France Hosts International Conference on Support for Lebanon

On January 25, French President Jacques Chirac hosted an international conference in support of the reconstruction of Lebanon. High-level state officials, including Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, UN Secretary General Kí-moon, and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, were among some of the distinguished members who convened in Paris to discuss rebuilding Lebanon’s economy.

“We have been brought here today by a duty of friendship and solidarity to a country whose civilization is ancient and which is the bearer of a message,” announced President Chirac. “A country in which the clash of arms has never drowned out dialogue between cultures. A country that is obstinately seeking rebirth and more than ever needs the unanimous support of the international community.”

Secretary Rice affirmed American support for this initiative. “We are committed to building on this work […] to support the Lebanese people’s aspirations for peace, stability, and economic development,” she said.

The French President also addressed “the imperative necessity for the Lebanese State to assert to the full its authority over the whole of its territory,” and emphasized the importance of long-term international solidarity to “reconstruct, reinvigorate economic activity, to control public deficits and to reduce the State’s burden of debt.”

“The action taken by the international community is resolve and coherent,” asserted President Chirac. “The deployment, with the agreement of all parties, of a UNIFIL (the U.N. peace-keeping mission in Lebanon to which France contributes 1,600 military troops) that has been transformed in terms of both manning and resources, gives the full measure of its determination. […] All the Security Council resolutions concerning Lebanon, without exception, are aimed at helping this country recover to its full sovereignty, […] but international solidarity must also be expressed in aid for Lebanon to meet its economic and social challenges.”

To meet these challenges, President Chirac announced that $7.6 billion had been raised from donors during the conference. France has committed to provide Lebanon with up to $675 million (using the exchange rate of $1.35) beyond the assistance France has previously supplied, as well as France’s participation in the UNIFIL. Secretary Rice pledged a strong commitment on behalf of the United States. “President Bush will request from Congress $770 million for a new comprehensive package to assist Lebanon,” she announced.

“The conference,” concluded President Chirac, “that has brought us together is intended for all Lebanese citizens and its ambition is focused on the long term. It is for this reason a crucial milestone, a unique opportunity, emphatically to reaffirm our wish to see a united Lebanon, working together as a sovereign nation respectful of all components of its population.”

First Lady Laura Bush Joins Bernadette Chirac in the Fight Against Child Abuse

BERNADETTE Chirac met with Laura Bush and other dignitaries at a one day gathering in Paris to discuss the fight against child-abuse crimes, focusing specifically on missing and sexually-exploited children. Mrs. Chirac and Mrs. Bush, honorary directors of the Washington, D.C. based International Center for Missing and Exploited Children, gathered January 17 at the Elysée Palace to promote awareness of child abuse.

Others who took part in the event included Lyudmila Putin, wife of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Suzanne Mubarak, first lady of Egypt, Queen Silvia of Sweden, Queen Paola of Belgium, and Margarida Sousa Uva-Barroso, the wife of the president of the European Commission. Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Prize winner, was also present.

Participants in the event focused on the dangers of the Internet, which can be particularly treacherous for children. According to Mrs. Chirac, over 100,000 Web sites are believed to publish child pornography. In addition, many children are sexually solicited online. "The reality concerns us all because the threat hangs over each of our children,” affirmed the first lady of France.

Participants in the conference discussed the need to work together to overcome the anonymity and challenges posed by a global Internet. "The abuses of children on the Internet know no boundaries,” declared Mrs. Bush. She identified technological exchange and international cooperation as key goals for law enforcers. “We have seen that when governments cooperate with other nations, they keep children in their own countries safe,” she added.

In response to growing concerns about child abuse, the European Federation for Missing and Exploited Children announced in December the creation of an emergency hotline for missing children. By the end of June, 2007, members of the E.U. will be able to call “116 000” directly to report information about missing children.

Laura Bush was in Paris as part of a three-day stay that included a round table discussion on global literacy and visits to the Musée du Quai Branly, the newly opened museum dedicated to the arts and civilizations of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas (see NFF 06.05.) as well as the Musée de l’Orangerie, which reopened in 2006 after a six year renovation.

