

French Culture Minister Visits New Orleans

Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres announces new initiatives to help the region get back on its feet

FRENCH MINISTER of Culture Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres traveled to New Orleans on November 4 to set up France's cultural assistance to the three Gulf coast states that were devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita (see NFF 05.11). When representatives of the French Embassy first met with local authorities in Baton Rouge and New Orleans and asked "What can we do?" the answer came promptly: schools need help during this exceptionally difficult time, and musicians need to keep working while the city is being rebuilt. Indeed, New Orleans is one of the most musical cities in the world, and music plays a key role in the city's economy, which depends heavily on tourism and conventions.

On November 4, Donnedieu de Vabres announced that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and Communications, every French musical institution and agency, and the French regions, are joining forces to create residencies for musicians from New Orleans. Starting in Paris on December 1, four artists will be provided with apartments and stipends, and will have the opportunity to work and perform in the French capital. Starting January 1, more than 15 residencies will be created throughout the rest of France.

Louisiana schools can also count on French help. Louisiana is home to dozens of schools with a complete French curriculum, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has promised \$180,000 to reopen schools that offer these advanced French programs. Several private donors have joined this effort, bringing the total to \$634,000 (including \$220,000 of in-kind donations from French book publishers and \$150,000 from media group Lagardère).

Helping to ease the immediate impact of Katrina is not enough. France also wants to help in the long term

and build new relationships. The Cultural Services of the French Embassy and the FACE foundation (French American Cultural Exchange) are launching several programs, based on public and private funding, to develop cultural exchanges among musicians from France and New Orleans and to boost educational exchanges. **■ ■**

WEATHERING THE STORMS TOGETHER



Ambassador Jean-David Levitte and his wife (left) welcome Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) to the residency on November 1

French companies announced an additional \$2.2 million in aid to the three states devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita during a reception at the French Ambassador's residence on November 1, bringing the total contribution by French firms to \$20.7 million (see NFF 05.11). Perrier, for instance, has distributed \$580,000 worth of mineral water. Areva will donate \$200,000 to the American Red Cross and \$100,000 to the Power of Hope Fund, and EDF is donating \$220,000 to help affected employees of local utilities. Dassault Falcon Jet and Thales have offered to help restore the National D-Day Museum, which is located in New Orleans. Thus, the French people will, according to Ambassador Jean-David Levitte, "express our gratitude not only in words but in deeds" to the Americans who liberated France during World War II.

"When the Hurricane hit the coasts of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, it triggered a huge wave of emotion, as if it had happened in France," noted Levitte, as he reminded his guests of the strong historical connection that exists between France and Louisiana. These ties clearly remain strong, and Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Senate co-chair of the Congressional French Caucus, Senator David Vitter (R-LA), Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL), and the Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana, Mitchell Joseph Landrieu, all expressed gratitude for French relief efforts in their states. Other Members of Congress who attended the reception included Senator John Warner (R-VA), Rep. Tom Petri (R-WI), House co-chair of the French Caucus, Rep. William Jefferson (D-LA), Rep. Charlie Melancon (D-LA), Rep. Gene Taylor (D-MS), and Rep. John Boozman (R-AR).

U.N. Security Council Approves Syria Resolution

THE U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL unanimously adopted on October 31 a resolution demanding full cooperation from Syria in a U.N. investigation into the assassination of Lebanon's former prime minister. The United States and France pushed for the resolution after the release of a U.N. report implicated top Syrian and Lebanese security officials in the murder of Premier Rafik Hariri and 20 others on February 14 (see NFF 05.02). The two countries, working together to support the inquiry in order to discover the truth behind the assassination, dropped earlier explicit warnings of economic and diplomatic sanctions against Syria in order to maintain unanimity in the U.N. Security Council (UNSC). But such sanctions remain a distinct possibility.

The resolution requires Syria to detain anyone suspected of involvement in the February 14th bombing. Immediate action taken against suspects will include freezing their assets and imposing travel bans upon them. U.N. investi-

gators will then have the authority to determine the location and the environment where questioning of the suspects will take place.

Foreign ministers from 12 of the 15 Security Council nations, including France's Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, attended the meeting in New York so as to demonstrate a united front and elicit full cooperation from Syria.

In a statement, Douste-Blazy emphasized that the goal of the resolution was to discover the true circumstances surrounding Hariri's assassination and to ensure that those responsible for it are held accountable. He expressed the sentiment of the American and French authorities, who jointly encouraged the UNSC to approve the resolution, when he said, "Syria's leaders must understand that the ... international community as a whole will not tolerate anything less than immediate and complete cooperation, and that it will draw the consequences of any failure by the Syrian authorities to meet their obligations." **■ ■**

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GOVERNMENT ACTS AGAINST BIRD FLU

In response to the epizootic disease that has been reported in certain parts of Europe, the French government has taken action to prevent bird flu from becoming a major epidemic. An interministerial delegate, Professor Didier Houssin, has been appointed to coordinate the government's actions and its communications. As a preventative measure, poultry imports from contaminated countries have been stopped and the inspection of migratory birds and poultry breeding farms increased. Concerned that the disease may jump the species barrier and spread to humans, the government is also stockpiling vaccines. Enough antiviral medication will be available to protect 14 million individuals by the end of 2005 (almost a quarter of the country's population), and France has reserved 40 million additional doses of the vaccine being developed. Fifty million protective masks are being delivered to hospitals across the country, a number that will rise to 200 million in early 2006. French authorities have emphasized the need for national and international coordination to contain an outbreak should it occur.

