France Passes Law Banning Facial Concealment in Public

France passed a law in early October banning the public wearing of garments that cover the face, declaring that "No one shall, in any public space, wear clothing designed to conceal the face." The legislation is the result of a year-long earnest debate held throughout France led by a bipartisan commission of 32 members of Parliament. The commission interviewed dozens of human rights associations, women's rights associations, legal scholars, specialists of the Islamic world, and Muslim faith associations, including the French Muslim Faith Council and the Great Mosque of Paris.

The statute does not target any one group of people, but rather addresses several areas of social concern in a broad manner. Throughout the consultation, various schools of thought were weighed and a consensus was formed around two prevailing elements. First, concealing the face in public runs counter to the values of the Republic, specifically relating to public policy. The latter covers not only the demands of security, but also the rules of sociability (facilitating open social dialogue between peers in which citizens are easily identifiable) and public service (complying with certain administrative formalities: marriage, trials, etc.), among others. Secondly, the full-face veil is not a universal religious obligation and is only worn by a minority of Muslim women throughout the world. Conversely, the law includes several exemptions and shall not apply “if such clothing is prescribed by law or regulations, is authorized to ensure the anonymity of the person involved, is justified on medical or professional grounds, or is part of artistic or traditional festivities or events.”

Although ratified this October, the law will not be enforced for another six months. The interim period is intended to allow for "mediation between the public authorities and the persons likely to be concerned by [the] statute." Starting next spring, any person found to be in violation of the law could face up to a 150-euro fine, while any person found to violate the "dignity of [a] human being" by compelling "another person, by reason of the sex of that person, to conceal their face" could be sentenced to up to a year in prison and receive a 15,000-euro fine.

Recent Retirement Reforms in France

The French Parliament is debating a reform of the country's pension system. To be implemented gradually by 2018, the controversial new law will raise the legal age at which citizens may retire from 60 to 62. Conversely, provided they meet the minimum level of contributions, those who began working at the age of 18 will not be affected by the increase in the legal retirement age. Additionally, the legislation will, by 2023, progressively increase the age at which a person is entitled to receive a full pension from 65 to 67.

The pension reform introduces, for the first time in Europe, recognition of the long-term toils of strenuous labor. In practical terms, those who have had physically grueling jobs can retire at 60. For senior citizens, the pension reform makes provision for the creation of a system to offer recruitment assistance to job seekers over the age of 55.

In the French pension system, contributions from those who work pay the pension of those who are retired. To guarantee the success of the system, the ratio of workers to retirees must be stable, requiring the input and output of the system to balance itself. Although plans to rebalance the ratio of workers to retirees have been met with strong opposition, the French system is currently facing a major obstacle: due to the advancing age of the Baby Boom generation, the ratio of workers to retirees is a strained 1.8:1, as opposed to the 4:1 ratio in 1960. The economic and financial crisis that hit the world accelerated and exacerbated the existing deficits. In 2010, one pension out of 10 is paid by government credit, further increasing public debt. Without reforms, the government projects that its deficit from pensions alone could reach 45 billion euros by 2020.
Symposium on Ocean Exploration, Governance and Discovery

The Embassy of France held a symposium on Ocean Exploration, Governance and Ten Years of Discovery on October 19. The Symposium brought together distinguished guests from NGOs, think tanks, universities, and federal agencies to provide insights on current marine biodiversity issues, from scientific exploration to international governance.

Guest speakers from France included Olli Barbé from Galatée Films, who worked for six years on Jacques Perrin’s film Oceans. Philippe Lebaron, director of the Marine Station in Banyuls-sur-Mer; Philippe Bouchet, of the French National Museum of Natural History; and Philippe Goulletquer of Ifremer also gave presentations on marine biodiversity exploration.

U.S. guest speakers included Ron O’Dor from the Consortium for Ocean Leadership, Michael Vecchione, curator of the Sant Ocean Hall at the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH); and Philippe Lebaron, director of the Marine Station.

