

Wi-Fi City
 La Bourse ou la Vie
 Montmartre Menagerie
 CinéAqua
 Maison Guerlain
 Route of the Tumbrils

Euro Aug 14: .786
 Euro June 14: .793
 Rain Days: 13
 High Temp: 70°F/21°C
 Low Temp: 53°F/12°C
 Nat'l Holidays: none

PARIS

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SPECIAL QUAI

By Paul B. Franklin

The new Musée du Quai Branly presents “an indispensable lesson in humanity for our times”

Museums are decidedly political places. While official custodians of culture, such institutions are often the brainchild of elected bureaucrats, at times emanating from brazen hubris and falling victim to the jabberwocky of stump speeches. In France, where all the most esteemed museums are state-run enterprises, this scenario is ubiquitous. Some might recall the ruckus that erupted when the Centre Pompidou—hobbyhorse and namesake of President Georges Pompidou—opened in 1977. Like the Emperor in his new clothes, the skinless, “naked” confection was a laughing stock. And who can forget the public’s rancor when François Mitterrand decided to meddle with the hallowed Louvre, seduced by the seemingly crackpot ideas (glass and pyramids!) of I. M. Pei? In both instances, history fortunately has been benevolent, demonstrating that museums and politics are sometimes compatible bedfellows. The new Musée du Quai Branly, Paris’ latest monument and the first major museum erected in the capital since 1986, is a bodacious political statement and, like its predecessors, has been shackled in controversy from its beginning. Notwithstanding this hullabaloo, the grand edifice devoted to the arts and civilizations of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas is a welcome and essential addition to the already rich cultural topography of the metropolis.

From inception to completion, Quai Branly has been the pet project of Jacques Chirac. Months after being elected in 1995, he attempted to wiggle out from under longtime rival Mitterrand’s shadow, so conspicuously embodied in the series of “great works” the latter commissioned around Paris (Pei’s pyramid, the Grande Arche at La Défense, the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Opéra Bastille). Determined to forge his own legacy, Chirac set his sights on non-Western art, Asian and African cultures being two favorites. Plans for the museum solidified in 1998 and an architectural competition was announced. Jean Nouvel, arguably France’s greatest living architect, was selected to design

the building. Eight years and 233E million later, Chirac proudly inaugurated Quai Branly on 20 June. In his ribbon-cutting address, he disclosed the philosophical tenet that precipitated the project: “There is no hierarchy among the arts, just as there is no hierarchy among peoples. It is upon this conviction—the equal dignity of the cultures of the world—that this museum is



founded.” Presenting “an incomparable aesthetic experience and at the same time an indispensable lesson in humanity for our times,” Quai Branly, he trumpeted, also aims “to promote among the public at large, a different, more open and respectful view, dispelling the clouds of ignorance, condescension and arrogance which in the past have been present far too often and have nourished distrust, contempt and rejection.”

Whatever your opinion concerning Chirac’s vision of Quai Branly as a standard bearer of multiculturalism, an architectural unguent for racism and ethnocentrism, he deftly exercised presidential muscle to realize his dream. The bulk of the permanent collection, for example, derives from the Musée National des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie, founded in 1960 and enshrined in an Art Deco palace until Chirac ordered it closed in 2003. Another 250,000 ethnographic objects were culled—some would say filched—from the beloved Musée de l’Homme, Paris’ natural history museum. Embittered staff

and advocates alike complained vehemently about the president’s strong-arming. To illustrate his romantic belief in the intrinsic equality of world cultures, Chirac also quelled objections from Louvre officials, who denied that their establishment is a “universal” museum, and forced them to surrender the Pavillon des Sessions as an annex to Quai Branly. In April 2000, some 120 masterworks from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas were unveiled in the ground-floor galleries. (They remain on permanent exhibit.) These were effortless victories for Chirac, compared to the political quagmire regarding the name of the new museum. In another age, it might have been christened the Museum of Primitive Arts. “Primitive,” however, is now widely considered pejorative. “Arts premiers” (prime arts), a newfangled alternative, was vetoed for the same reason. After much mulling, the building’s location on the Quai Branly provided the safest solution and leaves open the door to future possibilities. (Following the inauguration, Chirac did not hesitate to announce what “a great honor” it would be if the institution were eventually named after his truly.)

When one visits a new museum, the first artwork necessarily examined is the building itself. Jean Nouvel’s surprising, eccentric complex rises over the Seine on the upmarket Left Bank, steps away from the Eiffel Tower. A meandering 18,000-square-meter garden insulates it from the rest of the quarter. Since the 1980s, the sixty-one-year-old architect has made a name for himself with technologically refined creations that alter our experience of the urban landscape. The all-glass Fondation Cartier (1994) on Boulevard Raspail, for instance, is a meditation on the classic cube. Through the interplay of transparent and reflective surfaces, it fleetingly appears and disappears into its environment. For Quai Branly, however, Nouvel skirted Western architectural traditions altogether, while avoiding anything potentially “tribal.” He declared that such a project could “only be constructed by challenging the (continued on page 7)

é It was entirely fitting and proper that when at last I met Mary McAuliffe in person, after seven years of working together on sixty-plus articles, it was in a tiny restaurant buried deep in the obscure 12th arrondissement. Mary and her husband Jack are right at home in these kinds of neighborhoods. Michelin guide in hand, marked with hundreds of arrow stickers, they explore “Paris profond” together. When Mary (it’s actually Dr. McAuliffe; she has a Ph.D. in history) comes to Paris, she is on a quest to uncover hidden Paris (Jack faithfully navigates and keeps her on course), not just the Paris hidden behind fences and down barren impasses, but the Paris that is hidden between the lines of history books.

So, there we were in the 12th, kindred spirits, happy to finally meet, enjoying a delicious bistro meal and reveling in the discussion of all things Paris. But, we weren’t there just to talk; we were there to toast this month’s launch of Mary’s new book, “Paris Discovered: Explorations in the City of Light” (Elysian Editions, www.parisdisc.com). Based on the best of Mary’s Paris Notes material, this book follows no historical timeline or guidebook-like formula. Rather, it’s like riding a time machine, skipping back and forth through Paris generations, connecting the dots to tell the story of the city in a fresh new way. Mary is an historian, but she is also a storyteller, whose characters are sometimes people, and sometimes walls, buildings, art or even events, both minor and important. The title says the book is an “exploration” of Paris, but it is just as much a “celebration” of Paris.