CHIRAC CALLS FOR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL COHESION IN E.U.

A letter by French President Jacques Chirac, which expressed his hopes for the future of the European Union, ran in 24 newspapers across Europe on October 26, marking the first time such a letter has been so widely published. Chirac expressed confidence in the future of Europe, and more specifically in the success of the December budget meeting of the European

Council. He stressed the importance of a commitment to a politically and socially cohesive Europe, and not just an economical-integrated one. To read the letter in its entirety, please visit www.elysee.fr.

WWII DEPORTEE MEMORIAL OPENED

Struthof, the only WWII Nazi concentration camp on French soil, now houses a memorial commemorating deportees of the Resistance. President Jacques Chirac opened the memorial on November 3, telling observers to "never forget the victims of the darkest chapters of mankind's history." Fifty-two thousand people of more than 30 nationalities passed through the camp between 1941 and 1944. At least 22,000 perished.

NEWS FROM FRANCE / November 9, 2005

UNESCO Adopts Cultural Diversity Treaty

IN PARIS EARLY this summer, a meeting of inter-governmental experts took place to complete the UNESCO text for a convention on the protection and the promotion of cultural diversity. The idea was originally advanced by French

President Jacques Chirac at a summit in Johannesburg in September 2002. For the past three years, French and Canadian diplomats, and their international partners, worked to bring the plan to fruition. UNESCO's member states showed tremendous support for the convention, and on October 21, the text was overwhelmingly adopted by a vote of 148 to 2 (Israel and the U.S.).

On an international level, the convention addresses the rights and duties of countries with regards to cultural products, cultural cooperation and development aid. The convention allows governments to adopt policies and measures, such as quotas and subsidies, that protect vulnerable cultures and preserve cultural diversity. One such mea-

sure might be requiring movies to have subtitles or dubbing in the importing country's local language. In this manner, "[the convention] guarantees the survival of minority cultures," says the cultural minister of Ghana.



A diverse world

Indeed, according to French director Bertrand Tavernier, "The UNESCO convention is liberating, for it allows governments to keep their cultures alive." President Chirac agreed, calling the convention "a major progress in a world that needs to protect its cultural diversity (...). This convention paves the way for a globalization more respectful of the identity of peoples."

The agreement now needs to be ratified by at least 30 countries before it can go into effect. The convention would not override existing treaties but would have equal force with any future agreements. Visit www.unesco.org for more information.

Syracuse IIIA Heralds New Era in Intelligence Capabilities

FRENCH MILITARY communications will be more secure than ever, thanks to the successful launch of a new satellite, Syracuse IIIA. ArianeSpace launched the satellite, which was built by Alcatel Alenia Space, on October 13 from its South American base in French Guiana. Syracuse IIIA reached its orbiting position above the Indian Ocean about half an hour after it had left Earth. It will extend the geographic zones covered by secure French military communications, providing support for French military operations in Afghanistan in particular. Rear-admiral Guy Poulain explained that Syracuse IIIA "will help put in place an immense spider web of information systems."

For the first time, France has a satellite whose use is exclusively reserved for mili-



Technicians in special suits prepare Syracuse IIIA for its installation on an Ariane V rocket.

tary projects. The previous French communications satellite program, Syracuse II, was used for civilian as well as military purposes, and therefore could not guarantee 100 percent military security. Syracuse IIIA, on the other hand, will reinforce the strategic autonomy of France by providing complete jam-proof security for the military's intranet, including phone and fax communications. The actual capacities of the satellite's new technology will be between three and ten times greater than those of Syracuse II.

In addition to the French military, NATO will also benefit from Syracuse IIIA's technology starting in early 2006. This satellite is the first in a series of three to be launched. Syracuse IIIB will go up in mid-2006 and Syracuse IIIC is anticipated for launch in 2010.

First International Networking Forum for Women

Professional women from throughout the world met in Deauville to advance workplace equality

WOMEN ARE COMING together to advance their future professional prospects. October 13 marked the beginning of the first "Women's Forum for the Economy and Society," which was held in Deauville, Normandy. The goal of the three-day forum was to create international networks of women to help their young professional counterparts advance in the workplace and avoid the struggles faced by those who broke new ground before them. "I don't want my daughter to live through what I had to live

through to get to where I am today," said the French minister of social cohesion and equality, Christine Vautrin, who attended the forum. The conference was not limited to young women, however. Indeed, a new association promoting the employment prospects of mature women, "Force Femmes," was launched to give women over 45 the same chances as other workers. Among the participants in the forum were former justice minister, Elisabeth Guigou, and Laurence Parisot, the first female president of Medef, the French Business Confederation.



Areva Chairman Named Person of the Year

THE FRENCH-AMERICAN Chamber of Commerce's 22nd Annual Person of the Year Award will be taking place on Tuesday November 15. This year's award will be given to Anne Lauvergeon, Chairman to the Executive Board at Areva, the world's leading nuclear energy company.



Anne Lauvergeon

The Person of the Year Award is the most important event organized by the French-American Chamber of Commerce. It is considered to be the most significant French business award given outside of France, and is one of New York's most eagerly anticipated events. Each year, the award is given to an individual who has contributed significantly to

international business through their own accomplishments, as well as by recognizing the necessity and value of international relationships.

Under Lauvergeon's guidance, Areva has substantially increased its business in the U.S. and become the world's foremost nuclear energy firm. Areva U.S. had over 7,000 employees and \$2 billion in revenues in 2003. Areva as a whole has 70,000 employees in over 40 countries and earned \$13.3 billion in 2004.

