

FRAME BY FRAME

# Behind the window, beneath the hat

By [Sebastian Smee](#) | GLOBE STAFF SEPTEMBER 05, 2016

PORTLAND, Maine — Lois Dodd, who was born in 1927, is one of this country's most underrated painters. She was part of the generation of artists who were obliquely connected with Abstract Expressionism and then Pop, but who were more inclined to varieties of figurative quietude. One thinks of Fairfield Porter, Neil Welliver, Yvonne Jacquette, and Dodd's lifelong friend Alex Katz.

Dodd didn't have a retrospective until 2011, when the Kemper Museum for Contemporary Art, in Kansas City, Mo., and the Portland Museum of Art together mounted "Catching the Light." That show included this Dodd self-portrait, which Portland owns. There's something self-replenishing, something endless about it. It never exhausts looking.

It helps, no doubt, that it's so bright and fresh. You don't often see a painting with so much of the particular green Dodd has used for the house's siding. It's a sort of dull chartreuse, shifting toward yellow, and it is given a sharp, citrusy zing by the bright yellow of the flowers, the contrasting dark greens of the reflected trees, and the two shades of blue on the window frame.



PORTLAND MUSEUM OF ART

**"Self-Portrait in Green House Window" by Lois Dodd**

In fact, let's just take a moment to appreciate thechutzpah and fashion chops of an artist who would choose, wear, and paint herself in such a hat. (Perhaps I shouldn't be so dumbly literal: It's even more admirable if she changed it to yellow for the sake of the painting's harmonies.)

I've talked about color, but what's just as extraordinary is the light. Notice the way Dodd, with utmost economy, suggests the searing intensity of sunlight with her treatment of the shadows on the window frame — and especially the siding. Each horizontal shadow has a broken lower edge, suggesting uneven edges in the overlapping panels. Only strong sunlight creates that kind of shadow precision. Exquisite, too, are the variations in light reflecting off the slender, pinwheeling leaves of the green stem in the foreground.

These are all formal qualities, and I dwell on them to delay my attempt to express the picture's emotional effect. Why is that so hard?

Because the mood is so elusive. It is a painting of surfaces and reflections, but it powerfully suggests interior life.

The light is beneficent; but the artist's view of herself is reflected in a window, obscured and obstructed by the window frame; diminished by distance.

So it is a painting to bask in, but also to feel unsettled by. It would make a great cover for a volume of Alice Munro short stories. For me, it suggests both the sensual immediacy of daily existence, and the difficulty, perhaps the impossibility, of grasping the essence of any self.

## **SELF-PORTRAIT IN GREEN HOUSE WINDOW**

By Lois Dodd. At Portland Museum of Art, 7 Congress Square, Portland, Maine. 207-775-6148, [www.portlandmuseum.org](http://www.portlandmuseum.org)

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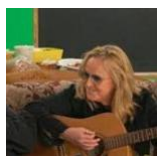
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## Most Popular in Arts

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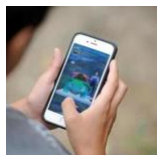


@LARGE | MICHAEL ANDOR BRODEUR

### The higher intelligence of Action Bronson and ‘Ancient Aliens’

Viceland’s “Traveling the Stars,” in which the ex-chef/rap star invites his homies over to smoke weed and watch a History Channel program, is the biggest waste of time and the greatest show on television. [MORE...](#)

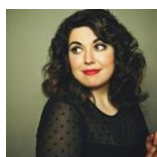
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### The Pussy Riot-inspired Russian law that got a Pokemon Go player arrested

A video blogger has become a crusader for Russians’ right to play the popular game in church. [MORE...](#)

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### Comedian Jenny Zigrino is poised for a breakthrough

The 29-year-old, who spent her early stand-up days in Boston, returns here this weekend. [MORE...](#)

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TV CRITIC'S CORNER

### Clinton and Trump: back to back, but not face to face

NBC is airing a not-a-debate featuring Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump tonight at 8. [MORE...](#)

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TY BURR

## Most of 2016's movies have been soulless, noisy, and dull

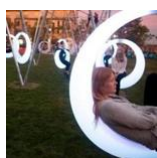
Commercial blockbusters still exist and they still make obscene amounts of money, but they matter less and less. [MORE...](#)



