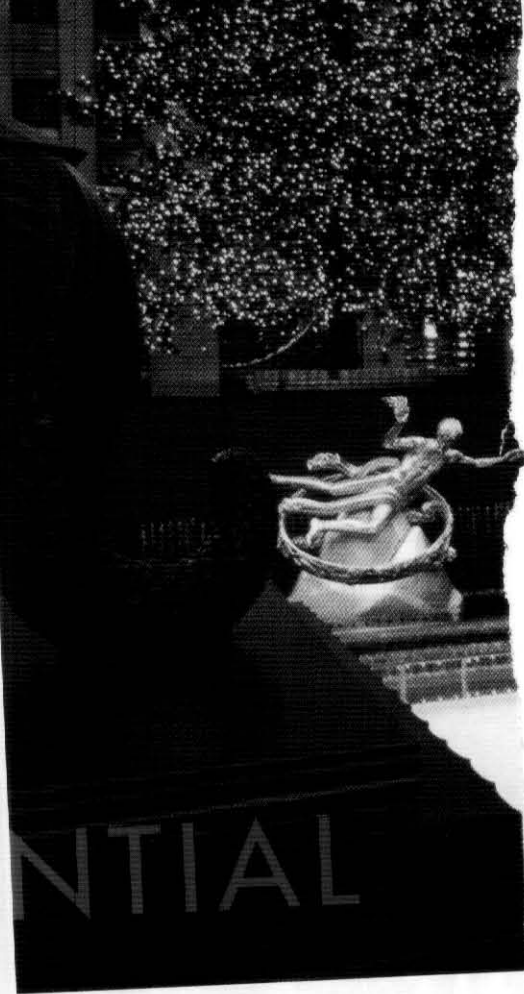


Producer/director Ismail Merchant relishes the neighborhood atmosphere of BILLY'S.



# NEW YORK CONFIDENTIAL



## 10 NEW YORKERS REVEAL THEIR

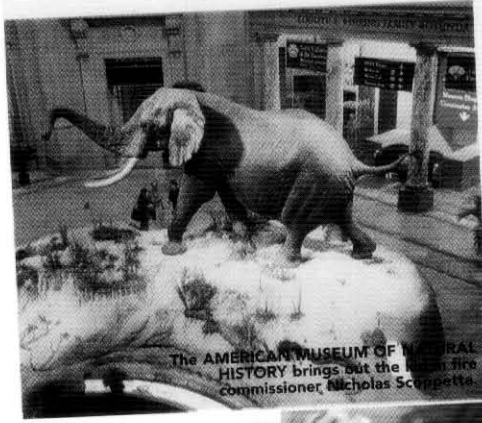
THOUSANDS OF FILMS, books, and songs have tried to capture the rhapsody of blaring horns, glittering skylines, and infinite possibilities that is New York City. Now it's our turn. We asked 10 prominent New Yorkers to share some of their favorite places in the city.

As a vice president of the Lauder cosmetics empire and author of the new book *An Eye for Beauty*, EVELYN LAUDER has a schedule that often preempts one of her favorite pastimes in the city—browsing at the **Madison Avenue Bookstore**. "I love to go there and lose myself. You're not surrounded by music or people racing around or coffee bars. It's just a relaxing, old-fashioned atmosphere."

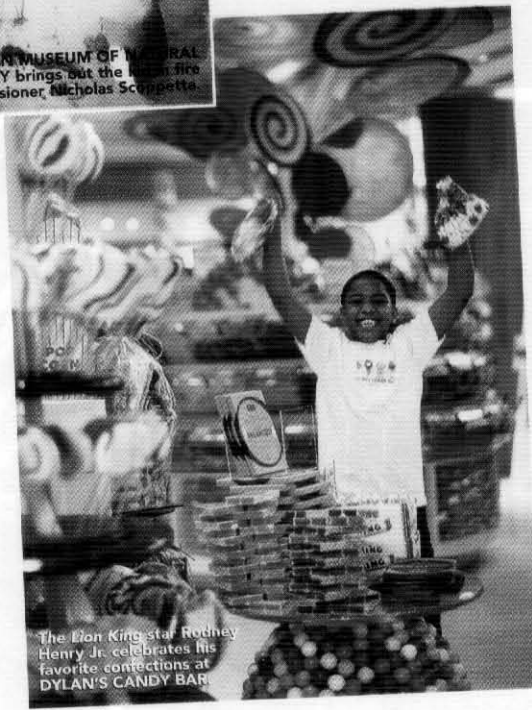
Another respite from her hectic life is **Central Park's Shakespeare's Garden** with herbs and flowers (like violets, roses, yarrow, and phlox) mentioned in the Bard's plays and sonnets. Lauder and her husband, Leonard, also like to lunch at the park's **Boathouse Restaurant**, where they occasionally rent a rowboat. "It really feels extremely rural and rather romantic out on the lake," says the cosmopolite.