To find out more about this event and the French-American Chamber of Commerce, visit www.faccnyc.org.



CAN YOU TELL ME HOW TO GET, HOW TO GET TO... RUE SÉSAME?

Sunny days have been sweeping the clouds away French-style since October 22, when Sesame Street returned to French airwaves after an absence of 22 years. Channel France 5 developed the new adaptation, "5, Rue Sésame," which joins the ranks of some 120 versions of the program worldwide.

The overall goal of the show is the same as it has been since its inception in the U.S.: to develop children's cognitive and emotional capacities, and to bring up important health and social issues. The specific themes it addresses, however, are directly related to relevant issues in France. For example, because most French children attend pre-school, "5, rue Sésame" will focus more on health and tolerance than on letters and numbers. Several unique French puppets were also invented for the show, including Nac, a hairy yellow giant, and Griotte, an ebullient handicapped girl. But some things haven't changed: the always lovable Elmo has brushed up on his French and will be hanging out with his new friends on "5, rue Sésame."

With 135 French alliances, 32 French program establishments, and 10 regional cultural services, France is the only European country with such a vast network promoting its language and culture. There are over 30,000 French teachers in the U.S., and more than 1,400 American universities have a French department. Over 2 million students learn French in universities. For more information, please visit www.actfl.org or www.afusa.org.

French to be Promoted during Foreign Languages Meeting

THE AMERICAN COUNCIL on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) is holding its 39th Annual Meeting in Baltimore, MD, from November 18 to 20. The event takes on a special importance this year, as 2005 has been designated "the Year of Languages."

As always, the Francophone pavilion will be out in force, with representatives from the French Embassy, the AATF (American Association of Teachers of French), the Alliance Française, and the tourist office Maison de la France in attendance. Visitors will be able to choose from an assortment of goodies (chocolates and sweets, flags, CDs, posters, maps...) and participate in the "Francophonie" game (first prize: a language-learning trip worth \$2,990). Participating educators will also be invited to a reception held in Baltimore by the French Embassy on November 19.

New Book Explores Sartre and De Beauvoir's Relationships

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE and Simone de Beauvoir are synonymous with 20th-century existentialism. The role their philosophy played in their romantic relationships, both with each other and with others, is explored in a new book by U.S. author Hazel Rowley, *Tête-à-Tête: Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre*.

De Beauvoir and Sartre met at the Sorbonne in 1929. Enamored with each other's intelligence, they committed themselves to a life-long intellectual companionship. Romantically, however, the two agreed not to be monogamous. Rather, they promised to be entirely open with each other about their other lovers, although Rowley notes that

Sartre sometimes lied to his other lovers about simultaneous affairs. The book tracks 50 years of Sartre and De Beauvoir's colorful romantic escapades, offering insights along the way about the personalities of these two great thinkers.



De Beauvoir and Sartre in 1954

Sartre (1905-1980) is best known for his existential philosophy, which emphasizes individual freedom and responsibility for one's actions. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1964 for his autobiography, *Words*. Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) is best known for her feminist writing, particularly the classic *The Second Sex*, as well as for her memoirs and fiction. Together, the two founded the influential liberal newspaper *Les Temps Modernes*.

FRENCH, U.S. CITIES TRADE TIPS

A series of seminars for French and American elected officials will take place in Paris and Saint-Etienne from November 7 to 11. These seminars, jointly organized by the National League of Cities and Sister Cities International as well as their French counterparts, the Association des Maires de Grandes Villes de France and Cités Unies de France, provide an opportunity to exchange information on the local management of services such as water, transportation, education and environmental protection. According to Jean-Marie Bockel, mayor of Mulhouse, "Each of our communities is richer thanks to this dialogue among local government leaders."

GOODRICH GETS FRENCH DEFENSE CONTRACT

Goodrich Corp. announced on October 31 that it has been awarded a multiyear contract from the French Ministry of Defense. The contract should generate almost \$141 million in sales by 2010. The firm is a global supplier of systems and services to aerospace and defense markets. Goodrich, which is based in Charlotte, NC, will provide maintenance repair and overhaul, technical support and engineering services for more than 1,300 operational aircrafts including fighters, transport planes and helicopters. Visit www.goodrich.com to learn more.

PRESERVATION HALL JAZZ BAND TOURS FRANCE

One of New Orleans's top musical groups, the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, began a European tour in late October with a stop in Paris to thank France for its help in Hurricane Katrina relief efforts. "Americans again found the French at their side" said U.S. Ambassador to France Craig Stapleton, who attended the concert on October 20, along with 17 French divers who helped clear obstructed Louisiana waterways (see NFF 05.11) and a large Parisian audience. The jazz band, whose goal is to raise "awareness and funds to bring musicians back to New Orleans," according to bassist Ben Jaffe, will continue its tour in Britain, Spain, and Austria.

FOUR N.Y. RESTAURANTS GIVEN 3 MICHELIN STARS

Michelin North America, which released its first-ever guide to dining in New York City on November 4, announced that Per Se, Le Bernardin, Alain Ducasse and Jean Georges won its highly coveted three-star rating. All four restaurants are found in the Manhattan area. Five hundred of the finest restaurants from all five boroughs of New York are included in the guide, out of a total of 23,000. The book is now available in bookstores, and Michelin hopes to cover five other U.S. cities by 2010. For more information, visit www.michelintravel.com.