Mary hasn’t missed a beat since finishing her book; the articles just keep coming, and they just keep getting better. Thanks, Mary.

—Mark Eversman, Editor
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- When you have one of the best sewer systems in the world, is there any reason why you can’t have one of the best **high-speed Internet** systems in the world? The City says no. Sewers, you see, make for great fiber-optic cable pipes. The City says it will have eighty percent of all Paris buildings hooked up with high-speed cable by the end of 2010, with the goal of making Paris one of Europe’s most digitally adapted cities. To achieve this, the City has embarked on a plan to increase its fiber-optic network from its current 1,100 miles to 6,200 miles in the next three years. Wi-Fi (wireless broadband) is also an important part of the City’s plan. By the end of 2007, it hopes to have 400 free Wi-Fi “hotspots” in operation, including access in all 200 Paris gardens (we’re not sure we want to take our laptops into a garden in the middle of winter, but, hey, it’ll be free). The largest free Paris hotspot is the Pompidou Center. You can get a connection anywhere in or near the center. If you are not near the Pompidou Center, stop into any, well, ah, McDonald’s (1st-7th arrondissements, and soon the rest of Paris) and you’ll find a free connection.

- **Thomas Jefferson**, who served as Minister to France from 1785 to 1789, is finally back in Paris. On July 4th, U.S. Ambassador to France Craig Roberts Stapleton, in the presence of Paris mayor Bertrand Delanoë and Washington, D.C., mayor Anthony Williams, unveiled a 10-foot-high statue of the one-time Paris resident. The statue is placed at the 7th-arrondissement entrance of the Passerelle Solférino on Quai Anatole-France, across from the Hôtel de Salm (now the Musée de la Légion d’Honneur, next to the Musée d’Orsay), a building that was Jefferson’s inspiration for Monticello. The monument’s sculptor, Jean Cardot, has also done sculptures of De Gaulle and Churchill (in front of the Grand and Petit Palais, respectively). His Jefferson stands proudly, chin up, with a quill in one hand and a draft of Monticello in the other. This first-ever Jefferson tribute (Jefferson is largely credited with introducing French culture to the American masses) in France was donated to the city by the Florence Gould Foundation (dedicated to French-American cultural exchange) and French art dealer Guy Wildenstein in memory of his art collector father, Daniel Wildenstein.

- BHV, Printemps, Galeries Lafayette and Bon Marché are Paris’ four remaining major department stores; in 1975 there were eight “**grands magasins**.” Last year’s closing of Samaritaine (although it is scheduled to reopen in 2011, rumors are it is closed for good), weak sales and the recent sale

of Printemps to an Italian company have Parisians wondering if it is only a question of time before all the grands magasins make a grand exit from the city. Whatever may come, the four stores won’t go without a fight. They are playing to their individual strengths and are learning how to change with the times. While all four stores are increasingly going upscale, each has carved out its own niche. BHV caters to residents and emphasizes home improvement. Printemps is the poor man’s Galeries Lafayette. Galeries Lafayette is trying to sell exclusively high-ticket luxury brands but at lower prices than found elsewhere, and it positions itself as a full-fledged tourist destination. The Left Bank’s Bon Marché, which is doing the best of the four, has decreased its floor space, gone way upscale and expanded its pricey ready-made gourmet food offerings.

- In early November, a new “palace” hotel is scheduled to open, joining Paris’ six others: Bristol, Crillon, George V, Meurice, Plaza Athénée, Ritz. Located at the corner of the Champs-Élysées and Avenue George-V, the **Hôtel Fouquet’s Barrière** (www.fouquets-barriere.com) has been under construction for the last eighteen months; the melding of five buildings was required. With 107 rooms (690E-8,500E) in gold, copper and “écaillé,” the Fouquet is being billed as having a “classicism revisited” style, which is probably its way of saying it’s different than all those other frightfully expensive “old-style” palace hotels. Expect aluminum windows and shades, black and white marble floors, stitched leather wall coverings and Art Deco- and Empire-style furniture to grace every room, signed by Parisian decorating/design star Jacques Garcia. Also expect specially composed music, “designed” for the character of every space in the hotel, to follow you around. Add a pool, a spa, a restaurant called Diane and a magnificent courtyard garden, and, well, you’ve got a 690E experience.

- Love him or hate him—he’d probably prefer the latter—singer/songwriter **Serge Gainsbourg** (1928-1991) brought new meaning to one-of-a-kind. You can’t say you know modern French culture until you’ve investigated his work and his life. First, go to iTunes and download a few of his songs (start off with “Je t’aime ... moi non plus” and “Je suis venu te dire que je m’en vais”). Second, go to his old home (now a graffiti-covered shrine) at 5 bis Rue de Verneuil, 7th. It’s a tiny place, visited by a constant stream of Serge admirers. Now, Serge’s daughter, actress Charlotte Gainsbourg, wants to turn the tiny home and a bookstore across the street into something akin to a museum/memorial.

• PARIS •
B I T E S
By Rosa Jackson



As you gulp down a sandwich at lunch with one anxious eye on your e-mail, you might feel envious of the hedonistic

French who spend as long choosing a bottle of wine to accompany their noontime feast as you do on the entire meal.

False!

The latest statistics, published in the new guidebook “*Bien Manger sur le Pouce à Paris*” (Les Editions de l’If)—which translates as *How to Eat Well on the Run*—show that the French (and not just Parisians) spend an average of only thirty-four minutes on lunch. I first laid eyes on this figure several weeks ago and am still digesting the implications.

So, it seems, are Parisians themselves. The book’s authors, Julien Ponceblanc and Jérôme Sorrel, remark in the introduction that many of their friends had trouble understanding what “*manger sur le pouce*” might mean. Some thought they would be talking about wine bars, while others imagined they might rate café sandwiches. “The most intellectual among them thought we had identified a new sociological trend that involved giving up forks and knives to go back to using our hands, like in the good old Neanderthal era.”

The book’s real aim is to list the best of the Anglo-American-style soup, sandwich, juice and salad bars that have sprung up all over Paris in the past few years. With a few listings per *arrondissement* the selection is limited, but the authors were probably wise to seek out the best and ignore the worst—sandwich-making, beyond the classic *jambon-beurre* in a *baguette*, is not something that comes easily to the French and there are some real disasters out there.

