French Minister Visits U.S. for Anniversary of Yorktown

FRENCH Defense Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie visited the United States from October 18-21. On Wednesday, October 19, Minister Alliot-Marie attended the 225th commemorative ceremonial anniversary of the victory at the battle of Yorktown, a decisive event in the American War of Independence and a symbol that marked the beginning of the French-American friendship.

"Whenever it was called into question, we rallied together, because something essential was at stake. In the 18th century, France came to America to fight by your side for your freedom. You haven't forgotten. Twice it was you who came to defend freedom on our soil. In 1917, Pershing and in 1944, Eisenhower, joined in our common fight. We will never forget it. The friendship pact sealed in Yorktown has always been respected. Our two countries intend to honor it always. Yes, for us our friendship is something precious. Never have our two peoples taken up arms against one another: a rarity in the concert of nations," Minister Alliot-Marie expressed. "The spirit of our pact at Yorktown is based on this primordial value: freedom and the respect for the other's freedom. (...) The dangerousness of the world, the threat of terrorism, we are all fighting together, the pressure of obscurantism and the rise of intolerance make this alliance more necessary than ever," the French minister concluded.

Minister Alliot-Marie also bestowed the insignia of Commander of the Legion of Honor upon U.S. Senator from Virginia, John Williams Warner, Jr (R) during the ceremonial events at Yorktown. "Today, on this very place where our brotherhood-in-arms was sealed, I would like to pay tribute to our most distinguished guest of honor who embodies both our brotherhood and our common ideal of freedom," Minister Alliot-Marie said at the French American Foundation. "We Americans, we Europeans are attached to our values and principles: liberty, democracy, and human rights. Giving up the ambition to make it possible for as many people as possible to enjoy this is out of question. We must admit differences, respect identities, take into consideration the pace of civilizations' need for their own evolution. (...) We must help them find a balance between a quest for modernity and the respect of identities. (...) We will then avoid the confusion that brings about a confrontation of cultures. We should strive to convince people and not impose ideas. (...) It is important that Europe and the United States may bring answers together."

Min. Alliot-Marie, left, attends ceremony at Yorktown

President Jacques Chirac bestowed the insignia of Chevalier in the French Legion of Honor upon Abraham H. Foxman, National Director of the Anti-Defamation League, on Wednesday, October 18 at the Elysée Palace in Paris. President Chirac also presented him with the insignia of Chevalier in the National Order of Police."You have always been committed to enhancing military cooperation between France and the United States, notably in the war on terrorism, where it is important to remind everybody that our cooperation goes a long way, encompassing both training and fighting side by side, notably in Afghanistan." This four-day visit marked her fourth trip to the U.S. since assuming her responsibilities as defense minister in 2002. Minister Alliot-Marie kicked off her trip of the U.S. on Wednesday, October 18 by meeting with Stephen Hadley, U.S. Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs for President Bush. On Thursday, October 19, the French defense minister met with U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld at the Pentagon. The two discussed current issues such as North Korea and Iran, as well as Lebanon, Afghanistan and Kosovo. Before the NATO Summit in Riga, Latvia on November 28 and 29, Minister Alliot-Marie wished to exchange views with her American counterparts regarding the future of the organization.

While in New York, she met with Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan. She also visited UNIFIL Strategic Peacekeeping Operations.

Director of Anti-Defamation League Awarded Legion of Honor

PRESIDENT Jacques Chirac bestowed the insignia of Chevalier in the French Legion of Honor upon Abraham H. Foxman, National Director of the Anti-Defamation League, on October 16 at the Elysée Palace in Paris.

Foxman was awarded France's highest honor in recognition for life-long dedication to promoting peace, dialogue and commitment to mutual human understanding. "Throughout your life," President Chirac expressed, "you have championed three inseparable causes: the duty to remember, the battle against anti-Semitism and the need for dialogue for peace. (...) As a passionate defender of your cause, you have always advocated dialogue, everywhere and with everyone, to promote tolerance and peace between men. You take part in dialogue between religions and creeds, regularly meeting with the Pope, as I believe you just have, you visit the Arab countries. You meet with European leaders, all European leaders, to push forward the fight against anti-Semitism."

