

NEWS AND NOTES

MUSEUMS

The new American Sign Museum in Cincinnati is a funky still-growing museum which can be visited by reservation seven days a week at 2515 Essex. There are 2,500 objects, including about 120 signs. www.signmuseum.org

Frieder Burda Collection is a private museum of 580 works created by the collector, Burda, with a new Richard Meier building. The museum is located in Baden-Baden, Germany and has representative work of Jackson Pollock, Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko, Adolph Gottlieb, Willem de Kooning, 40 Richters, Sigmar Polke, George Baselitz, Beckmann, Picasso (late period) and much more.

The Ukrainian Museum opened in its new \$9 million building on East Sixth St. in the East Village, NYC, with an exhibition of 65 works by Alexander Archipenko, the Kiev-born Cubist sculptor who lived in upper state New York for many years. Open through 4 September.

Vad Hashem in Jerusalem has opened a new Holocaust history museum, 10 years in the making. It tries to tell the story of the six million Jewish dead, the names of half of them still unknown, through diaries, images, experiences and testimonies of about a hundred individuals. What makes this museum different from those in Washington and New York is a sense of renewed life, because the other emphasis is on the creation of Israel.

BIG MISTAKE

Overzealous sanitation works in Frankfurt, Germany have mistaken a yellow plastic sculpture by the artist Michael Bentler for trash and cleared it from the streets. So the Stadel Museum there decided to offer art classes titled "Test Your Art Judgment" to the garbagemen and anyone else who wanted to learn to identify contemporary art. The artist, a graduate of the Stadel Art Academy, who had instilled 10 similar plastic sculptures around the city, said he was not upset. But this was not the first time modern art had been mistakenly discarded by diligent cleaning personnel in Germany: a piece by Joseph Beuys was disposed of by a cleaning woman at the Dusseldorf Art Academy in 1988.

THE OTHER GATES

Hargo's "Gates", an art installation consisting of 3.5-inch structures made of wooden dowels, cut-up roof shingles and corrugated plastic painted with orange tempera, all assembled at a cost of \$3.50 in 0.002 years went on public view (besides

being online on the Internet) on 24 February in City Hall in Somerville, MA, where this tiny rival to Christo's "The Gates" was unveiled by Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone. Hargo (actually Geoff Hargadon, 50, who says art is not his profession) announced that 13 of the gates, which gained instant fame on the Internet, are to be donated to museums and colleges that have expressed interest in giving them a permanent home, and that one will be auctioned 2 April for the benefit of the Massachusetts College of Art.

LOST & FOUND

More than 8,000 items ranging from 16th century maps to copies of the Beano have gone missing from the British Library since it moved to new premises.

Some disappearances were thefts, with collectors using razors to cut rare maps out of books. But the biggest theft is believed to have been carried out by a contractor who stole £17,000 worth of comics from a storage area. These included the first issue of the Beano to contain its iconic character, Dennis the Menace, dated March 17, 1951, and rare copies of the Dandy and Eagle.

Other items stolen since 1997 were more eclectic. They ranged from £10 CDs by Black Sabbath and the Rolling Stones, a Ford Cortina manual and a collection of rare Camden Britannica maps, printed in 1626 and valued at £15,000.

Lost: Four men were indicted on robbery and art theft charges for allegedly taking rare works from Lexington (KY)'s Transylvania University library including Darwin's "The Origin of Species", a two volume natural history published in the 1500s, pencil sketches by John James Audubon done in the 1850s and an illuminated manuscript written in 1425.

Found: A Picasso painting which disappeared from Centre Pompidou in Paris last year has been found. "Nature Morte a la Charlotte" painted in 1924 and the time it has been missing is still being investigated.

Found: the remains of a massive Maya salt-production complex submerged in a lagoon off the southern coast of Belize. The first wooden structural artifacts from the empire, including poles and beams used in building the salt factories have also been found. 45 sites have been found.

Found: Under a 230-year-old painting by master landscape artist William Hodges, art restorers in London using an X-ray machine, discovered the oldest known painting of Antarctica. The X-ray revealed two icebergs, painted during Capt. James Cook's historic expedition below the Antarctic circle.