French Welcome 2010 Women’s Forum Global Meeting

The coastal city of Deauville, France, welcomed female leaders in corporate and public spheres from around the world for the 6th annual Women’s Forum Global Meeting. Held from October 13 - 16, the theme of this year’s forum was “Change: Make it Happen.”

Heled at the Deauville International Center, the forum featured panel discussions, brainstorming sessions, and a variety of meet-and-greet events for participants. The conference aimed to address five primary questions related to global change in politics, business, the environment, health, and “the woman factor.”

Notable speakers at the event included Editor-in-Chief of Le Monde, Sylvie Kauffmann, Vice President of the Corporate Engagement Team at Goldman Sachs, Anne Black, and the Video and New Media Director-Producer for Barack Obama’s 2008 Presidential Campaign, Kate Albright-Hanna. The meeting was attended by over 1,200 guests, a 20 percent increase from last year.

A key contributing factor to the event’s success, according to organizers, was the innovative Discovery Program, introduced for the conference. Consisting of a series of sessions held in parallel to the main Forum, the Discovery Program allowed participants to “experience new thoughts, and exchange ideas with artists, writers, scientists, experts, men and women from around the world.”

Interview with Karen Taylor, Editor of France Magazine

How has the publication evolved since its inception 25 years ago, and where do you see it headed?

Our editorial mission has remained the same — 25 years on, we are still seeking out the best of France to share with our readers: the most outstanding cultural events, the most compelling talents, the best travel destinations, the most distinctive products and services. What has changed is not what we do but how we do it. Thanks to so many technological advances, we are producing a much more sophisticated product now than we did in 1985 with exactly the same number of people. It’s hard to believe, but when we started this magazine, we were retyping articles sent from France by fax and cutting and pasting layouts by hand!

Of what milestones or particular features is the magazine most proud?

Given all the upheaval in the publishing industry in recent years, we are most proud of the fact that we are still here—and I’m not being facetious! Just this past week, I read an article by a former travel writer at Gourmet (which folded last year) relating her lavish spending while on assignment. Maybe if we’d ever had Gourmet’s budget, we would have behaved the same way, I don’t know. But we are part of a nonprofit and have always had to keep costs down to the bone; creativity, resourcefulness and an incredibly dedicated staff have allowed us to produce a quality publication on a shoestring.

What also makes us very proud is when we do a feature story — on Marseille, for example, or contemporary winery architecture in Bordeaux — and people from those areas tell us that they learned something new about their native city or region in the pages of France Magazine.

How does the magazine plan to celebrate its 25th anniversary?

The best birthdays are those you spend with friends, and we are absolutely delighted that so many old friends are joining with us to put on a fabulous fundraising gala at the French Ambassador’s Residence. The event will benefit the French-American Cultural Foundation, and we are collaborating with names that you have seen in our magazine over the years: the Condé Nast Brunches, the Cannes Film Festival, the Pierre Cardin party at Paris, the de Young museum in San Francisco, Auguste by Thierry Grégoire, Baccarat, Christofle, Chanel... All of these great names and many others are helping us celebrate the best of culture, travel and art de vivre while supporting French-American cultural relations.
International Connections Forged in Higher Education

Thanks to a recent agreement between North Carolina State University (NCSU) and France’s SKEMA (School of Knowledge, Economy, and Management) Business School, both institutions will boost enhanced international connections for years to come.

Starting in January 2011, students from SKEMA Business School will be able to attend classes at SKEMA’s first American branch, located on NCSU’s Centennial Campus in Raleigh, North Carolina. Approximately 250 students in several undergraduate and graduate programs will participate in the first semester at the American campus, with all classes taught in English.