Foxman joined the Anti-Defamation League in 1965, and in 1987, he became the League's National Director and one of the main spokesmen for the American Jewish community. "The duty to remember concerns first and foremost remembering the suffering of the Jewish people, the horror of the camps and the criminal collusion. You have actively contributed to this memory, in particular as a member of the Holocaust Memorial Council to the President of the United States," President Chirac expressed. "Yet your commitment has also involved perpetuating the memory of those 'Just Among the Nations' who saved Jewish lives and embodied the universal consciousness. France faces up to this duty to remember. We have acknowledged the French State's responsibility in the deportation and death of thousands of Jews. We continue to pass on the memory and I would like to mention here the quality of the co-operation established with the Jewish organizations, and the Holocaust Museum in particular. (...) And in this regard, I am grateful to you for helping to build a trustful and regular dialogue between France and the American Jewish community."

In his acceptance remarks, Mr. Foxman thanked President Chirac for his "strength, moral courage and friendship to the Jewish state and people."
P A T R I C K G O M O N T, mayor of Bayeux, in northwest France, officially inaugurated the city’s new Mémorial des reporters (Reporters’ Memorial) on October 7 in conjunction with the 13th annual Bayeux-Calvados Award for War Correspondents. Bayeux worked in collaboration with Reporters Sans Frontières (Reporters Without Borders) to commission the site, which is dedicated to all journalists who have perished in the line of duty since 1944. "Do not forget them. Know that without them, democracy does not exist," said Robert Menard, secretary general of Reporters Sans Frontières. France’s Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy also expressed his support for the project. "At this inauguration of the Reporters’ Memorial, today in Bayeux, I want to associate myself with the tribute paid to the journalists who, since 1944, have died, all over the world, while exercising their profession."

The memorial will serve to remind visitors of the dangers that journalists face in their efforts to inform the world, and will ensure that the names of the dead are never forgotten. Architect and landscaper Samuel Criquelin conceptualized and created the memorial, the first of its kind in Europe. It consists of a landscaped garden walkway punctuated by white stones that feature etchings of the names of fallen reporters, camera men and sound recorders (see picture on left).

The memorial is truly international, honoring fallen journalists around the world. Michele Montas, widow of Haitian journalist Jean Dominique, was present at the unveiling. "This will be the only place where his name will be written in stone."

Bayeux, the first French city to be liberated on June 7, 1944, is already home to the Musée Mémorial de la Bataille de Normandie (the Battle of Normandy Memorial Museum), as well as the largest British war cemetery in Normandy.

Biodiversity in European Development

T HE "Biodiversity in European Development" Conference took place in Paris September 19 - 21, 2006, at the International Conference Center. The conference is the product of a partnership between the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (UICN), the European Commission, France, Belgium, Finland and Sweden.

The conference brought together the member states of the European Union and nearly 350 civil society and international organizations to address protection and preservation of biodiversity while promoting economic development. Distinguished speakers included Brigitte Girardin, French minister delegate for Cooperation, Development and Francophony, and Nelly Olin, French minister for Ecology and Sustainable Development.

The conference also strove to help Europe and other countries around the world meet the world meet the 2010 Biodiversity Target and the 2015 Millennium Development Goals. Participants wrote a "message from Paris" that will be provided to the Council of Ministers of the European Union this December.

France has demonstrated its commitment to protecting and preserving biodiversity in several other initiatives. Most recently, France was lauded for its "Debt-for-Nature" swap with Cameroon. Under this unprecedented contract signed in June 2006, Cameroon receives 100 percent debt relief from France for funds totaling 570 million euros. The swap serves two goals: reducing Cameroon’s foreign debt and preserving the Congo River Basin rainforest. Over the next four years, Cameroon will allocate the funds that would have otherwise been paid back to France, to finance and develop four different sectors: education, health, infrastructure and natural resources. For more information on this initiative, please refer to NFF vol. 06.08.