As happy as I am to indulge in Rose Bakery’s square quiches and towering carrot cake or to start my day with a whole-wheat scone and freshly squeezed juice at *La Ferme Opéra*, this alarming change in French eating habits led me to look for reassurance that some office workers still know how to suck the marrow of life, so to speak. With this in mind, I headed with a friend to **La Bourse ou la Vie**, a cheerful little restaurant that a few months ago came out tops in *Le Figaro* newspaper’s quest for “the king of steak-frites.”

Steak-frites is one of those dishes that has come to seem indigenous to Paris, even if pan-fried steak with French fries is eaten in most regions (I have often seen it listed as the most popular French dish, just ahead of *cous-cous*). There is something slightly mythical,

There is something slightly mythical about finding the perfect steak-frites in Paris—perhaps because this dish is so often abused

however, about finding the perfect steak-frites in Paris—perhaps because this dish is so often abused. Homemade fries are admittedly more labor-intensive than the frozen version, but I suspect that the depressing frozen frite has had something to do with the sudden French fondness for English-style sandwiches.

Pascal Tataré is one of the city’s few idealists who believe that loving attention can elevate the humble frite to something extraordinary. He is also a great Paris personality, with his round-rimmed glasses, hair-free head and natty scarf. Enter his restaurant and you are instantly not just an old friend but practically a member of the family. Throughout our meal he referred to us as “*mes amours*” and addressed everyone with the familiar “*tu*.” People who like their privacy might find this a little irritating, but I considered it all part of the show here. Even the red-and-yellow décor is theatrical, with globe lights, neon writing and chairs that appear to have come from an old theater.

Decision-making is kept to a minimum here—Pascal (I feel I can use his first name) presented us with small laminated white menus listing a handful of choices, all but one of them involving steak and French fries. Should you ever want to drag a non-meat-eater here, cod with frites is a possibility. My friend opted for the sure-to-be-tender *coeur de filet* while I took a chance on *bavette* (hangar steak), a cut that is often as chewy as it is delicious.

As we waited, I took the opportunity to observe the clientele. No, the restaurant that may serve the best steak-frites in Paris was not full at lunch, despite being just down the street from the news agency *Agence France-Presse* and in a neighborhood full of bankers. Having worked at AFP a few years ago, I know that most of its journalists rarely treat themselves to a bistro lunch, preferring to save money by swallowing Sodexo fare at the staff cafeteria. The more adventurous slurp a cheap bowl of Japanese noodles in *Rue Ste-Anne* or take a picnic to the *Palais-Royal* gardens. Only ex-AFP president Jean Miot was renowned for his insatiable appetite and astronomical expenses (Miot now writes about restaurants for *Le Figaro*).

La Bourse ou la Vie attracts more men than women, most of them wearing dark suits and happy to sip a *carafe* of *Bordeaux cru bourgeois* with their steak (20€ for 50 cl). The solo diner next to us seemed to enjoy Pascal’s routine and ate and drank with real gusto, even finding room for a slice of

homemade apple pie. The rustic desserts are displayed at the entrance, perhaps a little misleadingly as only the most resilient diners will make it that far.

Pepper sauce is the specialty here, and both of our steaks came with lashings of rich, creamy, peppercorn-laden goodness, perfect for mopping up with the mound of golden frites. (Our neighbor turned down the sauce and his steak looked naked without it.) Both steaks were gloriously *saignant* (rare), the *coeur de filet* a smaller, thinner strip while the *bavette* took up half my plate. The *bavette* put up no fight under my knife and fork, proving nearly as tender as the *coeur de filet*, if harder to finish because of its sheer size. Pascal would not reveal the origins of his meat (“*trade secret*,” he said), but I wasn’t about to leave without finding out what gave his frites their almost sweet, animal flavor. “*Suet*,” he said. For those unfamiliar with suet, it’s the fat that surrounds the kidneys of veal (in the case of Pascal’s frites) and other animals—the same fat that goes into a traditional English Christmas pudding.

As we sipped our coffee, Pascal pulled up a chair and confessed that he had never set out to run a restaurant. Previously an architect, he had bought this place for his daughter, who lost interest in it after a few months. “So I had no choice but to take over.” He is quick to admit that for him steak-frites is a labor of love. He charges 14.50-16.50€ a portion depending on the cut of meat and, if he is to be believed, little of that is profit. “I don’t do it for the money,” he laughs. But, as long as Paris has a few people like Pascal, serious eaters can forget about nibbling on salad for lunch.

•**La Bourse ou la Vie**: 12 Rue Vivienne, 2nd. Tel: 1-42-60-08-83.

Other good steak-frites in Paris:

•**Relais de L’Entrecôte Saint-Germain**: 20 bis Rue St-Benoît, 6th. Tel: 1-45-49-16-00. A favorite of PN editor Mark Eversman when he wants a simple meal in Paris.

•**Severo**: 8 Rue des Plantes, 14th. Tel: 1-45-40-40-91. Hugo Desnoyer, a star Paris butcher, supplies this bistro’s famed rib roasts.

•**Georget (Robert et Louise)**: 64 Rue Vieille-du-Temple, 3rd. Tel: 1-42-78-55-89. Fine-quality beef, which is served with *sautéed* potatoes, roasts over an open fire in this time-warp Marais restaurant.

MONTMARTRE MENAGERIE

The Chat Noir and the Lapin Agile, headquarters for the avant-garde

You've seen the poster—a lecherous-looking tomcat perched on a wall, eyes aglow and looking for trouble. Created by Théophile Steinlen, it became the legendary mascot for an equally legendary Montmartre cabaret, the Chat Noir, or Black Cat—long-gone but not forgotten.

When the struggling young painter, Rodolphe Salis, opened the Chat Noir in 1881, he had no idea that he was about to make history. After all, his nightspot was a scruffy place, located at the bottom of the Butte, at 84 Boulevard de Rochechouart. Even in those days, this was not a good address, but Salis' collaborator, the poet Emile Goudeau, helped to spread the word. Soon poets, musicians and artists began to congregate here, in a décor that featured threadbare tapestries, stained glass and a throne-like Louis XIII chair. Comfortably ensconced in this mock-medieval setting, the Chat Noir regulars readily discussed their work, gave readings, sang songs and skewered the Establishment. It quickly became a kind of club, the headquarters for a talented avant-garde who enjoyed sharing ideas as well as drinks and bonhomie with one another. In this zesty atmosphere, modern cabaret was born.