Together Towards Innovation: Celebrating Transatlantic Exchange

With the aim of strengthening collaboration between France and the American Southeast, the French Consulate in Atlanta thanks to a recent agreement between North Carolina State University and SKEMA Business School, currently the largest business school in France by enrollment, also hopes to take advantage of some of the rich research opportunities for its students in the nearby "Research Triangle." The school recently reached an agreement with the Research Triangle Park (RTP) Foundation to foster research projects with some of the area’s high-tech companies, including SAS Institute, CISCO Systems, and IBM.

The Federation of Alliances Françaises USA Rolls into New Orleans

The Federation of Alliances Françaises (FAF) USA held its Convention and Annual meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, from October 14-17. The Convention was open to all 113 chapters of the Alliance Francaise (AF) in the United States, who came to La Nouvelle-Orleans to discuss best practices, explore projects of mutual interest, and leverage resources to support and expand the French network in the U.S. Said Federation President Mimi Gregory, “I feel very proud that we chose to come to New Orleans to really share and celebrate their renaissance five years after Katrina.”

Offering a series of workshops, events, and cultural excursions, the convention aims to help address the ever-changing mission of AF chapters in the U.S. Workshop topics include creating an up-to-date and practical website, instituting a French-language instruction program, discussing noteworthy successes, and maintaining relevance in local communities. One way many chapters stay involved is through book clubs. For the coming year, the One Book - One Federation program selected Catherine Velle’s third novel, Soeurs Chocolat, a tale of two nuns from a community of chocolatiers who go to sea on their way through Colombia in search of precious cacao. AF members were also able to attend the Assemblée Générale of the Federation, in addition to meeting the new Délégué Général, Jean-François Chenin.

The FAF bestowed one of its highest distinctions — the Prix Charbonnier — on Le Comte Gilbert de Lafayette, direct descendant of the Marquis de Lafayette, in recognition of his efforts to sustain French-American friendship. He handed out copies of WETA’s recent documentary on Lafayette, according to Federation President Mimi Gregory, “to offer some of our smaller chapters an opportunity to work together with teachers and even nearby historians to create programs in local high schools about the role Lafayette played in the American Revolution and to facilitate round table discussions.”

For more information on the FAF, please visit: www.afusa.org.

RENOWNED FRENCH MAESTRO TAKES THE LEAD IN SANTA FE

French conductor, composer, and pianist Frédéric Chaslin began a three-year term on October 1 as chief conductor of the Santa Fe Opera. He will open the Opera’s 2011 season with a new production of Gounod’s Faust and will lead at least one new production during each of the subsequent years of his term. Chaslin, a native of Paris, received training at the Paris Conservatory and the Salzburg Mozarteum. In addition to a distinguished career of directing and guest-conducting in many of the world’s major opera houses, he has composed an operatic adaptation of Wuthering Heights. Additionally, an English translation of his book Music in Every Sense, which examines the relationship between modern music and its audiences, will be released this fall. After his debut conducting La Traviata with the Santa Fe Opera in 2009, Chaslin pleased to accept a more permanent position with the company. Citing the supportive spirit of the management, artists, and diverse patron base at the Opera, Chaslin articulated his satisfaction, “What more could a conductor ask for?”

CONFERENCE EXPLORES HISTORIC SHIPWRECK MYSTERY

Commissioned by King Louis XVI of France in 1785 (depicted in the painting above), Jean-François de Galaup, the count of Lapérouse, began a marine expedition around the world, aiming to gain scientific and geographical discoveries in addition to political and economic ties for France. After a three-and-a-half-year voyage chronicled in journals sent back to France, Lapérouse and his crew disappeared around the coast of Australia. Despite multiple search and rescue missions, they were never seen again. Artifacts from the shipwreck were discovered in 1826, but the ship itself was not found until 1964, and not formally identified until 2005. The historic achievements of Lapérouse, as well as the mystery surrounding his expedition’s disappearance, were the subject of a conference held on October 18 at a French language high school in San Francisco named after the explorer, Lycee Francais La Pérouse. As a native of the French Basque region, Laperouse presented to Jerome Genoves, administrator of the Friends of the National Marine Museum of Paris, the conference discussed particular episodes in the expedition and later inquiries into the disappearance.
Les Meilleurs Ouvriers de France: A Tradition of Excellence