Doctors Operate in Zero-Gravity Conditions

A team of French doctors successfully operated on a man in zero-gravity conditions aboard an Airbus A300, operated by Novespace (a subsidiary of CNES), last Wednesday, September 27. The specially designed aircraft mimicked weightlessness by making roughly 22 parabolas, with each dive creating 22 seconds of zero-G conditions. The chief surgeon, Dominique Martin, and his four-member team, who were strapped to the floor during the procedure, removed a cyst from the arm of a male patient. The surgery, which was carried out more as a “feasibility study” than a technically challenging exploit, went exactly as planned, according to the medical team. The operation is part of a project backed by European Space Agency, with the aim of developing Earth-guided surgical space robots. This is in fact the second zero-gravity surgery for Dr. Martin and his team; they previously mended the artery in a rat’s tail in 2003, an operation far more complex. For more information, please visit: www.france-science.org.
American Cathedral in Paris: Friend of All

Actress Olivia de Havilland was the guest of honor the evening of October 2 at a gala reception in honor of the Friends of the American Cathedral in Paris held at the residence of French Ambassador to the United States, Jean-David Levitte. The reception celebrated the long alliance between France and the Cathedral. It was chaired by The Very Reverend Zachary Fleetwood, Dean of the American Cathedral in Paris, as well as The Honorable Amy Bondurant, Mrs. Robin Jeffery, and Mrs. Karen Lamb.

Nominated for Best Supporting Actress for her role as Melanie in Gone with the Wind (1939), de Havilland has won two Oscars for Best Actress, one for To Each His Own (1946) and the other for The Heiress (1949). Olivia de Havilland has been a parishioner at the American Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Paris for many years and continues to play an important part in the Cathedral’s life today.

De Havilland moved to Paris in 1953. She quickly devoted herself to the study of French language and culture, taking three lessons a week. Her dedication to and appreciation for French society throughout the past fifty years have not gone unnoticed. “Olivia is claimed as a national treasure by two states: the United States and France,” Ambassador Levitte remarked in his opening address.

In 1968, her son Benjamin fell ill with Hodgkin’s disease. A year later, he had survived the illness and therapy. De Havilland turned to the American Cathedral in Paris as a place to give thanks for his recovery, an event that would mark the beginning of a longstanding relationship that would endure between the Academy Award winning actress and cathedral for almost a half-century.

Consecrated on Thanksgiving Day in 1886, the Cathedral was founded by the affluent expatriate American community of the 19th century. Since its inception it has been involved in the lives of many Americans and Anglophones living in Paris.

Today, the American Cathedral has an active, committed and diverse congregation, serving as a parish church not only for the American community, but a vibrant mix of nationalities, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds. The Cathedral’s ministries and programs have expanded from the local and national community to nations in Western and Central Europe over the last two decades to meet the changing needs of a changing world. For example, it organizes several local outreach programs, including “Mission Lunches” which offers a weekly lunch to 60-80 homeless Parisians. Additionally, “Love in a Box” delivers thousands of boxes of Christmas presents to underprivileged children in many countries.

As it has done since the 1800s, The Cathedral continues daily to fulfill one of its most important missions, opening its doors to thousands of tourists every year as a spiritual home away from home, and as a place of beauty and tranquility amid one of the world’s greatest and liveliest cities.

First Annual D.C. French Film Festival

The first annual D.C. French Film Festival “C’est Chic: New Films from France” took place from October 12-28, 2006, in various venues throughout Washington and surrounding areas. The American Film Institute (AFI), the French-American Cultural Foundation, the French Embassy’s La Maison Française and the National Gallery of Art collaborated to bring the festival to fruition. Recent films from esteemed directors such as Claude Chabrol (Comedy of Power) were featured alongside emerging talent such as Anne Villecèque (Rivière).