While on the topic of lunch, Lauder can't help mentioning that art museums (the couple are avid collectors) have some of the best dining rooms in town. "The **Whitney Museum of American Art** has the best tuna fish sandwiches on the most sour of sourdoughs."

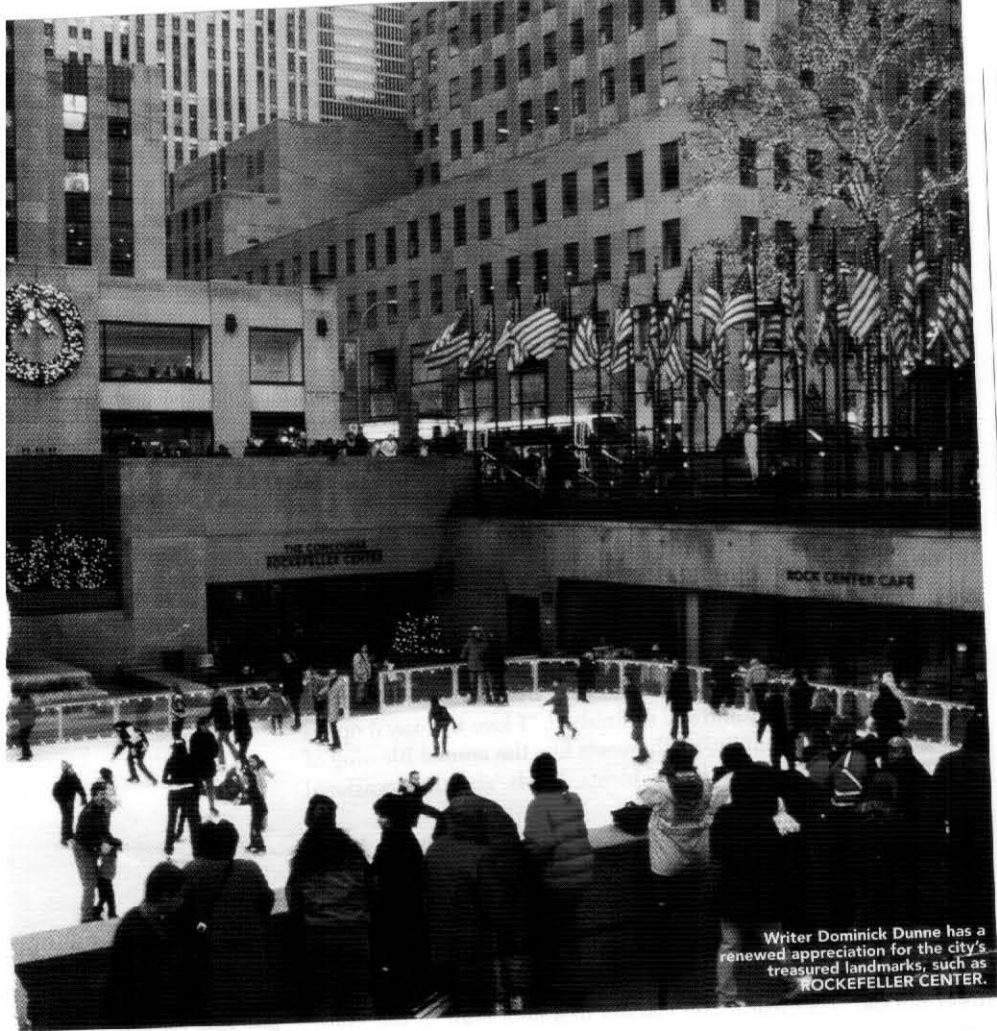
Not entirely disinterested, PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO says he would send visitors trooping up to the **Cloisters** on the northern tip of Manhattan. As director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, he has reason to encourage attendance at the Cloisters, named for the monastic quarters imported from France and reassembled on a perch overlooking the Hudson River.



The **AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY** brings out the mammoth commissioner **Nicholas Scoppetta**.