With the recent release of the critically acclaimed documentary Kings of Pastry, Americans are getting their first look at the famed Concours des Meilleurs Ouvriers de France (MOF), or "One of the Best Craftsmen of France Competition." The contest, held every four years, pits some of France’s finest artisans from over 190 different disciplines against one another in a no-holds-barred competition for the industry’s highest honor: entry into the Société des Meilleurs Ouvriers de France.

Though largely considered a culinary competition, MOF encompasses many different crafts and trades ranging from the more traditional (chocolate making, baking, lace and hand embroidery) to the more esoteric (plumbing, taxidermy, hairdressing, ice-sculpture) across 16 different trade categories.

The competition traces its origins back to 1924, when 200 master craftsmen from across France were invited to participate in the first Exposition Nationale du Travail (National Work Exposition), which concluded with the naming of 144 distinguished craftsmen as Meilleurs Ouvriers de France. Since its inception, the National Exposition has been held 23 times, with the next edition scheduled for 2011 in the centrally located French city of Clermont-Ferrand. Although the original MOF competition was held under the auspices of the first Exposition, the modern-day MOF has grown so much in size and scope that the format has been adapted. The competition itself is now held over the course of two years, with varying dates according to craft. Most trade categories have a preliminary qualifying round in which the best craftsmen are selected to compete in a final round usually held several months later. Those proud few selected as MOF at the end of the competition are then invited to participate in the National Exposition, where they present their work to the general public.

The winners also attend a special ceremony over which the president of France presides, where they are presented with the iconic MOF medals on red, white, and blue striped ribbons. The distinguished award carries with it lifetime retention of the MOF title — past laureates are easily recognizable by the red, white and blue collar that adorns their work garments. The title is taken so seriously that sporting such a collar fraudulently is a crime punishable by prison-time.

Although the next Exposition Nationale is not scheduled for another year, most of the MOF competitions are already well underway. October featured preliminary rounds for many of the culinary MOF categories, including pastry, cheese making, butchering, and baking, among others. The coming year is likely to bring a new fervor of competition, with title hopefuls putting their lives on hold for a chance to call themselves among the best French craftsmen of 2011.

Blood, Sweat, and a Lot of Tears

Considering throwing caution to the wind to pursue your passion for pâtisserie in the hopes of someday earning recognition as un des meilleurs ouvriers? The competitors are tough, but the competition is even tougher.

So, what does it take to be named one of the best craftsmen in France?

Technically, any French citizen 23 years or older who pays the 60-euro entrance fee can compete, but few have the preparation and dedication necessary to make a serious bid for the title. Most of the competitions involve a grueling regional preliminary round in which one must compete simply to arrive at the qualifying stage of the competition — six months before the final competition. Such a lengthy and meticulous qualification process ensures that only the best of the best end up in the finals.

Jacquy Pfeiffer, decorated Chicago-based pastry chef, competitor in the 2007 Pâtisserie division of the MOF competition, and the principal subject of the documentary Kings of Pastry, does not mince words in describing the level of commitment and dedication it takes to compete for the MOF title. "The time needed to prepare was tremendous I practiced in every spare second I could find and was often not home... It was also a great financial commitment as there are no cash prizes for the candidates, making it a very expensive sport." At the competition, Pfeiffer produced a series of wedding-themed masterpieces in just 24 hours, including a three-tiered cake to serve 30, five styles of pastry puff, a chocolate sculpture to display three types of chocolate candy, a plated dessert to serve four, and an incredibly intricate centerpiece, known as the bijou (jewel). Pfeiffer even moved to France six weeks before the finals to perfect his recipes, practicing countless "dry-runs" of the actual competition day, during which he produced hundreds of versions of what would become his final chef d’oeuvre for judging.