First Lady Laura Bush Joins Bernadette Chirac in the Fight Against Child Abuse
France and U.S. Pay Tribute to Art Buchwald

France mourned this month the death of the internationally acclaimed newspaper columnist Art Buchwald, who died January 17 at the age of 81 from a kidney failure. Buchwald earned recognition as one of the most favorite Americans in Paris through his humorous renderings of the cultural and political events in Europe, which were popular among readers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Buchwald began his love affair with France in 1948 when he moved to Paris at the age of 22 to pursue his education at the Alliance Française. "My dream was to follow in the steps of Hemingway, Elliot Paul and Gertrude Stein," Buchwald wrote. "I wanted to stuff myself with baguettes and snails, fill my pillow with rejection slips and find a French girl named Mimi who believed that I was the greatest writer in the world." Soon after his arrival, Buchwald began his literary career as a columnist for The New York Herald Tribune’s European edition.

Since the creation of his first column, "Paris After Dark," Buchwald has held a special place in the heart of France and its people. France demonstrated its esteem for Buchwald in 2006 by awarding him the prestigious Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. The literary equivalent of the Légion d’Honneur, the Ordre is given to individuals in recognition of significant contributions to the arts and literature. Past non-French recipients include Ella Fitzgerald, Jackson Pollock and Diana Ross.

To me, Art, you are sort of a colleague," said Jean-David Levitte, French Ambassador to the United States, at a gathering celebrating Buchwald’s 80th birthday held at the French Embassy in Washington. "Through your columns and your books, you have served time and time again as an Ambassador of France to the United States, explaining my country to your fellow citizens with accuracy, humor, and affection."

A satirical column in the European edition of The New York Herald Tribune earned Buchwald an international reputation. Buchwald’s column about the cultural and political events in Europe and around the world brought humor and insight to his readers. In the 1960s, Buchwald made the transition from The New York Herald Tribune to The Washington Post where his column became even more popular, appearing at its peak in at least 500 newspapers. Buchwald was also the author of more than thirty books, including "Paris After Dark" (1956), "I’ll Always Have Paris" (1995) and "Too Soon to Say Goodbye" (2006).

French National Police Train with Los Angeles Police Dept.

The Golden Globes, known for its dazzling celebrities and their stroll down the red-carpet, featured a new visitor this year. A delegation comprising 30 motorcycle police officers from National French Police, or Police Nationale, was in Los Angeles on a 10-day training and cultural exchange program (see NFF 06.13.) The program included training techniques, strategic alliances and the opportunity to assist the Beverly Hills Police Department at the star-studded awards ceremony.

The French police officers spent ten days training and building alliances with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), the Beverly Hills Police Department (BHPD), the California Highway Patrol (CHP,) and the Los Angeles Sheriff Department (LASD). The French motorcycle brigade appeared at the awards show in their own unique formation and assisted the LAPD with crowd control.

France and the United States have a historic alliance in sharing intelligence and law enforcement strategies. Patrick Hamon, Chief of Communication at the Police Nationale, felt that this operation was unprecedented and a crucial way to reinforce French-American relations and cooperation—all which would benefit the safety and protection of civilians.

A Taste of France in Palm Beach, Florida

Even though Versailles is thousands of miles away from Louisiana and Florida, visitors to the Palm Beach International Fine Art and Antique Fair can enjoy a taste of the renowned city from February 3 to 11.

It is the most important fair in the country, attracting over 100 leading dealers representing all disciplines of art from classical antiquity to the present, and features 30 speakers from around the world. The festivities’ proceeds will benefit the restoration of the Bestoff Sculpture Gardens at the New Orleans Museum of Art.

One of the finest 18th century royal portraits, "Marie-Antoinette a la Rose" by Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, from the New Orleans Museum of Art will be displayed. In addition, the Director of the Musée de Versailles, Dr. Pierre Arizzoli-Clementel, will present a lecture on February 3. On the 4, HRH Princess Michael of Kent will give a “Glimpse of the French Queen’s Life,” with profits serving the French Heritage Society’s Katrina Rescue Fund. Auction of the “ Pillows that Dazzle” will further benefit the museum. For more information, please visit: www.palmbeachfair.com.
French Jazz Festival Benefits Katrina Victims

THE 2007 "French Quarter" Jazz Festival proved to be an impressive musical exchange, offering jazz performances from French and francophone musicians throughout Washington D.C., New Orleans, and New York City. These musicians came to the U.S. to share their distinct, yet parallel style with the heartland of jazz.