In Depth Review **PROFIL**
Touché! Fencing in France



France and Fencing: a Shared History

AS MUCH AS any other sport, the modern practice of fencing is intrinsically linked to its history. Like javelin and archery, fencing developed as a ritualized form of martial combat. Egyptian art from at least 1200 BC shows men dueling with knobs on their swords and wearing protective gear, in what may have initially been training sessions for actual combat (Japanese tradition dates back even further).

Fencing became a veritable art during the Renaissance. The development of gunpowder for warfare made armor (and therefore the heavy, awkward broadswords needed to pierce it) obsolete by the late 1400s, and thus provoked renewed interest in the finesse and skill of swordplay. Armories responded to civilian demand, and in the 1500s, rapiers—long, light thrusting weapons—became popular for self-defense and dueling.

French Queen Catherine de Médicis brought many Italian fencing masters to France to promote their art, and the French school of fencing has remained influential ever since. French master Henry de St. Didier published the first fencing treatise in 1573, and he and his contemporaries were the first to define attacks and parries.



Under King Louis XIV, the "court sword" started to replace the rapier, which was too long and heavy to wear with the breeches and silk stockings in fashion at the time. The court sword was lighter and shorter than the rapier but stronger, and the one-handed style was developed. The court sword evolved into the modern foil. Meanwhile, a popular French dueling sword, the *colichemarde*, ultimately became the modern épée. The third fencing weapon, the saber, was modeled on

the cavalry scimitar; its modern technique was developed primarily in Hungary.

Often, the scoring rules for each weapon indicate their original, martial history as well; for example, in saber only the body above the waist is a valid target, since, when fighting on horseback, sabers could reach only the chest and head of soldiers on the ground.

Guillaume Danet wrote *The Treatise on the Art of Arms* in 1766, which established the modern French school of fencing. Several years later, in 1780, French master La Boëssière invented the fencing mask, an invention which enabled the development of increasingly sophisticated (and decreasingly fatal) techniques and strategies. Today, fencing's international rules are drawn up by the Fédération Internationale d'Escrime (FIE), founded in Paris in 1913.

France Takes Top Place in Fencing World Championship

THE FRENCH FENCING team had its most successful World Championships ever last month in Leipzig, Germany. France won more medals than any other country, 10 out of the 36 awarded, including four golds. Twenty-one of the 24 French fencers placed in at least one competition. The Russians finished second with seven medals and Italy third with six medals (each had two golds). France also won 10 medals at the 2001 World Championships in Nîmes, although only two of them were gold.

France's dominance is all the more impressive in light of the high turnover of both its coaching staff and athletes; five of the six coaches joined the team after the 2004 Athens Olympics, and several core members have retired. Michel Sicard, French team director and a former Olympic gold medalist in épée, said he was impressed with the way the team was able to come together. "The transition went well," he said. "You are at peace with yourself when everything is well-organized. There needs to be a balance between stress and pleasure."



The French team celebrates after Anna Lise Touya wins a gold medal in woman's saber.

Like most international fencing competitions, the World Championships offer medals in 12 categories. There are three different weapons—foil, épée, and saber—and gold, silver, and bronze awards are given to the best individual male and female fencers in each weapon, as well as to the best male and female teams in each weapon. The three weapons differ in the sword construction itself, the valid target area to be hit, and the rules regarding how to earn a touch. For example, a foil fencer may only hit the torso, uses a light, square blade with a small hand guard, and must abide by the rules determining right-of-way (he must be on "offense" to score).

The United States was without a medal this year until the very last competition, when the four-person American women's saber team won gold. They were dominant throughout the tournament, ultimately defeating Russia in the finals by a score of 45-36. The team's youngest member, Rebecca Ward from Portland, Oregon, was only 15 years old.

SPEAK FENCER!

French has become the discipline's lingua franca because of France's long fencing tradition.

Corps-à-corps: collision of fencers that prevents normal fencing action

Coup lancé: an attacked launched before the action is stopped; it still counts

Dérobement: evasion of the opponent's blade

En garde: the fencing stance

Flèche: a running, flying attack

Lamé: metallic vest worn to detect electric touches

Piste: the fencing strip

Prise-de-Fer: taking of an opponent's blade in initiation of an attack

Remise: continuation of an attack immediately after it falls short

Salle: fencing hall



Courtesy: Club Salle Gadaski (www.sallegadaski.com) - Photo Lee Walsh

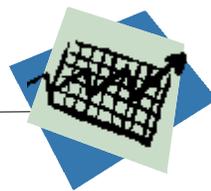
Pierre de Coubertin, the Frenchman who founded the modern Olympics, was a keen supporter of fencing, which is one of only four sports to have appeared in every modern Olympics. For many years women competed only in foil, but women's épée and saber are now Olympic sports as well. France has won more Olympic fencing medals than any other country (it is followed by Italy, Hungary, and the Soviet Union).



A French épée fencer parries a German attack for team gold.

Lacking the robust fencing tradition found in Europe, wary of the Soviet bloc's fencing prowess during the Cold War, and put off by its sometimes impenetrable rules, the popularity of fencing in the United States has been slow to develop. However, more and more Americans are visiting the *salles* and U.S. fencers have begun to assert themselves in international competition; saber fencer Mariel Zagunis won the first U.S. gold fencing medal in over a hundred years, during the 2004 Olympics.

