

NEWS AND NOTES

WILD PRINTING

A Florida company called Flip It Corp. has crated a device that imprints custom messages or pictures on pancakes. "Image the image of your son or daughter" on a pancake, says the press release. A political version of the machine has been commissioned for next year's Republic convention, to produce pancakes stamped with the GOP logo.

LOST & FOUND

Dateline: Warsaw,, Poland

Prosecutors in the southern city of Krakow confirmed they are investigating the theft of antique books and maps reportedly worth hundreds of thousands of dollars from the prestigious Jagiellonian Library.

Spokeswoman Malgorzata Wilkosz-Sliwa declined to give any more details on what she called the "sad fact of the disappearance of ancient publications," saying the Krakow prosecutor's office planned to release more information. However, the *Gazeta Wyborcza* newspaper reported prosecutors have given antiques shop owners a list of more than 50 missing books worth millions of zlotys (dollar hundreds of thousands). It said the theft was discovered in April, but none of the books have been found.

The Government Protection Office, an intelligence unit, has also been informed of the disappearance of six atlases and 500 maps from the 18th and 19th centuries, *Gazeta* said. Officials at Jagiellonian University have ordered a complete inventory of the library's 130,000 old volumes and the installation of a new security system, the head of the university, Franciszek Ziejka, told private Radio Zet.

He said the thief had removed the books while leaving the covers behind, stuffed with other books. It was not known how many books were taken or exactly when, he said. *Gazeta* suggested some of the missing books were from the famed Prussian Library, which came to Krakow from Berlin after World War II. Ziejka said, however, that that was unlikely since the Prussian collection, which includes original manuscripts of works by Beethoven and Mozart, is under special supervision.

During the war, the Nazis hid the Prussian Library in the Sudety mountains to protect it from Allied bombs. The mountains became part of Poland when borders shifted after the war and the priceless books were secretly placed in the Jagiellonian Library with only a few of its employees knowing it at the time. Talks

are underway on Germany's request for the return of the collection.

Missing: Manuscripts & Books in Krakow, Poland — For serious scholars, the Jagiellonian University library evokes the heady smell of precious pages from the past — works by such Renaissance giants as Copernicus and Galileo. Serious thieves smelled something else in the prestigious Polish library's aging stacks: cold cash.

In an unsolved caper that has humiliated guardians of the renowned medieval collection, at least 58 manuscripts disappeared six months ago. A few surfaced last month as they were about to go on sale at a German auction house. But that has done little to ease the embarrassment and pain at the Jagiellonian University, a 600-year-old center of learning named for King Wladyslaw Jagiello, who greatly expanded it. The library houses more than 3.5 million works, including some of the nation's most precious manuscripts. Copernicus studied at the Jagiellonian, as did a young Karol Wojtyla, now Pope John Paul II.

Today their bags would be subject to searches and they would have to go through rigorous bureaucratic channels for permission to examine even one old title. "This is the price that thousands of library users are paying," university spokesman Leszek Sliwa said last week. "Library patrons would skin the thief alive because now it is much more difficult to get to the books."

Library officials are not sure how much the books might bring on the antiques market, where valuation is highly subjective. One missing manuscript alone — a 1543 copy of Copernicus' planetary motion theory — is believed to be worth a half-million dollars. It isn't clear how the books were smuggled out, but there are some clues.

The head of special collections, Zdzislaw Pietrzyk, said a librarian noticed some oddities last April in the library's inner sanctum: a book sticking awkwardly out of a row, another stored upside down. A frantic inventory of the medieval collection's 300,000 volumes ensued. Most of the missing titles had been removed from protective covers and replaced with less valuable books. Library staff members make only \$190 to \$285 a month, leading to speculation that it would have been easy to bribe an insider.

Pietrzyk bristles at suggestions it could be someone from his select staff of 35, saying he could "not imagine" anyone among them "would try to violate the sanctity" of the library. Prosecutors are hoping for some answers from a Bulgarian student who was arrested last month after about 60 books from the Jagiellonian were found in his Krakow apartment. So far, no evidence has emerged linking him to the missing medieval manuscripts.