The "French Quarter" was co-organized and presented by the French Embassy's Cultural Services in conjunction with the 34th Annual International Association for Jazz Education Conference. The visiting French delegation comprising approximately 170 musicians, performed in over 20 venues throughout the three cities as a tribute to the French-American cultural exchange, with a special salute to all of the artists of Louisiana working to preserve their unique heritage. Professionals who comprise the French-American network joined together in celebration of their common interests. In New York alone, approximately 8,000 music educators, journalists, musicians and jazz enthusiasts from across both the Atlantic and state lines visited the festival.

Emmanuel Morlet, Director of the Music Office at the Cultural Services of The French Embassy, explained, "Jazz is a highly respected genre in France, attracting large audiences as well as the professional support of an ever-growing network of venues, festivals, schools and conservatories, labels, publishers and other related organizations."

Building on over a century of musical exchanges between the United States and France, the current generation is proud to call France the second home of jazz.

For a complete list of venues and artists who participated in the festival, please visit: www.alliance-us.org

This festival can be appreciated within the context of France's commitment to providing assistance to the citizens of Louisiana in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Recognizing the importance of culture and education, France has undertaken several initiatives to help maintain the cultural and educational traditions of New Orleans through various grant and artistic exchange programs, of which this festival is only one example. While the French government helped to ease Katrina’s immediate impact by contributing emergency relief supplies, rescue teams, and sending mine-sweeping divers to clear obstructed waterways, efforts to provide aid are much more extensive and far-reaching. The "French Quarter" is one example of an initiative with the vision of providing long-term assistance.

French Jazz Musicians perform in U.S.

Special guests sample the exceptional wines during tasting


In addition to the renown of these vintages, the event was extraordinary in that these types of wines are rarely sampled outside their respective vineyards, and are almost never tasted with wines from other vineyards.

The evening brought together journalists, food and wine experts, and political and scientific figures on a journey through taste and olfaction. Prominent guests included the Director and Deputy Director of the National Science Foundation, the Under Secretary for Science of the U.S. Department of Energy, agriculture representatives from the European Commission and the newly-appointed Chairman of the Committee on Science and Technology of the U.S. House of Representatives. Dr. Dubourdieu is Vice-President of the Institute of Wine and Vine Sciences, Professor at the University of Victor-Segalen, Bordeaux II, and a member of the French Academy of Agriculture. A scientist with a strong background in agricultural engineering, he specializes in the biosynthesis and chemistry of organolectic compounds.

Alliance Française Organizes National Writing Contest

EACH year, the Délégation Générale de l’Alliance Française organizes a contest for students of French called "Concours National de Français." The written competition, which takes place from February 11 to 17, is open to students from universities, high schools and the Alliance Française chapters throughout the United States. Prizes range from pre-paid trips to Paris to study with the Alliance Française, to books, CDs, newspapers, and DVDs in French. This contest aims to provide students with the opportunity to test their knowledge of French, while acquiring a better understanding of the French language and culture. It is co-organized by: Air France, TV5 Monde, le FIAF, and the Alliance Française de Paris. For more information, please visit: www.alliance-us.org/en/Page.Learning.Concours.aspx. Please contact your local chapter to register.

SMITHSONIAN PRESENTS: "CLASH OF EMPIRES: THE BRITISH, FRENCH, AND INDIAN WAR, 1754-1763.


The exhibit explores worldwide effects of the tense struggle between Britain, France and American Indian nations for control of North America, consequently leading to the eruption of the French and Indian War more than 250 years ago. The war also marked George Washington’s first military experience and would eventually lead American colonists on the road to independence.

Message in a Bottle

General Johnson Saving a Wounded French Officer from the Tomahawk of an Indian, Benjamin West

More than 300 rare artifacts on loan from 63 lenders worldwide are included in the exhibition. Nine lifelike models allow visitors the chance to come face to face with figures from history, including the Seneca leader Tanaghrisson, as well as a young George Washington after he signed the Treaty of Fort Necessity, the surrender document that ended the war on July 3, 1754.