The **Lion King** star **Rodney Henry Jr.** celebrates his favorite confections at **DYLAN'S CANDY BAR**.



Writer Dominick Dunne has a renewed appreciation for the city's treasured landmarks, such as ROCKEFELLER CENTER.

## BEST-LOVED PLACES IN THE CITY.

There's no question that the Cloisters is among the most enchanting—and least frequented—places in New York. “Beyond the unimaginable beauty of the atmosphere,” De Montebello says, “it also happens to be one of the half-dozen collections of medieval art in the world that you can see without crossing the Atlantic.” On his first visit as a student at Harvard, he was struck by the famous Unicorn Tapestries; the illuminated manuscript the *Belles Heures de Jean de France, Duc de Berry*; the Antioch Chalice; and Robert Campin's Annunciation Triptych. “Even children will be captivated by an ambience so unlike their daily lives.”

Where does a Broadway Baby go to escape? BERNADETTE PETERS, about to star in a revival of *Gypsy*, finds refuge in the **Conservatory Garden**, a six-acre plot in Central Park that features a circle of tiered flower beds, one of which dazzles with more than 20,000 tulips in bloom each spring. “I found it by accident,” recalls the curly-haired actress. “I saw these gates and thought, ‘Whoa, what's this?’ New York can be like that. Suddenly you're a tourist in your own home.”

Yet another favorite hangout is **Joe Allen's** restaurant in the theater district, where posters from Broadway flops hang on the Wall of Shame. “I remember when *La Strada* went up there,” says Peters of the musical version of Fellini's classic movie in which she starred. Decidedly more upscale is the hushed tearoom at Fifth Avenue's **Takashimaya**, which she calls “incredibly peaceful and beautiful” with its austere interior and elegant floral arrangements. “Here I go again with the flowers, but that's one sure way to get my attention,” Peters says. ➤

## ANTIQUES *clique*

Money and taste—of which the Big Apple has plenty—are magnets for fine antiques. Shops offering objets d'art can be found all over the island, from Greenwich Village's antiques arteries on 10th and 11th to the tree-lined streets of the Upper East Side and everywhere in between. But our favorite shops aren't remarkable just for what they sell. It's the sharp eye of the dealer and the opportunity to pick his or her brain that keep us going back. After all, these experts are the keys that unlock the often-secretive world of art and antiques. Most dealers began their careers as collectors themselves before setting up shop, and the best encourage other inquisitive collectors to pull up a chair (crisply carved mahogany, please) and plumb the depths of their knowledge. Like us, you may never hit bottom.

**O'SULLIVAN ANTIQUES**, 51 E. 10th St. between University and Broadway; 212/260-8985. Chantal O'Sullivan's shop in Greenwich Village is packed with sets of Irish-made mahogany dining chairs, Georgian tables, drop-dead crystal chandeliers, and a brilliant Waterford mirror framed in blue-and-white glass. Her mother's passion for antiques became daughter Chantal's profession in 1979, when she went to work for a dealer in her hometown of Dublin. In 1996, she opened her own place in Manhattan, where she stocks furniture from the old country. Antiques aficionados drop to their knees when they spot her dark, coffee-colored tables with weathered patinas still intact. A typically indigenous Irish piece on display is a bog-oak dresser with carved faces. “You can recognize ➤

### NYC'S BEST

## window dressing

BARNEYS NEW YORK, 600 Madison Ave. at 61st; 212/826-8900. The holiday windows (always a dash wicked) bring a smile even as icy winter winds whip down Madison Avenue.





CHANTAL O'SULLIVAN



## ANTIQUES CLIQUE...

Irish furniture by its deep carvings of masks and by its hairy paw feet," O'Sullivan points

out. "The masks were carved in the likeness of the absent landlords; that's why some have hairy faces. It meant the owner had thick whiskers. If he were mean, the face would be ugly, too." Prices range from \$6,000 for a painted terra-cotta dog made in Austria to \$60,000 for a set of eight circa-1830 Irish-made mahogany side chairs, each stamped Butler's of Dublin, to \$120,000 for a pair of carved early-19th-century mahogany benches that come from France.

