

Squartists' Rights
 Restaurant Pétrelle
 Paris Pampering III
 Fabulous Finds
 Tumbleweed for Toys
 Hôtels Pas Chers

Euro Sept 14: .816
 Euro Aug 12: .816
 Rain Days: 9
 High Temp: 60°F/16°C
 Low Temp: 46°F/8°C
 Nat'l Holidays: none

PARIS

n o t e s

OCTOBER 2004

VOLUME 13 ISSUE 8

JEWEL OF A PLACE

By Vivian Thomas

Place Vendôme, home to many of the world's great jewelers, is a shining symbol of Paris prestige

Entering the Place Vendôme, I always feel as though I'm stepping into a vast and elegant outdoor salon. The facades surrounding me, serene and majestic, enclose the stately space almost completely, and their rhythmic regularity is so satisfying that even the traffic passing through does little to mar the place's aristocratic allure. Instead of a chandelier, the great bronze candlestick of Napoleon's column provides a central focus, and it's easy to imagine the occasions when 18th-century aristocrats danced here to celebrate royal weddings.

Today, the Place Vendôme is still a magnet for Old—and New—Money, as doormen usher guests into the Ritz Hotel and as facades that once fronted private mansions glitter with the city's densest concentration of diamonds. Shop windows of jewelers like Boucheron, Bulgari and Chaumet attract not only serious buyers with Swiss bank accounts, but strolling groups of recreational window shoppers.

If the whole ensemble resembles a Hollywood set, it's not surprising. At one time, the Place Vendôme was just that: an empty stage lined by imposing facades with nothing behind them. Originally planned as the home of a royal library, scholarly academies and embassies, the place was launched in 1686, when Louis XIV authorized the construction of the Place des Conquêtes between a monastery on the Rue de Castiglione and a convent on the Rue de la Paix. Existing properties between them were expropriated (including the mansion of the Duc de Vendôme, whose title would eventually give the place its name), and work began the following year.

Under the direction of architect Jules Hardouin-Mansart construction continued for several years, but the project stalled in 1691 when money ran out. Finally the City of Paris, with the help of a group of speculators, took it up, renaming it Place Louis-le-Grand, in 1699. The developers divided up most of the plots among themselves, and Hardouin-Mansart resumed work with another architect, changing the shape from the original rectangle to an octagon.

At this point, the facades looked much as they do today, with arched ground-floor windows, two floors of rectangular windows flanked by Corinthian pilasters and a top story of alternating rectangular and oval mansard windows. Projecting sections on the east and west sides matched the angled corner structures, and only two streets cut into the place, Rue de la Paix to the north and Rue de Castiglione to the south.

Behind those facades lay vacant lots, waiting for buyers to build what they pleased. Even today, an aerial view of the Place Vendôme shows an amazing hodge-podge of structures behind those



matching fronts. And from the beginning, the whole ensemble was designed as a setting, not for a column but for a statue of the king.

Unveiled in 1699, the statue, enclosed by an iron fence and standing on a white marble pedestal, resembled the one that stands in the Place des Victoires today. Over 20 feet high, it depicted the bejeweled Louis XIV astride his horse, dressed as a Roman emperor, facing the Rue St-Honoré with his arm extended to the right.

The value of the lots went up and down like shares on a nervous stock market, and the first building was not completed until 1702. Most went to financiers and "fermiers-généraux" (wealthy tax-collectors), giving rise to a popular jingle about royal statues: Henri IV was on the Pont Neuf with his people, Louis XIII in the

Place des Vosges with his gentlemen and Louis XIV in the Place Vendôme with his financiers. By 1720, five years after the king's death, all work was finished.

Shortly before its completion, all remaining lots were bought by an enterprising Scotsman who would have a huge impact on France's economy. John Law, who'd studied banking in Amsterdam, had written a book called "Money and Trade Considered with a Proposal for Supplying the Nation with Money." Although the Scottish parliament rejected his proposal, Law received permission in 1716 to try his plan in France, heavily in debt as a result of Louis XIV's extensive wars.

But in Law's opinion, reduction of public debt was only an incidental result of his plan. He saw money as a creative force that would stimulate a larger national product and an increase in national power. The Mississippi Company he created acquired a trade monopoly on the French Louisiana territory, then bought out the French East India Company. His bank, which became the state bank, was soon pouring out paper money, and Law was made controller-general of France. A speculative frenzy ensued.

The plan worked well at first, and by 1719 Law, who lived with his family at 23 Place Vendôme, was the most courted man in France. But the "Mississippi Bubble" soon burst, the result of political intrigue and speculative complications. Although none of it was directly attributable to Law, he and many others in France were ruined. On July 17, 1720, a mob attacked his mansion and he narrowly escaped lynching. He died nine years later in Venice, a poor man.

Law was only one of the Place Vendôme's colorful cast of characters. Number 16 was once the home of Austrian physician Franz Anton Mesmer, whose experiments gave us the word "mesmerize." Mesmer was convinced that astrological forces influenced health by means of an invisible fluid, and that a person could transmit these forces to others through "animal magnetism."

He became fa- (continued on page 7)

Reconnecting with friends from the past is one of the great joys in life. Whatever leads to friends losing track of each other is not important. Being back in touch is. For me, I know that just about every long-lost friend I have ever had will eventually come back into my life. I like to think it's because I'm such a great guy and that my friends miss my dazzling intellect and sensitive nature so much that they are eventually compelled to track me down. But it's not.

What brings most of my old friends back into my life is Paris. Because sooner or later, just about everybody I have ever known goes to Paris. Somewhere along the line they have heard through the grapevine that I work on this little "cheat sheet"—or something like that—about Paris. With a little effort, Google-ing around the Internet, they find our website, and me. They are probably thinking, "Maybe some of Mark's dazzling intellect and sensitive nature can find me a good hotel room."

Whatever the real reason for old friends coming back into my life, I love hearing about their lives and why, now, they have decided to go to Paris. The reasons are many: my wife and I want to have a fling (or, I'm having a fling, but not with my wife); over the years I've acquired a love of art (I got tired of beer and football); I love French food (and I've heard the French don't get fat); my kids are gone and I'm finally going to learn to speak French. And on.

After we give each other the short version of our lives, we get into hours of Paris trip planning, making lists of do-this-and-do-that's (little of which they actually do), and Paris becomes our new bond. Yet another job perk.

—Mark Eversman, Editor
marke@parisnotes.com

www.parisnotes.com

User ID: boat • Password: port

Paris telephone numbers starting with (1) require a (01) when dialing from within France.

rédaction

CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Tel: 800-677-9660 (818-286-3109 outside U.S.)
- E-mail: pnoacs@magserv.com
- One year (10 issues): \$44 (\$54 outside U.S.)
- Paris Notes Subscription Services
P.O. Box 15818
North Hollywood, CA 91615-5818

Editorial Correspondence: Write the editor: Paris Notes, P.O. Box 3668, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266. Tel: 310-545-2735. E-mail: marke@parisnotes.com.

