

NEWS & NOTES

LOST & FOUND

Found: Deep in the remote tropics of north-western Australia, in a place the aborigines call Jinmium, stands a 130-foot-high sandstone monolith on which are thousands of precisely carved circles that are by far the earliest known sign of artistic behavior. Estimated to be 75,000 years old, these recently discovered carvings are at least twice the age of the former record holders. Could be that homo sapiens might have created pendant beads, body decorations and bone musical instruments over 110,000 years ago but this art makes man a creative being as much as 176,000 years ago because of red ochre and stone tools found underneath the stone monolith. Life is short, Art is long.

The Last Judgment by Luca Signorelli has been restored after 7 years of restoration work. It involved rebuilding the chapel roof, boring ventilation passages to dry the walls and painstakingly extracting more than 150 iron clamps that had been hammered into the frescoes early in this century to prevent their peeling from the walls.

Other Italian art having completed restoration in Arezzo are **Legend of the True Cross** by Piero della Francesca and Raphael's **School of Athens** in the Vatican.

Found: Master Drawings Rediscovered: Treasures from Prewar German Collections at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, 3 December - 31 March, featuring 89 drawings by 13 artists including large groups of work by Goya, Daumier, Signac and Archipenko and single pieces by Delacroix, Cezanne and Toulouse-Lautrec. These drawings were looted from German private collections during the war and secretly stored at the museum. Abrams is publishing an illustrated catalog of the drawings show.

Lost: The architectural and artistic heritage of Afghanistan has been ravaged. Not only have 1 million people been killed and the conflict has devastated the lives and livelihoods of millions more—but it has lost its heritage which fused influences from East and West, Greek and Buddhist, Persian and Mongol, Islamic and Hindu. The National Museum of Afghanistan had two-thirds of its collection pillaged or destroyed. Only 35,000 pieces remain of the original 100,000 pieces. What remains has been hidden in basements around Kabul. Included are ceramics, statues, friezes, ivories, paintings, frescoes and much more.

Found: An old frame bought for an unspecified small amount at a garage sale was

ignored for a year by a New England couple, then taken apart and found to contain two rare watercolor drawings by members of the 19th century Shaker religious sect, according to Sotheby's auction house. The unidentified couple, who like to restore frames, stand to receive more than \$300,000 from the artworks when they are put on the block January 19.

Found: The royal city of Cleopatra and Mark Antony in ancient Alexandria has been found by a French marine archaeologist after nearly 2,000 years.

Lost: Syracuse University's Street & Smith Archive—a trove of pop-culture icons including the earliest comic books, scripts of 1930's radio shows like "The Shadow" and mass-market magazines like Love Story Magazine—has been steadily disintegrating into piles of crumbling wood pulp. Access to scholars has been curtailed and photocopying of materials is no longer allowed.

But thanks to a \$250,000 grant from the NEH, the collection, which is the only existing archive of mid-19th and mid-20th century popular fiction from an American publisher, has been given a reprieve. The material and the publisher's records from 1865 to 1965 will be preserved on microfilm and in transparent mylar capsules.

Lost: A Bible given to John Quincy Adams by freed slaves was stolen from the Adams National Historical Site in Quincy, Massachusetts in November. All 6 items stolen were priceless because of their historical significance.

Found: Romanesque wall paintings identified as the oldest extensive church frescoes in Britain have been discovered in Great Britain in a remote and dilapidated church in the west of Norfolk.

Stolen and Found: A two-day auction of art and other valuables plundered by the Nazis was held in Vienna in October after generating more than \$14.5 million, mostly to benefit Holocaust victims. The total was more than four times pre-auction estimates. More than 8,000 items were for sale, including paintings, drawings, antique coins, sculptures, tapestries and porcelains. 80% went to Jewish victims of the Holocaust and 12 percent is to aid non-Jewish Austrian survivors.

MUSEUMS

A spate of thefts is plaguing small town galleries that collect historical artifacts, kitsch—and dust. Authorities seem to feel it is the thriving black market in Americana—but beware. Yours might be next.

The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles is taking an

advocate's position to realize the construction of the Disney Concert Hall, designed by Frank O. Gehry, a world-renowned architect championed for a long time by the museum. The City of Los Angeles is trying to raise \$52.3 million to meet a 1 June deadline.

The Jean Tinguely Museum in Basle, Switzerland, opened thanks to the donation of 55 works from Niki de Saint Phalle, the French-American sculptor who was Tinguely's second wife, longtime collaborator and principal heir. Pontus Hulten is the chief curator.