The screenings took place at the AFI Silver Theater and Cultural Center in Silver Spring, MD; La Maison Française at the Embassy of France; and the National Gallery of Art. The inaugural screening welcomed “Les Brigades du Tigre” by director Jerome Cornuau who also attended the screening himself at La Maison Française. The festival concluded with a series of short films — from documentaries to animated love stories — at the National Gallery of Art. For more information regarding French films and cultural events, please visit: www.la-maison-francaise.org.

Discussion between French and American Judicial Minds

Three of the world’s most distinguished justices discussed the critical role judges play in protecting liberty at the Third Annual Raymond Aron Lecture on October 5 at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., moderated by Brookings President Strobe Talbott, the panel discussion featured the former president of the French Constitutional Council, Senator Robert Badinter, retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, and Supreme Court Associate Justice Stephen Breyer. They discussed the different approaches of the United States and Europe on such issues as the balance between civil liberties and security; the role of foreign and international law in domestic jurisprudence, and the democratic legitimacy of legal institutions.

A strong advocate of human rights, Senator Badinter is an integral member of La Ligue des droits de l’homme (the League of Human Rights). He was the Minister of Justice under French President Mitterrand from 1981-1986. From 1986-1995 he presided over France’s Constitutional Council. Since then, he has been a senator for the Haute-de-Seine. Perhaps his greatest accomplishment was the legislation he introduced 25 years ago that abolished the death penalty in France. His contribution to the Brookings panel was the French experience in balancing civil liberties and fighting against terrorism by establishing well-defined laws on the rights of detainees.

Breyer and Badinter have developed a personal and intellectual friendship over years that has what moderator Talbott described as “a comparably analgesic and salutary effect.” Their friendship personifies the cooperation between France and America in their common goal of striking a balance between civil liberties and national security.

Doctors Without Borders sets up stand in Central Park

Médecins Sans Frontières, known as “Doctors without Borders” in English, was founded in France in 1971 and has since made great strides in bringing medical assistance to those in need worldwide. The U.S. chapter of MSF installed a model refugee camp in New York City’s Central Park in September to promote education and awareness about the world’s 33 million refugees. The 8,000-square-foot display camp included tents and makeshift latrines to provide a tangible representation of the life of refugees, for whom medical and food aid is often desperately needed. The exhibit also presented first-hand accounts from workers who had traveled abroad with the organization and a photo gallery displaying various representations of those who had fled from political persecution, violence, and areas torn by war. Médecins Sans Frontières

A refugee camp in the heart of the NYC

A refugee camp in the heart of the NYC
France is celebrating this year, the centennial of the birth of Josephine Baker, an African-American starlet who left the racially tense United States to pursue her talents and professional ambitions in Paris. Born in 1906 in St. Louis to a washed-up woman, Baker grew up as domestic help to wealthy white families. She began her career in entertainment in comedy roles for performance companies as a young teenager, which led her to New York. However, Baker really broke into the spotlight in 1925 when she traveled to France and signed on to La Revue Nègre, a tribute to black music and dance, which was performed at the popular Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. The presence of black American soldiers in World War I and their positive exchanges with French soldiers had set the stage for a great appreciation of jazz in France. Enchanted Parisians found Josephine Baker to embody this revolutionary new sound.

Baker found her popularity rising with her Danse Sauvage performed in the second half of La Revue Nègre. Audiences were seduced by the sensual display of her dancing to a pulsing jazz rhythm. Baker's fame flourished when she began performing in clubs in Montmartre, around which the cultural life of black performers centered (so much so that it became known as the "Harlem of Paris"). In 1926, she even opened her own club in Montmartre, called Chez Josephine. Around this time, she recorded the classic "I'ai Deux Amours - Mon Bap et Paris" (I Have Two Loves - My Country and Paris). Following a tour around Europe in the late '20s, Baker enthralled theater-goers in the Folies Bergères, a Parisian music hall where many of the great names in French music have performed. Audiences found her jaw-dropping performance unforgettable, especially since one of her costumes was a skirt made from 16 bananas strung together.