Despite the cabaret's location (in the heart of the Pigalle quarter) and the image of the cat in the moonlight, this was not some sort of bordello experience. The Chat Noir's clientele were looking for good times, to be sure, but their idea of a good time was a convivial (and well-lubricated) evening based on shared intellectual and cultural interests. Salis himself described the place as an "artistic cabaret," and many of Salis' regulars came from a Left Bank literary group, the *Hydropathes*, which Goudeau had earlier founded with the intent of making young writers and poets like himself better known through public readings in cafés. When Salis set up the Chat Noir cabaret, Goudeau simply moved his group to the new quarters.

The result was a happy combination of serious poetry and inspired flippancy, with both entertainment and publicity in mind. The Chat Noir published its own literary newspaper, which Goudeau edited, and promoted the work of its contributors. Before long, the place was jammed with poets, painters and musicians, including the composer Erik Satie, who played the cabaret's piano, and Claude Debussy, who occasionally did as well. Poster artist Alfons Mucha was a regular, as were the poets Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine.

By 1885, business was good enough that Salis could afford to move to larger quarters at a better address, at 12 Rue de Laval (now Rue Victor-Massé), 9th. He sold the old location to the

rakish chansonnier Aristide Bruant, who opened his own cabaret there, calling it the *Mirliton*. Bruant, whom Toulouse-Lautrec immortalized in his wide-brimmed black hat and red scarf, specialized in social protest and the comedy of insult. He redecorated Salis' former space with old warming pans, chamber pots and the Chat Noir's forgotten Louis XIII chair (which he irreverently suspended from the ceiling), and soon found his clientele among the bourgeoisie, out for some rough humor and a good time. The *Mirliton* thrived, but Chat Noir regulars found the atmosphere at their new location a bit stiff and formal for their liking, and they began to drift away. In response, Salis started up a pantomime shadow theater, which soon became wildly popular. With this new recipe for success,



the Chat Noir thrived for another decade before it closed, in 1896, shortly before Salis' death. Look for any remains and all you will find is a plaque on the wall telling passersby that this edifice, once the home of the famous cabaret, the Chat Noir, "was consecrated to the muses and to joy."

In the meantime, further up the steep slope of the Butte, another cabaret was about to become a legend. Its roots went back to 1860, when Paris incorporated Montmartre as part of the new 18th arrondissement, after the hated tax walls came down. Industrialization had already begun to chew up the 19th and 20th arrondissements, but the higher portions of Montmartre remained relatively bucolic—except for those areas around the gypsum quarries, which had only recently closed. A small tavern opened at the corner of Rue St-Vincent and Rue des Saules. Over the next few years it took several different names, until the painter André Gill created a memorable sign for it, featuring a laughing rabbit with a bottle of wine leaping out of a saucepan. Soon locals were calling the tavern the *Lapin à Gill*, or Gill's rabbit—a pun on Gill's abbreviated name. From there, it was

only a step to the *Lapin Agile*, or nimble rabbit. Thus, the *Lapin Agile* was born.

In 1903, Bruant bought the place and leased it to Frédéric Gérard, who turned out to be as colorful in his own way as Bruant himself. Gérard, known as "le père Frédéric," soon turned the *Lapin Agile* into a hub of bohemian nightlife, somewhat on the order of the Chat Noir. By this time, Montmartre's freewheeling atmosphere and cheap rents had attracted a virtual colony of starving poets and artists, most of whom (including Picasso, Modigliani, Utrillo, Braque, Guillaume Apollinaire and Max Jacob) eventually found their way to the *Lapin Agile*. When they had no money (which was often), they paid for their meals and drinks with paintings, and they regularly joined in literary evenings or in raucous song, accompanied by Frédéric and his guitar.

Generally evenings at the *Lapin Agile* were cozy and jolly affairs. Such as the time when Frédéric and friends tied a paintbrush to the tail of his pet donkey and submitted the resulting canvas to the 1910 Salon des Indépendants as a work of abstract art. Frédéric and his cohorts got away with the ruse for a while, and the donkey even managed to collect some respectable reviews.

But not everything was always light and joy at the *Lapin Agile*. Picasso's masterpiece, "Au *Lapin Agile*," is a somber one, depicting him as a grim Harlequin figure averting his gaze from the beauty at the bar beside him. She is Germaine Pichot, the woman responsible for his best friend's suicide. Picasso paid his bar tab at the *Lapin Agile* with this remarkable painting, which Frédéric put on his wall but eventually sold for a pittance. Several years ago, it sold for \$40 million (and is on view at the Metropolitan Museum of New York).

Montmartre has changed dramatically since those days when Picasso lived and worked here, but the pink cottage-like *Lapin Agile* still occupies its corner, and still is in business. Take a walk to this quiet and less-touristed part of the Butte, and absorb some of the quarter's memories. After all, the Chat Noir may no longer exist, but the Agile Rabbit (albeit a copy) still jumps out of his saucepan at the *Lapin Agile*, ready for a good time.

—By Mary McAuliffe

•Au *Lapin Agile*: 22 Rue des Saules, 18th. Tel: (1) 46 06 85 87. Open: Tue-Sun, 9pm-2am. Site: www.au-lapin-agile.com.

•The *Lapin Agile*'s original sign, and other mementoes of Old Montmartre, is in the Musée de Montmartre: 12 Rue Cortot (18th). Open: Tue-Sun, 11am-6pm. Site: www.montmartre.net.com.

•Mary McAuliffe is the author of "Paris Discovered: Explorations in the City of Light" (www.parisdisc.com, Elysian Editions, Sept 2006).

CinéAqua

By Amanda MacKenzie

It was an Indiana Jones moment. In the absence of a sign, the three of us hesitated on the threshold, uncertain whether to go on or look for a way around. In the end, it was the younger woman who broke the spell, striding out through the water tunnel to the far doorway. "It's not really that wet," she called back from where she stood, bathed in ethereal, blue light. Her mother hovered, unconvinced, until I remembered I had brought an umbrella with me. Thus armed, we rose to the challenge, penetrating, at last, the inner sanctum of CinéAqua.