Editorial Staff: Publisher/Editor: Mark Eversman. Paris Editor: Linda Koike. Paris Contributor: Rosa Jackson. Proofreading: Bonnie Trenga.

Paris Notes (ISSN 1522-2896) is published monthly, except bimonthly in July/August and December/January, by Mark Eversman, 3204 Highland Ave, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266. Subscriptions are \$44 per year; add \$10 for foreign delivery. Periodicals Postage paid at Manhattan Beach, CA, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: send address changes to Paris Notes, P.O. Box 15818, North Hollywood, CA 91615-5818.

© Paris Notes, 2004. All Rights Reserved: Every effort is made to provide information that is reliable, accurate and timely; however, Paris Notes cannot be responsible for errors that may occur.

Métro of the Future

The Métro, Paris' subway, is considered to be one of the best transportation systems in the world. In terms of city coverage, convenience and comfort, few city systems even come close. But the regional transport authority, the RATP, is not resting on its laurels. With its ridership rising at a pace of about 1 percent a year, the Métro needs to keep improving—and it's doing just that. The average time between trains in the Métro is 105 seconds. Recently a new signal and monitoring system called Ouragan was approved. This will allow trains to go faster between stops, reducing the average time to 90 seconds. The first line to use the system is the city's busiest, No. 13 (St-Denis to Châtillon), with 450,000 passengers a day. Installing the new system at a clip of a new line (there are 16) every 18 months, the RATP hopes the entire system will be converted by 2010. The most central line, No. 1 (La Défense to Château-de-Vincennes), will be the second line to go all automatic (the newest line, No. 14, was the first)—that is, no conductors. While the 220 conductors who work the No. 1 line are not happy about this, the RATP is determined to continue the modernization process.

Expense Report

An annual survey by American research company Mercer HRC recently revealed that Paris, by comparison to other major international cities, is not as expensive as most of us assume. Mercer's list includes 144 cities; it uses 200 criteria to measure expenses, ranging from the cost of CDs to dishwashers to the subways. New York, the 12th most expensive city, was selected as the median city and given an index of 100. Tokyo is the most expensive city with an index of 130.7, followed by London at 119, Moscow at 117.4, Osaka at 116.1 and Hong Kong at 109. Surprisingly, and happily, Paris comes in as the 17th most expensive city, with an index of 94.8. That's the good news. The bad news is that last year Paris held the 23rd spot. Mercer says the rise in cost is a result of the rising cost of luxury apartments, which are being bought primarily by foreign buyers. By the way, you might want to buy your CDs somewhere other than Paris, where, at an average of 19.29E, they are the most expensive in the world.

Squattists' Rights

Squat plus art equals "squat," a term that has become familiar to most art-minded Parisians over the last five years. Case in point: 59 Rue de Rivoli. This typical Haussmann-style building, owned by Crédit Lyonnais, was abandoned when three artists

know as KGB (Kalex, Gaspard, Bruno) broke into it and set up artist studios. Gradually more artists began "squatting" in the building, and many others worked and exhibited there. They festooned the facade of the building with wild and colorful artistic objects. They talked to the press and demanded their right to create and express themselves. The situation presented a considerable problem for the City (other squats began popping up). Popular opinion supported the artists—Parisians loved the idea of "outlaw" art (300,000 of them visited exhibitions there). Indeed, they believed, the City had a responsibility to support the artists. But the City also had the responsibility to enforce the law (Crédit Lyonnais wanted its prime real estate back). It knew, however, there would be a massive public uproar if it tried to force its hand. So, the City continued to negotiate and, to avoid a possibly ugly situation, bought the building for 4.6E million in 2002, which gave it time to find a solution to the problem. Two years later, it reached an agreement with the artists. In July, the building was closed to the public (artists continue to live and work there), and the building will undergo a complete renovation. It is scheduled to reopen in 2007 as a City-run center for contemporary art, with studios and exhibition spaces for selected artists. Seems the "squanarchists" have won the squat wars.

Tribute to Immigrants

Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin recently announced that the state would create a new museum, the Cité de l'Histoire de l'Immigration. The new museum will be located on the eastern edge of Paris in the Palais de la Porte Dorée, which used to house the collection of the Musée des Arts d'Afrique (its collection is being combined with other collections for the Musée du Quai Branly, which is under construction and will be devoted to "non-Western" art). The Cité de l'Histoire de l'Immigration will tell the story of the millions of immigrants (15 million French citizens have foreign roots) who have come to France to escape repression, find work or start new lives in better conditions. People with stories, photos or other memorabilia about immigrating to France are invited to send them to the museum's new website, www.histoire-immigration.fr.

Taxi Rates

The City is currently studying a plan to raise the price of taxis during the prime hours of the day, "les heures de pointe." That is, 7-10am and 5-7pm. The current price is .62E per kilometer after a 2E "prise en charge" fee (New York is (continued on page 8)

• PARIS •
B I T E S
By Rosa Jackson



Thanks to my job, I am lucky enough to have tasted Périgord truffles in season, to have dipped a tiny spoon into Aquitaine caviar, to have feasted on Cancale oysters and zucchini flowers from Nice. Never, though, had I encountered a life-changing carrot until my meal last week at **Pétrelle**.

Discreetly located in an un-flashy part of the 9th arrondissement, Pétrelle is a word-of-mouth address. Despite my close scrutiny of the French press for anything to do with restaurants, I had barely heard of it when I first visited with an Australian chef who is pals with chef/owner Jean-Luc André. “I don’t go looking for publicity, I let it come to me,” André told me, “and that means I’m happy about every article that has been written.” The quality of his food hasn’t escaped the attention of the international media, which has given the restaurant a loyal cosmopolitan following (with a certain number of film stars and fashion designers in the mix).

What attracts them is not only the carrots—I will get to those later—but André’s unique sense of style. With no more than about 10 tables, the restaurant feels like the living room of a slightly eccentric artist friend: red velvet, antique chairs and tables (not matching, heaven forbid!) and bits of bric-a-brac everywhere. Hand-made chandeliers are decorated with twigs and little birds, and though the wiring is draped along the walls and ceiling, somehow he gets away with it. While the rest of Paris was chasing the sun, André happily spent the rainy month of August redecorating his restrooms, covering an entire wall with scallop shells. A few months ago he also opened Les Vivres, whose name loosely translates as “survival supplies,” next door. This bright, equally quirky space allows him to indulge his newfound passion for making preserves, while serving simple, quick meals and cheese or charcuterie plates. (But what cheese! What charcuterie! I still haven’t forgotten the Ardèche saucisson I tasted there in June with a crisp glass of white Burgundy.)