THEATER

## At the Huntington, two Georges, one Sondheim

Artistic temperament and torment is at the heart of "Sunday in the Park With George." [MORE...](#)



## 'Swing Time' lights up the Lawn on D

The 20 glowing oval swings are the first interactive art piece to be added to the temporary public park space adjacent to the Boston Convention. [MORE...](#)



ART REVIEW

## At the ICA, Nalini Malani is a marvel

The Indian artist's installation "In Search of Vanished Blood" heads straight for the collective unconscious. [MORE...](#)



## You can finally see 'Hamilton'... kind of. A documentary will air on PBS.

The entire show will be filmed as part of the process, but "use of the footage in its entirety or otherwise has yet to be determined." [MORE...](#)



SEVEN BOOKS ABOUT ...

## Escapes into adventure on the high seas

Katharine Whitemore offers capsule reviews of sailing books. [MORE...](#)



The events hosted this weekend by Harvard's Nieman Foundation include the likes of Bob Woodward, Wynton Marsalis, Robert Caro, and Junot Diaz. [MORE...](#)

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## What Nicholson Baker learned as a substitute teacher

The author recalls his time as a Maine classroom fill-in in the book "Substitute." [MORE...](#)

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IN FOCUS

## What it's like to be in a cult

A man who spent 20 years in a cult, and as their unofficial videographer, presents his experience in the documentary "Holy Hell." [MORE...](#)

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## Three Hogwarts books to materialize Tuesday

Today is the day J.K. Rowling releases a trio of eBook shorts called "Pottermore Presents" exploring the world where Hogwarts resides. [MORE...](#)

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BUZZSAW

## Is Julia Louis-Dreyfus TV's best-ever comic actress?

A genius at making shallowness and awkwardness into comic goldmines, Louis-Dreyfus knows how to transform the trivial into the revelatory. [MORE...](#)

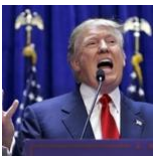
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## Restless piano innovator Igor Levit seeks new pathways

Largely unknown at the time of his 2013 debut recording, this prodigious Russian pianist has marked himself as an artist to reckon with. [MORE...](#)

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## What did Donald Trump say about immigrants?

Read excerpts of Trump's comments on immigrants and watch the speech. [MORE...](#)

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It’s not “Game of Thrones,” but at times, “Vikings” gives me just as much pleasure. [MORE...](#)

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PHOTOGRAPHY REVIEW

## At Worcester, photography gets the blues

The Worcester Art Museum looks at photographs made with the cyanotype process. [MORE...](#)

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## Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Road Project shines in stirring Morgan Neville documentary

“The Music of Strangers” is a new documentary about Ma’s pan-cultural endeavor. [MORE...](#)

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TELEVISION REVIEW

## ‘Queen Sugar’: melodrama at a slow boil

“Queen Sugar” is a different kind of soap, one that moves unhurriedly through each plot point and adds artistic and intimate flourishes whenever possible.

[MORE...](#)

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ART REVIEW | SEBASTIAN SMEE

## At the ICA, a powerful show from the collection

Ten years of collecting have brought impressive results, as seen in the exhibition “First Light.” [MORE...](#)

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TY BURR

## What to watch on demand? Try these 10

The second installment of An Occasional But Considered Guide to On Demand Movie Picks. [MORE...](#)

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ck creative pace, the rapper Future released his newest album, “EVOL,” Friday night. [MORE...](#)



BUZZSAW

## David Letterman seems to be marking time

Thirty-two years into his late-night reign — it’s OK to admit that Letterman’s sarcastic bite has lost its power. [MORE...](#)



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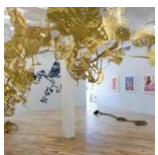
## Getting meta- with ‘Too Many Cooks’ and others

The viral video “Too Many Cooks” arrives as the newest entry to a deepening lineage of experiments in absurdist metavision. [MORE...](#)



## Borrow a bit of magic from Boston’s Puppet Free Library

With just a name and a phone number, you can borrow a puppet from one of Back Bay’s best-kept secrets. [MORE...](#)