**KAIKODO**, 164 E. 64th St.; 212/223-0121. The name of this Asian art gallery means "the hall of embracing antiquity," and they aren't kidding. A Japanese clay jar dating back 2,000 years (\$38,000) and Chinese scholar's rocks share shelf space in the library of this five-story Upper East Side townhouse. It's no surprise that owners Mary Ann and Howard Rogers are scholars with impressive academic credentials, or that the shop is staffed full-time by two former directors of Asian art at Sotheby's, Carol Conover and Arnold Chang. What does surprise is that despite the lofty pedigrees and turbo brain power, the staff welcomes curious visitors and rewards questions with insightful conversation about the objects. Prices range from \$2,500 for a circa-1840 Japanese hanging scroll featuring a procession of marching frogs (above) to over a million for archaic Chinese bronzes.

**A LA VIEILLE RUSSIE**, 781 Fifth Ave. at 59th; 212/752-1727. Did someone say Fabergé? For jewel-encrusted eggs and exquisite enameled boxes fit for a czarina, try this ►



SHAKESPEARE'S GARDEN IN CENTRAL PARK offers cosmetics doyenne Evelyn Lauder a respite from her demanding schedule.



Writer Joyce Carol Oates is drawn to the KENNEDY GALLERIES.

► **CYNTHIA NIXON**, who plays astringent lawyer Miranda Hobbes on *Sex and the City*, says she was plunged into mourning when **St. John the Divine**, the enormous Episcopal cathedral on West 112th Street in upper Manhattan, had a destructive fire last year. "It was deeply upsetting," she says of the damage to this architectural coronet—a mix of the Gothic and Byzantine-Romanesque begun early last century and still unfinished. "I love the way it opens its doors to the community," with events like the annual Blessing of the Animals, during which barks, bleats, howls, and the occasional moo fill the cavernous interior.

Living farther south, near the Museum of Natural History, Nixon loves to haunt local shops like **Liberty House**, on Broadway between 87th and 88th streets, where she finds "folksy stuff"—jewelry, scarves, and hats—that is a far cry from Miranda's style.

Since *Sex and the City* is filmed in Queens, Nixon gets the treat of seeing the cityscape at all hours on her return trip over the **59th Street Bridge**. "It's great if you can get to a high floor to see Manhattan, but it's even better if you can get across the river. It's stunning."

For **NICHOLAS SCOPETTA**, the city's new fire commissioner, one place that can rivet the attention of his 2-year-old grandson is anyplace that can rivet the attention of his 2-year-old grandson is one for the books. "That place is the **American Museum of Natural History**," he says, noting that the landmark stone building was a personal refuge in his youth. Climbing the steps and passing the bronze statue of Teddy Roosevelt on a horse, he was filled with gleeful anticipation. "I always found myself gravitating toward the dioramas and the **Great Egyptian Hall**, but I think you could lose yourself anywhere," he says, "and the roof offers a spectacular view of Central Park. When I'm there, I'm like a kid all over again."

His other favorite landmark? **Gino's**, an Italian restaurant near Bloomingdale's, around the corner from his old law firm. "They start the veal and peppers the minute they see me."

The stairway to heaven for **RODNEY HENRY JR.**, 10-year-old star of *The Lion King* on Broadway, might well be the candy-embedded acrylic steps leading from one tempting floor to another at **Dylan's Candy Bar** at Third Avenue and 60th. There are 4-foot-tall candy-bar topiaries, cornucopias of chocolates, and an old-fashioned soda fountain. Rodney's favorite at this sweet-tooth Oz? "The gummy-snakes things," as he calls the serpentine jellied candy.

Another of Rodney's ideas for a good time in New York is **Mars 2112**, a space-themed restaurant on Broadway north of Times Square. Meals start with a virtual-reality ride on a spacecraft to Mars, where the Crater burgers and Meteor pizza are the space fuel. For weary adults, the preferred pick-me-up might be the "Mars-tinis."

The massive **Toys"R"Us in Times Square**, with its two-story Ferris wheel, is next for Rodney. ►

