

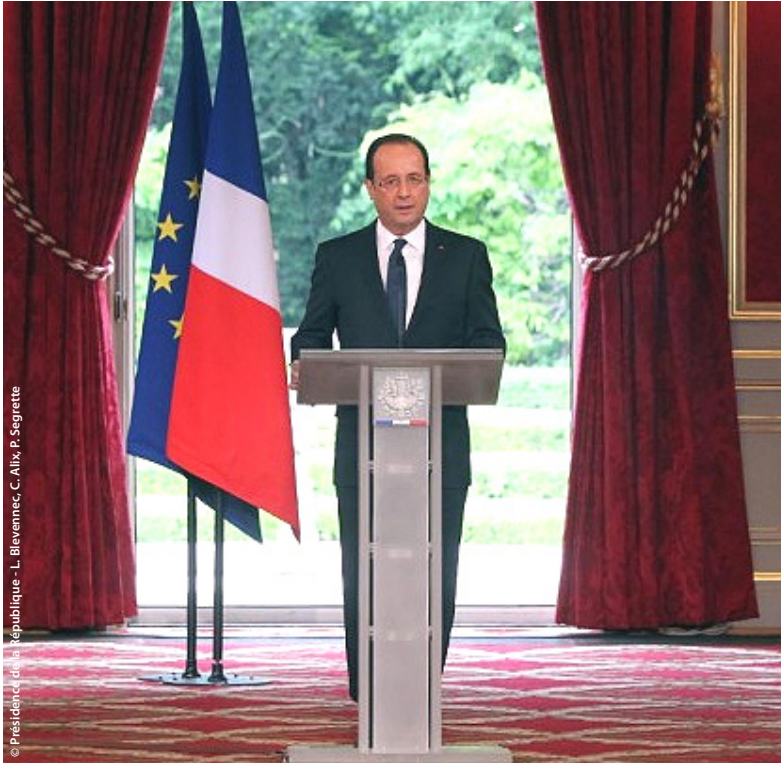


News From France

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A free monthly review of French news & trends

François Hollande Elected President of the Republic



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François Hollande was inaugurated as France's President on May 15. He delivered his first speech as head of state at the Elysée Palace, the Presidential residence, the same day.

▲ France has elected a new President of the Republic. François Hollande successfully campaigned against the incumbent, President Nicolas Sarkozy.

In the country's two-round Presidential voting process, French citizens cast ballots for Mr. Hollande, Mr. Sarkozy and eight other candidates. The first round, held on Sunday, April 22, saw the challenger emerge from the field as the leader with 28.6 percent of the vote. Mr. Sarkozy earned second place with 27.2 percent.

When the second round took place on Sunday, May 6, Mr. Hollande's final tally of 51.6 percent put him over the critical 50-percent threshold to win the office. Mr. Sarkozy earned 48.4 percent.

The Constitutional Council, the country's highest legal body, which holds final authority in verifying voting results, released definitive numbers on May 10 to confirm that Mr. Hollande will assume the nation's highest office.

Mr. Sarkozy remained President until May 15, and power was transferred formally via the traditional *passation de pouvoirs*.

In a show of national unity just after the elections, the current and soon-to-be Presidents appeared together at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris on May 8 to commemorate the anniversary of Victory in Europe Day. On that day in 1945, World War II was declared officially over.

Mr. Hollande's first trip outside of Europe will bring him to the United States, when beginning on May 18 he will travel first to Washington for a working meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama and for the G8 Summit, then to Chicago to participate in the NATO Summit on May 20 and 21.

The latter conference will bring together more than 60 heads of state and their delegations to discuss "security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area," according to the military organization's official website.

For more information on the 2012 Presidential election, its results, and what's next, please visit www.franceintheus.org.

France Awards Legion of Honor to D-Day Medic

▲ On Sunday, February 26, a veteran of the United States Army who had deployed in the D-Day invasion of France's Normandy coast was made a Knight of the Legion of Honor, France's highest award.

At age 92, Marion Gray, of Groveport, Ohio, was bestowed with the medal by Graham Paul, Consul General of France in Chicago.

Mr. Gray was serving as a combat medic in the 29th Infantry Division when his unit was called to participate in the first of several operations to liberate occupied France. At just 24, Mr. Gray saw action as a part of the first wave of U.S. troops that charged the beaches on June 6, 1944, against some of the worst possible weather and military conditions.

Delivered to the beaches by boat, as close as possible without straying within range of the guns perched on the cliffs above, Allied soldiers faced a jump into a freezing, violent tide and swim the remaining distance to the beach.

The young soldier managed to get to shore only after struggling through the

surf with heavy, soaked gear. The same difficulties caused many of his fellow fighters to drown even before reaching solid ground.