GALLERIES | CATE MCQUAID

## In current shows, creations with lives of their own

Fred H.C. Liang, Mags Harries, and Debra Weisberg create works that ripple with life and challenge perceptions. [MORE...](#)



CRITIC’S NOTEBOOK

## ‘Noah’ part of a flood of Bible-themed films

While many Christians and other believers decry modern pop culture as a swamp of secular sin, movie theaters are telling a different story. [MORE...](#)



## Regina Spektor a study in contrasts

No matter where Spektor goes, the music remains catchy, even during the kitschy

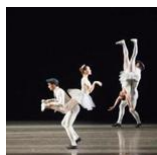


## 'The Marriage of Opposites' by Alice Hoffman

Plot is one challenge of writing fiction about real people, and the stories of Rachel and Camille unfold more as chronicle than narrative in Hoffman's latest book.

[MORE...](#)

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DANCE

## 'Le Corsaire' and more in Boston Ballet's 2016-17 season

The upcoming season will include the North American premiere of Ivan Liska's "Le Corsaire" and a world premiere by Jorma Elo. [MORE...](#)

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BOOK REVIEW

## New Trump book adds details but unlikely to change minds

Investigative reporter David Cay Johnston attempts to add to our understanding of the Republican presidential nominee. [MORE...](#)

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BUZZSAW

## You may never, ever remake these shows

We need a few rules about which shows absolutely may not be remade, rebooted, redone, or revived under any circumstances. [MORE...](#)

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TV CRITIC'S CORNER

## The meanest 'Seinfeld' episode ever

"The Twin Towers" is indeed in extremely bad taste — and funny, too. [MORE...](#)

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ART REVIEW

## At the MFA, Renaissance mastery on display

"Della Robbia: Sculpting with Color in Renaissance Florence" at the MFA is a revelation. [MORE...](#)

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MOVIE REVIEW



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...rested in demonstrating how a genius is misunderstood and unfairly judged by the standards of petty moralists. [MORE...](#)

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## David Duchovny shifts from actor to musician

A long way from “The X-Files,” David Duchovny shows his musical side on new debut album, “Hell or Highwater,” which he recorded in Somerville. [MORE...](#)

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ART REVIEW

## The art of the '80s at the ICA

“This Will Have Been: Art, Love & Politics in the 1980s” at the Institute of Contemporary Art reflects on the decade’s raw, heartfelt, and politically engaged work. [MORE...](#)

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TELEVISION REVIEW

## From Adlon and Notaro, life writ small in two new series

Pamela Adlon’s “Better Things” on FX and Tig Notaro’s “One Mississippi” on Amazon adapt their stars’ lives into TV narratives. [MORE...](#)

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ARCHITECTURE REVIEW

## New Balance’s new Brighton HQ an ode to old urbanism

What is it trying to look like? A cruise ship? A running shoe? Maybe a frog? Regardless, it’s an outstanding chunk of architecture. [MORE...](#)

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PHOTOGRAPHY REVIEW

## Let’s be honest, Ansel Adams’s images of a WWII internment camp are propaganda

Adams said he was trying to “show how these people, suffering under a great injustice... had overcome the sense of defeat,” but it’s disquieting that many photos are so upbeat. [MORE...](#)

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ures in Deirdre Sullivan and Maja Löfdahl's book tell two slightly different tales. [MORE...](#)

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ART REVIEW

## 'Kanreki' brings a bit of Japan to Falmouth

It is a big deal for Falmouth, the only US venue, to be hosting this prestigious show. [MORE...](#)

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NEWER MUSIC

## Michael Pisaro blurs edges of performance, perception

The composer has created a body of work in which silence and field recordings compel consideration. [MORE...](#)

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## Novelists team up for teen book on race and police

A timely new title co-written by young-adult authors Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely is finding surprising success. [MORE...](#)

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DOC TALK

## Taking a very different look at Nick Cave

A look at what's new and innovative in documentary programming. [MORE...](#)

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## In 'Notes From the Field' at ART, Anna Deavere Smith intends to educate and engage

The playwright and actress tackles the school-to-prison pipeline in her solo play, but the second act belongs to the audience. [MORE...](#)

