The French diplomatic community is looking to revolutionize the way it interacts both with French foreign nationals and the world at large. From February 21 to 22, a conference hosted by the French Embassy in Washington, D.C. brought together France’s press attachés from Canada, Mexico, and the United States to develop an understanding of how to present French diplomacy through the internet’s latest tools. Social media drove the agenda, and the communications teams brainstormed best practices on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and the consular websites.

At the forefront of diplomatic social media, where the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs hopes to continue to increase its online presence, the agency recently recognized the internet community’s importance in “international relations in general and public diplomacy in particular.” The website “France Diplomatie,” developed by the ministry, connects the 163 embassies, 92 consulates, and 16 permanent missions (e.g., France’s delegation to the United Nations) throughout the world. The site sees a monthly average of 1.6 million viewers.

Globally, almost 100 of France’s embassies are active on social media. These sites have millions of users and thus have the potential of reaching large numbers of people. The Foreign Ministry called the media a “new continent” in a February communiqué, one that “we are all discovering, here at the dawn of the 21st century… [They put us] in contact with all the new actors that are evolving on the international scene.”

The Artist Makes Movie History, Wins Five Oscars

For the first time in since 1929, a silent film has received top prizes at the Academy Awards. Nominated for 10 categories, French sensation The Artist swept three of the most prestigious categories, including Best Picture, at the 84th Academy Awards on February 26. Both the film’s star, Jean Dujardin, and director, Michel Hazanavicius, won top prizes in their categories—Best Actor and Director, respectively. The picture also won Best Costume Design and Best Original Score.

The Artist is a silent, black-and-white film that tells the story of a silent movie film star, George Valentin (Jean Dujardin), in the golden age of 1920s Hollywood who sees his prestige and fame fade at the advent of “talkies.” Refusing to change to suit the times, it is only through the help of a young up-and-comer, Peppy Miller (Bérénice Bejo,) that he is able to remain relevant and find his place in modern motion pictures.

Following the ceremony, several prominent figures in France expressed high praise for the movie and its success. President Nicolas Sarkozy offered his congratulations, saying that the film’s success demonstrates the “exceptional vitality” of the French movie business.

Mr. Dujardin was clearly moved during his effusive acceptance speech, in which he mixed shouts for joy in both French and English. “I love your country,” he said at one point, referring to the United States. Aside from the Oscars, The Artist has won six Césars (France), one Goya (Spain), three Golden Globes (United States) and seven BAFTAs (UK).
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Alain Juppé Addresses UN Security Council on Syria

On January 31 the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Alain Juppé, addressed the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in New York over efforts to find a resolution to the continued crackdown against pro-democracy demonstrations in Syria. Speaking briefly, he stated the need for an end to the Security Council’s deadlock over the issue and reaffirmed France’s commitment to end the violence there. The minister urged the UNSC to accept the Arab League’s proposed resolution, which called for Bashar al-Assad to step down and set up an “interim unity government” in his place. In this arrangement, Syria would then prepare for elections and enact security reforms.

“The situation in Syria is appalling and is just getting worse… Everything must be done to put an end to the spiral of violence that has led to the bloody repression which we’ve seen for the past 10 months.”

European Space Agency Successfully Launches Vega

Europe’s newest spacecraft, Vega, was successfully sent into orbit on February 13th. The satellite was launched from the European Space Agency’s Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana. The Vega will increase Europe’s satellite-imaging capabilities as well as enable it to supply the International Space Station. The launcher also improves the efficiency of Europe’s space infrastructure by sharing the high cost of launches, research and development. Vega is the third launcher in the ESA’s space fleet.

The Vega project began in 2003, with the cooperation of seven ESA member nations: Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. Italian and French space agencies alongside 40 industrial companies provided much of the technical support necessary for the successful launch.

current events

Minister Juppé Meets with Burmese Leaders in Pivotal Visit

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé completed a two-day visit to Burma, where he met with Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy, and President U Thein Sein in Naypyidaw, the capital. In Rangoon, Minister Juppé presented Ms. Suu Kyi the National Order of the Legion of Honor, France’s highest award.

Mr. Juppé’s visit marked the first French ministerial visit to the country since 1988. After decades of isolationist military rule, Burma has recently taken positive steps toward democratization. The minister commended the recent democratic progress in the country and announced a threefold increase in French foreign aid to Burma, which will focus on humanitarian endeavors as well as the development of civil society and bilateral relations between France and Burma.