Once on land, Mr. Gray searched frantically for any cover from enemy fire, then immediately turned to administer aid to the numerous wounded around him.

The soldier was then struck by a bullet—but continued giving first aid. Once those nearest him had been attended to, Mr. Gray, armed with only a helmet and his field medicine bag, struggled to advance toward the wounded that lay prostrate ahead. He was struck a second time.

Of the 126 men in his company that fought on D-Day, Mr. Gray recalled, only 18 were neither killed nor wounded. And Mr. Gray didn't stop after the Normandy invasion. Following a month in an army hospital, Mr. Gray volunteered to return to the front as part of the campaign to liberate Saint-Lô, another Normandy town.

His reason for doing so was courageous and simple: "My men needed me."



Normandy combat vet and medic, Marion Gray.

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French Film Still a Global Player, New U.S. Book Says

France, the birthplace of cinema, has long played an important role in its history. As Tim Palmer's new book, *Brutal Intimacy: Analyzing Contemporary French Cinema*, demonstrates, France is still a heavy hitter in the now Hollywood-dominated industry.

Mr. Palmer's book examines various themes found in modern French cinema, a discipline extremely pertinent given the success of *The Artist* and other films such as *Hugo* and *La Vie en Rose*. Key trends in the French industry that Mr. Palmer highlights include the growing number of French women filmmakers and the importance of first-time filmmakers.

An essential component of the book are interviews with big names in French cinema. Directors and stars such as Claire Denis, Bruno Dumont, and Vincent Cassel weigh in on the development of modern French cinema into the industry it is today. The book argues that "twenty-first-century French cinema is one of the most expansively interesting in the world." This year's award season shows that many agree.

French Frigate Helps Celebrate "NOLA Navy Week"

From April 17-23, the French frigate FS *Germinal*, led by Commander Sébastien Chatelain, arrived in New Orleans to celebrate NOLA Navy Week. The event was held in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the state of Louisiana, which has had a long history with France and French culture.

At the event, Commander Chatelain and Consul General Jean-Claude Brunet bestowed the medal of Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur (Knight of the Legion of Honor), France's highest distinction, upon WWII veteran Leon C. Standifer. Mr. Standifer served in the 9th Infantry Division and has a Purple Heart and other honors for his service during the U.S. campaigns in northern France and the Alsace region.



© Marine française

Parc André-Citroën Marks 20 Years with New Expansion

▲ The Parc André-Citroën, situated on the banks of the River Seine in Paris, will be marking its 20th birthday with the unveiling of an ambitious remodeling and expansion effort to be completed by the summer of 2013. The park, a stone's throw away from the Eiffel Tower, is a contemporary landscape with postmodern art and architecture combining geometric design with aquatic elements.

The 3.9 million euro plan to rejuvenate the park involves increasing recreational capacity and turning the park into a more family-friendly space. The west side of the park is specifically dedicated to picnics and a playground equipped with swings and table tennis facilities will be installed for children. The number of benches and chess tables will also increase, and food stalls will be added.

Roughly three-quarters of the expanded space will feature plant life, with various sections of the park incorporating different varieties of plants. Throughout the park certain gardens are dedicated to styles of landscaping, such as the six Serial Gardens that consist of one color combined with a related metal, planet, week, and water feature.

The renewal efforts will inject new energy into an already bustling tourism zone. A favorite spot of locals and Eiffel Tower visitors alike, the park, situated where the original Citroën car factory once stood, features a hot-air balloon station, which takes sightseers some 500 feet above the Parisian skyline. From there visitors can take in a panoramic view of the entire city, including some of its best-known landmarks such as Sacre Cœur and Notre Dame.



© Wikimedia Commons

The Parc André-Citroën once hosted a car factory.

interview with the expert

Christine Fages, Political Counselor



© Sylvain de Gelder

▲ It's an election year in both France and the United States. Keeping tabs on each is **Christine Fages**, diplomat and political specialist at the French embassy in Washington. *News From France* asked her to examine similarities and contrasts between two systems that are in some ways alike, and in others wholly different. To see a comparative study on French and U.S. electoral processes, please visit www.franceintheus.org.

You've been to town hall meetings, rallies and stump speeches. What strikes you as unique in American politics? How does this inform your work day-to-day?

What is interesting in the United States is the way people want to hear everything candidates have to say about all the subjects or issues, and really study what they are listening to. People who follow the campaigns, follow them very closely. They see every candidate, just to observe—and then they form an opinion. This is very characteristic, I think, of the United States.

What are some differences between the French and American political models?