Displayed in the window of Les Vivres and at the entrance of Pétrelle, bowls of fruit and bunches of vegetables look like still-life tableaux. Slender, curved radishes, chard with vivid yellow stalks, cute little round carrots and a bowl filled to the brim with blackberries—these ingredients tell you that André has gone to an awful lot of trouble to

find the very best ingredients for his cooking (he works unaided in the kitchen, with one or two waiters). For years he has visited the wholesale market Rungis before dawn, but lately he has been disappointed to see so many out-of-season vegetables. Finally, he convinced a producer from the Paris region who specializes in “forgotten” vegetables to supply his restaurant. “I’ve known Joël Thiébault for years and he always said his production was too small,” says André. “Look at these vegetables, how beautiful they are.”

Having tried Les Vivres, I couldn’t wait to eat at Pétrelle after the summer holidays. It’s a bit of a special-occasion place, though, with a meal costing about 60E per person without drinks. I quickly invented an occasion and chose a corner table with my friend A. far from the house cat (which would have made me sneeze). In addition to the five or so choices for each course, there are seasonal daily specials and a three-course, no-choice lunch menu for 25E. It’s a great bargain considering the quality of the ingredients and the exceptional setting, so we ordered one set menu, which we mixed-and-matched with à la carte dishes.

Raw marinated sardines, the set menu starter, looked stunning with their silvery skins set off by a vivid tomato compote, and tasted just as intense. A.’s seasonal special, two langoustine tails with sautéed cep mushrooms, drew on more luxurious ingredients, both of them impeccably fresh and perfectly prepared. A. continued with the set main course, unusually juicy rabbit with rosemary, while I chose duck prepared three ways: a confit leg, a grilled aiguillette (the sliver of tender meat that runs along the breast) and slices of pan-fried breast. As good as the meat was, even more remarkable were the vegetables—A.’s with more a Provençal slant (including grilled zucchini), mine a mix of quartered round carrots, yellow chard stalks and thin slices of pale pink beet. Usually, no matter how good restaurant vegetables might be, they never taste as good as garden vegetables. Here, though, the carrot in particular surpassed anything I have tried straight from the garden. Joël Thiébault has selected his vegetables not only for beauty but for flavor, the kind of flavor that has become all too rare even in France.

Desserts again showed what happens when exceptional ingredients fall into the hands of a passionate chef. A plate of

With no more than about 10 tables, the restaurant feels like the living room of a slightly eccentric artist friend

poached figs brought out all the flavor and juice of this violet fruit, while the “72 percent chocolate” dessert proved to be a slice of fluffy chocolate terrine with delightful little crunchy bits. As it was lunchtime, we limited our drinking to a half-bottle of fruity white Burgundy for a very decent 15E, and finished our meals with coffee, which here was milder-tasting and frothier than usual. The total bill, thanks to the 25E menu, came to 105E, which for this quality seemed perfectly reasonable. Next time I would go in the evening for a more eclectic crowd—we shared the dining room with a group of English and French businessmen.

The carrot story doesn’t end there. A couple of days after that meal, I found myself craving some of those vegetables for my own cooking. So I hopped on the Batobus (the floating Métro on the Seine, my preferred form of transport at the moment) in front of the Jardin des Plantes and rode it to the Eiffel Tower, where I hiked up a short distance to the market at Avenue du Président-Wilson. About halfway down, after refueling with a cheese-filled galette, I found Thiébault and his array of herbs (including several types of mint and Thai basil) and vegetables of all colors, shapes and sizes. Just before it was my turn, chef Flora Mikula (of the restaurant Flora, another favorite of mine) snapped up every last tomato—yellow, orange, red, purple. I did buy three artichokes, some of the irresistibly round carrots, two bunches of yellow chard and some pineapple mint, all for just 4E (maybe there was some mistake). At home, I cooked up a vegetable feast and I must say it was nearly as good as André’s—I was especially proud of the carrots glazed with lime blossom honey and sprinkled with pineapple mint. André and his genius supplier have changed the way I look at vegetables.

•Restaurant Pétrelle: 34 Rue Pétrelle, 9th. Tel: 1-42-82-11-02.

PARIS FACT: The new Hilton Arc de Triomphe hotel, 8th, has 508 rooms. The last hotel of its size to open in Paris was the Méridien Montparnasse in 1974.

PARIS FACT: The number of visitors riding to the observation deck on top of the Grand Arch at La Défense has declined from one million in 1989, when it opened, to 350,000 in 2003.

PARIS PAMPERING III

A visit to three excellent places to have a relaxing massage

Ever since I had my first massage, while visiting the Napa Valley town of Calistoga, I've been hooked. Now I always try to fit massage into my travel plans. Hydromassage in Tuscany, lomi massage in Hawaii and massage under a shower of warm seawater in Monte Carlo are among my "hands-on" souvenirs.

Anyone looking for massage in Paris has only two problems: choosing among the many establishments that are popping up like "champignons," and booking well ahead for the most popular ones. I recently sampled three very different places, and found something to satisfy any traveling massage-lover.

The discreet sign on **Spa Nuxe** at 32 Rue Montorgueil is hard to see, but whiffs of a flowery, honey scent were strong enough to guide me in from the street. After puzzling over the entry system (look for "Laboratoire Nuxe" on the scroll-down list and ring for entry), I entered a pretty reception area and found a warm welcome. I'd booked a shiatsu massage with Andrea, waiting almost two months for an opening. Sipping my tea in the waiting area, I admired the artful mix of ancient and modern, as candlelight flickered over rough-hewn beams, exposed stone walls, soft modern couches and artwork.

The vaulted stone "caves" to which Andrea escorted me once stored wine for the priests of St-Eustache, she claimed. Now they're a modern-day medieval fantasy, updated with sliding Japanese screens and brightened with bouquets of scarlet tulips. The spacious room we entered had an ancient well on one wall, lit so that I could peer down into its depths. But that wasn't the biggest surprise. The sound of running water drew my attention to a little stream that babbled and splashed its way past the futon on the floor, adding its music to the faint oriental melodies in the background.

Andrea's massage was unusual—traditional shiatsu applies pressure all over the body, at special points similar to those used in acupuncture, to "unblock the body's energy flow." But Andrea concentrated on my torso, legs and especially feet, using only slight pressure and sometimes remaining several minutes in one position.

Whatever she did, it worked. Lulled by the water music and her gentle touch, I drifted in and out of sleep. She finished by spending a few minutes massaging my forehead and temples. Wishing I could doze there for hours, I finally left, simultaneously relaxed and energized.

Not far away from Spa Nuxe, **La Bulle Kenzo**, located in the Kenzo flagship store near the Pont Neuf, offers ground-breaking massages in a space as bright and colorful as Spa Nuxe is shadowy and candlelit. Once I was inside the former Samaritaine building, a glass elevator whisked me past clothing and accessories to the 4th floor (right under the hip, high-design res-

taurant Kong). A luminous white space splashed with psychedelic orange and turquoise, the spa is staffed by enthusiastic young people eager to explain their unorthodox offerings.