On the heavily debated topic of EU sanctions against the country, the minister told reporters, “We have to examine the progress of the democratization process here in Burma and we will discuss this with our partners in the EU. We will lift sanctions step by step [based on] the progress of the democratization and liberalization of the regime.” Mr. Juppé called for the release of all remaining political prisoners, transparency in the parliamentary elections set for April, and reconciliation among ethnic groups.

Mr. Juppé also stated that France will support the country’s reintegration into the international community and eventually look to normalizing a number of visa bans and trade regulations held over from the previous regime.

François Delmas, Strategic and Security Affairs

To ward off the worst, France sends its best. From nuclear weapons to NATO, international security expert and Washington veteran François Delmas describes working for world safety like it’s his job. A News From France exclusive.

On the Iranian nuclear issue, Tehran insists its program is for civilian uses only, but the international community is convinced it’s for a weapon of mass destruction. How have you been called to work on this?

Let me say first that French-U.S. cooperation has been and is very strong, and we both want Iran to respect its international obligations. Following the worrisome report from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) last November, France has been at the forefront of international efforts to impose unprecedented sanctions on Iran. We’ve been working on a daily basis with U.S. officials trying to coordinate efforts.

You spent time at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a think tank. In what ways has this experience allowed you to adopt the “Washington mindset” as a strategic affairs specialist?

When you spend a year in one of the best, if not the best, foreign policy and international security think tanks in Washington, you become a member of a very strong team. You develop an in-depth knowledge on how the U.S. government turns ideas into policies. My time as CSIS was a great experience. The think-tank world guarantees innovative thinking and open debates, and lets you develop knowledge of foreign policy, irrespective of changes in government.

You’ve helped steer France’s role in Afghanistan. How do you see France’s work there in advance of the 2013 withdrawal—and beyond?

Afghanistan has been the number one NATO priority the past few years. In 2013, it will be up to the Afghans to conduct combat operations for themselves. France signed a treaty with Afghan authorities in January which enshrines our long-term commitment to the country, even as the Afghan people take on more and more self-rule. Let’s not forget that France has been engaged in Afghanistan from the outset. We have been strongly committed to the war in Afghanistan with no caveats, meaning that we fully engage in combat situations. French and U.S. soldiers have really been fighting shoulder-to-shoulder.

A year ago this month, the new START treaty went into effect, a landmark treaty in which the U.S. and Russia agreed to gradually reduce their nuclear weapon stockpiles. As a nuclear power, how does France feel about nuclear arms reduction by the first and second Cold War leaders?

I think it’s very important because the U.S. and Russia are by far the countries that own the most nuclear weapons and systems. As for France, we are the only nuclear state that decided to shut down and dismantle our facilities to produce more nuclear weapons. Likewise, we have torn down all of the on-the-ground launch facilities we once had. France has announced its maximum number of nuclear weapons—300. In sum, we are the only nuclear power to have accomplished a disarmament effort on this scale.

What do expect—and hope for—in tomorrow’s security challenges?

I think what we need is robust, flexible security cooperation involving NATO, the EU and bilateral cooperation between countries. There are also threats or changes like cyber security, energy security, scarcity of natural resources. All these issues will need to have more creative solutions than those from the past. I think that the upcoming NATO summit in Chicago this May will be critical. The world is waiting for a clear message on nuclear deterrence, and we’re working with both conventional and new tools to deliver one.
U.S. Exec Reflects on Living and Working in France

For the U.S. business executive Scott Allan McDonald, working and living in Paris has rewarded him immeasurably. Originally from a small town in northern Minnesota, Mr. McDonald went abroad for what would ultimately stretch into a 10-year professional stint in the City of Lights. His take on the experience, in one word? “Brilliant,” he says, whenever an American asks him about his time there. “But the truth is both more nuanced and more profound,” he adds.

And it would seem Mr. McDonald has quite a lot to say. In a lengthy essay written as a part of a leadership development program at Carlson Wagonlit Travel, where he works, the executive waxes nostalgic about the joys and frustrations of living the expatriate life. He describes the humility that comes with having your grammar corrected in public (some times by children) and the satisfaction that comes with learning a culture and its people over numerous years.

Now back in his native Minnesota, Mr. McDonald seeks to share his experiences with those who may not have considered that one should—or even could—take on life abroad successfully. Mr. McDonald recommends travel and life abroad to everyone, and ends his essay with this final thought, a beau geste in favor of exposing oneself to cultural exchange.