Not only must the creations for any MOF competition exemplify artistic expression, but in the case of pastry, taste is an essential factor. For this reason, each judging panel is composed of industry professionals, food critics, and past MOF winners who meticulously rate candidates on both artistic form and practical function of their creations. The stress of this judging process has been known to leave even the most seasoned professionals in tears. As Chef Pfeiffer puts it in terms of his own preparation, "I had to first work on the taste part of it... Each recipe had to be dissected to make it at the same time delicious yet also fool-proof in its preparation... This is when the question is asked about each recipe: is it good? Better question: are the judges going to like it?"

All of this raises the question: why do these titans of French craftsmanship choose to put themselves through such grueling and emotionally taxing trials? For Chef Pfeiffer, it has always been about bringing innovation to his profession: "No matter what the outcome of this intense competition, you are never the same... You have to push yourself, more than you thought possible, and whatever the outcome, you will come back a better professional."
French Kick-Off Electric Mobility at Paris Auto Show

The 2010 Paris Motor Show drew auto enthusiasts from all over the world to the Porte de Versailles Exposition Grounds from October 2 to 17, displaying over 100 new models. The Paris Motor Show offers an expansive look at the coming year’s auto market, and this year’s edition focused on new technologies in the field of “green” auto-engineering.

Among the companies debuting electric concept cars were French auto manufacturers Renault, Peugeot, and Citroën. Several of the companies have already moved past the concept stage, with plans to release their electric models to the public market in the near future. For example, Renault unveiled four all-electric cars at the Auto Show ready for market: the Kangoo Express Z.E. and the sedan Fluence Z.E. will be available in early 2011, the Twizy, a two-seat urban vehicle will come to market in late 2011, and the ZOE.

Citroën’s new 100% electric C-ZERO will be in production by the end of this year. Bluecar proposed its Bolloré model as an option for Autolib, the planned car-sharing program launched by Paris’s city council, demonstrating the collaborative spirit of both the public and private sectors to make the auto industry both environmentally friendly and cost-efficient.

Preview, an urban car, will be released for purchase in early 2012. Peugeot debuted what it hails as the first production-ready diesel hybrid in its new 3008 HYbrid4 model, which receives 62 mpg while cutting carbon emissions by 30 percent, according to the manufacturer.

Other highlights of the 2010 show included an indoor electric karting track, workshops on city planning around electric vehicles, and an electric vehicle test track.

Oenophiles Rejoice! New Wine Purchasing Technology in France

A new service for wine distribution and purchase is springing up in supermarkets across France. Self-serve wine vending machines, first installed in June 2009, are gaining popularity thanks to the ecological and economical benefits of the new technology.

The machines, which resemble indoor gas-pumps, allow consumers to fill up any container of their choosing with select wines on site. The machine measures wine output volume, and charges customers accordingly. Prices of wines vary according to vintage and provenance, but a normal cost is about 1.45 euros per liter, far below the price one would expect to pay for a similar bottled wine. The elimination of glass and plastic packaging translates into eco-friendly added value. Without heavy bottles to ship, transportation of the wine becomes more efficient, and the re-using of containers encourages recycling.

Astrid Terzian, the entrepreneur credited with the introduction of the bulk wine vending machines in France, says that customers’ reactions to the technology have been very positive. “Customers are taken aback at first, but then warm up to the idea, especially after a taste.”

Eurocopter Unveils New Hybrid

The Eurocopter group began official testing of a much-anticipated prototype high-speed helicopter on September 27 in Marignane, France.

The X3 hybrid helicraft is designed to achieve cruising speeds of over 250 mph by fusing traditional helicopter designs with those of modern dual-prop airplanes. The result is a craft that is capable of hovering like a helicopter, but also moving forward with the speed and agility of a small airplane.