The creators of La Bulle Kenzo started with an intriguing idea. They began with how they wanted clients to feel after each massage. So each "soin tactile" is listed with an "état de sortie" or "condition on leaving," ranging from the expected "relaxed" and "starting to smile" to the surprising "drunkenness" and "amnesiac." There are only two "cabines," one for energizing and one for relaxing massages, so it's essential to book ahead.



The energizing cabine glitters with gold tile walls and a ceiling disco ball. Its massages "awaken the senses" by alternating hot and cold temperatures and mixing textures and techniques—a "choreographed massage" is done to jazz music; the "sur mesure" is whatever you like—you direct the massage yourself.

I opted for the relaxing cabine and the "massage aux chandelles et au riz, based on grains of rice and perfumed rice powder. State on leaving: perfumed, with soft skin, to be continued..."

The cabine resembled a large white bubble ("bulle"), and when I touched the outer wall, it yielded like an under-inflated beach ball. Inside, a futon surrounded by flickering candles stood on a dark wood platform, giving me the impression that I was being massaged on an altar.

The first part was one of the best traditional massages I've had, with Hadas, an expert, using just the right amount of pressure on the exact spots that needed attention. It was when I turned over that the fun began. First she sprinkled perfumed rice powder over my back, arms and legs, which tickled so much that I couldn't keep still. Then she poured several cups of raw rice on me—another ticklish sensation—and gently rubbed my skin with the grains. Finally, she wiped off both powder and rice with warm, moist towels. The massage finished with a restorative cup of tea and another warm towel for touchups before dressing.

I floated out of La Bulle Kenzo highly perfumed and with the promised soft skin. As for the "to be continued," I'd definitely go back, but next time, I just might try the disco-ball cabine.

For my third massage I chose not a trendy spot but a traditional place offering a technique new to me: Thai massage. The **Espace France-Asie** is a surprising bit of Asia in an ordinary French "immeuble" near the Madeleine. Two flights up, I rang the bell and stepped into an incense-scented space straight out of "The Year of Living Dangerously." A smiling Thai receptionist showed me to a waiting room, where I sipped fragrant jasmine tea surrounded by carved wooden screens, orchids and the music of Albinoni.

A sturdy-looking masseuse led me down a narrow corridor—one side tiled, with each tile a tiny shrine with an embedded figure, the other side a row of doors. Outside the first two doors were shoes; we stopped at the third, where I slipped off my heels and stepped into a small room with carved teak walls, a ceiling fan and a futon on the floor.

My masseuse, who spoke nearly incomprehensible Thai-accented French (we relied mostly on sign language), gave me a pair of cotton pajamas to wear. What followed was the most amazing massage of my life. She started with my feet, as I lay on my stomach. After some pressure-point reflexology, she massaged each leg muscle separately, then lifted my legs and started bending them in strange ways. She pressed my right heel into my right buttock, repeated that on the left, then crossed both legs behind me and pressed each heel into the opposite side. (I didn't think my legs could do that.)

That was just the beginning. She stood on my upturned feet, hammered on me, twisted me into pretzel shapes, and at one point knelt on my derrière, pulling my arms behind me and leaning back to arch me into a back bend. And while it was sometimes a bit alarming, it felt wonderful. Finally I lay on my back while she covered my face with moist, fragrant cloths. Massaging my face first through the cloths, she then removed them and continued with a strong circular massage of my scalp, temples and hairline.

After she'd thanked me and disappeared, I lay for a moment feeling extraordinary—elongated and light. My arms felt long enough to touch the ceiling, my legs could have stretched out into the hall to retrieve my shoes. I dressed, paid and floated back to my office.

The best part? I felt the good effects of my Thai massage for a week, making it the best "rapport qualité-prix" of any massage I've ever had.

—By Vivian Thomas

•Spa Nuxe: 32 Rue Montorgueil, 1st. Tel: 1-55-80-71-40. Open: Mon-Tue, Sat 9am-7:30pm; Wed-Fri 9am-9pm. Shiatsu massage: 1 1/4 hours, 105E. Site: www.nuxe.com.

•La Bulle Kenzo: 1 Rue du Pont-Neuf, 1st. Tel: 1-73-04-20-04. Open: Mon-Sat, 10am-8pm. Massage aux chandelles et au riz: 1 hour, 80E. Site: www.labullekenzo.com.

•Espace France-Asie: 11 Rue du Chevalier de St-George, 8th. Tel: 1-49-26-08-88. Open: Mon-Sat, 10:30am-8pm. E-mail: info@espace-france-asie.com. Thai massage: 1 hour, 65E. Site: www.espace-france-asie.com.

Fabulous Finds

By Nancy Stillpass

Before heading to Les Puces (the flea markets) on a home-decorating treasure hunt, consider contacting Gloria Cohen. Gloria knows the flea markets like the back of her hand, and will personally guide you to the finest French furniture and decorative objects—often for a fraction of the cost you would pay back home. She helps avoid the pitfalls one might encounter when shopping alone. And she takes care of all the follow-up, including packing and shipping.

A former art gallery owner and successful art dealer, Gloria started her service, Finds in Paris, when clients of her husband, an architect who specializes in renovations, asked her to help them “finish off” their new homes. She has the uncanny ability to locate exactly what someone is looking for, be it an 18th-century armoire, a signed 40s dining table or an embroidered serviette.

What’s more, with access to the best artisans in Paris, Gloria can have your flea market-find designed into something unique. Just a few of her creations include transforming a pool table into a bathroom vanity, a vintage bird cage into an entryway chandelier and a Turkish fountain into a powder room sink.

I was impressed with Gloria’s “insider” status when she recently escorted me through the booths and alleys of Les Puces. It was obvious how much the dealers value her opinion and enjoy keeping her up to date on their latest acquisitions. She files away the information to anticipate future needs of her clients. I was also wowed by her expertise. When eyeing a display of art deco furniture, Gloria pointed out how to spot a reproduction versus the real thing (a too-shiny finish usually means it’s new). She seemed to know the history behind every piece we encountered.

A truly personal shopper, Gloria never tries to impose her taste or

ego. “I consider myself a chameleon,” she says. “I listen to a client’s wishes and always adapt to his or her taste ... not the other way around.” Gloria likes to meet over coffee before embarking on the shopping excursion. In the course of a half-hour conversation, she understands the mission, gets a feeling for someone’s likes and dislikes, and knows exactly where to go. “Sometimes I feel like a matchmaker,” she explains. “Finding that perfect object, piece of furniture or work of art among thousands is destiny. It’s as if you and the object were meant for each other.”

If you hope to find the objects of your decorating dreams in Paris, Gloria offers two custom shopping tours that coincide with the flea market hours (Fri and Mon, 7am-1pm, and Sat and Sun, 10am-6pm). Her “Flea Market Tour” is designed for those who want an insider’s overview and an exclusive guide to sleuth the market and find the best buys. The tour lasts approximately four hours with an optional stop at a café, and is limited to a maximum of five people.