I think there is a different scale because, of course, the United States is a huge country, so if you want to rally around all the voters, you have to tour the country. And it is huge, compared with France. At home we rely more on what we know about the candidates already. It's not a question of what will they say today about a given issue. It's more about the political program of the party and the way you position yourself on this program. That's the difference.

What about U.S. politics took the most getting used to when you arrived in Washington?

The political process, I would say. The way [Congress] works is quite different from the French system. You need to know the law-making process, you need to understand the constitutional issues. The background knowledge you can have of the system helps you identify the appropriate contacts and to ask the right questions in order to be able to inform Paris about what at stake beyond the issue of the day.


What about French politics do you think deserves to be better-known in the U.S.?

One thing I think that is not well understood in the U.S. is *la laïcité* [secularism]. It's the way the French deal with religion, the way the state and religion are separate. France and the United States share aspects of this in common: they fiercely defend freedom of religion.

Sometimes *laïcité* is understood as being against religion, while for us *laïcité* allows everyone to have the religion he wants without having the state interfering. France and the U.S. have two solutions for the same goal. It may not be the same way of functioning, but the objective is the same: freedom of religion.

Let's talk about one of your professional projects. You helped found Femmes et Diplomatie, a group that aims at improving the career path of women diplomats in France's Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. Why the group, and what does its future look like?

Femmes et Diplomatie was created by young women from the foreign ministry who noticed that it was more difficult for women to have a career. When you looked at the highest positions in the ministry, they were held mostly by men, so we decided it was time for us to organize and advocate for issues we felt were important.

The objective of the association is to attain the same proportion of women in the ministry's leadership as in its lower ranks. The group feels that having qualified women in the leadership is a good thing for an organization, and would enhance the efficiency of the ministry. It's important that we have the chance to contribute to that. 

Richmond Celebrates 20th Annual French Film Festival

▲ The capital of Virginia welcomed French cinema for the 20th anniversary of Richmond's annual French Film Festival. Hosted by Virginia Commonwealth University and the University of Richmond, the event brought together the best of new French cinema. Held from March 29 to April 1, the festival included more than twenty full-length feature films and short films, alongside a symposium with French film industry specialists.

A range of genres were represented by the movies screened. Thrillers included works like *Poupoupidou*, about a crime novelist and a singer who believes she is Marilyn Monroe reincarnated. In the drama category *Des Vents Contraires* (Headwinds) about a husband's struggles after the sudden disappearance of his wife, starring internationally renowned French star Audrey Tautou. Also showcased was the award-winning *Le Havre*, a film about a shoeshiner who tries to save a sick immigrant child. The film received the honor of "Best Film" from the International Federation of Film Critics Prize at the Cannes Film Festival.

In a look at the smaller things in life, *Microcosmos: Le Peuple de l'Herbe* (Microcosmos: The People of the Grass), a feature-length documentary directed by Claude Nurisany and Marie Pérennou about the earth's microscopic land and water creatures, was also for viewing.

Short films featured at the festival were *Dans Le Cadre* (In the Frame), which follows the story of an aging actress attending her first audition in years, and *The Old Santiago and the Sea*, a cartoon about a fisherman that plays on the title of the famous Ernest Hemingway novella.

Peter Kirkpatrick, professor of French and Film Stud-



Isabelle Huppert stars in "The Sea Wall," a colonial-era story of natural and cultural forces in 1930s Cambodia.

ies at Virginia Commonwealth University, commented, "Many of France's biggest stars and directors have participated in the French Film Festival over the years and, in turn, we have introduced Richmond and the rest of the country to some incredible French films, many of which debuted in the United States at the festival."

In Atlanta, French Illustrator Urges "Cartooning for Peace"

▲ Peace comes in many forms, and in Atlanta, that form is cartoons. The inaugural symposium of Cartooning for Peace-America, a non-profit operating in the city since 2010, took place at Emory University from March 28-30 with a focus on health, politics and peace. Illustrators and experts from around the world were invited to join in discussions on topics such as bioethics and the creative process in public health.

The three-day event brought together 18 illustrators for three days to examine the changing role of political cartooning in the global press. The director of Emory's Center for Ethics led a panel on the relation between illustrating, bioethics and environmental health. Ricardo Gutiérrez, director of Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the university, lectured on freedom of expression and press in Latin America. In attendance were a number of Latin American artists.



Well-known political cartoonist Plantu encouraged social commentary through drawing at a recent conference.

The brainchild of Plantu, a prominent French cartoonist best known for his work in *Le Monde*, Cartooning for Peace is an initiative begun in October 2006 with the support of the United Nations.

Their credo is summed up by former Secretary General Kofi's Annan's statement at the first Cartooning for Peace conference in 2006: "Cartoons make us laugh. Without them, our lives would be much sadder. But they are no laughing matter: they have the power to inform, and also to offend."