The Smithsonian’s International Gallery presents temporary exhibitions in art, history, science and technology that complement the Institution’s existing educational programs and collections. For more information, please visit: www.si.edu.
“I think, therefore I Blog”

FRENCH culture has long been known for its love of conversation, reflection, and debate. So when the "blog phenomenon" hit the country of existential philosophers, its citizens were quick to adapt to the new medium of expression. The result? With nearly 7,300,000 French citizens reading blogs each month, France has become the leading voice of the blogosphere, with a higher percentage of citizens reading and writing blogs than any country in the world. A simple sharing of a video, comment on a current event, or humorous reflection on daily life through France’s most influential sites easily elicits tens to hundreds of comments from France’s internauts, or internet browsers. Free of constraints faced by traditional journalists, bloggers are increasingly addressing topics formerly left to les grands médias. Their candid and engaging critiques of society are rapidly earning them a revered and respected position in society, changing the way ideas are spread and setting them at the head of a veritable information revolution.

A Blog is an online forum whereby readers can engage in dialogue with the author and members of the online community. The word “blog”, a term stemming from the term “web log”, was an Anglicism unknown to the majority of people a mere two years ago. The word sounded like something destined to internet-savvy technophile more than to France’s general population. Indeed, those who first caught onto the trend were a minority. Yet as blogger Cyrille de Lasteyrie explains in his blog, www.20sur20.net, the minority was an active one “for whom getting attention is a vocation, and shining is a second nature.” The appeal of the internet’s “early adopters” helped the French blogue become "a tool of expression and worldly accessory for free thought, socially interesting to defend before one's friends and colleagues; the proof of a true avant garde.” It would not take long for society as a whole to adapt to the trend. Bloggers became the object of media attention themselves, called upon by TV stations and media conferences to participate in everything from spotlight appearances to political campaigns, with the goal of creating higher transparency and opening their doors to a younger technologically savvy audience.

With all the recent limelight focused on the latest source of information and an increasingly larger number of citizens contributing to the uncensored dialogue, it may seem like it would be hard to distinguish genuine talent from the charlatans, or that due to their rising popularity, France’s most well-known bloggers may become the object of commercialized and filtered media themselves. The conclusion of Monsieur de Lasteyrie? “Perhaps we will watch all of this with a slight smile, finding them amusing, these little appearances outside the web, useless but pleasant,” he writes. “Yet I believe that the solution is found on the web itself, not elsewhere. The treasure is there. I am convinced that the web is, for some time still, an extraordinary creative terrain.”

BLOGGING AS A FORM OF DIPLOMACY?

Aside from facilitating creative expression and the spread of ideas, one of France’s most well-loved bloggers has taken on a larger project: the art of diplomacy. Cyrille de Lasteyrie, a.k.a. “VinVin,” has taken on the task of explaining baffling French myths to the American public. His English-language blog Bonjour America presents a series of comical short films created to help Americans understand the importance of a good smelly cheese and the difference between Bordeaux and Bourgogne, all while tackling questions about France’s political system, military, and sports on the way. “I have always held an admiration for American culture, as a kid, I thrived on it” Lasteyrie told News from France. “When I was young, I heard a lot of people talk about French-American relations. The problem was, the media only talked about it in the context of conflict.” Once he gained popularity with his blog in 2005, earning the honor of France’s “blogger of the year”, Lasteyrie came to the realization that he could use his growing influence to turn that trend around. Through his blog, Lasteyrie becomes a diplomat in his own right, using his charming French accent to dispel stereotypes and “set the record straight.” Lasteyrie’s next project? Hollywood. The blogger will travel to California during the month of February on a mission to meet the stars that inspired him as a child, or at least have fun trying. To catch archived episodes or to keep up with his future adventures, please visit: www.bonjouramerica.com.

The French are not the only ones catching on to the blogging trend. Francophiles in the U.S. are also doing their part to share ideas and promote cross-cultural understanding. The French Journal, a new blog developed by an American in Boston, Massachusetts, seeks to share news and thoughts on the culture, history, geography, food, wine, and travel in France. Check it out at: http://frenchjournal.typepad.com.

political sentiment expressed through comments on the blogs they author.