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BOOK REVIEW

## Belle Boggs blends reportage, cultural analysis in her memoir on her infertility fight

"The Art of Waiting" is an eye-opening, gorgeously written book that breaks the taboo on open



## An uninspired 'StartUp' with nothing new to sell

Crackle's new crime drama settles for sex scenes and over-the-top action set-pieces. [MORE...](#)

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## An homage to Gene Wilder's moving marriage to Gilda Radner

Gilda Radner famously described her life after meeting Gene Wilder as having gone "from black and white to Technicolor." [MORE...](#)

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## Katarina Burin wins ICA's Foster Prize

Burin, a native of Slovakia, has won the Institute of Contemporary Art's 2013 James and Audrey Foster Prize. [MORE...](#)

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CLASSICAL NOTES | DAVID WEININGER

## A Far Cry celebrates 10 years by moving ever forward

Starry collaborations and retrospective glimpses form only a small portion of the restless ensemble's anniversary season. [MORE...](#)

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BOOK REVIEW

## 'The Sixth Extinction' by Elizabeth Kolbert

"Extinction" is surprisingly breezy, entirely engrossing, and entertaining tour through a half-billion years of our planet. [MORE...](#)

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TELEVISION REVIEW

## A simple and satisfying goodbye to 'Looking'

For those attached to the HBO show's characters, the 90-minute movie is a warm coda to their stories. [MORE...](#)

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BOOK REVIEW

## A more personal volume of T.S. Eliot's letters



BOOK REVIEW

## ‘The Art of Asking’ by Amanda Palmer

The musician is a polarizing figure, and her book is sure to confirm the convictions of her devotees and detractors alike. [MORE...](#)

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## For a Renaissance sculpture at the MFA, it’s assembly required

A 15th-century statue gets pieced together at the Museum of Fine Arts. [MORE...](#)

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STAGE REVIEW

## Arousing ‘Company’ at Lyric Stage

Spiro Veloudos directs a production that gives Sondheim junkies every opportunity to savor what they love about this classic. [MORE...](#)

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GALLERIES

## Victoria’s secret — and sense of humor

Kathryn Parker Alamanas’s show at Yellow Peril Gallery” employs lingerie to imaginative effect. [MORE...](#)

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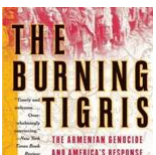


THE STORY BEHIND THE BOOK | KATE TUTTLE

## Psychologist on raising human beings

When solving a problem together, Ross Greene says, parents need to begin with empathy. [MORE...](#)

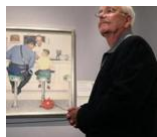
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SEVEN BOOKS ABOUT ...

## The Armenian genocide

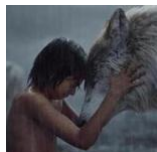
Including “The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America’s Response” and “They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else: A History of the Armenian



## People benighted Norman Rockwell illustrations reunite with paintings

In Stockbridge, sitters are face to face with the paintings they sat for. [MORE...](#)

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MOVIE REVIEW | ★ ★ ★

## New 'Jungle Book' is a weird and wondrous adventure

Disney's live-action/CGI remake of its 1967 film is a thing of digitized beauty until its formulaic smackdown of an ending. [MORE...](#)

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## J.K. Rowling unveils another school of magic – in the Berkshires

From the Berkshires to Boston, the muggle world welcomed the revelation Tuesday that “Harry Potter” author J.K. Rowling had chosen Mount Greylock, the state’s highest peak, as the site of an ultrasecretive school of magic. [MORE...](#)

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GLOBE SPECIAL REPORT

### Read More



## Danforth Art in Framingham scambles to move

Forced to leave its home of 40 years, Danforth Art in Framingham is scrambling to ready its new location. [MORE...](#)

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MUSIC REVIEW

## Steven Tyler was the least country part of his country show

After his second song, the singer declared, “What a good way to start the country show!” But Tyler wasn’t too interested in recasting familiar material. [MORE...](#)

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Lydia B. Smith takes up the pilgrimage to see how that life works in the 21st century in her documentary. [MORE...](#)

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