Jacques Chirac, President of France, will leave his cultural legacy on the face of Paris with a new museum for African, Oceanic and pre-Columbian art called the **Museum of Civilizations and Early Art**, costing \$200 million, and comprising the collections of the Museum of African and Oceanic Arts and the Ethnology section of the Museum of Man.

Cooper-Hewitt, the National Design Museum in New York City, has completed the first phase of a two-year renovation program, opening with "Mixing Messages: Graphic Design in Contemporary Culture", which is an exploration of typography used in the service of logos, posters, products, events, political causes, a kind of "Medium is the Message" by McLuhan and Fiore, which oddly enough is not represented in this show. Open through 16 February 1997.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art have received a bonanza of modern art from the estate of Florence May Schoenborn, a May Department Store heiress who died in 1995. The bequest of 32 major artworks by such premier figures as Picasso, Brancusi, Bonnard and Braque gives 18 paintings and sculptures to the Met and 14 pieces to MOMA. The total value of the gift exceeds \$150 million. Among the most important works are Picasso's Cubist painting, *Woman with Pears*, destined for MOMA, and Brancusi's marble sculpture, *Bird in Space*, left to the Met. Born in Denver, Schoenborn was the daughter of David May Sr., founder of the May Department Stores.

The San Jose Museum of Art examines megastars Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe as objects of sexual idolatry and obsessive worship. *Elvis + Marilyn: 2 X Immortal* displays more than 100 artworks, including Andy Warhol's famous portrait *Four Marilyns* (1967) and the stars variously posed on altars and crucifixes. Lectures and special events, including a film festival, accompany the exhibit, which runs through 23 February.

Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is slated to open in the summer of 1997 as sister museum to the Guggenheim Museum in New York. The Bilbao museum aims to fill the gap of a modern art collection in Spain by opening with around 300 masterpieces including works by Van Gogh, Renoir, and other 19th century masters, as well as contemporary artists. The museum, designed by Frank O. Gehry, will transform Bilbao from an industrial center to an international city with a high quality of cultural life.

The British Museum has "Mysteries of Ancient China" which runs through 5 January 1997 includes more than 200 ceramic, jade and bronze objects on display, one of the richest displays of ancient Chinese art seen in Britain since 1974. 5,000 years of art history are covered.

The Shanghai Museum has reopened with more than 7,000 bronze pieces, Chinese Painting, Jades, Furniture, Bronzes, Ceramics and more.

Berlin's Hamburger Bahnhof, the city's oldest railway station, has been converted into Berlin's new **Museum of Contemporary Art**.

PUBLIC ART

An abstract steel sculpture by Jan Randolph Martin, which stood in Indianapolis, was destroyed by the city in 1995, selling the resulting scrap to a recycler. The artist, under the Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990, has sued the city for \$125,000 in damages, since he was never notified that the piece was coming down. The artist, using his family business's donation of \$22,000 worth of material, had spent 2½ years engineering and building the finished piece. Indianapolis is now fighting Martin's demand for damages.

FLUXUS

Vitautas Z. Landsbergis, friend of George Maciunas and former Fluxfriend, looked like he has taken back the leadership of Lithuania after having broken with the Soviet empire, but later rejected by voters. He is a spectacled former music professor.

CYBERSPACE

Graffiti artists from all over the world have their own Web sites, comparing notes for techniques, locations, formulas for inks, etc. Not only the U.S. is represented, but also British, Canadians, Germans, Hungarians, Japanese, Swedes and Swiss.

DATELINE: FRANCE

Cézanne will appear on 100-franc notes in his native country, France, after making a hit in London and Philadelphia in his blockbuster exhibition.

DATELINE CUBA

Artists in Havana meet at Callejon de Hamel every Sunday to exhibit new murals, outdoor sculpture, and rumba music. Artist Salvador Gonzales, grudgingly tolerated by Cuban officials, opens up the Hamel Alley each Sunday since 1988, when he started writing a poem on one of the walls in printer's ink. Donations of paint come from neighbors and he has continued to paint wall-high tributes to deities, an altar to Chango, a principal deity in one of the three main Afro-Cuban religions that evolved from those slave beliefs. Before there would be censorship. Now there is greater acceptance of community culture.

DATELINE: LITHUANIA

According to the NY Times, tens of thousands of rare Hebrew and Yiddish texts are being housed in a Roman Catholic church, many dating from the 17th and 18th centuries, when Vilnius became an unrivaled center of Jewish intellectual and spiritual innovation. These books, which is one of the largest such collections in the world, were hidden first from the Nazis and then concealed for years from the Soviets under stacks of farm statistics. Now they belong to the Lithuanian National Library, a "treasure beyond value." The books are being cataloged by two women, but there is a battle among Jewish scholars, who say that these books were collected from most important and renowned yeshivas and libraries in Eastern Europe, and therefore no longer belong to Lithuania. With only 4,000 Jews left in Lithuania, the scholars believe these books belong to the Jewish people, and not to Lithuania.