Clearly, there is more than a little fine-tuning still to be done at the city's new marine attraction. CinéAqua recently opened its doors (but only just) at the special, "pre-opening" ticket price of 19€. It's no secret that the project has been beset by technical problems, and is still suffering from a yawning gap in the shark department. The likelihood that the final admission price will be set at 25€ threatens to make CinéAqua the most expensive aquarium in Europe. Not surprisingly, that has had city representatives spluttering into their coffee, and demanding why Paris needs such a thing at all. Isn't the Eiffel Tower enough?

Well, yes—and no. After all, this is the city that once boasted the largest aquarium in the world, built for the Universal Exhibition of 1878, and on the self-same spot on Trocadéro hill. Given the physical limitations of the site, competing on size was obviously a non-starter. Hence the attraction's unique selling point, the "ciné" part of the equation. In the foyer, an enthusiastic member of the staff did her best to enlighten me. "The fish are the backdrop to the mangas," she explained breezily, indicating the rows of colorful cartoons dancing above the rather more muted Seine Estuary tanks.

Sure enough, once through the damp entrance, you find yourself drifting irresistibly towards a huge bank of screens, where in-house cartoons and untitled marine footage compete, somewhat mystifyingly, for your attention.

The plopping and strumming soundtrack is certainly seductive. In any case, it's just an appetizer, since CinéAqua contains no less than three, large cinema spaces.

For the present, one screens the beautifully animated adventures of a water sprite and a gargoyle named Gurgle, who is moonlighting from his Notre Dame perch. In another auditorium, a hypnotic, silent movie documenting the traditional shark-hunt in 1950s Iceland is aimed squarely at grown-ups. "More than a simple stamp collection of fish," CinéAqua's official object is to forge "a new concept in entertainment." A double helping of fish 'n' flicks, if you like. Or perhaps that should be the other way round.

All of which struck me as doing a slight disservice to the fish, who seemed to me to be making a reasonable job of entertaining single-handedly. Tight shoals of mackerel flashed as they switched trajectory. Clownfish performed their chores; Scorpion fish strutted their stuff. Moray eels, all muscle and grin, launched themselves from the rocks, eliciting squeals from tots.

When the last cloudy tank has settled, CinéAqua will be home to some 500 species, representing a microcosm of French territorial waters, from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. Should that fail to impress, surely the shark tunnel, which welcomed its thirty new residents at the end of June, will do the trick. In the Manga Café ("the Samurai's favorite"), I tucked into my wild salmon sandwich, and marveled at the audacity of reconstructing a complex marine habitat in an inland city—with or without big screen entertainment. And at how cool the fish were.

•CinéAqua: Jardins du Trocadéro, Ave des Nations-Unies, 16th. Open: daily, 10am-8pm. Site: www.cineaqua.com.



▲ PARIS VISITS ▼

Maison Guerlain

By Vivian Thomas

It was already one of the prettiest parfumeries in Paris, but the recent makeover of the Guerlain boutique on the Champs-Élysées has transformed this venerable shop into a glittering showcase that's worth a visit even if perfume isn't on your shopping list. It's a gorgeous flagship boutique for one of the city's oldest perfumers. Founded in 1828, when Pierre-François-Pascal Guerlain opened his first shop as a "parfumeur-vinaigrier" on the Rue de Rivoli, the company from the very beginning produced not only perfume but beauty products, including "Crème à la Fraise" (strawberry cream) to whiten the complexion, and Persian Cream to soften the hands. Success prompted the opening of a second shop on the Rue de la Paix in 1844, and the Champs-Élysées showplace was created in 1914.

With its ornate facade adorned with iron filigree and interior lavished with multicolored marble, gilt ornamentation and crystal chandeliers, the Champs-Élysées shop is so special it's a classified historic monument. Its architect, Charles Mewes, was also the architect of the Ritz, and when the company (now owned by luxury group LVMH, which acquired Guerlain in 1994) decided to renovate, they enlisted two of today's design stars.

Architect Maxime d'Angeac decided to turn the mezzanine, which had not been open to the public, into a "Golden Gallery," and this gilt-edged facelift is apparent as soon as you enter the deceptively small ground-floor boutique. Past the displays of perfumes, makeup and skin care products, a golden wall glitters halfway up a graceful curved staircase. Even the stairs are flecked with gold—climb them and you'll find yourself completely surrounded by some 350,000 pieces of mirrored gold mosaic that were hand-inlaid on the walls, ceiling and floor. It's a breathtaking sight, and a brilliant introduction to what lies beyond.

The mezzanine's main room shows off the contributions of interior designer Andrée Putman. Arched windows opening onto the treetops of

the Champs-Élysées sparkle with showers of pearly beads, and an immense gold-draped chandelier glistens in the center of a circular display of perfume flacons that resembles a perfumer's worktable. Those flacons are filled with the work of four generations of Guerlain parfumeurs—until the retirement of Jean-Paul Guerlain

several years ago, it was all in the family. Now one of Jean-Paul's close collaborators oversees production of new fragrances.

Here you can sniff and spritz to your heart's content—the delightful young salespeople seem to have been selected for their helpfulness, foreign language abilities and readiness to smile. There's more golden magic in an adjacent room—a maze of transparent glass tubes mounted on the wall form a "fragrance fountain," filled with the golden liquid of four scents that can be dispensed into beehive-shaped bottles lining nearby shelves. Some flacons can be personalized with your choice of engraving, label and metal fitting—you can even choose the color of the atomizer bulb (called the "poire" in French).

To coincide with the boutique's reopening, Guerlain has reissued several fragrances that have been unavailable for twenty years or more, including the 1936 Vega, with its Art Deco design. A custom service also offers made-to-measure perfumes for those with unlimited fragrance budgets, and Guerlain's first line of scented candles and "parfum d'ambiance" are also on display.

Another luxurious realm lies above the golden gallery—the Guerlain Institut de Beauté, where a superb facial begins with a bubbly foot bath and a massage with Shalimar lotion. But that's another story...

•Maison Guerlain: 68 Ave des Champs-Élysées, 8th. Tel: 1-45-62-52-57. Open: Mon-Sat, 10:30am-8pm; Sun, 3-7pm. Site: www.guerlain.com.