“Engaging people on their terms sends a powerful signal of our commitment to achieve real understanding with those who may otherwise elude us,” he said.

French Experts Discuss Nuclear Waste Policy with Congress

In a display of bilateral engagement on Capitol Hill in Washington, French policymakers and members of the Congressional French Caucus convened two roundtable discussions on February 7 to trade best practices in nuclear waste management.

The sessions brought together the Ambassador of France to the United States, François Delattre, and Marie-Claude Dupuis, CEO of the French National Radioactive Waste Management Agency (ANDRA). Organized by the French Caucus, the talks included the Caucus’s Senate co-chairs, Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-LA) and Sen. John Boozman (R-AR), as well as Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE). The roundtable in the House of Representatives included the participation of House Caucus co-chairs, Rep. Russ Carnahan (D-MO) and Rep. Michael Michaud (D-ME).

In addition to several of the French Caucus’s 106 members, Congressional staff, Congressional Research Service, reporters and professionals from related industries also participated.

A world leader in nuclear waste management, the French representatives sought to explain how their country is engaged in the challenges of sustainability, safety and economics of nuclear waste as a part of broader civilian nuclear energy policy.

The French commitment to nuclear safety reflects the activity of several groups in the United States, including the Blue Ribbon Commission on America’s Nuclear Future. These groups hope that such roundtables will build dialogue and ultimately result in a long-term plan to improve the quality of nuclear waste management in the United States. France fully supports initiatives like these.

In his introductory remarks, Ambassador Delattre said that he is “convinced that we have many things to learn from each other in this field. [...] The United States and France have the most important nuclear fleets in the world. People are asking for answers to the challenges of nuclear energy development. Underscoring the issue’s importance, he said that “we owe it to the people.”

Ms. Dupuis has acted as the head of ANDRA since 2005. A mining engineer by training, she has worked on nuclear and environmental issues for much of her career. Prior to her current position, Ms. Dupuis worked as Director of the Industrial Environment Service, where she oversaw regulation of industrial and agricultural facilities at the national level.

Following the roundtable, Senators Boozman and Landrieu had positive things to say about France’s work in nuclear waste management.

“We’ve struggled with the waste part of nuclear energy in our country, and we appreciate the French experts being with us today to give us some new ideas,” said Sen. Boozman.

“We are very grateful for Ambassador Delattre and Madame Dupuis for having shared with us France’s experience with civilian nuclear power,” said Sen. Landrieu. “We hope to continue this series of roundtables,” she added.

ANDRA is the product of over 40 years of French nuclear practice, research and policy. It is housed in the Ministry of the Environment and Research, and operates independently from nuclear waste producers. ANDRA currently oversees four major waste disposal sites in France, in conjunction with the National Plan for Management of Radioactive Waste, and is involved in ongoing preparations for a permanent underground repository in eastern France.

Facebook Offers Free Ads to Small Businesses

Facebook recently announced that it will provide free advertising to thousands of small businesses throughout France and other European countries. Back in 2004, Facebook was founded as a simple vehicle for college students to stay connected. Since then, it has evolved and grown into something much more intricate and complex. With millions of users around the world, it is clear that Facebook has become an integral part of online social activity. While this activity has primarily focused on the personal relationships that users seek to cultivate and maintain, there is an untapped potential for small businesses that the site is seeking to develop. As part of their official announcement, Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg announced that 50,000 small businesses will be allowed to claim credits worth about $130,000. The advertising credit could be used to reach a specific target audience as well as increase buzz for small businesses that rely on low-cost, high-yield options that can provide greater visibility.

Paris Ranked Best Student City in the World

Have you ever wondered where the best place to study is—in the whole world? In a February ranking of cities from around the world, the market research firm QS ranked Paris the number one destination for university students. Evaluating each candidate through a matrix of factors including educational excellence, diversity, affordability, post-graduation employment opportunities, and quality of life, the City of Light managed to outshine all other established and emerging student hot-spots.

Nunzio Quacquarelli, Managing Director of Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), lauded the city’s breadth of advantages to degree seekers. “In particular, Paris has benefited from the affordability” of the French higher education system, which often amounts to just hundreds of dollars in tuition fees per year. The quality-of-life aspects make Paris’s place at the head of global student cities well-deserved. The study is the first of its kind for the UK-based firm.

