In the finale of the Netflix series *Living with Yourself*, Paul Rudd’s character gets into a fight with himself—or, rather, with a clone of himself. That new-and-improved version has spent the previous seven and a half episodes tormenting the original, a sad sack named Miles, by outshining him at work, at home, and pretty much everywhere. When they finally come to blows in the climactic scene, Miles and New Miles—both played by Rudd—destroy an entire apartment, leaving furniture smashed, sheets torn, packing peanuts strewn all over: a careening, spectacular mess.

And every second, of course, was meticulously choreographed. For that, the show’s creators turned to Kuperman Brothers—the eponymous enterprise of Rick ‘11 and Jeff: choreographers and directors with third-degree black belts in Kenpo karate and a growing list of screen and stage credits. The pair devised and rehearsed an action sequence emphasizing the idea of two equally matched—and equally awkward—fighters whose lives and identities are inextricably joined. During the fracas, the two Mileses sometimes seem to come together like a seesaw, and when one tries to hurl the other over his head, the force hurls them both into a circular tumble. At one point the two characters get twisted up together inside a bedsheets; later, facing off like mirror images, they push off each other with one foot, a double-kick.

The Language of Movement

The brothers Kuperman—choreographers, directors, and storytellers

by Lydialyle Gibson

The Kupermans choreographed the 2019 musical *Alice By Heart*, a retelling of *Alice in Wonderland* set during the London Blitz; above, brothers Jeff (left) and Rick.
move that sends each falling backward.

During the four-day shoot, as Rudd filmed the fight, first as one Miles and then as the other, one or the other Kuperman subbed in to stunt-double as his opponent: two brothers who look almost like twins (Rick and Jeff are only 13 months apart) standing in for doppelgangers who look, and fight, like brothers. “It was a really cool process,” says Rick Kuperman, “creating the action of these two leads, and also figuring out how it translated to the camera, how the camera would move to capture it.”

For the Kupermans, choreography came gradually, although dance started early. The two grew up in Toronto, where an interest in gymnastics quickly led to ballet and then tap, jazz, and contemporary dance. They branched into acrobatics and parkour, and then martial arts. The dance studio where they spent much of their childhood was an unusually nurturing place for young boys, Rick says: “There were a lot of male dancers. Oftentimes, you’re lucky if there are one or two guys. But there, it was the kind of thing where masculinity and movement were naturally combined.”

After high school, Rick, who is older, came to Harvard and Jeff went to Princeton. Both kept up their dance training alongside their other studies (Rick graduated with a concentration in psychology: “Incredibly relevant for work in the arts, process-wise”). They were learning about the greats of modern American dance—Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Katherine Dunham, Paul Taylor—while auditioning for performances and experimenting with choreography and directing at their separate campuses. They converged every summer in New York, where they put on a show, sometimes two, at Sightline Arts, a production company and arts incubator co-founded by Rick’s friend Calla Videt ’08. Their formal partnership grew out of those yearly convergences. “We just found that the work was better when we were together,” says Rick, “and that it was also more fun to make.” Safer, too. With his brother anchoring him, Rick says, he felt secure taking artistic risks and articulating wild ideas. “You have the freedom to go to the outer edges of your creativity.”

Kuperman Brothers incorporated in 2012, and the pair’s burgeoning repertoire now includes work in television, films, commercials, music videos, and theatrical productions. In 2016, they choreographed some 20 dancers performing to the Phish song “Pet-
With Alice By Heart, the Kupermans set up a “choreography lab” to collaborate with the ensemble. 

Montage richor” as part of a New Year’s Eve concert in Madison Square Garden. Early last year, the Kupermans choreographed a production of the musical Alice by Heart, a reimagining of Alice in Wonderland that places the protagonist in a London Tube station during the Blitz. The result, developed over four months in what Rick calls a “choreographic lab” with a team of collaborators and performers, won several awards. More recently, they choreographed Cyrano, a moody musical adaptation of Cyrano de Bergerac that starred Peter Dinklage, with a score by the rock band The National; they also choreographed a forthcoming Miramax film, Silent Retreat, about a bumbling group of four people who go to upstate New York for three days of silent meditation. It becomes a silent comedy about 20 minutes in, Rick explains: “Our role was to create some of the physical comedy,” drawing on the traditions of Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, and other silent-film comedians.