ROUTE OF THE TUMBRILS

Marie Antoinette and many others made their final trip in a tumbril

Saunter along the Right Bank's Rue St-Honoré past long rows of famous shops like trendy women's boutique Colette and luxury luggage-maker Goyard. It's hard to imagine this famous street was once lined with spectators watching horse-drawn carts filled with prisoners on their way to the guillotine. Yet, for thousands of men and women found guilty by the Revolutionary Tribunal during the 1790s, this east-west artery was the last road traveled. Many prisoners were guilty only of being former aristocrats; among those executed were the deposed Louis XVI, his sister Elisabeth, their cousin Philippe Egalité and the former king's hated wife, Austrian-born Marie Antoinette, guillotined on October 16, 1793.

While researching my new book "Walks through Marie Antoinette's Paris," I traced and followed the route of the tumbrils (open carts that tilted backwards to empty out their loads) using maps dating to the Revolution. Although a few smaller rues had been demolished, most streets remain intact, and the route had changed remarkably little. When traffic allowed, I walked in the street itself past buildings over two hundred years old—"hôtels particuliers" and shops that the former queen would have seen as she sat stoically in the open cart while Parisians shouted insults. Usually, the condemned were taken to execution in a group, but famous prisoners, including Marie Antoinette, were driven in an agonizingly slow procession in which they were the only victims. Although the guillotine operated in several locations, its main home was the former Place Louis XV, renamed Place de la Révolution (now Place de la Concorde, 8th).

The journey began on the Ile de la Cité at the grim Conciergerie prison (shown). The condemned were led out of their cell into a holding area where their hair was shorn so that it would not interfere with the guillotine's blade. They were then taken up a flight of steps into the Cour du Mai, the large courtyard still visible inside the ornate gates of the Palais de Justice, where tumbrils (usually used to carry wood) waited to receive their daily load of victims. After the condemned climbed into the cart and gingerly sat on a board, mounted gendarmes led the procession out of the Cour du Mai. Foot soldiers marched alongside the tumbrils, which turned left onto Boulevard du Palais, and crossed the Seine on the Pont au Change before rolling across the Place du Châtelet and turning left onto Rue St-Honoré.

Henri Sanson, the handsome young executioner whose father had supervised Louis XVI's death, stood beside Marie Antoinette in the cart that sunny October morning. He held the rope

that bound the royal prisoner's hands behind her back and held it up for the crowd to see. The profession of executioner was taken very seriously during the 1700s, and these masters of death dressed formally. During the Revolutionary period, they were customarily attired in a tri-cornered hat, striped pants and a dark green coat.

Although the French did not invent the guillotine, it was introduced there in the early 1790s as a humane way of capital punishment as, during the Ancien Régime, executions in France were often brutal drawn-out affairs. The wealthy tended to be killed with a sword or ax, while commoners were burned at the stake, broken on the wheel or drawn-and-quartered. France adopted the guillotine as its sole method of capital punishment



in 1791, although executioners bitterly opposed its introduction. They complained that the guillotine's efficiency robbed their profession of its drama and insisted that merely pulling a lever to release a blade demeaned their skills. Since death was accomplished so quickly—in 1793 the sharp blade severed twenty-one heads in thirty-eight minutes—the executioners insisted on a theatrical and drawn-out public drive of the condemned to the guillotine. Although the route is easily walked in less than sixty minutes, the carts crept along so slowly that it often took two hours for the victim to reach the scaffold. The tumbril often halted to allow the crowd to harangue the victim.

Over an hour after leaving the Conciergerie, the procession passed the Church of Saint Roch on Rue St-Honoré and neared the corner of Rue Royale (where the Longchamp store stands today). It passed 398 Rue St-Honoré, the lodging of Revolutionary leader Maximilien Robespierre (1758-1794). Elegantly dressed and nicknamed "the Incorruptible," Robespierre hated royalists and urged the Revolutionary Tribunal to have no mercy in executing anyone alleged to be sympathetic to the royal cause (ironically, he too was guillotined in July 1794).

Soon the tumbril turned left onto Rue Royale and approached the Place de la Concorde, which appears today much as it did during the late 1790s. Architect Jacques-Ange Gabriel's magnificent mansions had already been erected on the northern side of the square; these consisted of the Hôtel du Garde-Meuble, the royal furniture warehouse (now the Ministry of the Marine), and its sister mansion, now the Hôtel Crillon, at 10 Place de la Concorde.

The guillotine was originally erected in the square near the entrance to the Champs-Élysées (west side). Before Marie Antoinette's execution, it was moved closer to the Tuileries garden (east side) and palace (destroyed in 1882) and stood in the middle of the square—near where the obelisk is today. Crowds tended to gather near the Seine, although for an important execution the entire area would be packed with viewers. Spectators poured into the large open square and, eager not to miss anything, ran back and forth, asking each other, "Should I watch from the head side or body side?" Vendors hawked sticky buns, fruit and drinks to the waiting crowd. Some sold guillotine souvenirs such as special programs of the day's events.

The tumbril pulled into the middle of the square and slowly approached the platform that held the fifteen-foot-high guillotine. When the cart stopped, the condemned climbed the steep wooden stairs to the platform. Around its foot were large red baskets that would hold bodies. One basket was placed beneath the guillotine, so that the severed head would neatly tumble into it. After the blade fell, the executioner displayed the head to the crowd, who shouted "Vive la République!" Two assistants would untie the body from the plank and toss it into the basket while a third would throw in the head. The remains were then carted out of the Place de la Concorde by the northwestern exit (by the Hôtel Crillon). The carts would head west onto Rue du Faubourg St-Honoré before turning right onto the narrow Rue d'Anjou. Their final destination was the cemetery of the Madeleine, where Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and many others were buried.

After the downfall of Napoleon twenty years later, Louis XVI's younger brother, the former count de Provence, returned to France as King Louis XVIII. On January 18 and 19, 1815, he ordered that the bodies of Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI be dug up, placed in lead coffins and taken to their final resting place at Saint-Denis. Louis XVIII then commissioned architect Pierre Fontaine to build the Chapelle Expiatoire on the site of the cemetery in what is now Square Louis XVI just off Boulevard Haussmann at 29 Rue Pasquier.