To learn more, visit www.fie.ch (international federation), www.escrime-ffe.fr (French federation), or www.usfencing.org (U.S. federation). ■



EDF to Be Partially Privatized

Electricité de France is Europe's largest utility

ON OCTOBER 24, French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin made the long-awaited announcement of EDF's (Électricité de France) partial privatization. The process was launched on October 28, and by the time public trading begins in mid-November, approximately 15 percent of the company will have been sold for \$34.70 to \$40.30 a share, bringing in an expected \$8.5 billion. A third of the float is reserved for small shareholders, and 15 percent for EDF's staff.

In 1946, EDF was nationalized, and has enjoyed a state monopoly over electricity production and distribution ever since. It is the world's largest civilian nuclear energy producer, with 19 nuclear power plants in France alone. After aggressive international expansion, it now provides 22 percent of the energy consumed throughout the European Union. Its partial privatization will help further open Europe's energy sector to competition.

WIFI SPEED INCREASED BY 40 PERCENT

French researchers at the CNRS, the French scientific research center, have developed a method called "Idle Sense," which increases the speed of WiFi transmissions by 40 percent without the need for new hardware. WiFi (Wireless Fidelity) is one of the most popular forms of wireless Internet access. Their new system calculates the time gaps in transmissions between computers and the network and adjusts connections accordingly, ultimately allowing for a more efficient computer-network interaction. They hope their new system will be integrated into the next WiFi 802.11n standard.

To ensure that it continues to meet its public service responsibilities as the privatization process unfolds, EDF has signed a contract with the government requiring it to respect three rules: the stability of rates, a similar pricing policy throughout the country, and the provision of electricity for the poor. For more information, please visit www.edf.com. ■

WIND ENERGY GOES TO SEA

As part of France's goal of getting 21 percent of its energy from renewable sources by 2010, the green light has been given for plans to build the nation's first ocean-based windmills. The turbines will be built in the English Channel, about four miles from Veulettes-sur-Mer. The 21 windmills will be built in water over 75 feet deep. Ten maritime windmill projects have been submitted for consideration thus far.

OVER 400,000 .FR WEB SITES

There are now over 400,000 Web sites ending in .fr, France's domain extension. The increase is largely attributable to a new and simpler registration system at Afnic, the association that manages the .fr domain. In the three months after the May 2004 change, the number of .fr sites doubled from 176,000 to 321,000. The total number of .fr Web sites is expected to rise 30 percent during 2005.

ANTI-DATE RAPE GLASS DEVELOPED

A new anti-rape glass, designed by Richard Bille and Stephane Mathieu from Nice, is going to appear in several nightclubs in Italy this January. Once filled by the bartender, the "Billglass" can only be opened by piercing a straw through its top. The cone shape thus prevents would-be rapists from spiking drinks with "date-rape" drugs such as the sedative GHB. Bille, who works at a nightclub in Nice, says that sexual abuse involving the drug "happens every day, in every nightclub." Proceeds from the sale of "Billglasses" will be used to raise awareness about "date-rape" drugs.

French Car Makers Roar Ahead: Renault Wins F1 Title

FRENCH AUTOMOBILE constructor Renault just won a smashing victory in the Formula 1 World championship, only four years after returning to the competition. Team members Fernando Alonso and Giancarlo Fisichella seized the first two places of the drivers' championship, thereby giving Renault its first title as the leading automaker.



Fisichella Giancarlo pilots a Renault F1

After Sebastien Loeb and Citroën's victory in the Rally World Championship last month (see NFF 05.11), France's car makers have clearly demonstrated their proficiency in competitive mechanics. French tire maker Michelin, as Renault's official tire supplier, is also celebrating the world title.

High performance in sports does not always translate into sales, but such victories make car products exciting to consumers around the world and promote French *savoir-faire* in mechanical engineering. According to Renault's Chairman Carlos Ghosn, all is about image: "We're here to show our talent and that we can do it properly." Despite several question marks hanging over its future commitments to Formula 1, Renault has announced it will continue its investment in motor sports. Citroën has just taken the same step, confirming it will be back for the 2007 rally season after a one-year sabbatical. ■

LOUIS VUITTON OPENS HUGE BOUTIQUE ON CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES

Louis Vuitton opened its biggest store yet on the famed Champs-Élysées in Paris on October 12. More than 150 years after the legendary fashion line was founded, Vuitton's landmark address on the Champs-Élysées has reopened following a 20-month renovation. The newly remodeled store boasts an array of art-deco-inspired terraces, as well as a selection of contemporary art by James Turrell, Tim White-Sobieski, and Olafur Eliasson. On opening day, the store had a party for more than 1,000 guests. Celebrity attendees included Sharon Stone, Winona Ryder, Uma Thurman, Chow Yun-Fat, and Bob Geldof. The store is expected to attract business travelers and visitors who tend to spend lavishly while in Paris. Visit www.louisvuitton.com to learn more.

to display high-quality imagery for shoppers outdoors. An infrared camera then detects their finger movements on the touch-sensitive surface, and a video projector behind the screen sends appropriate images back to the consumer. This allows shoppers to visualize what they are looking for, navigate menus, watch videos, and, in effect, participate in an entirely new mode of communication, all without even entering the store!

Several merchants are beginning to show an interest in the Folio System, viewing it as an excellent way to better inform passers-by, and entice them into their stores. Planet Hollywood on the Champs-Élysées, for instance, tested the product for one month, allowing users to consult their menu through the front window. Interactive shopping could be just a touch away!

For more information, visit www.tcsf.fr. ■

Window-Shopping... Literally!

IMAGINE IF window-shopping actually meant just that: shopping through an interactive shop window. Touch Communication System France has recently developed and commercialized a concept that will allow consumers to do this, thanks to their new interactive screen technology.