Through their conferences, the organization seeks to promote improved understanding and mutual respect between populations of different beliefs and cultures so that political cartoons become more universal. The ultimate goal is that artists become more sensitive to their significance in the global forum and the associated effects—and opportunities to make society better.

"Visio-Disco" Mixes Music and Art in Francophonie Fest

On Friday, April 13, the National Portrait Gallery's Kogod Courtyard turned into a vibrant night spot with "Visio-Disco: A Remix of Music and Art." In collaboration with the Alliance Française, the Smithsonian Institution and the Wallonie-Bruxelles Theater, the event featured a Belgian performance art group, French composer-performer Koudlam, and Washington-area DJ, The Pinstriped Rebel. The night marked the culmination of the Francophonie Culture Festival (see page 4). The Brussels-based performance art group, called t.r.a.n.s.i.t.s.c.a.p.e, styles themselves an "interdisciplinary collective." They combine dance, live music and on-stage painting for an other-worldly show titled "Urban Distortions." As the evening's main artistic draw, their set included a pair of giant pill-shaped plastic bubbles, in each of which a pair of dancers responded to music with steps both choreographed and improvised. The dance routines are likewise inspired by "discontinuity and fragmentation, offering audiences a new form of contemporary fable," according to the group's website.

Detroit Expat Blog Tells of "Two Frenchies in the D"

For French expats Helene Bienvenue and Nora Mandray, Detroit is much more than "the city of Robocop, Eminem, [and] Motown." Funded by the French Film Institute to write and direct a documentary about the city, the duo's accompanying blog *Detroit, Je T'aime* has gained an impressive amount of support from both Detroiters and the international community, with over 800 likes on Facebook. Their main aim: to keep a positive image for Detroit.

Founded by the Frenchman Laumet de La Mothe, Sieur de Cadillac—the man behind the car—over 300 years ago, Detroit today is hard-hit by recession. For Bienvenue and Mandray, however, the metropolis is a "blank canvas" with a myriad of possibilities. Highlighting the local ingenuity and resources Detroiters are currently using, their blog covers such topics as urban farming and community sustainability. By focusing on this inventiveness, the pair believes that Detroit can both make a positive transition into the and become an example for urban hubs to come. Check out the blog at the address www.detroitjetaime.com.

La Fête de la Francophonie Lights Up the District



From March 6 to April 15, the 12th annual Fête de la Francophonie (Francophone Cultural Festival) was held in Washington, D.C.

The six-week event is the largest festival in the U.S. celebrating the diversity of Francophone culture through performances, art and culinary delights. This

year's celebrations were hosted by the Embassy of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in partnership with The Smithsonian Associates, the Alliance Française the French-American Cultural Foundation and several other Washington-based institutions. Held over six weeks, the series involved 35 participating embassies that organized the vibrant array of festivities.

pher through documentaries, short fictions, video essays, and animations. Haitian playwright Guy Régis, Jr. presented one of his most recent pieces, *Moi, Fardeau Inhérent* (The Burden Within). A rendition of Eugène Ionesco's satirical comedy *La Cantatrice Chauve* (The Bald Soprano) amused audiences on March 21.

Participants shared and appreciated works by Congolese novelist Alain Mabanckou, Lebanese author Alexandre Najjar, and French writer Sylvie Germain at literary salons held throughout the festival.

Introducing “Les Petits” to French Culture

Younger Francophiles also took in the excitement. Famous Québécoise children's book author Annie Groovie joined educators from the Alliance Française to introduce French to kids in innovative ways. Annie told the story of Cyclops Léon, the hero in one of her many books, and showed children how to create their own heroes. La Maison Française also featured a family film based on the well-known European comic character, “Titeuf.”

Washington Toasts French Heritage in Style

Among all of the appealing offerings, La Grande Fête de la Francophonie, held on March 23, returned as a highly anticipated event on the Washington diplomatic social calendar. Held at the Embassy of France, the sold-out soirée invited the public to travel the Francophone world through traditional crafts and cuisines. French-speaking embassies presented their native dishes and heritage to eager attendees, and a live concert made for a joyful ambiance as revelers danced into the night.

Renowned artists such as Maria de Barros performed as part of the festivities this year. De Barros, whose style blends African, French, Spanish, and Latin influences, wooed the crowd at La Maison Française on March 22. The following week on March 31, folk Québécois group Genticorum brought their flutes, fiddles, and vocal harmonies to a musical boil at the National History Museum.