The chic gatherings that have become the latest mode in Paris and are only a small peak at the “blogging phenomenon” ripple effects of which France is taking the lead. In between meetings, interviews with aspiring politicians or reflections on daily interactions will fill the space on their site. The conversations they expose will continue to create a stir, not only in France, but are also sure to echo around the world.
**Economic News TECHNOLOGIE**

**Research Out of This World**

**C**NES, the French Space Agency, celebrated the successful launch of the COROT space telescope on December 27, 2006 in conjunction with its European and international partners, as well as the Paris Observatory, ArianeSpace/Starstem and prime contractor Alcatel Aenia Space. The French-led COROT mission (CONvection, ROtation of stars and Transits of extra-solar planets) is the first of its kind, being the first spacecraft dedicated to the search for Earth-like exoplanets, while at the same time carrying out a very high precision, stellar photometry mission which will allow scientists and astronomers to take a glimpse inside stars. The spacecraft is currently being positioned by the CNES control center in Toulouse, France. Once COROT reaches its 900 km polar orbit, it will have a line of sight in the same direction for 150 days at a time, allowing for uninterrupted observation of as many as 120,000 stars during its 2.5-year lifespan. Mission planners are expecting to observe at least 40 rocky bodies and hundreds, if not thousands, of gaseous ones. The spacecraft should be fully operational by the beginning of February and has already sent back its first images. COROT is paving the way for future extra-solar missions, especially ESA’s Darwin mission, which is designed to analyze extra-solar planetary atmospheres for signs of life and expected to launch sometime after 2020. For more information, please visit: www.france-science.org/france-in-space.

**A** group of international scientists, including French astronomer Jean-Paul Kneib of the Laboratoire Astrophysique in Marseille, released on January 7, a three-dimensional map of the universe that offers an unprecedented look at the distribution of dark matter in space.

Scientists used data from the Cosmic Evolution Survey (COSMOS), a large scale survey of the Universe produced by NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope, to create the first comprehensive map of this mysterious substance which makes up 5/6 of mass in space. Unlike ordinary matter, which is visible from the night sky and includes the planets, stars, and galaxies, dark matter neither reflects nor emits light and has long remained a mystery to scientists.

The map will help shed light on the formation of galaxies over billions of years. “Mapping the distribution of dark matter in space and time is fundamental for understanding how the galaxies developed and grouped themselves over time,” explains Kneib. The completion of this project marks the close cooperation of a team of international scientists led by researchers at the California Institute of Technology in the United States, the European Space Agency (ESA), NASA, the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), and the Commissariat à l’Energie Atomique (CEA) in France.

**Initiative to Launch an Environmental Organization at U.N.**

A international conference in Paris with the focus on the environment, will bring together representatives from over 50 nations on February 2-3 upon the invitation of French President Jacques Chirac. Its objective is simple but ambitious: to launch a solemn appeal for the creation of a United Nations Environment Organization (UNEO) with the vision of promoting environmental responsibility and global governance—like the other global organizations for education, science and culture (UNESCO), health (WHO) and trade (WTO). The Conference for Global Ecological Governance, or “Citizens of the Earth,” will take place before an audience of government officials, scientists, industry leaders, NGOs, and public figures.

Participants in the event will focus on three principal goals: heightening awareness of global environmental threats, developing measures to combat those threats, and engaging the community at an international level through the creation of the UNEO. Six in-depth workshops surrounding the themes essential to environmental preservation will address these objectives. Topics will include combating climate disruption, modifying production and consumption patterns, fighting pollution and protecting health.

On the second day, the findings of the workshop will be presented to President Jacques Chirac, architect behind the event. “We all know that uncontrolled human activity is bringing about a sort of slow collective suicide,” said President Chirac in an address to the U.N. General Assembly last September, “Disaster can only be averted realizing that, for the first time in its history, mankind can destroy itself and its planet.”

**EUROPE PREPARES TO SEND PROVISIONS TO INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION**

The European Space Agency is preparing the “Jules Verne” Automated Transfer Vehicle (ATV) for its journey aboard an Ariane 5 launch vehicle to the International Space Station (ISS) sometime around July 25. The ATV will supply the ISS with experimental equipment and spare parts as well as food, air and water for the permanent crew of the ISS. Jules Verne will also perform an equally important function by serving as a down-mass container in which the space station crew can jettison waste and debris. The state of the art pan-European project has recently undergone—and passed with flying colors—a punishing battery of preflight tests designed to gauge the readiness and durability of the ATV. Jules Verne will be the most significant European contribution to date to the ISS, supplementing previous missions flown by the Russian Soyuz and NASA’s Space Shuttle. 30 companies from 10 European countries, as well as eight other companies from Russia and the United States share the work with EADS Launch Vehicles, based in France, as the prime contractor.