In addition to her on-stage success, Baker was notable for her eccentricities and luxurious "art de vivre." She strived to learn as much as she could about European culture, studying literature and painting, and worked on her French diction with a Passionate and luxurious "16 bananas strung together." The performance was unforgettable, especially since one of her costumes was a skirt made from 16 bananas strung together.

Josephine Baker's contributions to music, dance, civil rights and international causes. One of her most interesting endeavors was her role as a "Universal Mother." By the early 1960s, she had adopted 12 children from impoverished countries around the world. The children were raised in Baker's home called Les Milandes, a chateau in Périgord, in southwestern France. Not only did Baker strive to lift these children from poverty, she also aimed to prove that "children of different ethnicities and religions could still be brothers."

Baker's concern for cross-cultural and cross-racial understanding also manifested itself in her heavy involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. Along with other activists, Baker was a leader of a march in Paris to support the impending March on Washington in 1963. She flew from Paris to speak alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, who delivered the closing address which crescendoed in the resounding "I have a dream" — and would immediately earn eternal recognition as one of America's most famous and influential speeches.

In her 50s, Baker's successful career began to slide. She found herself struggling with financial difficulties and had trouble booking gigs. When Les Milandes was repossessed by creditors, Josephine's friends and fans came to her aid. Brigitte Bardot appeared on national TV to make an appeal for the legendary starlet, and financial assistance poured in — money was even said to have come from Zsa Zsa Gabor and Pope Paul VI.

Though Josephine suffered through a few more years of hardship and poor health, she experienced a revival in her career toward the end of her life. Invited to perform at Carnegie Hall on her 67th birthday, Baker finally received the acceptance she desired from an American audience — the crowd rewarded her with a standing ovation even before the concert began. Apparently so moved by the reception, she went onstage. The next year, Josephine returned to Paris for a retrospective performance of her 50-year career at the Bobino Theater. Audiences flocked to see this performance, including celebrities such as Princess Grace of Monaco and movie star Sophia Loren. There, Baker received some of her best reviews ever.

When Baker died just two weeks into this appearance, more than 20,000 people turned out to watch the funeral procession go through the streets of Paris. Her name still shining on the marquee of the Bobino Theater, she was honored by the French government with a 21-gun salute.

Josephine Baker's contributions to music, dance, civil rights and entertainment are still vibrant today. Voluminous memorials throughout the world continue to celebrate her legacy, including a restaurant called "Chez Josephine" in New York City; a statue depicting Baker as a mother embracing a chateau in Périgord, in southwestern France. Not only did Baker adopt 12 children from impoverished countries around the world. The children were raised in Baker's home called Les Milandes, a chateau in Périgord, in southwestern France. Not only did Baker strive to lift these children from poverty, she also aimed to prove that "children of different ethnicities and religions could still be brothers."

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Clinical Trial for New Avian Flu Vaccine

In an effort to increase Europe's pandemic preparedness, the Sanofi-Aventis Group's vaccine branch, Sanofi Pasteur, generated the first clinical trial lot of a new generation of H7N1 avian flu (bird flu) vaccine in Bergen, Norway on September 19. The vaccine was produced at Sanofi Pasteur's facility in Marcy l'Etoile, France, and could be used to combat both pandemic and seasonal strains. According to Sanofi Pasteur, two influenza subtypes, H5 and H7, have recently caused highly pathogenic avian influenza. While most vaccine development has focused on H5N1 strains, avian H7 containing viruses remain a significant pandemic threat and have caused human infections in Europe over the last three years, according to Sanofi Pasteur. Sanofi Pasteur conducted its work on the vaccine within the framework of FLUPAN, a European Union-funded collaboration intended to improve the level of pandemic preparedness in the E.U.