© Sylvain de Gelder

Flavors from the Francophone World

While flavors from all over the French-speaking world were showcased at the series, special exclusive events brought Moroccan and Belgian cuisine to the real foodies in D.C. Fatema Hal, the French-based “Queen of Moroccan cuisine,” offered a rich assortment of concoctions featuring signature Moroccan spices at the Embassy of France. In recognition of the Year of Gastronomy in Belgium, chef Paul Fourrier presented a bountiful array of Belgian pastries, meats and croquettes at the Atrium Café of the National History Museum, a Smithsonian location.

Ending the festivities with a bang was Visio-Disco, a contemporary show blending music and performance art that brought together Washington-based artists with distinguished performers from Belgium and France (see p. 3).

Each year, La Fête de la Francophonie unites French-speaking embassies in Washington D.C. to engage the community with the full diversity of Francophone societies. The festival celebrates not only Franco-American diplomatic relations, but also the continuing cultural exchange among Francophone countries—and with the world at large.

Connecting Cultures through the Visual Arts

Several films engaged attendees at the series, notably Jérôme Sequin's documentary tracing the life of author Maryse Condé from Guadeloupe, and director Rithy Panh's *Un Barrage Contre Le Pacifique* (The Sea Wall), an adaptation of Marguerite Duras's novel about a French woman's battle to

survive in her community in 1930s Indochina (now Vietnam).

Director Laurent Salgues's *Dreams of Dust*, a Sundance Film Festival selection telling the tale of a Nigerian peasant's journey to a gold-mining village in Burkina Faso, and *La Faute à Rousseau* (Blame it On Rousseau), directed by Pierre Maillard, among other films were also featured at the festival. In Maillard's film, fifteen directors paid homage to the French Enlightenment philoso-



© Sylvain de Gelder

Clockwise from top left: Partygoers admire full moon over La Maison Française; Guests came from all over the Francophone world, including these Swiss youths, to partake in the festivities; Musicians fueled the fun at La Grande Fête de la Francophonie; Consul Général Olivier Serot-Alméras donned an apron for the French food line.

Broad Array of French Companies Push for Global Reach

▲ In the face of high global demand, French companies are expanding operations overseas in sectors such as agribusiness, aeronautics, pharmaceuticals, and information technology, among others. French firms today are experiencing heightened success by providing technology and expertise within global markets that offer them immense room for growth.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), France's net outflow of foreign direct investment totaled \$84.1 billion in 2010.

A recent survey has shown that a large majority of French business executives rate international development as a key strategic priority for growth. Jean-Michel Huet, Associate Director at prominent business consulting firm BearingPoint, acknowledges that the main purpose of firms seeking to increase their international presence is "to create new markets, establish commercial activities and find new resources-energy, brains, sources of finance and so on."

French innovation abroad is especially developing in the environment, energy, and information and communications technology (ICT) fields. The increasing global presence of French enterprises can be felt in a diverse range of industries, from financial services and transportation to gastronomy and construction.

While major French groups like Électricité de France (EDF) and Total help to meet the world's energy needs and others like Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy (LVMH) satiate global demand for luxury goods, companies like Bouygues and Orange continue to lead in global telecommunications.

French businesses have embraced the potential to increase competitiveness through international expansion. Thierry Courtaigne, Vice President and Director General of MEDEF International, a firm that represents the interests of top French businesses and corporations worldwide, said, "Globalization is a reality and French companies have to place their investments in buoyant markets."



The neighborhood of La Défense is Paris's primary business district. Many French businesses have made a priority of developing their activities internationally, with recent figures ranking France the world's third-largest international investor.

French Eco-Businesses Growing, In-Country and Abroad

▲ In the past decade, French "eco-industries," or environmentally-friendly sectors, have become a force to be reckoned with in the French economy. Protecting the environment has surfaced as a key issue in France, and the French government has encouraged the emergence of "green" industries by promoting their visibility and strength in the export sector.

The French Environment and Energy Management Agency (ADEME) ranks France as the fourth-largest eco-industry market worldwide. French eco-businesses now employ approximately 300,000 people in France and are projected to add 10,000 to 15,000 jobs annually in coming years.

On average, French eco-industries spend 3 percent of their revenue on research and development. The French government has also allocated a total of 6 billion euros for the development of green industries. In response, French companies have shown a significant amount of green initiative that has increased their competitive advantage globally. Research has focused primarily in the fields of biofuels, sources of alternative energy, water and waste management, and energy storage. Innovations include gas treatment plants for incineration and a technique to bind gas molecules to solids to clean post-industrial emissions.

France has also taken its green-technology expertise abroad. In the Chinese city of Wuhan, many of the

80 French companies that have invested in the area have adopted green technologies. In Shanghai, where China is looking to mitigate the effects of heavy industry, French companies have introduced efficient and eco-friendly manufacturing techniques to the highly industrial area.



