

seemingly contrasting ideas: hard science and romance, numbers and poetry, unreadable picture books, the ancient past and the present. His material of choice, aluminum, is a commonplace, modern metal used most often for industrial—not artistic—purposes.

One of his boldest aluminum pieces, *The Neutrino Chronicles*, was first displayed in an Etruscan tomb. That was in 2000, during an arts festival in a town north of Rome, and visitors to the tomb came upon what Burke describes as “a shiny, new 14-foot machine—mysterious, but clearly with some kind of scientific purpose—in the middle of this cave riddled with history.” (The piece holds a polished aluminum arc that rises out of a rectilinear metal scaffolding ground to such a high polish that it appears to glow. Beneath the machine lie dozens of angled aluminum pieces, many etched with quantum formulas and/or with Etruscan script.) “Both science and the Etruscans have a mystery that engages people,” Burke asserts. “The formulas and the script mean so much, but both are so hard to decipher. It’s a moment when the unknowns of science and those of the Etruscans interact. I like the conflict between drawings from a distant past and a metal that didn’t exist then.”

### Comings and Goings

**University clubs** offer a variety of social and intellectual events. Following is a partial list of Harvard-affiliated speakers appearing at local clubs this winter. For further information, contact the club directly, call the HAA at 617-495-3070, or visit [www.haa.harvard.edu](http://www.haa.harvard.edu).

On January 23, David Powell, an associate of the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, speaks to the Harvard Club of San Diego. On January 26, the Harvard Club of Cape Cod hosts Marshall Goldman, senior scholar at the Davis Center, for a discussion on “Putin, Petroleum, Power, and Patronage: The Dog Barks, but the Caravan Moves On.” On February 28, associate professor of government and social studies Glyn Morgan lectures on “Morality and Terrorism” for members of the Harvard Club of Cincinnati.

It doesn’t matter to Burke whether people understand the formulas; he often reverses them or writes them upside down “to relieve people of the pressure” of “getting” the science. New York City art collectors Mary Anne Schwalbe ’55 and Douglas Schwalbe, M.B.A. ’52, have several Burke pieces, including a tall aluminum tower that sits on their terrace. It contains equations and symbols, but it also has tiny metal squares that can be picked up, played with, and used to cover the symbols. Burke has twice replaced the pieces because the Schwalbe grandchildren have so enjoyed using them on the sculpture. “It’s a magical piece. He’s highly imaginative and also very skilled,” Mary Anne Schwalbe says of Burke. “His drawings as well as his sculptures are technically perfect.” Yet she begs off when asked to translate the scientific formulas. “I don’t understand them, but it is important to me that they are there. I find the art fasci-

nating,” she says. “He can explain it all, and it is very much a part of who he is.”

Burke is intent on celebrating the beauty and power of science in his sculptures, but the art is not agitprop: he weaves science into the sculptures subtly, with style and humor, and in ways that are never doctrinaire. The mischievous burnishing of incised equations, making them hard to read, is a good example: he interferes with the ability of quanta to bring information to us in order to call attention to the phenomenon itself. But he doesn’t insist that people understand the scientific fine print. “I want people to know there’s a logic, a science in the art,” he says, but “there’s no test afterwards.”

~ANNE EISENBERG and NELL PORTER BROWN

Anne Eisenberg writes “Novelties,” a biweekly column for the Sunday Business section of the New York Times. Nell Porter Brown is assistant editor of this magazine.

## Radcliffe and Other “Shared Interest Groups”

AMONG THE University’s new Shared Interest Groups (SIGs) is the fledgling Alumnae and Friends of Radcliffe College, led by Ellen Gordon Reeves ’83, Ed.M. ’86. Long active with the Harvard Alumni Association and a former Radcliffe Association board member, Reeves says she helped create this new organization “to honor and show respect for the pioneering women who went to and created Radcliffe.” It is open to women as well as men from any class and offers alumni “another way to connect to each other, to undergraduates, young alumnae, and the University,” she says. “It is not meant to replicate the Radcliffe alumnae associations of the past, but it is a way for women to reorganize themselves as alumnae.”

SIGs in general do not supplant clubs, classes, and other traditional alumni groups and networks. They are defined by the Harvard Alumni Association (HAA) Executive Committee as “any collection of Harvard University alumni who actively engage in communicating and/or gathering around a central unifying purpose, mission, background, or activity beyond class affiliation or regional proxim-

ity.” Each group is its own nonprofit entity with a mission statement, dues, membership policies, and meeting schedules. The HAA does not provide funding to SIGs (nor does it for clubs and classes), but does consider them “a critical part of what connects so many alumni with each other and with Harvard.” Thus they do receive logistical help, guidance on operations, on-line tools with e-mail capabilities, access to mailing addresses for all self-selecting alumni, representation at the HAA directors’ thrice yearly meetings, and a yearly news item in the HAA’s e-newsletter, *Harvard Monthly*.

There are now nine alumni SIGs (opposite), and the list is expected to grow. “We’re in conversations with five to seven more groups at this time,” says Lauren Brodsky, assistant director of clubs and SIGs at the HAA. “In the same way that clubs have been brought closer to the HAA in recent years, so the SIGs are now going through that process.” Overall, the pooling of resources and enhanced communication among alumni groups, the HAA, and its committees should yield “best practices.”