**STATE OF THE ART TOURS**

Visitors to Paris’s Musée des Arts et Métiers (CNAM) from January 16 to March 5 will be able to take advantage of one of France Télécom’s latest developments in information technology. In collaboration with the museum, which focuses on the history of technological innovation, the technology-savvy company has introduced one of the latest technologies to museum tourism. The service permits Orange (a subsidiary of France Télécom) subscribers visiting the museum to obtain more information on selected works in the museum’s seven domains: scientific instruments, materials, construction, communication, energy, mechanics, and transportation) by simply taking a picture of the “semicode” (a sort of bar-code that a mobile telephone can read) displayed next to the exhibit of interest and sending the picture text to a designated server number. The text is immediately interpreted and processed by the network, which then responds by providing the sender with a multitude of multimedia information (images, animation, video, and audio.) For more information, please visit: www.francetelecom.com.
Fertility Rate in France Reaches 2.0

T is the highest rate since 1981 and has almost reached replacement level (2.07). France recorded over 830,900 births in 2006, 2.9% higher than in 2005. This impressive fertility rate, combined with longer life expectancy and migratory movements, is contributing to increasing the French population, estimated at 63.4 million on January 1, 2007.

France, with Ireland, now has one of the highest fertility rates in Europe, far ahead of the EU average (1.52 in 2005), which has itself also risen (1.48 in 2000). It is far higher not only than those of its Mediterranean neighbors with Catholic tradition, such as Italy and Spain, whose birthrates averaged 1.35, but also than those of East European countries, including Greece, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, which averaged 1.3 children per woman.

New Tourism Campaign Turns Heads

A MAND stands before three white lines on a black canvas, thinking to himself “My four year old could’ve done that,” while teens and 20-somethings dance the night away in Versailles “treated like royalty” à la Marie Antoinette. You may have to see it to believe it, but the new ad campaign launched by the Regional Tourism Committee of Paris Ile-de-France aims to capitalize on tourists’ stereotypes of Parisians in order to present the city in a new, trendy light. The objective? According to the committee, the new campaign aims to “show Londoners that Paris isn’t a stuffy museum city, but that it is a vibrant destination brimming with exciting events that are worth visiting regularly.” The billboard campaign has been launched in London to encourage frequent visitors from their European counterparts. Anglosaxons, tourists everywhere can also enjoy the ad campaign at www.cestoparis.com, where visitors can play interactive games, learn how to “cop the Parisian attitude,” in addition to discovering the latest getaway ideas, local secrets, and essential information for visiting the region. With the ad campaign well underway, Paris has found a new and trendy way to wish its visitors a Bon Voyage.

New Networking Web sites

SEEKING to expand upon services offered by its popular Web site Pagesjaunes.fr (the French Yellow Pages), France Télécom launched its latest site: www.AnnonceesJaunes.fr. The new Web site, currently available in beta version and destined toward a professional audience, offers its users a diverse selection of car and real estate classifieds which are easily sorted by region, price, or other personalized search criteria. The service captures announcements updated from networks such as Century 21, Guy Hoquet, or Group Neubauer, and already counts over 234,000 available ads and hopes to extend its user network beyond a strictly professional audience by the end of the month by allowing private individuals to post classified ads for a membership fee.

MYSPACE FRANCE LAUNCHES

Counting already 650,000 Francophone users since the debut of its beta version in August 2006, “MySpace” officially launched its final French version in January. “MySpace France” represents the first non-Anglophone community launched by the popular social-networking Web site, taking the lead in France’s recent blogosphere phenomenon. While the site seeks to widen its community in the coming months, Marc Major, the new general director of MySpace France, believes that the network is already off to a head-start. “For me, to arrive at my desk with a community of over one million people, without having done anything yet, is a luxury. […] with 80 million visitors each month alone, MySpace is the world leader of social networks.” For more information, please visit MySpace France’s Web site at: http://fr.myspace.com.
PARIS’S famous Musée d’Orsay is celebrating its 20th anniversary with mounting enthusiasm over the arrival of two of its most recent exhibitions: “Le Nabi aux belles icônes,” a collection of works by Maurice Denis, and “La donation Rispal,” a donation of Art Nouveau furniture and objects collected between 1900 and 1910.