The French ecology ministry says eco-industries stand to create some 10,000-15,000 jobs in France annually.

French-Run Nightlife Booming in New York City

New Yorkers are painting the town red à la Française, from champagne brunches to fashionable clubs with impossibly selective door policies. In New York, where music, art and entertainment are constantly reinvented, French-style partying is the new cool.

Celebrities from both sides of the Atlantic mingled with artists, musicians, and bohemians in early January to celebrate the highly anticipated opening of Le Baron, on 32 Mulberry Street. The establishment is an extension of its namesake bar in the eighth arrondissement of Paris and is the newest place to see and be seen.

Establishments like Le Bain, located at the Standard Hotel, and Red Egg in the city's Chinatown area are also drawing not only elite French cliques but crowds eager to experience the exclusive, intimate club atmosphere of French nightlife as well. Andre Balázs, owner of the Standard Hotel, said, "It was a very conscious effort to bring French night life to New York." The end result is New York cool with a French touch.

French Wine and Spirits Exports Hit Record Sales

French liquor exports reached record-high sales of 10 billion euros in 2011, a 10.5 percent increase from 2010, according to the French Federation of Wine and Spirits Exporters. Despite an increase in prices, exports of trademark French alcohols have seen boosts in both the United States and Asia over the past year.

Europe remains the largest market for French wine, but demand has especially increased in the Asian sector. Sales to China, Hong Kong, Japan, and Singapore in 2011 collectively accounted for 29 percent of the total increase in French wine exports, and exports to the Asian market hit 2.5 billion euros. After the United States and Britain, China is the third-largest importer of French alcohol.

European countries imported a total of 4.1 billion euros of French wine in 2011 (up 3 percent from 2010), and North and South America imported 2.1 billion euros of French wine this past year, a 9 percent increase.

French wine has remained a strong export despite the rough waters of global finance. Louis Fabrice Retour, president of the federation, said, "The sector has weathered the [last few years] fairly well." With a total trade surplus of 8.6 billion euros (\$11.4 billion), the French wine and spirits industry is a significant contributor to France's trade balance.

Burger Chic: Paris's Coolest Clamor for Classic U.S. Meal

Served everywhere from gourmet food trucks to trendy al fresco steak houses, burgers have become all the rage at stylish eateries all over Paris. The restaurants are in stiff competition over perfectly grilled authentic American-style cheeseburgers and unique creations with French flavors.

Floréal, a hip restaurant along the Canal Saint-Martin, serves up burgers with rich cream cheese in a Hollywood-inspired setting.

Big Fernand on rue de Faubourg-Poissonnière pairs their burgers with French cheeses like tome de Savoie and chèvre Sainte-Maure.

Les Crocs de L'Ogre on avenue Bosquet has replaced the traditional toasted bun with hearty potato pancakes.

Former "Top Chef" Brice Morvent has also delved into the American original, serving his sliders with sesame, pistachio, and slices of comté cheese at his restaurant Au Comptoir de Brice on rue Bouchardon.

For serious hamburger connoisseurs, Maison Mère on rue de Navarin keeps it simple with its classic cheeseburger cooked to perfect juicy pinkness.

International Community Pledges Reforms on Water

The world has pledged that it's "time for solutions" when it comes to water.

The sixth annual World Water Forum (WWF) that took place in Marseille on March 20 brought together 173 countries in a display of dedication to environmental reform. Attended by over 7,000 participants, the conference stressed the importance of conservation and commitment to change. Building upon the fifth WWF in Istanbul in 2009, the conference increased the number of signatures to the Istanbul Pact to over 1,000.

The agreement calls for signatories to dedicate themselves to sustainable management and good governance of water resources. Since the conference, over 100 different pledges to eco-friendliness have been made.

Continuing with the theme of sustainability and water management, various museums throughout France are showcasing various art exhibits on the topic. The displays represent the past, present, and future of water as an international issue.

Agricultural Exposition Takes Center Stage in Paris

▲ The *Salon International de l'Agriculture* in Paris, held from February 28 to March 4 this year, is one of the largest stomping grounds for agricultural connoisseurs in the world. First organized in 1870, the exhibition brought together the best of French agricultural products and regional cuisine.

As the second largest exhibition in Paris held at the Porte de Versailles convention center, the location is divided into four sections, each showcasing a different aspect of French agriculture. The four sections of the event were 1) animals, 2) gastronomy in France and abroad, 3) crops and plant sectors, and 4) agricultural services and professions. Each provided visitors the opportunity to learn more about French agriculture and regional diversity.

This year's exhibition mascot was Valentine, a 7-year old Gascon cow from the Haute-Gasconne region of southwest France. She was awarded the highest honor for the Gascon breed, and was shown off throughout the exposition.