On the day of the tour, Gloria meets you at a convenient location—usually near a Métro station—and accompanies you from there. For those looking for something very specific, Gloria offers a “Search and Find” tour, where she escorts you to many different sources, including dealers and warehouses not open to the public, and negotiates the best prices on your behalf.

•Gloria Cohen’s Finds in Paris: 4 Rue Chalgrin, 16th. Tel: 6-11-89-76-29. E-mail: gloria@easynet.fr. Site: www.findsinparis.com. Rates for the “Flea Market Tour” are 200E per person, 250E per couple. Since the “Search and Find” tour may take longer than a day, fees vary.



▲ PARIS VISITS ▼

Tumbleweed for Toys

By Gary Lee Kraut

To watch Lynn Rovida demonstrate the whimsical selection of handcrafted toys, finely cut puzzles, inlaid puzzle boxes and animated sculptures available in her little shop in the Marais, you’d think that she was more intent on playing with her wares than selling them.

You might also think that she was off her rocker. She’ll laugh wildly as she turns the handle of a wooden automaton so that the mechanism causes the blue elephant to jump when the mouse appears. She’ll study your expression like a maniacal scientist as you try to figure out how to open a highly crafted Japanese box, before she reveals the precise 7 (or 12 or 27!) manipulations.

You may actually have to be a bit nutty and maniacal yourself to appreciate the unique offerings at Tumbleweed. To call Tumbleweed a toyshop would be to miss the beauty and cleverness of the articles that Lynn has gathered from around the world. These aren’t children’s toys so much as playthings and decorative toys for big kids, ages 9 to 99.

The colorful wooden tops from Austria are intended for collecting as much as for spinning. The cardboard animated cutouts require delicate assembly before the (British) humor is revealed in the form of a flying pig, a surfing dog, a ewe boat. You might offer a bright child a three-layered jigsaw puzzle from Wales, but the finely cut puzzle paintings from Prague have an artful sophistication that you’ll want to keep for yourself. A bright teenager could enjoy one of the brainteasers, though he probably won’t figure it out until he finishes college. Even the tin wind-up circus figures that were created as children’s toys in the 1930s now must come with a safety warning, “Only for decoration, not for children.”

Lynn defines the spirit of Tumbleweed as “quirky, playful and beautiful.” She is in continual search for finely handcrafted articles that fulfill those criteria. As to the zoomorphic baby slippers she sells, she confesses

that they’ve earned a home at Tumbleweed simply because “they’re so cute and funny.”

Lynn likes to think of her finds as bits of poetry, and she has a special affection for people who share that point of view. Handing back and forth the poetry from her meticulously organized display cases, she treats such individuals as playmates as much as customers.

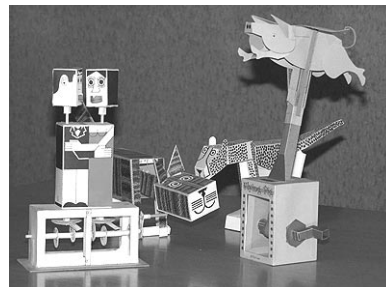
On the other hand, she can be visibly frustrated when someone enters her 160-square-foot shop looking for a quick fix of cheap mass-market humor, pulling apart 3-D puzzles with appreciation for neither the workmanship nor the challenge of putting them back together. Like a child giving away puppies, Lynn wants to be sure her wares find a good home.

As poetic handcrafted goods, the articles available at Tumbleweed don’t come at mass-produced prices. The baby slippers cost 30E, the puzzle boxes run 30-100E, the wooden automata begin at 75E.

In keeping with its name, Tumbleweed, created in 1989, is an uprooted concept in constant evolution. Lynn, who hails from Western Pennsylvania and has lived in France since 1977, initially promoted traditional and contemporary American crafts. The focus of her store has since evolved, yet the emphasis on natural materials and fine craftsmanship remains.

In 1993, Lynn moved Tumbleweed into the Marais, around the corner from Place des Vosges. Since then, the Marais, following in the multinational footsteps of its Left Bank cousin St-Germain, has witnessed the arrival of chains, international brands and shops emphasizing fashion over originality. Tumbleweed, meanwhile, follows the beat of a different drummer.

•Tumbleweed: 19 Rue de Turenne, 4th. Tel 1-42-78-06-10. Open Mon-Sat, 11am-7pm; Sun, 2-7pm. Site: www.tumbleweedparis.com.



HÔTELS PAS CHERS

If all you need while in Paris are a clean bed and a pillow, read on

Colonizing Romans, liberating GIs, expatriate poets, starry-eyed students and centime-pinching tourists: they've all landed in Paris over the eons—and they've all looked for cheap places to sleep.

But Paris is known more for putting up visitors like Hemingway when he lived at the Ritz than when he lived on Rue du Cardinal-Lemoine. Does Paris offer any decent hotels for those who can't book a palace overlooking the Tuileries?

After poking into dozens of Paris' most suspicious-looking cheap hotels—good, bad and indifferent—I'm happy to report that not all zero- and one-star establishments still linger in the shadow of the 19th century. You know the type of hotel I'm talking about: those made famous by gritty, black-and-white New Wave films set in rooms with dripping faucets and stained mattresses. Legendary crash pads like the Hôtel Esmerelda by the Shakespeare and Company bookstore and Hôtel Henri IV on the Ile de la Cité's Place Dauphine still thrive. However, I'm guessing most readers of Paris Notes would find them flying a little too far under the radar of the modern hotel industry.

My personal biases for low-priced hotels are blatant. I'm no fan of the cookie-cutter super-chains like Ibis, Novotel or Mercure. I don't favor those owned by proprietors who've stripped away every vestige of historical dust and stone. I like hotels that emanate some essence of character and personality—whether from the front desk or the taste in decoration. I also prefer lesser-known quarters that feel Parisian and “neighborhoody,” not anonymously international, yet are still with-in shouting distance of major monuments.

For the following selection of budget hotels the cut-off was \$150 a night—much harder to meet now that the U.S. dollar has slipped lower than the euro. Prices are for a standard, double-occupancy room during high season (at press time, 1E = about \$1.20). Unless otherwise noted, these hotels do include elevators, cable or satellite TV and telephones, and at least some rooms have private baths. These may be cheap hotels, but I don't expect guests to rough it. Air conditioning at this price range, however, isn't the norm.

Let's begin in the Latin Quarter/St-Germain-des-Prés (5th and 6th). I love the **Hôtel de Nesle**, an eccentric, 20-roomer decorated by theme: Notre Dame Paris, La Chaumière (“the cottage”) and Le Hamman (North African steam room). Some rooms have canopy beds, funky lamps, and wall murals and mosaics. The garden is another plus, as is the Nesle's cul-de-sac location within a few steps of Odéon's boutiques, galleries and bistros. But to bring this custom ambiance in at this price, the hotel skimps on some comforts like the elevator, room phones, TVs and breakfast.