Found: The son of two artists who were friends and contemporaries of Jackson Pollock found 32 previously unrecorded works by Pollock among his parents' belongings. The works date from 1946 to 1949. 22 mixed-media "drip" paintings on boards as well as drawings. None of the pieces is signed.

MUNCH WORKS RECOVERED

Three stolen works of art by Edvard Munch were recovered less than 24 hours after thieves pried them loose from the walls of an upscale restaurant in the second theft of the Norwegian master's work in less than seven months.

A 1915 watercolor called "Blue Dress" and two lithographs were stolen from the walls of the restaurant of the stately Refnes Hotel near the city of Moss, about 30 miles south of Oslo. Munch expert and auctioneer Knut Forsberg estimated the paintings' collective value at more than \$257,000, with "Blue Dress" being the most valuable because it is unique.

"Pedersen said a hotel worker went into the restaurant at about 11 p.m. Sunday night and surprised two people who had removed the pictures from the wall. "They dropped one, and broke the frame and glass, but took the picture," Pedersen said. The suspects were described as being in their 20s, of medium height and having dark hair.

It was the second such theft of Munch paintings in the Nordic country in less than seven months.

The hotel's owner, Widar Salbuviik, said the works were part of a 400-piece collection, including another four by Munch, displayed in the restaurant. The hotel itself is part of an estate that was built in 1767. The hotel is on the island of Joleoy, where Munch lived and worked from 1913 until 1916, when he moved to Oslo.

The hotel has an alarm system, but it was not turned on since the hotel had not yet closed for the night. "It seems to be a fashion among criminals to steal Munch," Salbuviik told state radio NRK. "How professional is it to steal art? Great value, big risk and hard to sell. They would have to be very slow in the head to do it."

In 1994, another version of "The Scream" was stolen from the National Gallery in Oslo and was recovered a few months later in a sting operation.

TERRORISM INSURANCE

A traveling show of paintings by J.M.W. Turner has been postponed indefinitely because of the high cost of terrorism insurance. The show was organized by the Tate Gallery in London and the show was scheduled to travel to LACMA in Los

Angeles, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Metropolitan in New York, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. But the high cost of insuring the artworks prompted the museums to cancel the show.

DATELINE: London

The British Library must return a 12th-century prayer book that has been part of the collection of the BL for more than 50 years, taken from the city of Benevento in southern Italy. The British government panel decided that an English army captain had looted the rare missal. The prayer book contains 290 folios in a script identified with the Benevento region, written in the scriptorium of a monastery there.

DATELINE: Arlington Cemetery

Faces of the Fallen, an exhibition of 1,237 portraits honoring those who died in the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts, curated by artist Annette Polan, opened on 23 March. More than 200 professional artists, all of whom were volunteers, executed the portraits, some from photos, some from websites. Each canvas measures 6 x 8 inches, hanging on a steel rod with a nameplate giving the service member's name, branch of service and date of death. This exhibit runs through 11 November, Veterans Day. The portraits are of those military personnel killed between 10 October 2001 and 11 November 2004. Polan wants to create portraits for those who died after 11 November 2004.

DATELINE: Brussels

La Belgique visionnaire, c'est arrivé près de chez vous through 15 May is the last, inspired exhibition by the late, great curator, Harald Szeeman, director of many Venice biennales and of Kassel's documenta, who died last month as this show was being set up. In 26 rooms, Szeeman celebrates the 175th anniversary of the founding of the small, mystifying, still-divided nation that revolves at the center of Europe's Germanic/Latin crossroads. Included are Magritte and Delvaux, Marcel Broodthaers, Luc Tuymans, Anne Veronica Janssens, James Ensor, Leon Spillaert, Masereel, Felicien Rops and more.

DATELINE: Frankfurt, Germany

Peter Postleb, director of the Clean Frankfurt task force, part of the city's sanitation department, saw a yellow plastic structure that he suspected was a makeshift shelter, so he told his sanitation workers to incinerate it. It was instead a piece of sculpture by Michael Beutler, one of ten commissioned by a city arts society. The large, origami-like artworks were made from sheeting ordinarily used to encase

cement during construction. They are not asking sanitation workers to take monthly classes in art appreciation.