The award comes as “a recognition of the huge amount of work done in the last few years in French [and] Parisian universities especially,” said Edouard Husson, Vice-Chancellor of the Paris Universities. Four institutions were noted as “universities of excellence”: Paris-La Sorbonne, Paris-Cité, Paris-Sciences et Lettres, and Paris-Saclay.
What brings together marine biologists, the head of the United Nations, and a major fashion mogul? The answer is TARA Oceans, a French research ship that has been traversing 70,000 miles of the world’s oceans for two and a half years as it studies marine life, ecosystems, environmental change—and the delicate balance between the two.

The ship, a 118-foot schooner equipped with state-of-the-art navigation and research technology, made landfall in New York City this month to promote its cause at the United Nations and elsewhere. An affiliate of the UN’s Programme for the Environment, the TARA Oceans project combines a network of seven laboratories and the partnership of several American researchers in their efforts to make new discoveries about the world’s ocean life, and raise awareness of issues affecting the world’s greatest bodies of water.

**Tiny Organisms, Worldwide Importance**

The objective of the TARA Oceans expedition is to “identify the effects of global warming on planktonic and coral reef systems, and the consequences on food webs and marine life,” according to an official document from the group’s website.

TARA’s researchers have focused their research on plankton for the singularly important role this kind of organism plays. These tiny organisms, the scientists say, supply roughly half of the world’s oxygen supply. This means that variations in the amount of plankton living in the world’s oceans could fundamentally impact how much oxygen is available to living things worldwide—including humans—and could impose sweeping changes on a planet in climate flux, which could affect everything from endangered species to global air quality.

**UN-Bound**

Not least among TARA Oceans’ multiple goals is outreach to people unaware of the issues the ship’s team seeks is researching. During its port call in New York City from February 5 to 13, Ban Ki Moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, which is based there, came aboard to visit the team. The crew took Mr. Moon on a tour of the Manhattan coast while various specialists gave a tour of the ship’s “dry lab” for field research as well as the boat’s living space, which is specially outfitted for travel through polar climates.

Mr. Moon said he was “very moved” by his visit, and stressed his personal commitment to ocean issues and to the related initiatives undertaken by UN agencies.

A different but equally enthusiastic visitor also came to see TARA at port. The businesswoman agnès b., from whom the global fashion brand gets its name (and fashionable spelling), attended the ceremonies at the UN and aboard the TARA, and wished the research team her very best. As the ship’s owner and key supporter, her company’s logo appears displayed on the vessel’s sails in whatever part of the globe she may set sail (see photo above).

**TARA and the Future of the World’s Oceans**

The TARA will reach its final destination, the port of Lorient on France’s Atlantic coast, on March 31. Yet the boat’s team will hardly be taking a break—in fact, they’ve declared 2012 “the year for sharing the TARA Expeditions” work with the world. A series of promotional events have been coordinated in France and elsewhere, the most notable being the ship’s scheduled presence at the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development, or “Rio + 20,” this June in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The conference’s theme is “The Future We Want,” and in the same vein, TARA Oceans will be advocating the environmental decisions it recommends to secure safe, sustainable ocean policies at the international level—for the global good.
France, UK Partner in Civilian Nuclear Development

France has partnered with Great Britain to bolster each country’s civilian nuclear industry—while at the same time creating jobs at home and abroad.

Following a meeting on February 17 between President Sarkozy and British Prime Minister David Cameron, the leaders unveiled an ambitious bilateral project that will strengthen the Franco-British energy partnership.

The nuclear branch of France’s main electricity firm, EDF Energy, will be developing plans to build four European pressurized reactors (EPRs) in the UK, organized in pairs at the country’s Sizewell and Hinkley Point sites.

The plans enhance each nation’s already-strong reputation as a nuclear leader. Together, they possess 76 reactors and operate cutting-edge facilities covering the whole fuel cycle, a status unique among European civilian nuclear powers.

To support the new plans, EDF Energy projects hiring 6,000 employees in the next four years. Once in full swing, the four EPR sites between Hinkley Point and Sizewell will require 20,000 workers between on- and off-site staff.

By comparison, the United States provided 19.6 percent of its domestic energy needs via nuclear production in 2010, according to the Washington-based Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI).

The deal comes as the fruition of an initial cooperation agreement signed between Areva and Rolls-Royce, which are leading French and British manufacturers in the energy sector, in March 2011.

Tech Support: Start-Up Development Group Seeks Partners

In the latest technology development between France and the United States, the New Technology Venture Accelerator, or NETVA, opened this year’s competition for French technology start-ups on February 15.