The X3 features large overhead rotor blades similar to those found on normal helicopters, but substitutes the trademark extended tail and rotor for two small aircraft wings with forward-facing propellers. The overhead rotors and wing-mounted propellers operate independently, allowing for the forward propellers to be disengaged during takeoff and landing.

It is estimated that the X3 will travel approximately 50 percent faster than today’s traditional helicopter. For more information, please visit www.eurocopter.com.

TEN-EURO COINS WITH A REGIONAL FLAIR

Four million ten-euro coins were recently minted and released into circulation by the French government, each coin bearing the insignia of one of 22 French regions and four overseas Departments. The coins were introduced for the first time on September 20. President of the Paris Mint, Christophe Beaux, explains the idea behind the minting as “[a way] to find common ground between this otherwise [stateless] currency and French national heritage.” France is not the first to experiment with this type of currency. Germany has been using ten-euro region-themed coins since 2002. Although the coins, available for purchase in over 3,000 post offices across France, will be legal tender, individuals would be wise not to spend them too quickly: among collectors, certain pieces are already worth more than their struck value.
Quadruple Amputee Makes Channel Crossing

Croizon celebrates his successful English Channel crossing.

Philippe Croizon gives new meaning to the phrase, “can-do attitude.” On September 18, the Frenchman and quadruple amputee crossed the English Channel, finishing the 21-mile swim in just 13.5 hours. After being pulled from the water, an ecstatic Croizon described his arrival on the French shoreline as “pure happiness.” Croizon has already taken on several other extreme sporting endeavors, including skydiving and scuba-diving, hobbies he picked up after a job-related electrocution suffered in 1994—an accident that led to the partial removal of his arms and legs. Croizon has written a book about his experiences titled J’ai décidé de vivre. (I Decided to Live). When asked about future plans to swim from Spain to England, he replied, “I want to set a shorter crossing than that of the English Channel.”

Croizon, a 57-year-old France-born, has represented France’s gymnastics team in the 1930s, has four children, seven grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren between them. When asked to look back on the course of their lives, the sisters stated, “We live in the present, it’s pointless thinking about the past or the future—we’re still 20 (in our heads).”

World Record Twins Turn 98 Years Young

Raymonde and Lucienne Wattelade are not your average identical twins. The two sisters recently celebrated their 98th birthday in the French town of Saint-Georges-de-Didonne. Born in 1912, they are recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records as the oldest living set of identical twins. The sisters describe the secret to their longevity as a combination of their joie de vivre, frequent exercise, and liberal doses of their favorite spirits: pastis for Raymonde and whisky for Lucienne. The twins, who competed for France’s gymnastics team in the 1930s, have four children, seven grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren between them. When asked to look back on the course of their lives, the sisters stated, “We live in the present, it’s pointless thinking about the past or the future—we’re still 20 (in our heads).”

Society

Sparkling New Environment Initiative

Eau de Paris, the city’s public water service, unveiled France’s first public sparkling water fountain on September 21, housed in a former garden cabin in the Jardin de Reuilly. The fountain, called La Pétillante ("The Bubbly" or "The Fizzy"), offers both still and sparkling water, chilled or at room temperature. Free and open to the public, the fountain injects carbon dioxide into still water from the public supply to make “thin and tasty” bubbles, according to Philippe Burguière, a spokesman for Eau de Paris.

Sparkling water fountains have already taken off in Northern Italy, but in France, the fountain remains experimental. Preliminary reactions have been positive, and if they continue as such, Eau de Paris hopes to install similar fountains in parks across Paris.

The French are well known for their penchant for sparkling water. However, the national love of fizzy beverages can have negative environmental consequences—buying bottled sparkling water can generate a significant amount of plastic waste. Eau de Paris estimates that one sparkling water fountain saves about 2,300 plastic 1.5-liter bottles every day.

Burguière explained that the new fountain is part of a broader initiative “aimed at promoting tap water in a country where we invest a lot to preserve its quality.”