Up by the Sorbonne is **Hôtel Saint-Jacques**, with its trompe l'œil paintings, lobby chandelier

and Hollywood pedigree (Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn filmed “Charade” here in 1963). Some of the 35 rooms are Victorian themed, while some have little balconies with views of Notre Dame and the Panthéon. During my two visits, I found the staff to be super-cheery. Not far away is the **Hôtel Marignan**, which I recommend for groups because some bedrooms have as many as five separate beds—quite unheard of in Paris. Its hybrid hotel-hostel atmosphere is humble, but backpackers, singles and families on the cheap appreciate the self-serve kitchen and laundry facilities. Deals can be negotiated for those who



book long stays.

A lot has been written about the 27-room **Hôtel Langlois** over by the Grands Boulevards, and for good reason. The owner is a museum curator with an eye for antiques, and he's strewn the hotel, which used to be a bank, with Belle Époque- and Art Nouveau-era paintings, fabrics and furniture. Though it feels a bit removed from the hubbub, some rooms do have views of Sacré Cœur. This has always been one of my favorite inexpensive lodging choices, and the feel of a three-star joint for the price of one can't be beat.

If you don't mind the hike south of Rue Mouffetard and towards Place d'Italie (5th and 13th), I might tempt you with the **Résidence Hôtelière Le Vert Gallant**. This 15-room hotel with unassuming but clean rooms that wrap around a peaceful green space has kitchenettes, letting guests save mega-euros on dining out. But after sampling the Pays Basque cuisine of the adjacent restaurant L'Auberge Etchegorry, run by hotel proprietors Monsieur and Madame Laborde, you may forget about cooking at home. Not far is the **Port-Royal Hôtel**, another perennial favorite. I've always been won over by this immaculate establishment, which shows its pride even if every room doesn't have its own toilet. Most of its 46 “chambers” were recently refurbished with modern but tastefully selected wrought-iron beds, mirrors and armoires. No room TVs and no credit cards accepted here.

If you're intent on staying by the Eiffel Tower/Trocadéro (western 7th and 16th), I can rec-

ommend two places. The first is the colorful, Provençal-themed **Hôtel du Champ de Mars**, near the Rodin Museum and Les Invalides. Each room is named for a flower and has wall stenciling and floral prints. The second is **Hôtel Au Palais de Chaillot**, one of the few budget hotels over in the 16th. Considering the receptionist who knows five languages, a sidewalk terrace, soundproof rooms in sunny, Mediterranean colors and a food delivery deal with local eateries, this is a steal.

Finally, an alternative to the standard hotel experience is **Alcôve & Agapes**, an urban bed and breakfast service. This network of 100 Parisians open their Haussmannian apartments and artists' workshops to guests who want a true home stay experience. You can select your ideal neighborhood, type of accommodation and any other preferences such as non-smoking hosts or extra services like cheese tasting or French conversation.

You'll find a larger selection of budget hotels in my newly revised Paris Notes Hotel Guide (the second edition is now online and available to subscribers; see passwords on page 2, column one). But for those who can't wait, I do have some general advice for pas cher sleep seekers. First, room price tends to descend as you leave the city center (arrondissements 1 through 8) and head into the 9th through 20th arrondissements. In the off-season (mid-July, August, November, early December and late January) rates can be considerably lower. It's always worth inquiring about promotional specials and weekend deals. Also, remember that most Paris hotels charge extra for breakfast; at budget hotels, their Continental breakfast of pastries, bread and beverages (6-8E) may seem paltry and not worth the expense.

I'm certain more Paris hotel bargains are out there to be discovered. Please feel free to forward any suggestions to me at Paris Notes. Bonne chasse!

—By Ethan Gilsdorf

•Hôtel de Nesle: 7 Rue de Nesle, 6th. Tel: 1-43-54-62-41.

•Hôtel Saint-Jacques: 35 Rue des Ecoles, 5th. Tel: 1-44-07-45-45. Site: www.hotel-saintjacques.com.

•Hôtel Marignan: 13 Rue du Sommerard, 5th. Tel: 1-43-54-63-81. Site: www.hotel-marignan.com.

•Hôtel Langlois: 63 Rue St-Lazare, 9th. Tel: 1-48-74-78-24. Site: www.hotel-langlois.com.

•Résidence Hôtelière Le Vert Gallant: 41-43 Rue de Croulebarbe, 13th. Tel: 1-44-08-83-50.

•Port-Royal Hôtel: 8 Blvd de Port-Royal, 5th. Tel: 1-43-31-70-06. Site: www.portroyalhotel.fr.st.

•Hôtel du Champ de Mars: 7 Rue du Champ de Mars, 7th. Tel: 1-45-51-52-30. Site: www.hotel-du-champ-de-mars.com.

•Hôtel Au Palais de Chaillot: 35 Avenue Raymond-Poincaré, 16th. Tel: 1-53-70-09-09. Site: www.chaillotel.com.

•Alcôve & Agapes. Tel: 01-44-85-06-05. Site: www.bed-and-breakfast-in-paris.com.

mous in Austria for therapeutic sessions resembling seances, during which patients sat around a liquid-filled vat, holding hands or grasping iron bars protruding from the solution, while Mesmer walked behind them, placing “healing” hands on them. Accused of practicing magic, he left Austria for Paris.

Moving into the Place Vendôme in 1778, he was soon attracting so many patients that he launched a two-tiered system: the rich got the doctor himself, the poor his valet. When the mansion became too small for his thousands of patients, he moved to the 10th arrondissement. He was eventually discredited; in 1784 an investigative commission including Benjamin Franklin and Antoine Lavoisier found that any cures were the result of “individual imagination.” Mesmer retired rich but died forgotten in 1815.

The Place Vendôme remained the Place Louis-le-Grand until the Revolution, when a mob toppled the king’s statue and sent it to a foundry (only the huge left foot, now in the Louvre, survived). Renamed the Place des Piques (lances), the square in which the nobility once danced at royal weddings was soon displaying their guillotined heads.

In 1799 it was finally named the Place Vendôme, and when Napoleon wanted to commemorate the Battle of Austerlitz, he ordered that “there shall be erected ... a column [like that] erected at Rome in honor of Trajan. The column shall be surrounded by a pedestal adorned with an olive wreath, on which there shall be a statue of Charlemagne.” But it didn’t turn out that way. Raised in 1806, the stone column was covered with a spiraling bas-relief depicting the story of the battle, cast from the melted bronze of over a thousand Austrian cannons. Four years later it was topped by a statue, not of Charlemagne but of Napoleon, dressed as a Roman emperor.

From then on the column was subjected to the whims of successive regimes. After Napoleon’s 1814 defeat, the statue was replaced by a giant fleur-de-lis. In 1833 Louis-Philippe erected a new statue of Napoleon, this time in a long overcoat and little hat (now at the Invalides). Napoleon III replaced this with a copy of the original statue, which toppled, along with the entire column, in 1871 during the Commune, largely at the instigation of painter Gustave Courbet. In 1873 the column and its statue were restored and re-erected at the artist’s expense, leaving him ruined.