A public program supported by the French embassy’s Office for Science and Technology, NETVA “aims to address the need for the internationalization of young French technology companies developing highly innovative products,” its official website said. NETVA is designed to assist French companies specifically aiming to develop in the United States.

With a strategic focus on Boston and Silicon Valley—two of America’s “most dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystems,” according to NETVA—the group will provide aspiring tech firms training and multi-stage support in getting set up in these innovation hubs. The intensive guidance from the program’s administrators includes an introductory seminar and week-long series of meetings, training sessions and a formalized mentorship structure between NETVA and its laureates.

Last year’s winners have described the program’s positive attributes in detail. Julien Roquette, founder of the start-up Blue Industry & Science, said that “NETVA’s immense value is to give participants a real picture of what ‘attacking the American market’ means.” The NETVA call for applications remains open through April 15. For more, please see www.netvafrance.com.

Supermarket Chain Carrefour Names New CEO

On January 31, the international supermarket chain, Carrefour, named Georges Plassat its new CEO. He will join the company in April and become board chairman and CEO as of June 18.

Mr. Plassat is no stranger to the company, nor to the supermarket business. He worked for French retailer Casino for 14 years before spending two years as Carrefour’s Spanish division CEO. Previous to his appointment as Carrefour’s global CEO, he worked at the French clothing retailer Vitrage for 11 years. A graduate from Switzerland’s Lausanne School of Hospitality and Cornell University in the U.S. his background is somewhat untraditional. Yet, as stated by former Carrefour CEO chairman, Luc Vandeveld, “He is a great retailer and knows retailing inside and out.”

Carrefour is the world’s second largest merchandiser, with 470,000 employees at 16,000 stores in 32 countries. In recent years it has rolled out an aggressive international expansion. Last year, the company opened stores in Iran, Albania, Iraq, Oman and Pakistan. The chain hopes to open 30 new stores in China in 2012, a new commercial center in Romania, and will continue to increase its presence in northern India.

Transcending the Inbox? French Tech Co. Bans Email

We live in a time in which email and business have become synonymous. The image of a corporate employee with a smartphone in hand has become a societal norm—but one French company has decided to change that.

Atos, a French IT firm, has decided to wean its employees off internal email by its self-imposed 2014 deadline. According to the CEO, Thierry Breton, only ten percent of the emails his employees get are actually useful, with almost 20 percent being spam.

The company will now use instant messaging and a “Facebook-style interface.” In the first six months, employees have already cut emails by 20 percent. Mr. Breton says that his younger employees are more accustomed to this immediate type of conduct. In moving toward a social media-type platform, he hopes to increase both the productivity and the working conditions of Atos employees.
France Works to Enhance Sustainable Development

France is preparing to greet the future in a more ecologically friendly way with its new National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS). The strategy will focus on meeting challenges facing sustainable development and overcoming them to create a fair, green market.

The NSDS has been in the works since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. From 1992 to 2010 various measures were taken that led to the birth of this new plan: the first National Sustainable Development Strategy was adopted in 2003, the creation of the Environment Charter in the French Constitution in 2005, and the "Grenelle de l’Environnement" in 2007 that started a national dialogue on environmental issues. The strategy (formally adopted on July 27, 2010) takes into consideration both economic and social challenges as well as environmental issues. This new strategy was collaboratively designed and its implementation will continue in the same fashion, as environmental issues affect all members of society.

Paris Hosts Annual Agricultural Conference

France’s capital became the gathering place for all things farm-grown, when the International Agricultural Exhibition opened its doors to both human and animal visitors from February 26 through March 4. The weeklong annual event offers a smorgasbord of farming-related activities, from blue-ribbon livestock competitions to tastings of the finest cheeses, meats, dairy, wines and other naturally grown delights from France and around the world.

This year’s theme was "Agriculture and Careers," and industry professionals were on hand from the sectors of private commerce, public research, NGOs and the Ministry of Agriculture. The groups traded practices and ideas on preparing natural products for market fluctuation and the stability of the agricultural business overall. The exhibition will culminate in the hallowed Concours Général Agricole, in which producers enter some 47,000 products in 21 categories to compete for the Gold, Silver and Bronze medals of excellence. The winning entries will sport a label indicating their performance for all of 2012.