Although systems that perform similar functions already exist, what separates TCS France's "Folio System" from the rest is the high level of specialization and accommodation that the system's technology offers. In a matter of seconds, the Folio System can pull up a truly interactive screen on any standard shop window. A translucent film is placed over the window, making it possible



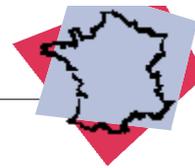
A client tries out Planet Hollywood's new touch-screen window in Paris

LYON-TURIN TUNNEL LAUNCHED

Work has started on a new tunnel that will pass through the French Alps, connecting Lyon, France, with Turin, Italy. The European Union is providing much of the project's 535-million-euro total cost. France has allocated 95 million euros for the tunnel, which is expected to be completed by 2010. If all goes according to plan, high-speed trains could be using the tunnel by 2020.

PARIS TESTS NEW TRAM

The city of Paris conducted the first test of its new tram system on October 12. Mayor Bertrand Delanoë declared the ride "excellent." Over 100,000 people are expected to ride the tram daily once it is completed in late 2006, which would make it one of the busiest in Europe. The five-mile, 19-stop track is primarily located in the city's southern residential districts. Paris's last tramway (with over 600 miles of track) was closed in 1937.



A EURO A DAY COVERS DRIVER'S LICENSE COST

A new policy to help young people afford a driver's license went into effect in France on October 3 in the form of a special loan. Young applicants are now eligible for a loan of between 800 and 1,200 euros, enough to pay for mandatory driving lessons. They are responsible for paying back just one euro a day while the French government pays the accumulated interest. Though the total cost remains unchanged, the loan should make learning to drive a little bit easier on the wallet! For more information, visit www.permisauneuroparjour.fr.

POPULAR FIRST NAMES

The new edition of *La Cote des Prénoms* by Joséphine Besnard lists the most popular names in France today and offers predictions for next year's trends in baby names. The most common names are Monique, which is the name of 356,000 French women, and Michel, a name possessed by 633,000 French men. In terms of predictions, Besnard says that next year Léa will be an extremely popular girl's name, followed by Inès, Chloé, Emma, and Clara, as well as names ending in "ane" such as Louane, and Romane. On the boy's side, Matteo tops the list for next year, with Mathis, Enzo, Lucas, Hugo and other names ending in "o" close behind.

FOIE GRAS DECLARED NATIONAL HERITAGE

The National Assembly of France unanimously voted on October 17 to declare the pâté delicacy, *foie gras*, an official, and therefore protected, part of France's cultural and culinary heritage. According to the members of the Assembly, *foie gras* "perfectly illustrates the adherence to heritage and the link to the land that characterize the originality of the French food model."

FIRST EUROPEAN UFO MEETING IN FRANCE

Interest in unidentified flying objects, after having abated somewhat during the 1980s, is resurfacing in France and trying to burnish its scientific credentials. From October 14 through 16, the town of Châlons-en-Champagne hosted the first European conference on the topic of UFOs. Some 200 scientists, authors, and researchers who specialize in paranormal phenomena were on hand to relay their experiences to thousands of visitors. Seeing flying saucers? Beam up to www.les-repas-ufologiques.com!

NEWS FROM FRANCE November 9, 2005

French Do It With Associations

ACCORDING TO A STUDY conducted by the Center for Research on Philanthropy, there are 1 million active nonprofit associations in France, that is, one for every 60 people in the country. Recently released figures show that 70,000 are created each year and that nearly 7 percent of all the French have participated in the creation of an association over the past 10 years. These nonprofit organizations, known as "1901 associations," after the year in which the law governing their activities was passed, range from cultural associations to sports or volunteer assistance groups.

While most of them are run by France's 14 million volunteers (one French person in four!), they also provide employment opportunities to 5 percent of the working population (1.6 million people). The increasing professionalism of these associations accounts for their rising reliance on paid employees. The government is eager to promote this source of job creation, as well as the associations' activities themselves, and it provides them with several subsidies and flexible employment frameworks. Many associations have greatly benefited from the "emploi tremplin" employment contract, for instance, which is celebrating its first birthday. This type of contract is specifically designed for associations and foundations, and is partially subsidized by local governments for a six-year period.

Visit www.associations.gouv.fr to learn more.



Traditional candlelight auction

BURGUNDY WINES FOR AUCTION

The 145th wine auction sale of the Hospices de Beaune will take place on November 19 and 20 in Beaune, Burgundy, allowing professionals and amateurs to buy one of the most famous wines in the world. As in years past, some of the wine will be auctioned by candlelight (bids must be made before the candle burns out). Some 3,000 bottles, dated between 1982 and 2000, will be sold for the benefit of two nonprofit organizations and the hospices. And in a first, Christie's will direct the sale, which is expected to drain larger international crowds than in previous years and generate over 3 million euros. Visit www.beaune.com to learn more.



PASTRIES FOR PUPS

Situated in the 15th *arrondissement* of Paris, "Mon Bon Chien" recently opened its doors to dog lovers looking to buy a special treat for their canines' chops. France's first bakery for dogs was conceived by American Harriet Sternstein, who bakes the gourmet dog biscuits and cakes herself. Pastry flavors include biscotti, peanut butter, garlic-cheese-parsley and carob (Sternstein's personal favorite). The treats contain neither sugar nor salt: Sternstein uses only natural ingredients like eggs and milk, creating baked goods edible by humans as well as their canine companions.

"I don't understand why this did not already exist in France, a country which loves dogs. In the U.S., there are lots of dog bakeries," says Sternstein.