Sight-Seeing in Champagne Picks Up the Pace

Since 2005, the phenomenon of sight-jogging, a guided tour taken at a brisker pace than ordinary sight-seeing, has taken off in large cities like Rome, Berlin, Barcelona, and Paris, with private companies charging between 70 and 80 euros per client per hour. A more cost-effective version of this combination of exercise and tourism has recently come to Troyes, the capital of the Aube department in Champagne, located on the River Seine.

The first sight-jogging season in Troyes concluded this past September. Tours, which typically fill up days before the event, take place most Saturday mornings starting at 9:00 a.m. Each tour lasts for about an hour and costs just one euro per person. Going at a faster pace than a walking tour, visitors can see more of the city in one hour while still experiencing the outdoor ambiance of the city. The program welcomes joggers of all ages and experience.

In an interview with News From France, Nicolas Villiers, director of the Troyes Office of Tourism, emphasized the accessibility of the activity: “There is no competition, no restrictions in this activity; only pleasure and well-being.” Villiers praised the originality of the activity, stating, “We’re always looking for less traditional ways to explore the city. Sight-jogging is a personalized tour, an opportunity to discover sites that others do not see. The element of sport breaks down barriers between participants, creating a spirit of conviviality among groups.” After every tour, the tourism office provides snacks for participants, encouraging socialization. Both residents of the city and tourists can enjoy the activity, thanks to the unique route, the knowledgeable and enthusiastic guide, and the camaraderie that develops among participants.

Next year, the Office of Tourism plans to expand the program by hosting a marathon tour of Troyes during La Journée du Patrimoine.

For more information, please visit: www.tourisme-troyes.com.

Blogs

A Tour of MOF Gastronomy

An American expatriate living and working in France, PT Ford operates the blog www.why-traveltofrance.com, which examines, among other topics, the gastronomic delights offered by France’s winners of the coveted title Un des Meilleurs Ouvriers de France (MOF). The “MOF” section on the blog features accounts and reviews of Ford’s many trips around the country to sample the culinary delights offered by MOF laureates. The sampled fare includes chocolate from title-holders Georges Larnicol and Fabrice Gillote, haute cuisine from the likes of Head Chef Serge Chenet, and pastries from the world-famous Christophe Michalak. In addition to providing mouth-watering photos of tastings, Ford offers reflections on and contact information for each restaurant or boutique she visits.

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6 NEWS FROM FRANCE
Monet Exhibit Sheds New Light on the Impressionist's Oeuvre

One of the most prolific and well-known Impressionist painters, Claude Monet’s career encompassed 60 years of painting, from early landscapes to his celebrated water lily paintings. Monet pioneered the artistic movement of Impressionism, painting ceaselessly for over 60 years, establishing a foundation for modern art at the turn of the 20th century through his work and collaboration with his contemporaries. Over 170 of Monet’s paintings are currently on display in the Galeries Nationales of the Grand Palais in Paris until January 24 as part of the largest exhibit of his work in three decades.

The exhibit, titled “Claude Monet (1860-1926),” has been organized both thematically and chronologically, no small feat considering the sheer volume and genius of Monet’s opus. Visitors to the museum traverse the retrospective along three paths: Monet and Nation, Figures and Still Lifes, and Dreams and Reflections.

The exposition retraces the entirety of Monet’s career, from his start in 1860 until his final paintings of water lilies housed in the Orangerie Museum. The Grand Palais worked in conjunction with La Réunion des musées nationaux and the Musée d’Orsay to compile the monumental display of Monet’s work from museums and private collections around the world. In 1980, the Grand Palais hosted a retrospective of Monet’s career that paid homage to the great Impressionist; today, museum-goers benefit from decades of new research into more obscure areas of the artist’s work.

For more information, please visit: www.monet2010.com.