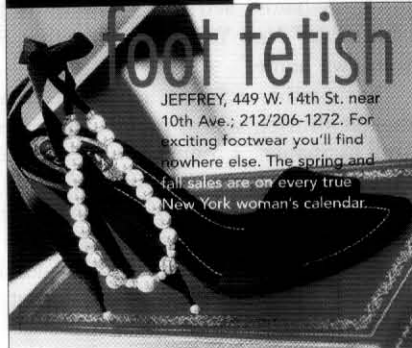
## NYC'S BEST



## sugar high

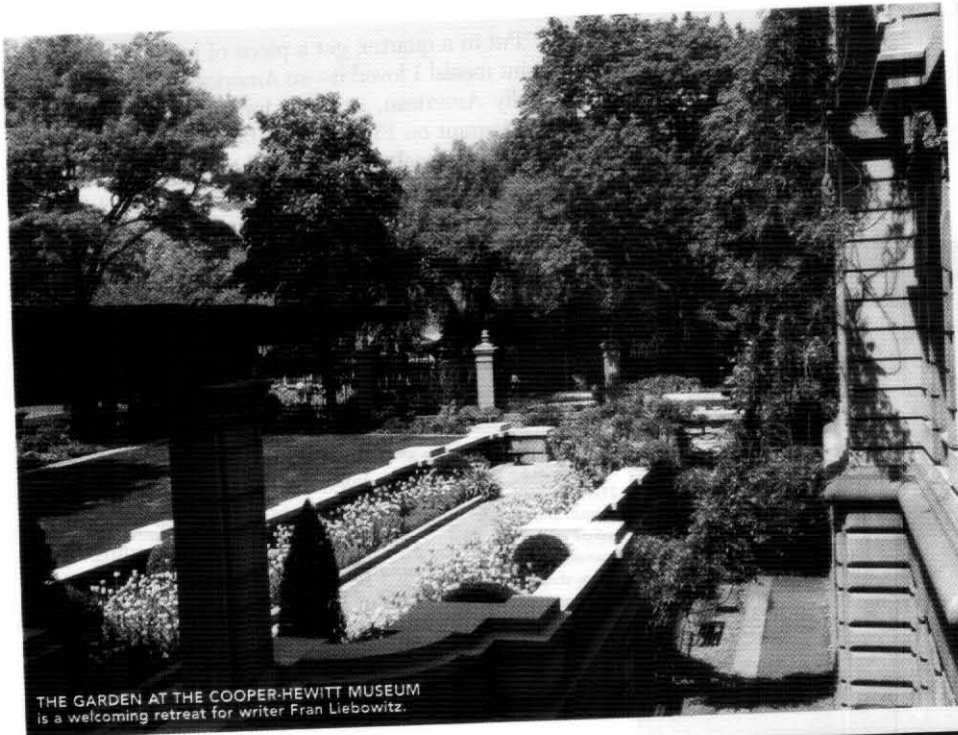
DOUGHNUT PLANT, 379 Grand St.; 212/505-3700. The line snakes out the door for these huge, preservative-free diet-busters. Flavors (35 in all) change daily.

## NYC'S BEST



## foot fetish

JEFFREY, 449 W. 14th St. near 10th Ave.; 212/206-1272. For exciting footwear you'll find nowhere else. The spring and fall sales are on every true New York woman's calendar.



THE GARDEN AT THE COOPER-HEWITT MUSEUM is a welcoming retreat for writer Fran Liebowitz.

► “That’s where the games are,” he says. *Family Feud*, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* and *Monopoly* are among his favorites. While this little capitalist usually ends up owning Park Place and Boardwalk, he says he prefers to play the host rather than a contestant. What else would you expect from someone who’s been performing since age 2½?

FRAN LIEBOWITZ, the curmudgeonly author of *Social Studies*, declares sourly that she is New York’s anti-tourist board, loath to disclose favorite spots for fear they’ll be ruined. “I’d like to keep people from coming to New York,” she declares bluntly. “I liked it best when everybody hated the city, because then it was less crowded.”

After mourning the surrender of Times Square’s gin joints and grind houses to Disney, the expansion of the Museum of Modern Art (“The last time they made it bigger, they didn’t make it better”), and the loss of Sixth Avenue’s flower district, she does admit an affection for one venerable institution: **The New York Public Library** at 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue. “Even though they put in computers, it’s still quiet,” she says. “You can’t ruin the library, because you can’t get anybody into it. There are no lines.”

She also expresses admiration for another “nearly empty” architectural gem, the **Pierpont Morgan Library** on East 36th Street. “They have this fantastic manuscript collection that no one is allowed to see, which is an excellent way to preserve it,” she says. “It’s a real oasis, like the Frick.” The latter, a small art museum on Fifth Avenue and 71st Street, is 20 blocks from Liebowitz’s pick for the best park in the city: **the Arthur Ross Terrace and Garden at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum** at 2 East 91st St. “You have to pay to get into the park, so it’s never crowded,” she says. “And though I’m always shocked at the fee they charge to get in—something like \$8—I pay it.” What price peace and quiet for a grump?