Considered the most important part of the event, the *Concours Général Agricole* (General Agricultural Competition) selects the best of French goods. Although over 20,000 products are tasted in 21 different

categories, less than one-fourth of them are awarded one of the coveted bronze, silver, or gold medals. The win offers bragging rights and a significant commercial boost: the awards are labeled on the front of the product for the following year.



Gascon cows like these won top honors at the annual *Salon International de l'Agriculture* in Paris this spring.

A Hundred & One Ways to Picture Independent Journalism

▲ For the past 25 years, Reporters Sans Frontières (Reporters Without Borders) has been advocating for freedom of the press throughout the world. To honor this organization, the Consulate General of France in Boston, in conjunction with the Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University, hosted a photo exhibit entitled "101 Photos for Press Freedom" from March 21 to April 30 at the Art Institute of Boston.

The exhibit showcased 101 photos taken from 1947 to the present, highlighting press freedom as a democratic value.

The photos were gathered by the Paris-based Magnum Photo Agency, one of the foremost names

in contemporary photography, through donations by its members.

A panel discussion with three award-winning photojournalists was also held with Thomas Dworzak, Antoine D'Agata, and Susan Meiselas speaking about the role and importance of independent journalism. The panel was moderated by New York Times reporter Alex Kershaw, best-selling author of *The Life and Times of Robert Capa*, the biography of the famed Hungarian photojournalist.

Speaking about the event, Mr. Christophe Guilhou, the Consul General of France in Boston, said, "The Consulate of France is happy to have contributed to this exquisite photo exhibition. Not only do these pictures brilliantly illustrate the big issues of today's world, but they also invite viewers to reflect upon freedom of expression, to which France and the United States are committed."



© Susan Meiselas/Magnum



© Abbas/Magnum

The Consulate of France in Boston celebrated "101 Photos for Press Freedom" from March 21 to April 30. Left, a Sandanista fighter in 1979 by Susan Meiselas. Right, Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami in a self-credited 1997 photo.

New Website Opens Window to French Literature's Finest

▲ Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus often come to mind when thinking of famous modern French authors. FranceLivre, a new online portal published in April by France's National Center for Books, is looking to expand your French-lit vocabulary with their new online portal that brings the country's best contemporary literature to the mostly anglophone internet.

The new web location acts to promote new French literature, as well as figures from all sides of related industries. It is divided into five categories according to profession: publisher, author, translator, bookseller and librarian. Each section offers a gold mine of information on professional services, partner institutions and groups that, with the site as a shared resource, can work together to keep France's book world going strong.

And that's not to say FranceLivre is focused only on French works, only in France. The site stresses its commitment to "fairness and reciprocity" as it tries to advance "French literature on the international stage and foreign literature in France in return." Recent posts have included a profile of the book business in Senegal and the evolution of exporting French books to franco-phone and non-franco-phone countries alike.

A part of the Ministry of Culture and Communication, the National Center for Books has since 1946 worked to "support all actors in the book publishing chain, including authors, broadcasters, publishers, bookshops, libraries, and literary events organizers," according to the site. The agency offers some 42 million euros each year in subsidies, credits, grants and zero-interest loans.

For weekly updates and information for all those interested in learning more about France's life of literature, check out www.FranceLivre.org.



© International Book Centre

Meant for book lovers and industry professionals both, the new FranceLivre.org promotes literature at all levels.

French Film Exposition Arrives at AFI Silver Theatre

▲ The AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center in Silver Spring, Maryland offered a one-week film series called "Rendez-Vous with French Cinema" from March 3-8. Six French films were shown and followed by a Q&A session with Vincent Lindon, the French star of *Pater*.

A leading exposition of French cinema, the event is hosted annually at the Film Society of Lincoln Center. The event began in New York and continued on in Washington, D.C., three days later. Via a new digital distribution company called Emerging, which wirelessly links theaters throughout the country, the films were also shown at over 50 venues across the country at the same time as their showings at Lincoln Center. Each of the films originally came out in France in 2011, and some are being shown for the first time in the United States.

A range of genres were presented, from period pieces to updated classics. This year's AFI showcase included *La Permission de Minuit* (Moon Child), *Pater*, *The Screen Illusion*, *Dernière Séance* (Last Screening), *Les Chants de Mandarin* (Smugglers' Songs), and *La Fille de Puisatier* (The Well-Digger's Daughter).