Inevitably, Poland's 10-year struggle with post-communist economic reforms gets some blame for the lax security. Pleas for more money from the cash-strapped government have gone unanswered for years, said Krzysztof Krolas, head of finance at the university. But the scandal has prompted some changes. A U.S. security system — including remote cameras and alarms — costing \$171,000 is being installed a year earlier than planned.

Polish investigators say they have identified 18 Jagiellonian titles that were to go on sale at the Reiss and Sohn auction house in Koenigstein, Germany, including a 15th-century copy of a work by astronomer Ptolemy. Krakow prosecutors want the books back, but prospects are uncertain. Frankfurt prosecutors have only approved the confiscation of 11 of the 18 titles claimed by Polish investigators, and say it will be up to the German courts to determine ownership.

Found: 3 Dutch masterworks stolen on Christmas Eve 1978 have turned up in a box at the William Doyle Galleries auction house in Manhattan. The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco really want the paintings back, but there is significant damage to all three paintings. One of the paintings was Rembrandt's "Portrait of a Rabbi", which was severely damaged by someone trying to clean it. But perhaps new techniques can be restored revealing a possibility that the painting is *not* by Rembrandt and they can be returned to the San Francisco Museum.

Found: Egyptologist have found limestone inscriptions in the desert west of the Nile which are the earliest known examples of alphabetic writing, probably dating from the first two centuries of the second millennium.

Returned: A 2000-year-old Mayan stone carving that police detectives discovered in Brooklyn garage last month is being returned to Guatemala, where the authorities believe the piece was plundered from a ruin.

The carving, which may date back as far as 150 B.C. was found on 12 November packed in crate in a garage in New York City.

Stolen: Armed robbers stole literary treasures from a library in the city of Armagh, Northern Ireland, among them a copy of "Gulliver's Travels" that included handwritten alterations by author Jonathan Swift. The two robbers burst into the public library in Armagh, about 35 miles southeast of Belfast and held a gun to a library assistant's head before tying her up. The robbers then systematically smashed glass cases and stole items estimated to be worth about \$165,000. Other items taken included an ancient miniature version of the Koran and a 1611 Geneva Bible.

Lost: A 45-million dollar six-level underground garage inside the Vatican known as "God's Parking Lot," built to hold 105 pilgrim buses and 800 cars, is not a public works project, even though Italy paid for half of it. This access ramp became Italy's reigning symbol of the clash between those who wish to preserve every vestige of Rome's imperial past and those who want modern amenities to ensure the city's future. The ramp has to be finished because the "archeological ruin uncovered at the ramp site are less than what the average Roman would find in his basement" so Italy is in a hurry to get things ready for the Jubilee Year and they are very behind.

Dateline: Canada

It has been brought out in Canada's Maclean's magazine that Bill Reid, famed late British Columbian Haida artist, used a changing team of carvers, some Native, some white, who executed his work as Parkinson's disease took its toll on him during the eighties and nineties. Many of the carvers have hurt feelings, since they feel they have not been given enough credit or money. In fact, they feel exploited as just "a pair of hands." The answer to this was an Op Ed piece by Eldon Garnet, an old friend to *Umbrella*, to artist books and mail art, former gallery owner and publisher of the defunct cultural journal *Impulse*, who defends artists for their imagination and creativity, because it is the process that is important rather than the product.

MUSEUM NEWS

The National Portrait Gallery and the National Museum of American Art, both part of the Smithsonian Institution are closing in January for a \$60 million, three-year-long renovation during which many of their treasures will tour the U.S.

The **Los Angeles County Museum of Art** now has President Andrea L. Rich taking

over the duties of departed Director Graham W.J. Beal.

Joint Venture: French and American museums, mostly regional, have entered into an agreement to raise their profiles, sharing know-how on new technology, marketing and fund-raising, which will lead to exchanging masterpieces and developing joint exhibitions. Included are the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Dallas Museum of Art, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the Portland (OR) Art Museum, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the St Louis Art Museum, the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, MA and the Yale University Art Gallery and Yale Center for British Art. The French fine art museums are those of Bordeaux, Grenoble, Lille, Lyons, Montpellier, Rennes, Rouen, Strasbourg and Toulouse.