Growing up in Bombay, ISMAIL MERCHANT’S concept of New York was shaped almost entirely by Rock Hudson and Doris Day movies. “That was shattered in one day when I arrived here in 1958,” says the film producer/director, whose collaboration with James Ivory has yielded such acclaimed films as *A Room with a View*, *Howard’s End*, and *The Remains of the Day*.

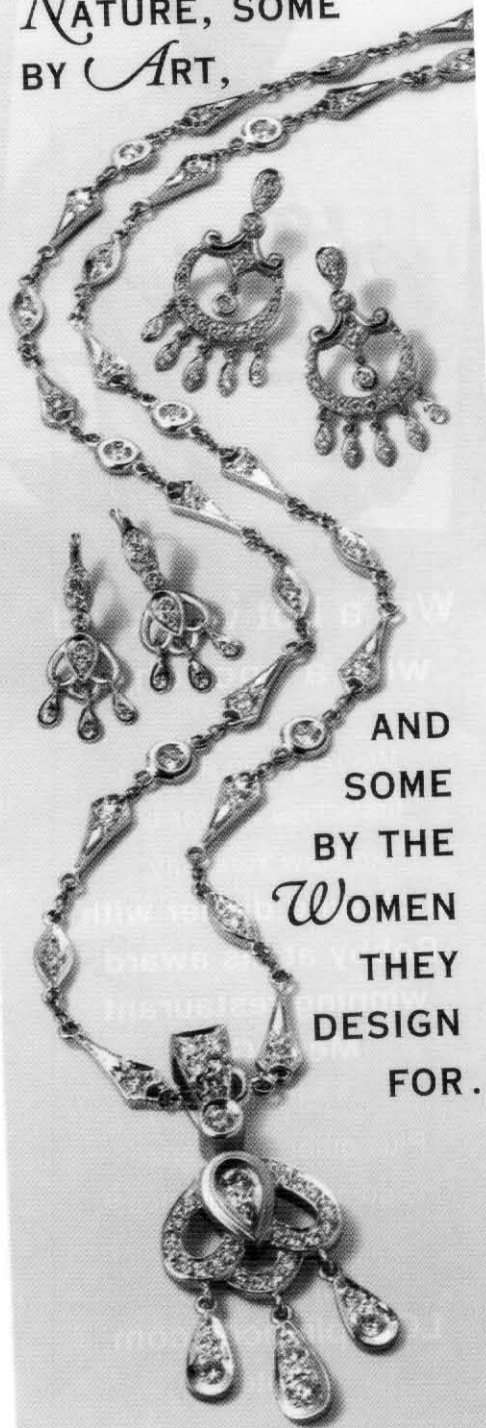
He fondly recalls those early days, especially dinners at the Horn and Hardart Automat in Herald Square, not far from the Hotel Martinique, where he lived while pursuing an MBA at New York ►

NYC’S BEST



TAKASHIMAYA, 693 Fifth Ave.; 212/350-0100. You just can’t leave without buying something to put in one of these cool triangular bags. TIFFANY & CO. 727 Fifth Ave. at 57th; 212/755-8000. They’ve made robin’s-egg blue an icon.

SOME DESIGNERS ARE INSPIRED BY NATURE, SOME BY ART,

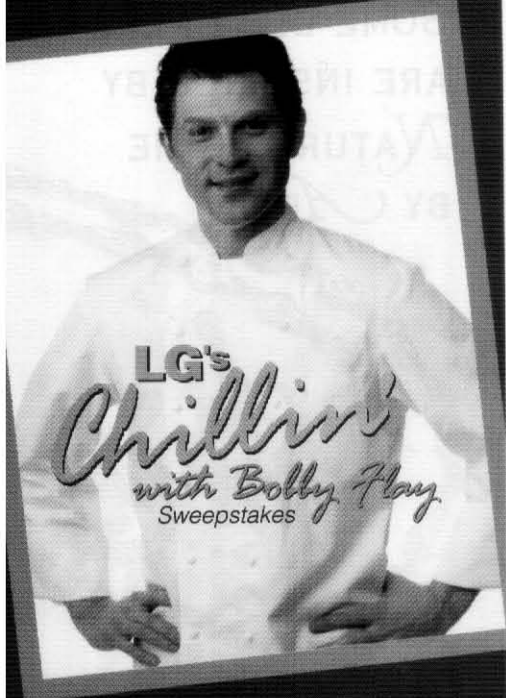


AND SOME BY THE WOMEN THEY DESIGN FOR.