Les Grandes Ecoles Top Prestigious Rankings

Once again les grandes écoles of France have ranked very highly in a Financial Times survey of the best European universities. For the sixth year running, HEC Paris and L’INSEAD (l’Institut européen d’Administration des affaires—the European Institute of Business Administration) have been ranked first and second, respectively. Both schools beat out staunch competitors such as the London Business School, IE Business School of Madrid, and the Iese Business School of Barcelona.

The process of ranking the schools involved the weighing of a number of different factors, with the top four heaviest weighted factors focusing on academic merits. Other criteria such as the number of foreign students and staff and the percentage of women faculty members were also taken into account.

The survey demonstrates two important trends in French university education. The grandes écoles have shown consistent dedication to improving the quality of education, as evidenced by the rapid advancement in ranking of a number of French schools. The schools also show a move toward a more global identity, with the number of foreign students and staff on the rise. This speaks to the caliber of education at les grandes écoles and the desire to have the graduates of these schools be global leaders in economics, management, and entrepreneurship.

French, U.S. Libraries Partner for Audiovisual Excellence

Beginning February 1, the Library of Congress and France’s National Audiovisual Institute (the Institut National de l’Audiovisuel, or INA)—the government agency responsible for archiving French radio and television—will exchange up to 500 hours of specially selected digital content. The material chosen will reflect how the United States and France have portrayed each other in their respective media, focusing mainly on news programming, documentaries, educational films, travelogues and home movies. This unprecedented cultural collaboration will allow researchers on both sides of the Atlantic to glean information from each country’s audiovisual documents.

The digital files will be available for research in the Library’s Motion Picture Reading Room and INA’s consultation center at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris. A wide selection of public-domain titles will be made available for global online access via the World Digital Library.

INA, founded in 1974, gathers and preserves the images and sounds which form the basis of our collective memory. It authenticates them, gives them meaning, and shares them as widely as possible through its collections and its expertise.

The world’s number one audiovisual center for digital archiving and archive enhancement, INA has become the watchword for technical innovation in both these fields. Its expertise is acknowledged today on every continent.

The Library of Congress is the nation’s oldest federal cultural institution and serves as the research arm of Congress. It is also the largest library in the world, with millions of books, recordings, photographs, maps and manuscripts in its collections.
**Restored French Masterpiece to Be Shown at Festival**

Napoléon, Abel Gance’s classic five-and-a-half hour biopic of France’s legendary leader, will be shown at the Oakland Paramount Theatre as part of the San Francisco Silent Film Festival. The film will be shown on March 24, 25, 31 and April 1, 2012.

The 1927 epic follows the life of Napoléon from his days as a youth in Corsica to his rise and fall as Emperor of France. The film has been restored thanks to the painstaking efforts of Academy Award winner and film historian Kevin Brownlow.

Mr. Brownlow undertook this challenge after discovering the film at a street market. “I was stunned by the cinematic flair,” says Brownlow. “I was exhilarated by the rapid cutting and the swirling camera movement. What daring! I had never seen anything comparable—and I set out to find more of it.”

With the restoration complete, this latest Napoléon is considered to be the most comprehensive version of the film to date. Accompanied by Carl Davis and the East Bay Symphony Orchestra, the score has been expanded to accompany the new footage that has been added to this marathon movie experience.

The screenings will begin in the afternoon and will be shown in four parts with three intermissions and a break for dinner. Tickets will be available online through the San Francisco Silent Film Festival website, www.silentfilm.org.

Napoléon is presented in association with American Zoetrope, The Film Preserve, Photoplay Productions, and the BFI. Technical services will be provided by Boston Light & Sound.

**In “Gastronomik,” A Grand Café Marries Myth and Cuisine**

La Coupole, a historic grand café and restaurant in the famous Montparnasse neighborhood of Paris, has decided to make fairytales come alive by hosting a photo exhibit that joins myth and cuisine.

Called “Gastronomik,” the pairing of fine art photography and specially designed dishes was the brainchild of Daniela Jeremijevic, whose efforts led the concept, design and roll-out of the project. She asked well-known chefs and pâtissiers including Pierre Hermé, Christophe Michalak and Frédéric Anton to draw inspiration from twenty mythical women, then turn their ideas into entrées and desserts. The finished dishes were then served beneath high-concept photographs of legendary ladies displayed throughout the restaurant.