DATELINE: MADRID

An unknown Spanish artist hung one of his own paintings in the Prado. Victor Ruiz Roizo, 39, glued his work, *Afterwords*, on the wall of a gallery of 17th century art, where it stayed for four days amid Rembrandts and other masters. Eventually, a visitor pointed out that the painting of a human skull with worms had a metal plaque dating it in the 20th century. Ruiz told the daily *El Pais* that he'd been unable to interest art galleries in his work, explaining: "I'm no good at public relations and I've barely shown, so I thought it would be good to show with Rembrandt and all those guys." The Prado was investigating.

DATELINE: FRANCE

The Chauvet cave, discovered two years ago with astonishing prehistoric wall-paintings, remains sealed because of ownership and other issues being contested in the courts. Even the Ministry of Culture is being sued by the three supposed owners for distributing photographs and videotapes of the art, which they say belongs to them. But the archeologist remains philosophical, saying that the cave has waited 30,000 years, so it can wait a few more months or years.

DATELINE: RIO

The new Museum of Contemporary Art has opened in Niteroi, about 9 miles from Rio de Janeiro, with a permanent collection of more than 1,000 paintings and sculptures from Brazilian artists whose works span four decades. Designed by the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, its cylindrical foundation supports a two-story circular building with 21,528 square feet of floor space. The first floor, where the permanent collection is installed, is surrounded by glassed-in verandas. The museum is open daily from 1 to 9 p.m., except Mondays.

DATELINE: TORONTO

The art student Jubal Brown, whose college, Ontario College of Art and Design, decided not to punish him for vomiting on paintings at two galleries, might not be going back to school. Brown threw up two primary colors, one each, on paintings at MOMA in New York and the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, but since he did the actions off campus, the student affairs committee decided not to punish Brown for his actions.

Brown began his project, a protest against what he deems "banal" art by eating red food and throwing up on a seascape by Raoul Dufy that hangs at the AGO. In early November, he vomited blue on a Mondrian canvas at MOMA. Both galleries initially dismissed the incidents as accidents, and neither painting was damaged. He was planning to vomit yellow on another painting, but says he will not after the "media circus" that pursued him. He feels that the media circus has completed the piece. The New York Times, Harpers magazine and German TV have all expressed interest in Brown's story.

DATELINE: AUSTRALIA

A UNESCO-sponsored project had 5 artists from the Asia-Pacific region spend two weeks in the Toolangi Forest near Melbourne collecting nearby materials and sculpting them into permanent site-specific works. The five overseas artists were joined by another four Australian sculptors, and each given a local assistant to help them design and build their ideas. Artists came from Pakistan, Mongolia, The Philippines, Japan and Malaysia, as well as indigenous artists from Melville Island off the coast of Darwin, who used traditional Tiwi art to sculpt and paint a ceremonial totem red-eyed pigeon, among other wonderful work.

DATELINE: JAPAN

Manga artists (those who make comic books) all gathered in Iwaki, Japan for the month of September for a Manga Summit, organized by Machiko Satonaka, who wants to create a bigger summit and build a manga museum. More than 300 artists exhibited their manga at the Iwaki City Art Museum and many symposia were held.

The world's most expensive building, designed by architect Rafael Vinoly, will open in February as The Tokyo International Forum, an elliptical hall which towers in the city like an ocean liner in a 1930s travel poster. It will house theaters and conference halls and trade shows, political conventions and rock concerts. Its walls are sheer glass, 70 meters high and 260 meters long

DATELINE: CANADA

Daniel Dugas, an artist living in Moncton, New Brunswick has opened a new gallery space, The Trunk Gallery, which operates from the trunk of his car. It is a traveling space, operating in parking lots, at special events, in malls or outside other galleries. For one dollar he opens the trunk to let viewers see the show.

DATELINE: AUSTRIA

Austrian airlines has turned the fuselage of one of its planes into a gallery of famous and popular Austrians—that's a very large mobile gallery of colorful portraits of 24 famous Austrians such as Mozart, Schubert, Strauss and Haydn, Freud and Lorenz, and Billy Wilder, Romy Schneider and Oskar Werner, and painters, poets, and athletes too. A flying gallery.

NEA NEWS

A 1990 law requiring the National Endowment for the Arts to consider "decency and respect" for American values when granting money to artists—passed during a furor over the NEA's role—was ruled unconstitutional by a federal appeals court in November. The ruling means that "artists are free to create works without having to guess about some unknown NEA bureaucrat's notion of what decency and respect mean" said David Cole, lawyer for the NEA Four.

