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Letters

Conquered consumers?

In "Civilization and Its Discontents" (SN: 3/3/90, p.136), German archaeologist Thomas von der Way states that because local methods of pottery at Buto were replaced by more advanced techniques originating in Upper Egypt, the Upper Egyptians had apparently conquered Buto.

I wonder if my Japanese piano, my husband's Japanese electronics, our Japanese car and our Japanese dishes would lead future archaeologists to conclude that Japan had, in fact, "conquered" our civilization.

And maybe they'd be right!

*Delana Ann Bunch
Oakhurst, Tex.*

Smart art — and beyond

Ivan Amato's article on intelligent materials ("Smart as a Brick," SN: 3/10/90, p.152) got me to wondering about the application of adaptive structures to art.

Interactive art is not new, but these new

This Week

- 276 Human Brain Neurons Grown in Culture
- 276 Antenna jam delays Hubble's first light
- 277 Enzyme blocker cools inflammatory reaction
- 277 CMV and heart disease
- 277 Manic depression's ex-X
- 278 'Clockwork' quakes may not keep good time
- 278 Panel finds fluoride-cancer link 'equivocal'
- 279 Critical Kaposi's growth factor identified
- 279 Experimental method lowers multifetal risk

Research Notes

- 285 Chemistry
- 285 Earth Sciences
- 287 Materials Science
- 287 Physics

Articles

- 280 Forecasting Into Chaos

Cover: While ancient sailors sought weather portents in the clouds that filled the twilight sky, modern forecasters perform their task using computer models of the atmosphere. Through ongoing research, meteorologists hope to learn when their models will fall prey to mathematical chaos, a force that renders forecasts unreliable. (Photo: Lawrence Radke/University of Washington)

- 283 Episodic Oceans

Departments

- 274 Books
- 275 Letters

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spontaneous mutation seems to be "a bit of a mess."

*John Cairns
Professor of Microbiology
Harvard School of Public Health
Boston, Mass.*

Gravity's pull on imagination

In "Imagined pictures possess 3-D properties" (SN: 3/10/90, p.150), researchers assert that people construct an imaginary space around themselves based on three dimensions or axes, and that "this is a powerful [mental strategy] to organize space that we use whenever we can" — for instance, in painting a mental picture of a scene described in a book.

The implication is that this is based on some innate attribute of the reader. Perhaps, however, it is the result of the three-dimensional descriptions provided by the writers — i.e., by using words like "above," "below," "front," "behind" and "right," which force the reader to think in three dimensions.

Letters continued on p.284