

DESIGN

get in shape

Architect Neri Oxman takes organic forms

Like a science-fiction heroine, 33-year-old Israeli beauty Neri Oxman, who founded the Biomimetic Materials research lab at MIT, experiments with computer science, structural engineering, and ecology to produce sublime objects based on biological principles. "I am trying to understand what nature knows about assembly that we don't," she explains about such projects as sustainable building facades that mimic butterfly wings and fish scales, part of her Natural Artifice series, which was recently purchased by MoMA for its permanent collection. "She is doing what we have been trying to do for millennia by stealing secrets from nature," says MoMA curator Paola Antonelli. "Her work looks like beautiful sculpture, but it represents the future of architecture and design."

Oxman is currently reimagining a line of medical products, including an abdominal splint and a sexy corset, for the Boston Museum of Science. But her most provocative piece thus far is the Beast lounge chair. In a high-tech caress, its cellular structure responds to the weight and sensation of the human body. For its line, the futuristic Oxman turned to Le Corbusier's classic chaise longue. After all, she says, "that's the divine question of architecture: Where do you begin?" —CATHRYN DRAKE



NATURAL ARTIFICE: NERI OXMAN, IN A VICTORIA BECKHAM DRESS.

Clockwise from top left: LANE CODER; Settings Editor: Heidi Bivens; hair and makeup: Regina Harris for L'Atelier NYC; Courtesy of the Public Theater; ALEKSANDRA MIR, photographed by KARL WEATHERLY; © Getty Images; FRANÇOIS DUHAMEL/Courtesy of Focus Features; Details, see in This Issue.

A SUMMER STATE OF MIND

PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT

editor: Valerie Steiker

* high culture/low budget

LEAFLING

These days, \$0 doesn't go as far as it used to, except at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, where tickets are free and the New York City Opera can't be bought. This month, the season kicks off with a starry *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare's comedic free-for-all of overblown lovers, long-lost twins, and cross-dressing clowns. As Viola, Anne Hathaway in boys' clothes chases Orsino (Raúl Esparza), who's in love with Olivia (Audra McDonald), who's in love with the strapping young Cesario, who is really Viola in male drag. Then things get complicated. As the mildly deranged Orsino, Esparza is forced to confront, he says, "some serious gender issues" as he struggles with a growing attraction to his boyish aide-de-camp (it's Hathaway, remember). "He's got this ideal of love that is neat and tidy and lofty and poetic but doesn't really exist," Esparza says. "The real thing turns out to be a little bit messier." —ADAM GREEN

ART



FLIGHT OF FANCY: A POSTCARD FROM MIR'S VENEZIA (ALL PLACES CONTAIN ALL OTHERS), 2009.

MOVIES HIT THE ROAD

After Juno for 30-somethings, Sam Mendes's sweet-natured *Away We Go* tells the story of soon-to-be parents Burt (John Krasinski) and Verona (Maya Rudolph), who are trying to figure out "how to live." Zipping from Montreal to Miami in search of a place that feels like home, they bump up against a wide range of possible lives, from the hilarious boozing of Verona's ex-boss (Allison Janney) to the smugness of Burt's professor friend, LN (Maggie Gyllenhaal), a monster of New Age PC. Enjoyably loose yet neatly structured, this beautifully shot road picture was written by literary It couple Dave Eggers and Vendela Vida, whose portrait of modern romance is at once funny and a tad precious—a heartfelt hymn to hip decency. —JOHN POWERS

DAY TRIPPERS AWAY WE GO'S JOHN KRASINSKI AND MAYA RUDOLPH.



KEEP IN TOUCH

You wouldn't expect images of alpine rivers or elephants bathing to turn up on postcards of Venice, Italy. But for this year's Venice Biennale, artist Aleksandra Mir is distributing a million postcards—each one labeled VENEZIA—sporting anomalies like flamingos or the Golden Gate Bridge. "It's the idea that Venice extends out to the world through water," the 41-year-old Polish-born artist, raised in Sweden, says by phone from her home in Palermo, where she moved after a long sojourn in New York. "That sense of geography as fluid is something I've always had inside me," she admits. "Now it's up to the public to take over." —LESLIE CAMHI pata >88