DATELINE: Tokyo

Your eyes probably hurt just thinking about it: Tens of thousands of Japanese cell-phone owners are poring over full-length novels on their tiny screens. In this technology-enamored nation, the mobile phone has become so widespread as an entertainment and communication device that reading e-mail, news headlines and weather forecasts - rather advanced mobile features with global standards - is routine.

Now, Japan's cell-phone users are turning pages. Several mobile Web sites offer hundreds of novels - classics, best sellers and some works written especially for the medium. It takes some getting used to. Only a few lines pop up at a time because the phone screen is about half the size of a business card. But improvements in the quality of liquid-crystal displays and features such as automatic page-flipping, or scrolling, make the endeavor far more enjoyable than you'd imagine.

In the latest versions, cell-phone novels are downloaded in short installments and run on handsets as Java-based applications. You're free to browse as though you're in a bookstore, whether you're at home, in your office or on a commuter train. A whole library can be tucked away in your cell phone - a gadget you carry around anyway.

"You can read whenever you have a spare moment, and you don't even need to use both hands," says Taro Matsumura, a 24-year-old graduate student who sometimes reads essays and serial novels on his phone.

Such times could be just around the corner in the United States, where cell phones are becoming increasingly used for relaying data, including video, digital photos and music. U.S. publisher Random House recently bought a stake in VOCEL, a San Diego-based company that provides such mobile-phone products as Scholastic Aptitude Test preparation programs. Random House also said it reached licensing arrangements with VOCEL to provide cell-phone access to the publisher's Living Language foreign language study programs and Prima Games video game strategy guides.

Cell-phone books are also gradually starting to get traction in China and South Korea. In Japan, though, some people are really getting hooked, finding the phone an intimate tool for reading.

The Tokyo-based wireless service provider offers 150 books on its site, called "Bunko Yomihodai," which means "All You Can Read Paperbacks." It began the service in 2003 and saw interest grow last year. There are now about 50,000 subscribers.

"It's hard to understand unless you try it out," Kajita said, adding that the handset's backlight allows people to read with the lights off - a convenience that delights parents who like to read near sleeping infants. Users can search by author, title and genre, and readers can write reviews, send fan mail to authors and request what they want to read, all from their phones. A recent marketing study by Bandai found that more than half the readers are female, and many are reading cell-phone books in their homes.

Surprisingly, people are using cell-phone books to catch up on classics they never finished reading. And people are perusing sex manuals and other books they're too embarrassed to be caught reading or buying. More common is keeping an electronic dictionary in your phone in case a need arises.

DATELINE: Kanazawa

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, in the Ishikawa Prefecture, is popular because in displaying innovative works of modern art, it allows children to run around the innovative works done by relatively unknown, yet inventive, contemporary artists. There is a ping-pong table that accommodates eight people to play at the same time and a room with a mirrored floor, as well as "The Swimming Pool" by Leandro Erlich, which gives visitors the feeling of walking on the bottom of a swimming pool and looking up through the water.

DATELINE: Canada

Rebecca Belmore is the first native woman artist chosen to represent Canada at the Venice Biennale in June 2005. She is well known for her 1991 outdoor performance called "Speaking to Their Mother, where she uses a two-metre-wide megaphone, and *Vigil*, a video performance she made I Vancouver's East Side, a haunting memorial to the women, most of whom were First Nations, who vanished from the streets of Vancouver and whose remains were found on the Port Coquitlam farm owned by Robert Pickton, now charged with 15 counts of murder.

ARTISTS ON INTERNET

According to the Investor's Business Daily in Los Angeles, a recent poll of artists found that more than 75% use the Internet. An ever greater proportion of paid artists - those who earn at least some income from their art - are online, compared with 63% of the general population.

NEW WEBSITE

Publisher Louise Blouin MacBain is starting Artinfo.com, a website that aims to inform collectors and dealers about trends in the \$20-billion (U.S.) Art market.