In addition to its glass display of tempting artisan biscuits, Sternstein's boutique features gifts imported from the U.S. (nail polish, jewelry, coats—all for dogs!) as well as a grooming service. In fact, the boutique is nearly 65 square meters larger than she originally planned. Although not all of the locals have been convinced—"The biscuits are a bit expensive," says one college student—Sternstein has already attracted a loyal clientele in the neighborhood. Bow *appétit!*

French Women Feel Good

THE FRENCH WOMEN of today are feeling in better physical and emotional health than ever before, according to a study published by *Le Figaro Magazine*. Whether they are in a relationship or single, many French women are claiming that they feel a greater degree of independence and overall contentment.

Indeed, 53 percent of French women say they are happy on the whole, according to the survey carried out by TNS Sofres, and 30 percent consider themselves "very happy." They also expressed a healthy attitude toward their own body image, with a majority of 54 percent of single French women feeling beautiful overall. Interestingly, women living with a significant other are

somewhat less likely to consider themselves beautiful (44 percent). Sixty-six percent of all French women claimed that they



are judged at their true worth, even though a substantial majority of 64 percent believe men continue to be macho. While 49 percent of the women surveyed are on or have been on a diet, 45 percent claimed that "it is not important to follow fashion trends."

In general, the *Figaro-Sofres* survey expresses good news about French women and their view of themselves. The growing number of career options and lifestyle choices for French women seems to have led to a surge in self-confidence and feelings of self-worth.





La Rentrée Littéraire: Literary Prizes Galore

AUTUMN IN FRANCE heralds the traditional *rentrée littéraire*. Of this year's 633 titles, six were singled out as the best of what contemporary French literature has to offer.

France's most prestigious literary prize, the Goncourt, was awarded to François Weyergans for *Trois Jours Chez ma Mère*, which overtook the favorite, *La Possibilité d'une Île* by Michel Houellebecq. Weyergans's somewhat autobiographical novel retraces the relationship between a writer, who is psychologically unwell and having difficulty writing his highly anticipated book, and his mother, who is physically unwell. The author immediately informed his 91-year-old mother of his prize. The Prix Goncourt des Lycéens, which is given to an author whose book inspires young people to read and write and which is awarded by a jury of 2,000 high school students, went to Sylvie Germain for *Magnus*, a novel about a boy brought up by a Nazi doctor.

The Prix Renaudot, which often rewards a book critics feel has been overlooked by the Goncourt, went to Nina Bouraoui for *Mes Mauvaises Pensées*, a journey into the history of Constantinople. Alain Mabanckou's *Verre Cassé* (see facing brief) came in a close second. The Académie Française's prize went to Henriette Jelinek for *Le Destin de Iouri Voronine*, the story of a

Russian immigrant who has trouble adapting to life in Hollywood. The Prix Médicis, which aims to recognize new, original talent, was awarded to Jean-Philippe Toussaint for *Fuir*. Régis Jauffret won the Prix Femina (awarded by a jury composed exclusively of women) for his book *Asiles de Fous*. ■

GRAND PALAIS EXHIBIT SHOWCASES VIENNESE ART



Judith II, Klimt, 1909

The Grand Palais in Paris is featuring an exhibit of works by the master artists of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the turn of the 20th century. Entitled "Vienne 1900," the show's 91 paintings and 55 drawings date from between 1890 and 1918. This exhibition is the first in France to honor the artwork of Klimt, Schiele, Moser, and Kokoschka. Although Klimt and Schiele are internationally recognized, Moser and Kokoschka have received little exposure in France until now.

The pieces are divided into three sections: "Allegory," "Landscapes," and "Portraits." Traditional though these categories may seem, the works themselves are anything but. On Klimt, Serge Lemoine, the commissioner of the exposition, says, "His paintings are without depth, two-dimensional ... the colors are completely artificial, completely unnatural." Indeed, the artists break with the rules of perspective and instead focus on form, allowing viewers to appreciate startlingly different interpretations of universal themes. The exhibit runs through January 23. For more information, visit www.mn.fr. ■

Villepin Seeks to Rekindle Modern Arts

FRENCH PRIME MINISTER Dominique de Villepin has made several announcements related to the promotion of modern art in France. A plan to create a "European Center for Contemporary Creation" on Seguin Island, in Paris, is one of them. The center will welcome selected artists, French and foreign, who will benefit from dedicated facilities to produce their art works. It would also include a vast university, in which specific courses for architecture, the visual arts, design, and film would be offered. This new center would hopefully spur creativity by favoring artistic exchanges.

Villepin's goal is to "remake France as one of the most lively places for contemporary creation," very much like the Montparnasse neighborhood during the inter-war period. Tax laws will be changed in order to promote artistic production in France: artists should soon benefit from a 50 percent reduction in taxes on any sales during the first five years of their careers. The focus is not only on the artists but also on new media: the lower 5.5 percent sales tax rate, which was already enjoyed by more traditional media such as painting and photography, will now be applied to installation and video art as well. ■

Klezmopolitan Fills Paris With Modern Jewish Tunes

THE CITY OF PARIS celebrated from October 20 to 23 its first large-scale Jewish music festival, Klezmopolitan, which featured contemporary airs inspired by traditional tunes and a blend of musical genres. Klezmopolitan is a play on the words klezmer (traditional Jewish music from Eastern Europe), cosmopolitan (the festival was composed of musicians from New York, Toronto, Cuba, Argentina and many other countries) and metropolitan (the bands mixed modern day jazz, rock, techno and hip hop with traditional Jewish music). Klezmer, whose main instruments are the clarinet, the violin and, sometimes, the