Some art critics claim that the mammoth column (132 feet) spoils the proportions of the Place Vendôme, which was designed to hold a smaller statue. But, as John Russell writes in his book “Paris,” “this is a case in which affection must be allowed to override aesthetics; most of us, I think, would be sorry to see the column pulled down.”

A walk around today’s Place Vendôme will give you an opportunity not only to acquire (or admire) some of the world’s finest jewelry, but to stroll through history. Let’s start at number 1: the Hôtel de Vendôme stands on the site of the private mansion that gave the place its name. Now a beautifully appointed boutique hotel, it

once housed the embassy of the Republic of Texas, from its declaration of independence in 1836 to its admission to the Union in 1845.

Number 7 houses the contemporary diamond designs of the jeweler Fred, and, in the adjoining courtyard, the discreet boutique called JAR (for Joel Arthur Rosenthal). By appointment only, select clients are admitted to this reclusive American-born jeweler’s atelier, where one-of-a-kind creations are displayed in a museum-like setting. For the rest of us, the window usually displays one exquisite item.

The Ministry of Justice occupies numbers 11 and 13, where the Revolutionary leader Danton lived with his wife in 1792. At the time, he was Minister of Justice (a coincidence, since the building did not house that ministry until 1815). However, he lost power as the Reign of Terror gained momentum and was guillotined in 1794. An interesting Revolutionary relic remains on the building—a standard meter in marble, placed there in 1795 to familiarize Parisians with the new unit of measurement.

The Ministry is flanked by the Ritz Hotel, where the ghosts of Proust, Coco Chanel and Hemingway still haunt the halls. It’s hard to imagine now what a groundbreaking event its opening in 1898 was. César Ritz, the Swiss farm boy whose hard work and original ideas elevated him from waiter to hotelier, was managing a luxury hotel in London when he decided to create a small, intimate and exclusive Paris hotel, equipped and decorated with the very best, regardless of expense. The first Paris hotel to offer private baths and suites of rooms, and the first to bear his name, it was a work of art. And although Ritz’ obsessive attention to detail nearly led to a nervous breakdown, his hotel was a success from the start. Today, having a drink at one of the hotel’s three bars—the charming terrace Bar Vendôme, newly decorated Bar Cambon or atmospheric Hemingway Bar—is a great way to experience the undeniable Ritz allure.

An awning at number 21 still carries the name of legendary couturier Elsa Schiaparelli, a reminder of the days when her elegant and witty fashions, some embroidered with designs by Jean Cocteau, were sold in her boutique at this address.

Where Law was nearly lynched, the Dubail and Cartier boutiques (no. 23) start an unbroken line of jewelers that encircles the rest of the Place. Parisian jewelers began settling here at the end of the 19th century, and it’s been the center of the trade ever since. One of the first was Boucheron (no. 26), which opened here in 1893. Its neighbor, Van Cleef & Arpels, moved into numbers 22 and 24 in 1906, giving it an unrivaled eight windows on the Place. For those whose budget doesn’t stretch to serious stones, most shops have introduced affordable boutique lines; some even carry perfume and accessories like handbags and sunglasses.

I love wandering from window to window to admire the frequently changing displays. Tucked into the corner at number 20 is legendary watchmaker Breguet. Napoleon and Wellington both wore Breguet watches at Waterloo, and he even

supplied the imprisoned Marie Antoinette with a simple watch, perhaps to count her remaining hours.

Breguet’s neighbor, Mauboussin, a sixth-generation family firm known for surprising color combinations of precious stones, recently renovated its boutique, creating the most accessible and inviting shop on the Place. Jewelry and accessories are displayed in a luminous decor of soft apple green, turquoise and lavender, with Deco-inspired chairs and sculpted wood tables. Its most unique feature is the “cave à diamants,” where glass cases, equipped with an ingenious sliding jeweler’s loupe, display unset diamonds along with their quality ratings and price, ranging from a modest .19-carat stone at 240E to a 2.26-carat dazzler at 27,850E.

Continuing past Chanel and Piaget, you’ll find that Comme des Garçons and Swatch now occupy Dr. Mesmer’s former clinic at number 16, while Chaumet, at number 18, is housed in the building where Frédéric Chopin spent his last months and died in 1849. Currently being renovated, the Chaumet boutique is typical of these security-heavy shops, where you must ring for entry. Inside, at velvet-topped tables, prospective buyers admire sparkling necklaces and brooches carried out from back rooms on little trays. One of Paris’ most historic jewelers, Chaumet, founded in 1780, created Napoleon’s coronation crown and Josephine’s tiaras, as well as exquisite gems for everyone from Russian countesses to American actresses. The array of glittering windows continues through Bulgari, Patek Philippe, Mikimoto, Dior, Repossi and Buccellati, with Damiani closing the circle at the Rue de Castiglione.

Although all the shops empty their windows at closing time, the Place Vendôme remains one of Paris’ loveliest spots at night, when facades are bathed in soft light and the central column glows with artful illumination. That’s when I think of another famous inhabitant, the Comtesse de Castiglione. As a young beauty, the “divina contessa,” mistress to Napoleon III, entertained all of fashionable Europe. In later years, no longer the toast of the town, she moved into an apartment at number 26 where she lived alone, so distressed at the ruin of her looks that she covered all the mirrors, shrouded the walls in black and emerged only after dark, heavily veiled.

Perhaps it’s just as well that the madwoman of the Place Vendôme, as she came to be known, can’t see her former home today. Because the Place Vendôme, ageless and ever-fashionable, remains just as splendid today as it was when the Sun King had it built over three hundred years ago.

Change of Address? Don’t miss an issue because you’ve moved. Call Customer Service to change your subscription address: 800-677-9660, Mon-Fri, 7am-5pm PST. Or e-mail: pnocs@magserv.com.

Christmas: It’s not too early to be thinking about it. May we suggest a subscription to Paris Notes for your favorite “Parisophile.”

PICK OF THE MONTH

Veronese

Paulo Calari, known as Veronese (1528-88), is presented here in all his Cinquecento glory: sumptuous silvery colors (cool yellows, silky blue-blacks and warm umbers) and intricate decorative detail. The emphasis here is on his "profane" paintings—those depicting the demurely sensuous buxom beauties and noble personalities able to pay for his work—rather than on his religious paintings, judged "irreverent" by the thought-police of the Inquisition. This exhibition is too perfect to miss. •Musée du Luxembourg. Until Jan 30. Best times to visit: Tue, Wed and Thur, 8-10:30pm. Site: www.expoveronese.com.