Dueling Violins: World’s Top Young Musicians Fiddle Away

Founded in 1943 by violinist Jacques Thibaud and pianist Marguerite Long to encourage the development of young musicians during World War II, le Concours Long-Thibaud, an international violin and piano competition, thrives today as a standard-bearer for excellence in the classical music community. Now separated into bi-annual piano and violin competitions, this year’s Concours for violinists will take place from November 6 - 15 in Paris.

To this day, the competition remains truly international. This year’s pool of 19 competitors includes one Romanian, four South Korean, six Japanese, and seven French violinists, eight of whom are men and ten of whom are women. According to official rules, all competitors must be under the age of 30. The judging panel consists of renowned violinists from France, the United States, Japan, Germany, and Great Britain, as well as one French conductor.

Contestants were chosen in the pre-selection round based on CD recordings submitted in advance to the jury. The live performance rounds begin on November 6, starting with the elimination round and semi-final, and concluding with final recital and concerto tests. Each round affords the musicians a degree of freedom — they may choose their pieces from approved lists for most rounds, categorized by style or composer. The final recital test includes a free choice and a contemporary work written specially for this year’s Concours. The finalists will perform concertos at a gala on November 15, held at the Théâtre du Châtelet, bringing the competition to a close.

In addition to prestige, the top six contestants receive monetary prizes, with a grand prize of 30,500 euros.
Art-lovers from all over the world travel to Paris’s Musée d’Orsay to see the renowned collection of French Impressionist paintings. However, Tennesseans are spared the trip this fall. Nashville is the last stop of the travelling exhibition, The Birth of Impressionism: Masterpieces from the Musée d’Orsay, previously displayed in Madrid and San Francisco. The exhibition will run in Nashville from October 15 through January 23 at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts.

Tracing the development of the Impressionist movement through the work of artists living in Paris, the exhibition brings together 100 paintings from the permanent collection of the Musée d’Orsay. Included are masterpieces by artists such as Degas, Manet, Monet, Pissarro, and Renoir. Seventeen of these paintings will be displayed exclusively in Nashville.

“The Musée d’Orsay has the finest collection of French mid- to late-19th-century art in the world,” said Frist Center Executive Director and CEO Susan H. Edwards, Ph.D. “In sharing these masterworks with the cities of Madrid, San Francisco and Nashville, the Musée d’Orsay offers an unparalleled cultural experience to people who might not have the opportunity to travel to Paris.”

The exhibition aims to broaden the conventional view of Impressionism as a radical departure from the Realist art of the era. It examines the Impressionists in the context of other artists that transformed the art of schools in Paris in the 1870s.

For more information, please visit www.fristcenter.org.

Thinking Outside the Canvas: New Courses on the Art of French Framing

A series of classes and internships on traditional French methods of artistic framing are currently being offered by framing artists Francoise Moulon-Tabournel and Anne Nguyen in New York City, Westchester, NY, and Washington, D.C., from October 2010 to June 2011.

Although French painted masterpieces have always been celebrated, the subter art de l’encadrement (art of framing) has an equally rich heritage. Moulon-Tabournel discovered l’encadrement 24 years ago in Paris; Nguyen partnered with Moulon-Tabournel after taking several of her classes, seeking a better way to frame her own artwork. According to the workshop creators, the French technique is unique in the personal approach artists can take to the framing process.

“During our internships, we teach the most diverse techniques step by step to allow you to discover the specifics of framing: the know-how, a sense of color and form, and most of all, creativity,” explained the two artists.

Among those techniques are entre-deux-verres (between two glasses) and boitage (shadow box). Entre-deux-verres is a way of suspending an image between two sheets of glass that can include multiple colored mats, creating a sense of dimensionality, while boitage uses a three-dimensional box to arrange and display mementos and objects that deviate from the standard painting or photograph. “Our project is to develop this artistic craft in Washington and in New York,” the artists stated.

For more information or to register for their courses, email: fcmframing@gmail.com.