The Phase I clinical trial initiated on September 19 is the first to assess the safety and ability to generate an immune response of a split, inactivated prototype pandemic H7N1 vaccine produced on cells, according to Sanofi. “The H7N1 vaccine strain was developed from an avian influenza virus by the UK's National Institute for Biological Standards and Control (NIBSC) and the University of Reading, UK. A highly pathogenic H7N1 avian influenza virus which caused outbreaks in Italian poultry in 1999 has been modified, so that it is safe to use and grows well in mammalian cell culture,” according to Dr. John Wood, FLUPAN coordinator.

Sanofi Pasteur is a worldwide leader in the field of influenza vaccine research, development and manufacturing. The company is actively involved in various projects throughout the U.S. and Europe, and is currently investing in a major expansion of its influenza vaccine production capacity in the U.S. as well as in France. The U.S. government has contracted Sanofi Pasteur for a number of pandemic-related agreements such as the development of pandemic vaccine stockpiles, production of investigational doses and the development of cell-culture technology. For more information on the clinical trial, please visit: www.sanofi-aventis.com.

French Management Schools Earn High Marks

French schools continue to top the Financial Time’s ranking of the European Masters in Management programs, published on September 11, and more are on their way up. This year, French schools offer 11 of the 35 programs ranked; of these 11, six occupy the top seven ranks. For the second year in a row, HEC ranked the highest. Its graduates, earning over 62,000 euros (approximately $74,400) on average, are the best paid. One of its alumni remarked that it also offers the best network since most top French CEOs also attended the institution.

ESCP-EAP, ranked third, is well known for its international mobility. It provides many opportunities to work and study abroad and has a high proportion of international students and faculty.

Two more French schools climbed their way to the top five this year: Grenoble and EM Lyon. A major contributing factor to Grenoble’s rise was a healthy improvement over the year in weighted average salary from 42,098 euros (approximately $50,518) to 47,350 euros (approximately $56,820).

Whether business students are interested in superb training, establishing professional connections, international mobility or higher pay, French schools are increasingly yielding them a higher profit margin in all of these fields.

Arianespace Launches Satellite for DIRECTV Among Payload

Arianespace, the commercial launch services leader, holding more than 50 percent of the world market for satellites to geostationary transfer orbit (GTO), recently celebrated its fourth launch of the year. Headquartered in Evry, France, Arianespace was created in 1980 as the first commercial space transportation company. The latest Ariane launch (picture on right) boosted three payloads into orbit on October 13: DIRECTV 95 for American operator DIRECTV, Inc., OPTUS D1 for the Australian operator OPTUS, and the large deployable reflector, LDREX-2 for the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).

The launch blasted off from Launch Complex No. 3 in Kourou, French Guiana, and carried a total payload of 9,031 kg, including 7,804 kg for the three satellites, which were released separately into their respective targeted orbits.

The DIRECTV 95 will give American TV viewers a greater choice of broadcast services, while setting up tomorrow’s multibeam satellites for multimedia applications. This satellite was built by Loral Space Services in Palo Alto, California. The Orbital Sciences-built OPTUS D1 will provide direct TV broadcasts, Internet links, voice and data services for Australia and New Zealand. LDREX-2 (Large-scale Deployable Reflector Experiment), launched on behalf of JAXA, is a half-scale model representing the large deployable antenna to be used on a future satellite.
LYON HOSTS BIENNALE DE LA DANSE

Sunday September 19 was a cool, mostly sunny day in Lyon—perfect weather for dancing. An impressive 320,000 people lined the Rue de la République for the Lyon Biennale de la Danse, Lyon’s biannual dance festi-
val; up from 20,000 last festival. The festival dates back to 1984, but the Défilé, the grand outdoor parade, was added a decade ago. Varying in age, race and talent, the performers in the Défilé are not professionals like the dancers in the festival’s formal schedule. They are locals from Lyon and other regional cities who just want to be a part of the festivities. City, regional and commercial partners provided the financial support, which amounted to approximately one million dollars this year. This year’s theme was “the city,” though performers were dressed as everything from colorful flamenco dancers to Charlie Chaplins.