MUST SEE

Turner/Whistler/Monet

A truly glorious show, splendid in concept, presentation and design. This exhibit neatly shows the relationship, influence and parallel thinking of these innovative artists and their preoccupation with, and perception of, the light and changing colors of the water and the sky. The first paintings Monet did of the Thames in 1871, as well as those from 1899 to 1901, are shown here along side those of Whistler and Turner that influenced his work. •Grand Palais. Until Jan 17. Site: www.rmn.fr.

Napoleon

The "Treasures of the Napoleon Foundation," from the opulence and grandeur of the Imperial Court to the ignominy of exile: 200 paintings, arms (including his hunting gun), personal knick-knacks and memorabilia of Napoleon's private life. Rather sad, but peculiarly appealing. •Musée Jacquemart-André. Until March 4. Site: www.musee-jacquemart-andre.com.

The History of France

100 manuscripts and other treasures, from the Merovingian epoch (500-750 AD) to the 5th Republic (1958), are on show during the massive renovation of the museum: the keys to the Bastille (and a few stones retrieved from the rubble after its storming); manuscripts concerning Marie Antoinette, Baudelaire, Voltaire, etc.; the dagger used to kill the Duc de Berry; and an eclectic array of other curiosities. •Musée de l'Histoire de France, 3rd. Until Nov 4.

André Breton

A selection of the works acquired by the City of Paris during last year's auction of the André Breton collection: photographs, documents, manuscripts and paintings. •9th arrondissement town hall, 6 Rue Drouot. Until Oct 23. Free.

Marc Riboud

This is most certainly a "must see" for anyone really interested in the art of photography. Riboud shows a sensitivity, and technical prowess, rare in this flashy art form. His work is often cruel; that is, never sentimental or easy on the eye. •Maison Européenne de la Photographie. Until Oct 24. Site: www.mep-fr.org.

Woven Treasures

These beautifully preserved examples of Egyptian and Coptic textiles were chosen from the Louvre, and from the Roanne and Rouen museums' collections, to demonstrate the esthetic harmony and technical savvy of the weavers of the Nile

Valley during the pharaohic and Islamic eras. These exquisite remnants are a poignant reminder of lives past—with all their cunning chic and impossible yearnings for beauty—a distant echo of the fashion follies of today. •Institut du Monde Arabe. Until Jan 2. Site: www.imarabe.org.

Poliakoff

170 watercolors of Serge Poliakoff are shown here in an exuberant display of abstract beauty. This expo demonstrates the progress of an artist at work, steadily moving toward the ultimate abstraction of perceived forms. •Musée Mailliol. Until Nov 11. Site: www.museemailol.com.

WORTH A VISIT

Decoration

This expo is drawn from the Forney Library's incredibly rich collection of decorative and interior arts (industrial and artisanal)—wallpaper and fabrics in particular. This is a sprightly, well-documented and pleasingly presented show of wild and wonderfully fanciful design. •Bibliothèque Forney, Hôtel des Archevêques de Sens. Until Dec 31.

Body Art

Elaborately colorful tattoos, weird and wonderful body paintings, and other strange and enchanting art forms are shown here in an exotic display of African art as found in South and North America, Asia and the South Sea Islands. Masks, statues and other objects show the importance given to the decoration of ears and noses. •Musée Dapper. Until April 3. Site: www.dapper.com.fr.

George Sand, 1804-1876

This is an ultra-romantic homage to George Sand, celebrating her life and work: an exposition of paintings, manuscripts, objects and memorabilia. Conferences on Sand's work are also offered. •Musée de la Vie Romantique. Until Nov 28. Site: www.paris.fr/musees/Vie_romantique/default.htm.

Hairy Mammoths

Titled "Au Temps des Mammouths" (at the time of the mammoths), this splendid expo traces the history of the hairy mammoths, which became extinct just 4,000 years ago. •Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Jardin des Plantes. Until Jan. Site: www.mnhn.fr.

The Baron Rothschild Collection

15th- to 18th-century drawings and prints from the Edmond de Rothschild collection, one of the most important in the world. •Louvre, Aile Sully. Oct 8-Jan 10.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Fêtes des Vendanges

The Montmartre grape harvest is the occasion for wine-tasting and general merrymaking. •Rue des Saules and Rue St-Vincent, 18th. Will take place early October, depending on when the grapes are ripe. Site: www.comite-des-fetes-18.com (site scheduled to be online in early Oct).

Nuit Blanche

Sleepless night. From Saturday evening to Sunday morning, the city will be wide awake: activities and "happenings" are planned in public buildings, galleries, museums, cafés and cultural centers. A good place to start is the Musée Zadkine, where Japanese artist Akio Suzuki has prepared an itinerary "that follows the sights and sounds of

Petites Notes, continued from page 2

.32E/2.01E, London is 1.62E/2.30E). By increasing rush hour rates, the City is not trying to discourage taxi usage. Rather, it wants to increase the number of taxis in town by giving drivers an incentive to work. Many drivers stay home during rush hours because traffic moves so slowly that it's tough to make a profit.

Zoo in Decline

Even though 750,000 people visit the 70-year-old Paris zoo each year, it has failed to keep up with the times, and it has been neglected by the City. Gone in recent months are its lion, its tiger and its bears. Their living conditions had degraded to the point of being dangerous to their health. The City has closed important sections of the zoo and reduced the entry fee to 5E.

Paris-Plage

The numbers are in. Paris-Plage 2004, the third annual, was a huge success. The event, from July 21 to August 20, turned two kilometers on the banks of the Seine into a manmade beach—complete with sand, parasols, beach chairs and misters. According to City estimates, Paris-Plage attracted 3.8 million visitors. The event will return in 2005.

the night" from the museum (100 Rue d'Assas, 6th) through St-Germain-des-Prés, along the Seine and then through Montparnasse. •Oct 2-3. Site: www.paris.fr.

Spring/Summer 2005 Fashion Collections

These are the bi-annual prêt-à-porter fashion shows, held primarily in the Carrousel du Louvre, but all over Paris as well. Restaurants and hotels fill up, so be sure to make early reservations. •Oct 4-12. Site: www.modeaparis.com.

FIAC 2004

The 31st Foire Internationale d'Art Contemporain, this year's major modern and contemporary art fair, promises to be the finest ever. 215 world-renowned galleries from 21 countries will be exhibiting their finest pieces, including every medium from paintings, sculpture and works on paper to photography, video and installation. •Paris Expo (site: www.parisexpo.com), Porte de Versailles, Hall 4, 15th. Oct 21-25. Site: www.fiac-online.com.

Salon du Chocolat

The best chocolate makers of France will display their wares. •Paris Expo (site: www.parisexpo.com), Porte de Versailles, Hall 5, 15th. Oct 28-Nov 1. Site: www.chocoland.com.

PLANNING AHEAD

Paris Photo

A fair that has become "the undisputed standard for viewing the world's best photography." Works from the 19th century to modern masterpieces to the latest work by leading contemporary photographers. •Carrousel du Louvre. Nov 11-14. Site: www.parisphoto.fr.