Best known as a founder and theoretician of the Nabi movement, Maurice Denis’s work was originally inspired by painters Pissarro de Chavannes and Paul Gauguin. The Nabis, a young group of “rebellious” students, artists embraced the belief that “a piece of art is the final product of the artists’ synthesis of nature in personal aesthetic metaphors and symbols. They were the early beginnings of abstract and non-representational art, and peaked in popularity around the turn of the 20th century. The Nabis, or “Prophets” as signifies their Hebrew name, sought to revive art in the same way that ancient prophets rejuvenated Israel. While the Maurice Denis exhibition highlights his well-known works of the Nabi period, it also seeks to restore his later and less-studied pieces to their rightful prominence. Faithful to his identity as a man who expressed himself through multiple artistic media, an exhibition exposing a vast collection of Denis’s unedited amateur photos runs parallel to his more well-known paintings.

The second exhibition celebrating the museum’s 20th anniversary, “La donation Rispal,” appropriately parallels Denis and the Nabi movement with an exceptional display of over 300 pieces of Art Nouveau furniture and objects. Collected by Antonin Rispal between 1900 and 1910, the collection features furniture, vases, ceramics, glassmaking, goldsmithery, and stained glass donated by the widow and daughter of the late Rispal.

The Musée d’Orsay was inaugurated in the midst of a grand ceremony on December 1, 1986. What once had been an old train station on the edge of demolition was transformed into one of the most renowned artistic and cultural centers of Paris. The museum is now eminent for its exhibitions detailing intellectual, political, and artistic movements from 1894 to 1914. As visitors to the Musée d’Orsay today will certainly discover, the recent exhibitions in celebration of its 20th anniversary serve as a beautiful addition to that identity.

For more information about the museum or exhibitions taking place, please visit: www.musee-orsay.fr

King’s Cake: Bringing in the New Year with Taste

WHO says you can’t have your cake and eat it too? Throughout the month of January, men and women across France have been enjoying “galettes des rois” (King’s cake,) a flat, round cake made from puff pastry with plain or almond paste filling. Watch out not to eat too fast, however! A small figurine is hidden inside the lucky person who finds it is crowned king or queen for the day, receiving a paper crown and good fortune.

Traditionally, the youngest person in the room hides under the table and calls out the order in which the pieces of cake are to be distributed so that no one seeing the small favor peaking out from a slice of cake can unfairly claim the toy and its accompanying good fortune as his or her own.

The tradition of the galette is a practice that dates back to the Middle Ages in France. Although originally intended to be eaten on January 6 to celebrate le jour des Rois, when the three Magi are believed to have brought gifts for the newborn baby Jesus, galettes are now enjoyed across France throughout January. What originally commemorated a Christian holiday has become a cultural tradition.

When the tradition first began, a fava bean or une fève, a symbol of fertility, was placed inside the cake. Today, however, the fèves inside the cake range from inexpensive plastic toys to intricately decorated porcelain figurines.

Whether an inexpensive plastic trinket or hand painted piece of porcelain, the consumption of galettes marks one of France’s most beloved traditions. It is a time when friends and neighbors can come together and celebrate both the season and the arrival of the new year “with taste.”

"No Promises" Promises to Please

FOUR years following the release of her debut album “Quelqu’un m’a dit,” Carla Bruni, the Italian-born singer and ex-model, has branched out from her well-loved mixes of French chanson and Italian poesia to try her talents before an English-speaking audience. Her new album, “No Promises,” released by Naïve Records on January 15, comprises a collection of well-known Irish, English, and American poems set to the comforting sound of an acoustic guitar and drum, accompanied by slight riffs of the harmonica, flute, and of course, the sultry voice of the singer herself. For her inspiration, the singer-songwriter has turned to the poems of William Butler Yeats, Walter de La Mare, Wyman Hugh Auden, Christina Rossetti, Emily Dickinson and Dorothy Parker. For more information, please visit: www.carlabruni.com.