FRANCE’S JUDO TEAM TAKES HOME MEDALS

France’s Judo teams each took home a medal from the World Championship on the weekend of September 16-17 in Paris. France’s men’s team tied for third place with Japan, for example, because when sparring with Japan, for example, they had to fight an Olympic champion in one instance and a world cham-

Paris’s Motor Show Revs Enthusiasm for French Automobiles

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RENCH car makers proudly unveiled their newest models at the world’s oldest and Europe’s biggest motor show, the Mondial de l’automobile, which ran from September 30 to October 15. Exactly 110 years ago, the Paris motor show was inaugurated to display cars that competed in the Paris-Bordeaux race. Two years ago a record 1.46 million people attended the show. The boldness, innovative technology, and luxury on display dazzled car enthusiasts then, and this year was no different.

In a bold move to break into muscle car territory, Peugeot unveiled its aggressive looking 4-passenger sedan, the 908 RC, powered by a 700-horsepower Le Mans V12 diesel engine.

According to critics, the 908 RC is an ambitious car that incorporates power, comfort, luxury, and respect for the environment. Sleek, black, and powerful, the new Peugeot 908 RC will be sure to turn heads. The car features a panoramic windshield and glass roof, and graceful flying buttresses that emerge from the rear edge of the roof. The original plan for the Peugeot 908 was to create a limousine with bold style that offered smooth driving. The end result blends dynamic performance, modernity, luxury, and environmental protection. The auto show featured this concept car in an effort to combine imagination with an uncom-

Virtual Neighborhood Connects Residents of Paris

With the Internet connecting people across the world, Parisians can now use the web as a tool to get to know the people right next door. Residents of certain arrondissements (neighborhoods) in Paris can connect via a Web site called Peuplade (www.peuplade.fr), a virtual port that facilitates introductions between neighbors, involvement in group projects in the area, and postings for those who wish to announce events or to buy and sell goods locally. Even local schools are connecting on Peuplade—a special page designed for parents allows them to set up carpools, outings for their children, and arrange childcare. Created in 2003 as the ini-
tiative of Nathan Stern, the president of an organization in Les Epinettes in the 17th district, Peuplade today seeks to expand to all of Paris. A new version of the site launched on September 18, allowing even more Parisian neighborhoods to connect. With help from Mobile Operator SFR, “peupladiens” can now record video messages on their cell phones for the site. The city of Paris is also encouraging the project, by helping Peuplade to find funding partners and launching a promotional campaign for the initiative.
French Museum Hosts Exhibition on Walt Disney

The images of Walt Disney’s Snow White, Sleeping Beauty’s castle, and Mickey Mouse are recognizable to children and adults all over the world. But how many people know that the renowned animator received much of his inspiration from European art and storytelling? Le Grand Palais museum in Paris hopes to increase that awareness, while celebrating the delightful contributions to art made by Walt Disney. France’s famous art institution has recently opened an exhibition titled "Il était une fois Walt Disney (Once Upon a Time, Walt Disney)," featuring the art of Disney as well as the European sources that influenced his work.

In 1935, Walt Disney traveled to Europe. He returned to the United States with more than 300 illustrated books for his animators, many of whom themselves hailed from Europe and had been schooled in European art centers. Many of these books are on display, as are original artworks and other treasures. The Walt Disney Company allowed the museum rare access to its 70,000-piece archives, and more than 500 Disney pieces are on display. The exhibit also borrowed works from museums around the world, allowing visitors to see the Disney creations next to the European art that inspired them. For example, a scene from the spooky forest sequence in Snow White where trees come to life can be seen next to an equally spooky 1900 painting of similar trees by Belgian symbolist William Degouve de Nuncques.

Once Upon a Time, Walt Disney runs at Le Grand Palais through January 15, when it will move to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, March 8 - June 24. For more information, please visit www.rmn.fr/gngp-gb/index.html.