The critically acclaimed *Pater* is an account of French power politics, with Alain Cavalier both directing and starring in the role of a fictional French president while Vincent Lindon plays the prime minister. *Moon Child* is a sentimental piece about the relationship between a young boy afflicted by a rare genetic deficiency which makes him unable to tolerate sunlight. *The Well-Digger's Daughter* is a moving romance, while *Smugglers' Songs* is an enchanting period piece about Louis Mandrin, an 18th-century French folk



© Les Films Alain Sarde

"The Well-Digger's Daughter" was one of many films shown at the yearly "Rendez-Vous with French Cinema."

hero and bandit. *Last Screening* is a gripping psychological thriller.

The diverse collection of films concluded with *The Screen Illusion*, an adaptation of Pierre Corneille's 17th-century tragicomedy about the search for a missing young man.

Catherine Deneuve to Receive Award in New York



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The Film Society of Lincoln Center is hosting an evening dedicated to one of France's most celebrated actresses, Catherine Deneuve. Joining the likes of past honorees Meryl Streep and Elizabeth Taylor, Ms. Deneuve was honored at the 39th annual Chaplin Award Gala on April 2 at New York's Alice Tully Hall. This event is the Film Society's largest annual fundraiser and benefits the group's programs, including its trade publication, *Film Comment*.

Over the course of her career, Ms. Deneuve has been nominated for one Academy Award, eleven Césars (France's Oscar equivalent) and a host of other prestigious film honors. One of France's most recognizable figures, she has acted in over 100 films. In the United States she is known for her work in classics such as *Indochine*, *Belle de Jour*, and *Le Dernier Métro*.

Disneyland Paris Celebrates Twenty Years

Disneyland is a magical playground for both young and old alike, and on April 12 France's version of the American theme park turned 20, but celebrated with a birthday on March 31. Much like the pyramid at the Louvre, the park faced some initial criticism but has since become a much-loved destination. In fact, more than half of the visitors are now French, a growing trend in the last decade.

Celebrities such as actor Jean Reno and soccer star Zinedine Zidane turned out for the big day. In celebration, the park had a special train carrying Disney characters to Sleeping Beauty's palace, the center point of the grounds and location of the new parade. The event also showcased the new night-time show, *Disney Dreams*, which included special effects, fireworks, 3D videos and a water display. To carry on the festivities, there will also be extended hours from April to September.



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Embassy Expo Remembers Holocaust Diarist and Victim

▲ For the first ten days of March at the French Embassy in Washington, D.C., an exhibit commemorated the diary of H el ene Berr, a Jewish Parisian who perished in the Holocaust. Her diary provides a poignant look at life under increasing deprivations, from Vichy laws until her arrest in March 1944. Ms. Berr was later deported to Auschwitz and died at Bergen-Belsen five days before the camp's liberation.

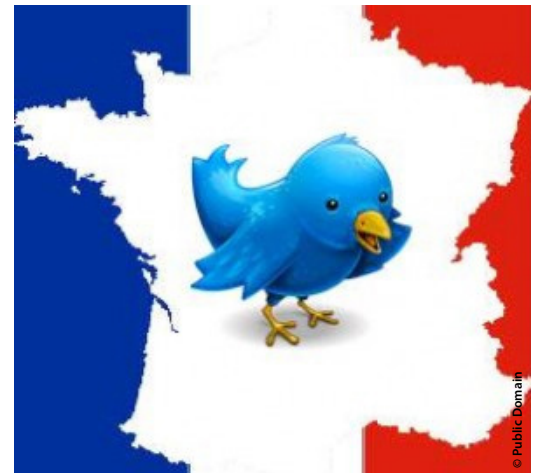
Organized by the M emorial de la Shoah, based in Paris, the traveling exhibition was later installed at the United Nations headquarters in New York City. One of the rare written records of Jewish life in Occupied France, Ms. Berr's work provides a unique opportunity to understand her hardships and honor her memory.



© The H el ene Berr Family

Published in 2008 after years of a friend's safekeeping, *The Diary of H el ene Berr* details life in Occupied France.

Embassy Holds Its First Q&A Conference on Twitter



The Q&A event is part of a foreign ministry-wide push to expand France's presence on leading social networks.

▲ In a first-of-its-kind event on March 12, the Embassy of France invited the public to ask questions of Luis Vassy, spokesman and head of its Press and Communications office, on the prominent social network Twitter using the hashtag #askfrance, by which users can plug in to the conversation. Participants responded with inquiries on both French policy and information on France more broadly. Subjects ranged from how to apply to the Sorbonne to violence in Syria, and from the Arab Spring events to France's role in aiding post-earthquake Haiti. Longer questions and comments were also taken via the embassy's Facebook page, including various questions on France's role in the international community and the French-American relationship. Confined to the 140 character limit on Twitter, Mr. Vassy's responses were short and to the point, and he encouraged those interested in applying to French universities to go to www.campusfrance.org.