The Hermitage Museum is setting up a satellite museum in London at Somerset House, a late 18th-century mansion on The Strand.

The **Neue Galerie New York** will open at Fifth Avenue and 86th Street in New York City at 1048 Fifth Ave, to show German and Austrian fine and decorative art, with an emphasis on works from the first half of the 20th century onward. On view will be works from Serge Sabarsky's estate and from the museum's collection with Ronald S. Lauder as president of the museum.

The new director of the **Detroit Institute of Arts**, Graham W. J. Beal, closed a room of the museum recently because of 15 provocative pieces, including a toy Jesus wearing a condom, a pile of human excrement and a brazil nut labeled with a racial epithet. The show was called *Van Gogh's Ear*.

The Guggenheim Museum is opening a new outpost in an old space, converting the 17th century Customs House on Venice's Grand Canal into a new international branch, with the Venice Guggenheim Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art set to open in three years. The Italian and Venetian governments agreed to donate use of the building—a triangular structure built in 1676-82 on a wedge-shaped piece of land at the meeting point of two canals—for 99 years. Although the building's exterior will be unchanged, architect Vittorio Gregotti will lead the interior renovations, estimated to cost \$13 million. Venice, meanwhile, is already home to the Guggenheim Collection—an eclectic private art collection owned by the late Peggy Guggenheim.

LIBRARIES AND BOOKS

After 10 years of construction, a new modernistic \$18.5 million library will open

in the ancient city of Alexandria, Egypt, home of the ancient library conceived in 306 B.C. by Ptolemy I, the successor to Alexander the Great, who founded Alexandria just before his death in 322 B.C. The library faded into oblivion around 47 B.C. when part of Alexandria was burned, but it is said that part of that collection is now believed to have survived that conflagration. But the library was finally wiped out in the third century A.D. during fighting under the Emperor Aurelian. This new library will have room for 4 million works, a French-designed computerized catalog and 500 built-in Internet ports, thereby becoming the largest and most advanced library in the Arab world.

SPIRAL JETTY

Robert Smithson's monumental Earthwork, **Spiral Jetty**, has been given to the Dia Center for the Arts by the artist's estate. The Dia will attempt to make the work more visible. In addition, it plans to collect and centralize the historical documents that relate to the project.

The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California have recently acquired a vast collection of works by William Morris (1834-1896), including stained glass, wallpaper, textiles, tapestries, embroidery, carpets, drawings, ceramics and more than 2,000 books, amassed by Sanford and Helen Berger.

PUBLIC ART

Beverly Hills, California now boasts the addition of an Oldenburg sculpture at its City Hall. "Architect's Handkerchief" is a newly executed 12-foot by 12-foot sculpture of a white handkerchief bursting forth from a blue shirt pocket, alluding to Mies van der Rohe's way of dressing always the same way except he always had a handkerchief flowing out of his pocket. The sculpture is on loan to the city for a year by Grant Selwyn Gallery.

MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE ARTS

Despite a nationwide explosion of arts activity, media coverage of television, movies and music dominates arts news at the expense of dance, architecture and the visual arts, according to a report just released by the National (U.S.) Arts Journalism Program at Columbia University. Arts journalism continues to be a lower priority than business and sports, while, on network television, arts stories are concentrated on the morning programs rather than evening newscasts, which the study said devote less than 1% of their time to the arts.

RESOURCES

As an alternative source of information about the **Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts**, go to <http://www.bamfa.berkeley.edu/ciao/>

This collaborative site links ATCA to Berkeley, the Electronic Café, Franklin Furnace, the Getty, the Hood Museum, the national Gallery of Canada, the Tate, and the Walker.

•**Art in the Public Interest** and Virginia Tech have announced the creation of the Community Arts Network (CAN), a new information network serving the field of community-based art. CAN is developing a searchable Internet database on the history and current activities in the field; information services and communications; online learning and a training directory on the Web; as well as a physical archive at Virginia Tech.

The first phase of the initiative is APINEWS, a regular newsletter, now available by e-mail and on the Web at <http://www.communityarts.net> Edited by Linda Frye Burnham and Steven Durland of API and hosted by Virginia Tech, *APInews #1*, is available on the site including Hillary Clinton speaking on successful arts-ed programs at New York's Community School District #1, the first conference and festival of the Network of Ensemble Theatre, the Boa-Friere conference and festival of the Network of Ensemble Theatre, and an account of how Jaime Permith's photograph of a rose at dusk helped save more than 100 community gardens in New York when the photograph appeared on billboards around the city.