Analysis Provides New Insight into the “Mona Lisa”

A team of Canadian scientists has recently used technology to unlock a few of the secrets of one of the most famous women ever to be painted — the woman represented in the painting "The Mona Lisa." With a special infrared and three-dimensional laser scanner, the scientists were able to look beyond the darkness of the paint that typically obscures analysis of the painting. Their work revealed details that cannot be seen by the naked eye. For example, analysis revealed that Lisa Gherardini, believed to be the subject’s real name, is wearing a transparent gauze veil over her dress; a custom for 16th century Italian women who were pregnant or had just given birth. "We can now say that this painting by Leonardo da Vinci was painted to commemorate the birth of the second son of the Mona Lisa, which helps us to date it more precisely to around 1503," said Bruno Mottin of the French Museums’ Center for Research and Restoration. The technology works by scanning 3D images at a depth resolution of about 1/10 the diameter of a human hair. However, even with the help of this advanced technology, some of the master’s ingenious tricks remained a mystery. The scientists were mystified by da Vinci’s combination of a process called “sfumato” (blending one tone into another) and the simultaneous high level of minute detail. Mottin explained: "It’s extremely thinly painted and extremely flat, and yet the details of the curls of hair, for example, are extremely distinct. So the technique is unlike anything we’ve ever seen before. Leonardo was in a league of his own."

Venice and the Orient Explores Centuries of Artistic Exchanges

Today the city of Venice is a major tourist destination, but in the 9th century, and for many centuries after that, Venice was an economically and commercially powerful city-state. As a result of its geographical position on the Adriatic Sea, Venice became a major trading post between Western Europe, the Byzantine Empire, and the Islamic world. The city developed close ties with many of the great Middle Eastern dynasties, such as the Ottomans, whose sea-faring traders counted Venice as one of their main ports of call. These connections facilitated the exchange of art and design; an exchange that is highlighted at the Institut du Monde Arabe’s (Institute of the Arab World) exhibition titled Venise et l’Orient (Venice and the Orient).

Co-organized by New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, Venice and the Orient covers numerous centuries, starting in 828 and continuing through the 17th century. Some 250 Venetian objects are on display, including paintings, textiles, rugs, and ceramic figures. The influence of the Orient is so evident that experts still disagree on whether or not certain objects were created in Venice or were imported from abroad. The result is a unique melding of East and West that leaves much to the imagination of the viewer. Venice and the Orient will run from October 3 - February 18 at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris. For more information, visit www.imarabe.org.
Tour de Champagne

The Tour de Champagne is an event that will feature more than 20 prestigious brands of Champagne as well as the cuisine of talented local chefs. Beginning this fall, the Tour de Champagne will be hosted in various venues throughout Chicago, New York, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta.

For more information on events in your area, please visit: www.tourdechampagne.com.

Exhibition Pays Homage to Ambroise Vollard

New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art is currently paying homage to renowned French art dealer, collector and publisher Ambroise Vollard. Van Gogh, Cézanne, and Matisse and many other leading artists of the late 19th and early 20th century owe their early recognition and sponsorship to Vollard, who played a key role in promoting and shaping their careers. "Cézanne to Picasso: Ambroise Vollard, Patron of the Avant-Garde" showcases many of the works that Vollard either commissioned, exhibited or owned.

Vollard made his first appearance on the Paris art scene in the late 1880s. In addition to helping to jump-start the careers of some of the world's most famous artists, Vollard was an avid art collector. He acquired great wealth by purchasing works not yet in demand, but created by artists destined for fame, and then slowly selling them off to collectors and dealers.

The exhibit features 100 paintings, dozens of ceramics, sculptures, prints, and livres d'artistes dating from the late 1880s to Vollard's death in 1939. Visitors will be treated to works by a number of well-known artists such as Cézanne, Degas, Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Renoir. Paintings from Picasso's first French exhibition (1901) and Matisse's first solo exhibition (1904) will also be featured. The exhibition also includes numerous portraits of Vollard by leading artists, including Cézanne, Bonnard, Renoir, and Picasso.

Cézanne to Picasso: Ambroise Vollard, Patron of the Avant-Garde is currently showing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and will run through January 7, 2007. For more information, please visit www.metmuseum.org.