—By Diana Reid Haig

•Diana Reid Haig is the author of "Walks through Marie Antoinette's Paris" (www.marieantoinettesparis.com, Ravenhall Books, Sept 2006).

expression of our present Western contingencies. Farewell to structures, fluidity, frontage joinery, safety staircases, railings, false ceilings, projectors, pedestals, showcases and wall clocks... If they must exist, let them be out of our sight and mind, let them step aside from the sacred artifacts on view and allow us room for communion." To this end, he conceived a hodgepodge of quirky constructions where calculated chaos rules, in marked contrast to the uniform, rationally ordered facades of the classy Haussmanian apartment buildings nearby. As corny as it may seem, Nouvel encourages visitors to become explorers, seeking out the unfamiliar rather than fleeing from it.

The Quai Branly complex comprises four structures, each with its own personality, interconnected via footbridges. A striking glass wall mimicking the Seine's gentle bend greets visitors on the quay. Twelve meters high and 200 meters long, it presents tantalizing vistas of the grounds and muffles the surrounding din. The five-story Branly building stands in the northwest corner of the plot, fronting the river. Earmarked for administrative purposes, it accommodates 140 workstations, an executive boardroom and a 100-seat movie theater. Its vegetal facade on the quay is the invention of noted botanist Patrick Blanc. This remarkable vertical garden consists of 15,000 green plants representing 150 varieties, all carefully rooted in a matrix with its own sophisticated watering system. Along the garden, the glass front of the Branly is festooned with adjustable orange awnings, like the Auvent building next door. The latter's glass and metal facade abuts non-museum dwellings on Avenue de la Bourdonnais. A workshop for children and the impressive museum library are located inside. The reading room (open to the public) is named in honor of Jacques Kerchache, the connoisseur-collector of non-Western art and Chirac's chum who was a motivating force behind the museum. To the south, one encounters the University building, so called because of its Rue de l'Université address. Its materials (stone and glass) and proportions correspond to those of adjacent abodes, Nouvel's acknowledgement of neighborhood history. The museum bookstore occupies the lower floor, and the upper four levels are reserved for conservation workshops and collection management offices. Contemporary Aboriginal artists were brought in to adorn the ceilings. Their vibrant, geometric frescoes are visible from outside, especially after dark when lights are left blazing.

Quai Branly's main attraction is the Museum building. In a discreet nod to Eiffel's sacrosanct totem, Nouvel designed the edifice around a 210-meter-long metal infrastructure. Its arresting bulk and Technicolor palette ensure it pride of place. Twenty-six Lego-like boxes of varying sizes and hues protrude from between diagonal wooden cantilevers across the bowed, glazed north facade, their function remaining intentionally obscure. The south side of the building is also in glass. Its panes are hidden

beneath hundreds of blood- and rust-colored louvered brise-soleils that prevent too much sunlight from penetrating the interior. Haphazardly placed pillars, assuming "the aspects of trees or totem poles" (Nouvel), support the structure's faceted underbelly and allow visitors to roam the verdant terrain beneath. Some liken this colossus to a ship (say, an aircraft carrier in dry dock). Others imagine it evokes a suspended gangway. Such comparisons remain rough approximations. Rest assured, you have never seen anything like it.

Tucked beneath and attached to the west end of the Museum building is a squat, triple-tiered ovoid structure of white aluminum and glass. Ticket booths are located on its exterior. The main reception hall and a temporary exhibition space (the Garden Gallery) are inside. A stone footpath ascends around its girth to the principal entryway. Immediately past security, a massive stone sphere sculpted in Costa Rica (c. 800-1500) captures the eye. Probably an astrological representation, it is a fitting metaphor for the global scope of Quai Branly's collection.

The whitewashed atrium just beyond soars skyward. Anchoring the far end of the lofty locale is a 14.5-meter-tall totem pole (c. 1860) that once stood guard at the home of a Native American chief in British Columbia. Nouvel expressly envisioned the space for the whittled trunk. The lobby also includes an imposing round glass enclosure chocked full of over 9,000 musical instruments from around the world. Traversing the entire building, this storage area and its contents are visible from numerous vantage points throughout the museum. In the center of the entrance hall, a stark white ramp ushers visitors to the permanent collection. Snaking slowly upward for 180 meters—anyone familiar with New York's Guggenheim Museum will recognize the effect—it offers panoramic views of the complex along the way. (Notice the gorgeous white curtain bordering the Garden Gallery; Naoki Takizawa, artistic director of Issey Mikaye, fashioned the pleated wonder as a gift to the museum.) A tunnel, black as pitch, awaits you at the ramp's summit, a transitional space meant to disorient visitors as they approach the permanent collection.

Spread out over 4,750 square meters and divided into four open zones, one for each continent represented, the vast unpartitioned collection area houses 3,500 wildly disparate objects, sacred and quotidian. The ramp delivers visitors into the middle of the dimly lit cavernous gallery. (Certain critics have lambasted Nouvel for the extreme lack of light, which they perceive as a colonialist rendition of "jungle ambience.") There is no set itinerary to follow. Unlike in most museums, chronology and hierarchy are anathemas. You may go right into the Oceanic collection or turn left and start with the Americas. If you need time to examine your floor plan or adjust your eyes to the shadowy setting, you can sit down along one of the walkways that cut through the gallery on its east-west axis. Nouvel's contribution to the museography, these winding passages (he dubbed them the River) are edged

with thick, low curvy walls covered in leather (the Serpent) into which have been installed numerous video screens, speakers and binocular systems for viewing 3-D images. These areas provide both respite and, for those interested, more in-depth information about the artifacts. No matter what path you take in the gallery, you will inevitably get turned around. But this is part of the experience. As the architect would maintain, discovery and enlightenment demand the loss of one's bearings. Nevertheless, to assist visitors, he outfitted each zone with flooring in differing colors—red (Oceania), orange (Asia), yellow (Africa), blue (the Americas).