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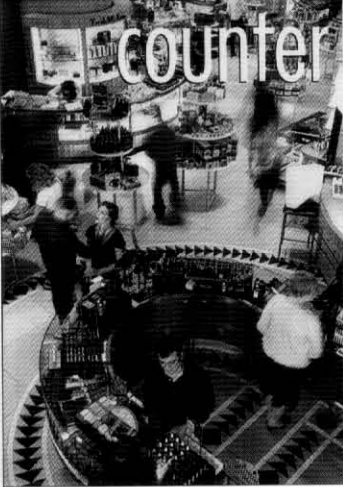
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**NYC's BEST**



**counter action**

**HENRI BENDEL,**  
712 Fifth Ave.;  
212/247-1100.  
Moguls and models  
collide at the  
cosmetics counter,  
where shopping  
evenings complete  
with cocktails draw  
a hip, stylish crowd.

University. "Put in a quarter, get a piece of lemon chiffon pie," he muses. "Instant meals! I loved it—so American."

Quintessentially American, as well, for Merchant is **Billy's**, a neighborhood restaurant on First Avenue between 52nd and 53rd. It has warm mahogany paneling, checkered tablecloths, welcoming waiters, and a friendly atmosphere. "It's been going for a century, and I've been eating there for the past 35 years. It's the sort of place where you order a martini then sit down for fish and chips or shepherd's pie, and they have the world's best coleslaw sandwich."

Though **JOYCE CAROL OATES**, as a professor in the creative writing program at Princeton, has lived in New Jersey for the past 25 years, she makes almost weekly retreats to the city where she lived in the '70s on Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village. On a recent trip to arrange a reading of her new play, Oates stopped at **Deux Amis**, one of her favorite restaurants, on East 51st near First Avenue. "It's small, intimate, and friendly."

Another regular destination for Oates and husband Raymond Smith is **Kennedy Galleries** on Fifth Avenue at 57th Street. "We visit a lot of galleries, but we particularly like this one

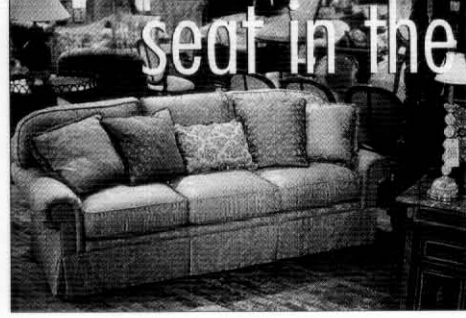
because it's quiet and inviting, and they have good work." (The couple collects art by Charles E. Burchfield and John Marin.)

They also like the **American Wing at the Met**. "All museums are beautiful, but this room is particularly so because it's so full of light and whiteness and all that beautiful Tiffany glass," Oates says. "It seems so distinctly American. I can sit there for hours."

Writer **DOMINICK DUNNE** says that since September 11th, he treasures every brick of New York's great architectural landmarks, none more so than Midtown's **Rockefeller Center**. When entertaining out-of-towners, he makes a stroll by the ice skating rink a mandatory part of the itinerary. "For the first time in my life, I look at buildings and realize they're vulnerable, and I value them as never before. I don't take anything for granted anymore."

Dunne continues, "Whenever I come back over the bridge from the airport, I'm always awed by the view. Seeing the lights of the city rejuvenates me no matter how tired I am." After a trip, Dunne usually heads for his favorite restaurant—**Swiftys**, on Lexington between 72nd and 73rd. Dunne frequents the place because it draws the old crowd from Mortimer's, the legendary society boîte where the gossip was dished out along with the coq au vin. "Swiftys has only been open for three years, but it seems like I've been going there forever," says Dunne. "It's good home cooking—meatloaf and mashed potatoes—and I know at least half the people there. It's like coming home. I think, like a lot of New Yorkers, I've just fallen madly in love with the city all over again." —PATRICK PACHECO

**NYC's BEST**



**seat in the house**

**ABC HOME AND CARPET,**  
888 Broadway at E. 19th;  
212/473-3000. Artist Julian  
Schnabel bought six red  
damask sofas right off the  
floor. Though ABC tilts to the  
modern, there are plenty of  
tufted traditional styles ready  
when you are.