The Klezmatics

accordion, was heavily inspired by gypsy music. It reached its highest peak at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century in Jewish neighborhoods in Eastern Europe, where klezmerim (klezmer musicians) played in the streets during special occasions. The festival in Paris featured two main acts: the Klezmatics, a group of six who use jazz and folk sounds in their music, and David Krakauer, a clarinetist who modernized his airs with guitar riffs and electronic loops. Pleased with the event's success, the organizers hope to hold a second festival next year. For more information, please visit www.klezmopolitan.com. ■

CONGOLESE WRITER WINS FRANCOPHONY BOOK PRIZE

Congolese writer Alain Mabanckou recently received the *Prix des Cinq Continents de la Francophonie* 2005 for his novel, *Verre Cassé*. This prize seeks to highlight the amazing diversity that can be found on the francophone literary scene. As a recipient of this award, Mabanckou will receive a 10,000-euro cash prize and benefit from the support of the Intergovernmental Agency of Francophony, which will promote his novel during the year. Mabanckou is currently a professor of French and Afro-American literature at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. He has already published six collections of poetry and four novels. He was presented with the Grand Prix Littéraire d'Afrique Noire in 1999.

PHOTO EXPOSITION AT JARDIN DU LUXEMBOURG



First snow in Luxembourg, Paris, 1955

Photographs from throughout the century are on display on the gates of the Jardin du Luxembourg, which adjoins the Palais du Luxembourg, where the French Senate convenes. This exhibition, made possible by the store Fnac, is the 12th presented by the Senate, and will be on display until November 30. For more information, visit www.senat.fr.

RECORD SALES FOR ASTERIX AND OBELIX!

The latest book starring Gallic heroes Astérix and Obélix was released on October 14. Eight million copies simultaneously hit 27 countries around the world, and more than half have already been sold. The publishers are hoping to outdo the last album, *Asterix and the Class Act*, which sold almost 10 million copies in all. Frenchmen Albert Uderzo and René Goscinny created the famous characters in 1959. They have sold more than 300 million comic books in over 107 languages since. The latest book, *Asterix and the Falling Sky*, is the 33rd in the series, and, assured Uderzo, it will not be the last.



ACT FRENCH IN NEW YORK
 "Act French," a series of French performances and events, will grace New York's stages until December 15. These contemporary works by French playwrights address political, social, and psychological issues—global concerns to which American audiences can identify. Playbills credit outstanding French actors Isabelle Huppert, Marie-France Pisier, and Laurent Poitrenaux, among others. Visit www.actfrench.org to learn more.

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French Contemporary Art Exposition in Miami

FOR THE FIRST time ever, noteworthy works from the Fonds National d'Art Contemporain (FNAC), which houses the most extensive collection of contemporary art in France, will be displayed in the United States. "Shortcuts Between Reality and Fiction: Video, Installations and Paintings from le Fonds National d'Art Contemporain" is on display through January 29, 2006, at the Bass Museum in Miami, Florida.

The FNAC was founded almost 200 years ago by the French government to increase public interest in works by French artists. Today, it has more than 80,000 works, including 20,000 from the past 25 years. FNAC's curators have chosen 19 pieces mostly from the 1990's onwards to showcase. The works shown include videos, drawings, paintings, photos, and large-scale light installations.



Untitled
 (known as *Les Policiers*)
 Xavier Veilhan, 1993.

Each innovative work in this exhibition represents a unique critical perception. French artist Xavier Veilhan, for instance, experiments with translations of virtual images into three-dimensional objects through his *Lightworks* pieces. The substantial scale and increased distance between the image and the viewer presents a new perspective on the subject matter that results in a new way of seeing.

Artists in the exhibition include Pierre Bismuth, Jean-Marc Bustamante, Claude Closky, Malachi Farrell, Thomas Hirschhorn, Pierre Huyghe, Anne-Marie Jugnet, Alain Clairet, Bertrand Lavier, Orlan, Alain Séchas, Barthélémy Togo, and Xavier Veilhan. For more information, please visit www.bassmuseum.org.

Claudel and Rodin: Fateful Love Affair, "Fateful Encounter"

THE FRENCH SCULPTORS Auguste Rodin and Camille Claudel had a tempestuous affair during which they produced some of their most renowned work. "Fateful Encounter" tells this story through their sculptures, drawings, photos, and love letters. The exhibition is arranged in chronological order, starting with works produced before they met, then with art they created together, and ending with pieces produced after they broke up.

Rodin first met Claudel in 1882, when he was 41 and she was 17. Rodin hired Claudel as an assistant to help him complete his first government commission, "The Gates of Hell." Their scandalous love affair started soon after, despite the fact that



Vertumnus and Pomona, Camille Claudel (marble, 1905).

Rodin already had a companion, ex-model Rose Bleuret. The love affair began deteriorating by 1886, however, in large part because Claudel was jealous of Rodin's success and his relationship with Beuret. The couple was completely estranged by 1890.

After their breakup, Rodin created many masterpieces and received great acclaim, whereas Claudel never received nearly the same level of publicity. Though their relationship was over, Rodin continued to use her face in his pieces and support her financially.

"Fateful Encounter" is on exhibit through February 5 at the Detroit Institute of Art, its only U.S. stop. The exhibit includes 62 sculptures by Claudel and 58 by Rodin. For more information, please visit www.dia.org.

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