The HAA first approved policies and operating principles to support SIGs in

February 2004. Under the rules, for example, SIGs cannot raise money for any purpose not related to their “stated core mission,” and any political activity must carry a disclaimer that the group does not “represent the President and Fellows of Harvard College (Harvard University) or the Harvard Alumni Association.”

The Harvard University Muslim Alumni group (HUMA) decided to become a SIG partly because the HAA offered “impressive” organizational support and successfully welcomed them, says HUMA president Shahzad Bhatti, J.D. '97, M.P.A. '06. Formed in 2004, the group now has about 200 members around the world. Its goals include linking Muslim alumni to one another, strengthening ties to undergraduate Muslim groups, and “working with young Muslims to encourage them” to apply to Harvard. “Also, in light of the contemporary political environment that we live within,” Bhatti adds, “we view it as part of our mission to work with others in the Harvard diaspora to foster dialogue and ensure that an accurate image of Islam exists within and around the Harvard community.”

Bernard E. Kreger '59, M.P.H. '70, a leader of the Harvard Glee Club Foundation, now a SIG, hopes easier access to alumni records will help Glee Club members, especially the younger ones, better stay in touch with each other—and “interact more with the Glee Club when it tours and even when it appears locally.”

The largest SIG to date, with upwards of 4,000 members nationwide, is the Har-

## Eternal Creatures

Some 29 sea creatures from Harvard's Blaschka Collection, exquisitely rendered in glass in the nineteenth century, are now on display in a special exhibit at the Underwater Adventures Aquarium near Minneapolis/St. Paul. *Glass Sea Treasures from Harvard: The Age of Darwin* is the largest group of Blaschka invertebrate models that the Museum of Comparative Zoology has ever allowed to travel; most of them have not been seen publicly in more than a century. (Their Czech-born creators, father

UNDERWATER ADVENTURES AQUARIUM/COURTNEY CONIK



**Todd D. Peterson**

and son Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka, also produced exclusively for Harvard the renowned glass flowers now on display at the University's Museum of Natural History.) Darwin's work in the mid 1800s sparked interest in the “variations of species,” notes aquarium president Todd D. Peterson '84, M.B.A. '87. “The Blaschkas were not making ‘artistic’ pieces; they were using their talents to make exact scientific replicas, translating drawings coming back from this bold new age of expeditions. People wanted a way to see these exotic sea creatures in three dimensions.”

Glass, Leopold Blaschka once wrote, “is such a changeless thing that we do not dare in its construction to make a mistake; it becomes eternal.” In their Dresden studio, the two men produced hundreds of the glass invertebrates (and many other objects, such as glass eyes) and sold them to museums and private clients throughout the world. (One of the largest collections of their work was destroyed during the bombings of Dresden in World War II.) When Rudolf died in 1939, so did the Blaschkas' singular art; he had no apprentice.

The exhibit is on display until Labor Day. For details, visit [www.minnesota-aquarium.com](http://www.minnesota-aquarium.com).



**Top: A nudibranch. Bottom: A “by-the-wind sailor” sea jelly.**

### SIGs and Contacts

**Alumnae and Friends of Radcliffe College**, Ellen Gordon Reeves '83, Ed.M. '86, [ellenreeves@post.harvard.edu](mailto:ellenreeves@post.harvard.edu)

**Harvard Alumni Startups**, Betsy J. Campbell, Ed.M. '93, [www.harvard-startups.org](http://www.harvard-startups.org)

**Harvard Black Alumni Society**, Danice L. Woodley '00, J.D. '05, [www.hbasonline.org](http://www.hbasonline.org)

**Harvard Gay and Lesbian Caucus**, Tom Parry '74, [www.hglc.org](http://www.hglc.org)

**Harvard Glee Club Foundation**, Bernard E. Kreger '59, M.P.H. '70, [www.harvardgleeclub.org](http://www.harvardgleeclub.org)

**Harvard Student Agencies Alumni**, Brian Feinstein '07, [www.hsa.net/alumni](http://www.hsa.net/alumni)

**Harvard University Muslim Alumni**, Shahzad A. Bhatti, J.D. '97, M.P.A. '06, [www.harvardmuslims.org](http://www.harvardmuslims.org)

**Harvard Women's Leadership Project Alumni Network**, Rucker Alex '99, [www.womensleadershipproject.com](http://www.womensleadershipproject.com)

**Harvardwood** (alumni working in Hollywood), Mia Riggin Riverton '99, [www.harvardwood.org](http://www.harvardwood.org)

vard Gay and Lesbian Caucus, founded by alumni in 1984 as an “issue-oriented advocacy group specifically to press Harvard

to include sexual orientation in the University's nondiscrimination policy, as well as to advocate in general for LGBT students, faculty, and staff,” says current president Tom Parry '74. He sees the HAA's embrace of these diverse organizations as a positive step. “Most women, gay, and black alumni did not have great experiences with Harvard in the 1950s through the 1970s, and these organizations, formed by alumni outside of Harvard, have offered ways for them to connect with friends who came out of the same crucible,” he explains. “Harvard is discovering that there is a lot of energy in these groups that can be tapped.”

Alumni interested in learning more about SIGs and the HAA may visit <http://post.harvard.edu/harvard/clubs/html/SIG.html>, or contact Brodsky at 617-496-0493 or [lauren\\_brodsky@harvard.edu](mailto:lauren_brodsky@harvard.edu).