Humor—physical, ironic, witty, poignant—is a common thread through their choreography. Another is the importance of story. “In every format,” Rick emphasizes, “our principal goal is to tell a compelling story. That’s always been my strongest interest: not movement for movement’s sake—although that is often brilliant and virtuosic and can bring me to tears—but creating a movement language that is part of a narrative structure, that helps drive a story.”

Arbuckle professor of business administration Rosabeth Moss Kanter, like her Business School colleagues, spends a lot of time teaching about how to manage and lead organizations, large and small. She also created the Advanced Leadership Initiative, which brings executives of a certain age back to campus to retool for new challenges, mostly of a public or nonprofit nature (see “Advancing Leadership,” March-April 2014, page 38). That experience appears to have radicalized her views of institutions—and her theory of how to make them more supple—as this extended metaphor, from the prologue to her new book Think Outside the Building (PublicAffairs, $28), suggests.

Don’t try to attack a “castle”—the established order, the dominant way of dealing with issues—head on. A direct attack provokes defensive actions. Fortifications get deployed. Every window shows a weapon. Iron gates drop, and drawbridges rise to make it impossible to cross the moat. Legions of protectors are mobilized. Occupants become even more defiant, not wanting to be displaced. They hunker down for a long siege, secure in the knowledge that they are superior to the peasants and barbarians outside.…They fail to see that there might be a new way of life taking place beyond their walls.

The world is littered with literal and figurative castles.…In America, castles take…modern physical form as suburban corporate headquarter campuses, heavily guarded office towers, newspapers, spirituality with the church.…Headquarters become the impersonal embodiment of the established structure (“the Pentagon says”).

Castles are pernicious because of what they leave out.…Health isn’t the hospital or even the doctor’s office. Health might be a function of nutritious food, clean air, or stress-free work. But behemoth establishments dominate health care, including rival fiefdoms such as providers and insurance companies, full of fortification and defenses, sometimes shutting out alternatives for treatment or blocking routes to wellness.…And the city isn’t only city hall….It is also the life and culture of the people as seen in pop-up stores, food trucks, events, festivals, sidewalk chalk artists, and outdoor mural painters.

…Castles are monuments to the past and to past thinking, museums of preservation. They are establishments harboring the establishment, the elites of business and society.

The best way to attack a castle is not head on. (Unless you command a mighty army and are willing to risk mutually assured destruction.) The best way is to go around it or underneath it.
Creative Exposure

*Lena Chen transforms trauma into art and performance.*

by Mathilde Montpetit

Tension crackled through the audience, which was clumped in a circle in the Frankfurt Conference Center. At the center of the group, Lena Chen ’09, an artist and writer, paced like a cat around a bed, scanning nervous faces for her next victim. A camera trained on her face projected her image onto the back wall, as she led each chosen person to the bed, before inviting him or her to pick one of the several notebooks fanned out in a semi-circle on the floor: they are revealed to be Chen’s diaries. Then, sometimes coquettish, sometimes convivial, she read several entries, both intimate and mundane, aloud to the group.

The performance was part of the B3 Bien­nial of the Moving Image, hosted this past October in partnership with the Frank­furt Book Fair. Earlier, Chen and frequent collaborator Molly Baber (the video­grapher that evening) won an award for Best Emerging Talent for their video installation, *Expose Her*. For that project, Chen posed in her Berlin apartment as her recorded voice recited passages from some of those same diary entries, which recount how she has dealt with revenge porn—she became one of its first known victims—online harassment, and mental-health issues during the last 10 years.

Chen was raised in Los Angeles, the