John Cage Discussion List is at <http://www.realtime.net/~jzitt/Cage> for discussions of music, philosophies, writings, art, life, influences, and the influence of the late John Cage. Links to other Cage resources including "John Cage at the Mattress Factory", "The NewMusNet File Library", New Albion's page on John Cage, and photographs of John Cage in 1978 by the Italian photographer Corinto.

Art for your Page is available from Bill Gates' Corbis Corporation (www.corbis.com) for a one-time use only costing \$3.00 an image. Well, you have 400,000 images from which to choose. The images may be used for Web sites, personal newsletters, classroom reports, computer wallpaper and screen savers.

Online resources: The Grove Dictionary of Art (www.groveart.com) through subscriptions. Your local library (art, that is) probably has subscribed. You won't believe it!

Other art resources are Betye Saar: **Digital Griot** (LT1-Voyager, \$29.95 for Windows 3.1 and later and Macintosh 7.0 and later) reviewed in the NY Times on 13 May 1999. Another is **Powers of Ten Interactive**, dedicated to expanding on the

ideas of the husband-wife design team of Charles and Ray Eames, which can be purchased online at www.eamesoffice.com and www.powersoftent.com. (\$79.95 from Pyramid Media, for Windows 95 and 98 and Macintosh 7.1 and later).

Contributions to Umbrella Museum

Mary Ellen Long, Judy & Chuck Goodstein, Judy Stein, Hans Waanders, Annie Silverman, Beth Bachenheimer, Anna Banana, Jennifer Henderson, Elena Siff, Robert Gordon, Carol Stetser, Claire Isaacs, Ken Friedman, Johanne Todd, Marilyn Rosenberg, Ken Mikolowski, Art-Bibliographies Modern, Guy Bleus, Gabriel Rummonds with thanks.

UMBRELLA NEWS

At the 1999 Santa Fe Indian Market, the winner of the Grand Prize was Teri Greeves, a 29-year-old Kiowa, who showed a hand-beaded umbrella. Made of brain tanned deer hide, the umbrella told the story of an Indian parade on its eight panels. As a child growing up on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming, Teri remembers the parades she and her family would attend. She tells her story showing how Indians of different tribes would parade. Many showed up to see the parades with umbrellas to shade them from the constant summer sun.

For her entry, she used an antique umbrella frame and for two years created scenes of Indians on horses, on foot, in trucks and in flatbed trailers. The umbrella was finished with a lining of soft white clouds on a blue-sky background. Around its edges are teardrop-shaped clear beads mimicking water droplets. The umbrella sold for \$10,000.

•"Along their soggy route, they passed umbrellas of every shape, size and color bobbing and swaying like some kind of surreal mushroom patch." A description of the Macy's Thanksgiving parade on a very wet Thanksgiving Day in New York City.

•In Japan, according to the Los Angeles Times (as if it were brand new news), the Tokyo Metropolitan Lost and Found reports that the most common items unclaimed are umbrellas - 393,961 in 1998 alone. While 99% are never claimed, they are still dutifully collected and marked on the minute chance an owner shows up. "Oftentimes, the owner is not really forgetting something. It's more like garbage," said the section chief, pointing to some cheap plastic umbrellas. "Unfortunately, though, you can't just assume it's rubbish." Roughly 1,079 umbrellas are cast off each day.

BOOKS & UMBRELLAS

Letter from Corrado Govoni to Filippo Marinetti (1915?): "Why not make books which open like little organs cameras umbrellas fans? They would be extremely suitable for words-in-freedom. I am exceedingly enthusiastic about this idea and you just back me up because you too are highly fed up and sickened by the awful forms of common books." (This is the beginning of the idea for the book-object which Depero was later to realize with his bolted book of 1927, and Tullio d'Albisola and Bruno Munari with their lithotin *L'anguria lirica* of 1934; the two most striking examples of Futurist editorial experimentation.