TRIBUTE TO JOSEPHINE BAKER’S LEGACY

2006 celebrated the centennial of Josephine Baker’s birth with a musical production of A la recherche de Josephine (In Search of Josephine) at l’Opéra Comique in Paris. Jérôme Savary, director of l’Opéra Comique, chose to pay homage to the Franco-American artist 81 years after her debut in Revue Nègres at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. French producer Michel Dussarrot, collaborated with Savary to create an engaging piece that highlights the life of Baker and New Orleans, the birthplace of jazz. The show boasts a captivating use of style through music and dance. A troop of young, American comedian-singer-dancers relate Josephine’s story through afro and salsa dancing while an orchestra from New Orleans entertains the crowd with Cajun, boogie-woogie, gospel, and blues music. An old Louisiana narrator recounts the history of his people with tales of slavery in Cuba and Haiti while traveling on a roadboat through the play’s simple scenery of murky Louisiana water.

Nicole Rochelle, former actress on the Cosby Show, plays the role of Josephine and wears Baker’s famous banana belt in the show. L’Opéra Comique was not the only venue to honor the life of Josephine Baker. The Théâtre Princesse Grace in Monaco also co-sponsored the performance, Jo et Josephine, a Jacques Pessis musical, which portrayed the journey of the singer with her husband Jo Bouillon. Additionally, the National Portrait Gallery of Washington offers an exhibition of Freda Josephine McDonald (Josephine Baker) until March 18, featuring photos, posters, and sketches of the artist’s vibrant life.

NEW CHILDREN’S MOVIE

Grégoire Solotareff may not be a famous actor, but if you ask most children, teachers, and librarians, he is indeed a star. He has written over one hundred books, many of which have been translated in more than a dozen countries including: Japan, Spain, Denmark, United States, Italy, and Germany. His stories are known for their humor, sharpness, creativity, and honesty. He is not afraid to take an unusual spin on classic tales. Solotareff has translated his success from paper to the big screen. In 2003, the author adapted his 1988 children’s book Loulou into a short film with the help of director Serge Elissalde. Three years later, Elissalde and Solotareff decided to take their successful collaboration to a new level with a full length animated picture. The film titled U, is a story about a young girl who overcomes misfortune and unhappiness thanks to her guardian angel, a unicorn named “U.” Eventually, the child develops into a charming adolescent who no longer needs her angel to guide her through life. U was released last year and should soon be distributed internationally.
Correlation:

“Seminar Explores Science of Taste” in NFF 06.13 stated that well-known cook and author Michel Richard participated in the event at the Embassy of France. NFF would like to clarify that William Rubel was the well-known cook and author in attendance.

News from France

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Masterpieces of French Jewelry on Display in San Francisco

THE astonishing inspiration, refined workmanship, as well as the intriguing variety of French jewelry are celebrated in the exhibition "Masterpieces of French Jewelry," presented by the Legion of Honor Museum in San Francisco, where over 150 of the finest examples of French jewelry from the 20th century will be on display. Whether acquired as works of art, as the Lalique pieces bought by Henry Walters, or for wearing, such as the Cartier pieces belonging to Marjorie Merriweather Post, French jewelry possesses a reputation for being the finest in the world.

Drawn entirely from American collections, this exhibition is organized by the National Jewelry Institute at the Forbes Gallery, New York. It features pieces from the Hillwood Museum and Gardens, Washington D.C., as well as pieces from important private collections-many of which have never been shown before. The private collections include those of Elizabeth Taylor, Christopher Forbes, Dina Merrill Hartley, and Iris Cantor.

The dazzling array of jewelry includes necklaces, brooches, pendants, rings, bracelets, and earrings. The exhibition also includes stunning and thoughtful personal effects such as evening bags, fans, opera glasses, vanity cases, perfume bottles, inkwells and an umbrella handle. Featured in the show are works by the most famous Parisian jewelers including Lalique, De Sedles, Cartier, Van Cleef & Arpels, and JAR. The works of artists such as Man Ray, Pablo Picasso, Jean Arp and Max Ernst are also on display.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue written by Judith Price, President of the National Jewelry Association, and is available in Museum Stores. For more information, please visit: www.legionofhonor.org.