Throughout the gallery, objects are exhibited in glass vitrines against minimalist black backdrops. Displays are occasionally cramped, causing congestion. Larger sculptures stand in the open air. Respecting Nouvel's wishes, pedestals are conspicuously absent. Introductory wall texts (in French, English and Spanish) as well as individual labels (in French only) are edifying. The once mysterious boxes decorating the front facade serve as small rooms for focused thematic presentations (e.g., Dogon masks, Moroccan carpets, indigenous Siberian costumes). Spots artfully bathe each display in soft light. For better or worse, the sheer exquisiteness of the objects takes precedence over ethnographic or anthropological contexts. Stéphane Martin, president of Quai Branly, defends the approach with impudence. "Everything in a museum gets beautiful," he asserts. "The priests of contextualization are poor museographers." I must admit that the aesthetic punch of most of the works is seductive, breathtaking, magical even. Take the bead-encrusted royal female figure from the Bamileke people of Cameroon, or the ornate brass chest ornament of the Naga in India, or the medieval effigy of an androgynous African king found in modern-day Mali, or the half human-half serpent sculpted by the Tolai in Papua New Guinea, or the ancient and plump terracotta figurine from the little known Chupícuara civilization in Mexico... The list is virtually endless. When all is said and done, you're apt to feel a bit like Phileas Fogg or Passepartout in Jules Verne's "Around the World in Eighty Days."

Politics aside, thanks to Jean Nouvel's prodigious talent, Quai Branly is destined to become a pivotal cultural beacon in Paris and the world over. With its superb permanent collection, rotating exhibitions, extensive program of lectures, music, dance, theater and movies, soon-to-be-lush garden and high-design restaurant (take a peek at the gigantic Moai head from Easter Island smirking off the terrace), the new Musée du Quai Branly offers something for everyone, from novices to aficionados.

•Site: www.quaibrantly.fr.

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PICK OF THE MONTH

Dan Flavin

Floating freely between exquisite daintiness and upsetting intensity, the work of the minimalist American artist Dan Flavin (1933-1996) is shown here in a remarkable retrospective. Using common industrial fluorescent light tubes, Flavin created ethereal "light poems" of great beauty. A selection of his working plans and drawings completes the show. •Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Until Oct 8. Site: www.mam.paris.fr.

ON THIS MONTH

Walt Disney

Called "Once Upon a Time," ("Il Etait Une Fois"), this exposition brings together original drawings by Disney studio artists and the original works of the art—the sources of our favorite Disney stories—that inspired them, from the Gothic style of the Middle ages to Surrealism. Disney was interested in all things European. •Grand Palais. Sept 16-Jan 15. Site: www.rmn.fr.

Titian

In the sixteenth century, if you were anybody, you had your portrait done by the Italian master Titian. Some of his greatest portraits are shown here. The exhibition shows his considerable talent, but it is also a who's who of European political, religious and cultural VIPs. •Musée du Luxembourg. Sept 16-Jan 21. Site: www.museeduluxembourg.fr.

Pierre Loti

A celebration of the curious life and work of the novelist Pierre Loti (1850-1923). Paintings (Delacroix, Descamps, Ziem, Gérôme and others), water colors and other nineteenth-century objets d'art illustrate Loti's lifelong fascination with the mysteries of Arabia. •Musée de la Vie Romantique. Until Dec 3. Site: www.paris.fr/musees.

Marilyn Monroe

Fifty-nine photographs of the fragile actress taken by Bert Stern in 1962 during two sittings for Vogue magazine. At the time, Stern was the world's top star photographer, and Marilyn was

the top star. •Musée Maillol. Until Oct 30. Site: www.museemaillol.com.

23rd Biennale des Antiquaires

The biggest and best antique show: furniture, paintings, jewelry, objets d'art of all periods and styles. •Grand Palais. Sept 15-24. Site: www.biennaledesantiquaires.com.

Medieval Treasures

In a tribute to the museum's late curator, Viviane Huchard, this expo displays treasures acquired under her ten-year direction (1995-2005). Stained glass, textiles, sculptures, illuminated texts—both sacred and profane—dating from the tenth to sixteenth centuries. •Musée National du Moyen Age (Cluny). Until Sept 25. Site: www.musee-moyenage.fr.

The Red Sea

The work of photographer Henry de Monfreid is displayed here: a luminous and touching view of the men who make their living on the Red Sea and the boats they sail in. •Musée National de la Marine, Palais de Chaillot. Until Oct 2. Site: www.musee-marine.fr.

Agnès Varda

This expo is a treat for filmmaker Agnès Varda fans: installations, videos, film extracts and other souvenirs present her life, work and loves. •Fondation Cartier. Until Oct 1. Site: www.fondation.cartier.fr.

Balenciaga

A tribute to the work and influence of the master couturier Cristobal Balenciaga. 160 pieces show the evolution of design. •Musée de la Mode et du Textile. Until Jan 28. Site: www.ucad.fr.

Dreyfus

In memory of Dreyfus' victory against a false accusation of treason, on July 12, 1906. This expo traces the history of the infamous Dreyfus Affair. Guided visits are available in English. •Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme. Until Oct 1. Site: www.mahj.org.

Space in the City

The theme of this expo is urban space, but the real star is the city of Paris. Photos by Daniel

Boudinet, Denise Colomb, André Kertész, François Kollar, Roger Parry, René-Jacques and Raymond Voinquel. •Hôtel de Sully. Until Sept 17. Site: www.jeudepaume.org.

American Artists at the Louvre

This is the first time that American artists are shown at the Louvre. Whistler, Hopper, George Catlin and others are shown in the "American Season." •Louvre. Until Sept 18. Site: www.louvre.fr.

Dragons

Dragons, the myths, the legends and the creatures that inspired them. •Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle. Jardin des Plantes. Until Nov 6. Site: www.mnhn.fr.

Heritage Days

The 23rd Journées du Patrimoine; hundreds of historical sites are opened to the public. •Sept 16-17. Site: www.journeesdupatrimoine.culture.fr.

Techno Parade

A wild musical extravaganza will wind its way through the streets of Paris, starting and ending at the Place de la Bastille. •Sept 16. Site: www.technopol.net.

Musée des Arts Décoratifs Reopening

Finally! After ten years of closure, the world's leading decorative arts museum will reopen. 5,000 works of predominantly French furnishings, porcelain, glass, textiles, wallpaper, toys and jewelry from the Middle Ages to the present have been restored to their original splendor and have been reinstalled to reflect a new approach to their presentation. •Musée des Arts Décoratifs. Opens: Sept 15. Site: www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr.

COMING SOON

Chocolate

An entire exhibit hall filled with chocolate in all shapes, sizes and flavors. •Paris Expo. Oct 28-Nov 1. Site: www.salonduchocolat.fr.

Hogarth

A major retrospective of English painter, sculptor and pictorial satirist William Hogarth. •Louvre. Oct 17-Jan 8. Site: www.louvre.fr.

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