Happened to High Culture.

Elsewhere in the issue, writer David Margolick, whose most recent book was *Dreadful: The Short Life and Gay Times of John Horne Burns*, published last year by Other Press, returned to Florence for the first time in a very long time to report on how this ancient fortress of Renaissance culture has moved "out of the past" and into the 21st century. Another of our favorite writers, Michael Shnayerson, currently at work on *The Contender*, a biography of New York governor—and would-be presidential candidate?—Andrew Cuomo, tells of the second coming of Manhattan's Park Avenue Armory, perhaps the most important cultural moment on the Upper East Side since...Holly Golightly breakfasted at Tiffany's. This issue also marks the debut of our new fashion and style director, Horacio Silva, who reports on haute couture as well as the changing of the guard this season at some of the biggest and most important fashion houses on planet Earth.

And then there's BRANDO'S LOST ISLAND, for which a bit of an explanation is in order. A year ago this month, I was at dinner in Los Angeles at the home

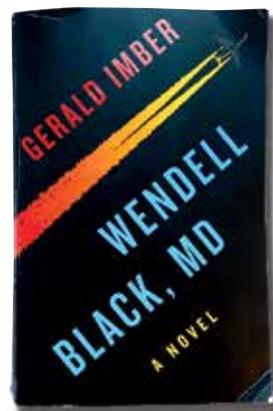
### THE PLASTIC SURGEON- AS-GUMSHOE AUTEUR

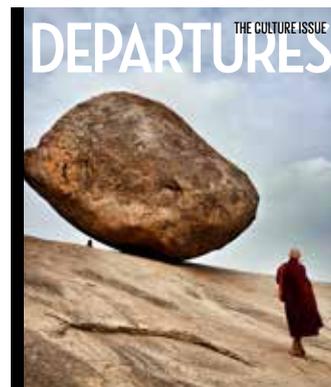
"After showering, I dressed in gray pants, blue shirt, dark blue tie, and the soft tweed sport coat that had become part of my uniform. It was... casual and understated, which helped deny its custom-tailored cashmere heritage." —from *Wendell Black, M.D.*

Nice detail, no?

Dr. Gerald Imber is one of the "big deal" plastic surgeons, the man behind some of the best "faces" in town, always at the top of those Best Doctors lists. He lives in Manhattan with his chic and talented wife, DEPARTURES contributor Cathryn Collins; spends weekends in Millbrook, New York; loves Mozart and Puccini opera (the Pearl Fishers duet from *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* with Jussi Björling and Robert Merrill is a favorite), St. Barths in spring, Capri in summer...and has his suits custom-made by Anderson & Sheppard on Savile Row—that is, the guy's a worldly, sophisticated sort.

He also does not suffer fools gladly, a quality shared with his fictional detective. The first in a brand-new series, *Wendell Black, M.D.* (Harper's Bourbon Street Books) starts with a bang—a cardiac arrest during a flight from London—and doesn't stop. Manhattan is the backdrop, and there's a swell, elegant, knowing sort of way about Imber's writing that's as up-to-the-minute as London-Tehran drug cartels and counterterrorism. Black reminds me of my favorite detective of all, that armchair gumshoe Nero Wolfe, whom Rex Stout created so many years ago.





At DEPARTURES, we take our covers very seriously. Here are four almost-made-its.

I KNEW THE BRANDO STORY WAS A GREAT ONE FOR DEPARTURES, FAR-FLUNG TRAVEL ON A NEAR-MYTHICAL DESERTED ISLAND WITH OVER-THE-TOP GLAMOUR AND CELEBRITYHOOD.

of Angella and David Nazarian, whose elaborate Persian gardens we had photographed for our special Home + Design issue last year. It was an intimate evening, not more than 12 people gathered at the table. Angella is one of the great, great hostesses, and the dinner was extraordinary, a grand *bouffe* of savory Persian specialties, incredible art and equally amazing guests. A few I knew; others I was meeting for the first time that evening. One of the latter was Hollywood producer Mike Medavoy, of *Black Swan*, for which Natalie Portman won an Academy Award three years ago.

Medavoy was a cofounder of Orion Pictures and former chairman of TriStar. His credits are mind-boggling: *Apocalypse Now*, *Raging Bull*, *The Silence of the Lambs*...and, it turned out, executor of the Marlon Brando estate. As the evening was winding down over coffee and a Willy Wonka-like array of sweets, I got the chance to talk with Medavoy

about Brando and a particular part of his history that no one really knew very much about. Brando, when filming *Mutiny on the Bounty* in Tahiti, bought an atoll in the South Pacific, vowing to one day create the great ecohotel. There had been reports that the hotel was actually happening, but as with anything having to do with the Brando estate, things were very tight-lipped and carefully controlled.

I knew the story was a great one for DEPARTURES, far-flung travel on a near-mythical deserted island with over-the-top glamour and celebrityhood. Thanks to the diligent pursuit of our features director, Heather Halberstadt, and reporter Ned Zeman, we got the story and exclusive first look at the property—and the interviews with everyone involved. In July the resort officially opens, and DEPARTURES tells the tale of the long and winding road to Tetiaroa, home to the 35-room ecoresort called The Brando (page 188). ♦