PRESERVATION PROBLEMS

Museums are learning that plastic is mortal. According to the New York Times, postwar design collections are falling apart. As soon as plastic comes off the assembly line, it begins to decay. Curators merely watch it disintegrate, since there is nothing to do. Plastic self-destructs. The only alternatives are warehousing backups, repair and rot.

NEW TOMBSTONE DESIGNS

A new firm founded by Hali Weiss, called Living Monuments, recently received a patent for a new type of tombstone that she believes will make the death of a loved one more meaningful for the bereaved and render cemeteries more interesting for future generations. The tombstone features a 500-word biography of the deceased in 20-point type, which is sandblasted onto a rotating element like a cylinder, integrated into the design of the tombstone. This new technique allows the

use of photographs or genealogical trees alongside the text. According to Ms. Weiss's vision, "Cemeteries of the future will be libraries of past lives." The tombstones range from \$6,000 to \$9,000, whereas the average price of a tombstone is \$2,000 to \$3,000.

US POSTAL SERVICE

The U.S. Postal Service has declared 1997 the Year of the Artist. It will issue its first triangular stamps in history, a pair of stamps depicting a stagecoach and ship, early California modes of transportation.

Detailed panoramas by **James Gurney**, the illustrator of two *Dinotopia* books, brings to life a set of 15 dinosaur stamps.

Christopher Van Allsburg, winner of two Caldecott Medals for children's book illustration, has created a stamp dedicated to "Helping Children Learn." There is also a group of Merian Botanical Prints, done by pioneer German artist **Maria Sibylla Merian**, who was one of the greatest female artists to emerge from the 17th century. She was one of the first to document the development of plants and insects by observing their stages of development. The pineapple (with two types of cockroaches) and the citron (with moth, larva and pupa, and a beetle) have been chosen from over 70 engravings housed at the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

CENSORSHIP

The banned ad campaign for *The People vs. Larry Flynt*, featuring Woody Harrelson as the publisher of *Hustler* magazine, where Harrelson is shown in a crucifixion pose, wearing only an American flag around his mid-section, with a scantily clad woman in the background, will not be seen in the U.S., but will appear all around the globe. The sanitized version features a head shot of Harrelson with a flag taped over his mouth. Harrelson's lawyer and the director, Milos Forman, don't understand what is obscene about the original ad campaign. Ironically enough, the movie is about press censorship, but has been banned by the Motion Picture Association of America. There it goes again: Sex rears its ugly face, but only in the U.S.!

Works of art at the International Place in Boston for an AIDS fund-raising event, including works by Herb Ritts, Jock Sturges, Paul Richard, Jack Pierson, Laird Van Riper Elting, Nan Goldin and Frank Yamrus; and paintings by Damon Lehrner, Raphael Jaimes-Branger and Robin Paine all involve some degree of nudity. The curator was given the option to drop the offending art or remove it. The curator decided to drape the works in black, allowing the public to lift the cloth and look at the work at will. Then the works were removed from the walls the next day. Then they went back up, without the drapery—except for Nan Goldin's and Yamrus'

photographs, which stayed under wraps until the auction.

The International Place management, Boston's biggest office building, decided to do an about-face and unban 8 of the 10 artworks they had banned the day before.

A proposed House Rule, being promoted by the Heritage Foundation and Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, would require all organizations that testify before House of Representative committees to state the amount of federal funds they receive and what they use the funds for, even if they are testifying on a topic unrelated to their federal grant according to an alert from the Alliance for Justice. Information available on <http://www.handsnet.org/handsnet2/hn.action.alerts/index.html>

NEW TECHNOLOGY

Researchers from the University of Tsukuba, Japan have developed a device that projects images in a viewer's complete field of vision. The system produces an extremely real viewing experience. The system has 12 diamond-shaped screens, forming a capsule inside which the viewer stands on a transparent platform. 12 liquid crystal display (LCD) projectors send different images to each screen, creating an all-encompassing viewing experience for the person inside. The impression is of one floating in outer space. This is the first system to provide images from all directions. And it takes up less space, fitting into a room measuring just 2.7 meters on a side.

33 companies, including Sony and Dai Nippon, are joining 9 Prefectures in Japan in establishing a task force to digitize art for display via computers. Separately, the Agency for Cultural Affairs of the Education Ministry has begun building a computer network to catalog, in digital format, fine arts and cultural properties housed in museums and galleries across the country. For instance, Tokyo National Museum will digitize images of 200,000 works over the next 10 years.