The famous (and sometimes infamous) women come from a variety of folkloric backgrounds, including Greek mythology, the world’s religions, and traditional fairytales such as Cinderella. Marianne, the national emblem of France, kicks a soccer ball with le coq gaulois, the Gallic rooster; this is a likely reference to France’s champion national team, which won the World Cup in 1998. In some of the more literal interpretations the women are portrayed with food that was important to their stories, such as Eve from the Bible, who presents the viewer with a tempting apple, a python draped over her shoulders.

In other renditions more symbolic than historically accurate, the Virgin Mary is photographed with a pastry confection known as a Saint Honoré, while Venus stands in a giant scallop shell—knife and fork in hand. The latter image is a wink to the masterpiece by Italian Renaissance painter, Sandro Botticelli.

In addition to the other chefs, La Coupole’s own Jean-Philippe Bourguil chose to contribute to the event, which will run until March 10.

Gastronomik has so far enjoyed decided success. The restaurant is even reported to be seating customers based on a photographer’s location, with requests to the tune of “A table for four near Little Red Riding Hood, please.”

**Neon Exhibition Lights Up the Art World**

La Maison Rouge, a Parisian foundation dedicated to contemporary art, is putting on the first major all-neon exhibition entitled “Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue,” starting February 17. Over one hundred works by 83 artists are on show, many being displayed for the first time. The exhibit will feature wide diversity in both subject matter and time period, with some works dating back as early as the 1940s.

Neon was discovered late in the 19th century and came about by pressurizing odorless gases and passing electricity through them. It is now most often associated with advertising, but this exhibition demonstrates how it has become a true art form. The first purely neon piece of art was created in 1951 by Lucio Fontana. Throughout the rest of the 1950s and well into the 1960s, neon became a new canvas for many artists. The exhibition has been divided into subsections, with each section demonstrating a movement in neon art. The exhibition begins with “Pioneers” and comes full circle, ending with “Broken Beams.”

**Stein Collection Enchants Paris at the Grand Palais**

The Stein collection on display at the National Galleries of the Grand Palais, a collection that assembled some of the most important works of early 20th-century art, recently closed this past month. The display included works by artists like Édouard Manet, Edgar Degas, and Paul Cézanne, all of whom were paramount in the foundation of the modern art movement.

The collection is not only a display of early modern art, but also a tribute to the illustrious Stein family. Leo, Gertrude, Michael and his wife Sarah each became avid collectors in the early 20th century, investing in the now-famous masters of Cubism, Impressionism, and Post-Impressionism. The most prominent of the four is undoubtedly Gertrude, known for her salon and the relationships she cultivated with the artistic expatriates living in Paris at the time. She and her brother Leo concentrated on collecting works by artists such as Renoir and Picasso, many of which hung in her Parisian apartment on the rue de Fleurus, a stone’s throw from the Luxembourg Gardens. Her brother Michael’s collection focused on more of the work of Matisse. Through the early patronage of the Steins, many of these artists gained the recognition they now enjoy.
In French-U.S. Effort, Stolen Painting Returned at Last

On January 25, the US customs service returned to France a rare color monotype by French painter Camille Pissarro. Entitled “The Fish Market,” this work had been stolen from the Faure Museum in Aix-les-Bains (South-East of France) in 1981. The restitution ceremony took place at the Kreeger Museum in Washington, D.C. France’s Ambassador to the United States, François Delattre, received the painting from John Morton, director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The painting’s repatriation is the result of collaboration between ICE, Interpol, U.S. and French Customs, and the U.S. Department of Justice.

“Returning a painting to a museum is indeed a significant contribution to the celebration of our cultural heritage and a gift to all future visitors, but it is also another great illustration of Franco-American friendship and cooperation,” Ambassador Delattre said.

D.C. Exhibit Captures Painters’ Early Photography

The invention of the hand-held camera in 1888 inspired more than the camera-phone generation of today. In a new exhibition beginning February 4 at the Phillips Collection in Washington D.C., over 200 photographs from post-impressionist icons such as Pierre Bonnard and Edouard Vuillard are displayed.

It wasn’t until the late 19th century that the camera became more accessible to the general public. French and other artists whose works make up the collection used the camera to capture images, so as to better paint them later. The more than 10,000 photographs these artists took throughout their lives tell a parallel story to their brushwork, even serving to fill in more intimate details.

The idea for the collection began early in the 1980s, when the photographic collection of Mr. Vuillard was discovered in the hands of the artist’s family by the exhibition curator. Since then, various curators and museums, such as the Musée d’Orsay, have contributed to the project in the hope of making these photographs come alive once more.