

NEWS AND NOTES

LOST & FOUND

Found: Three small figurines carved of ivory from mammoth tusks have been found apoloized cave in southwestern Germany, providing stronger evidence that human ancestors were already adept at figurative art more than 30,000 years ago. One of the pieces is the oldest known representation of a bird, which resembles a cormorant or a duck. The others appear to be the head of a horse and a figure half-man, half-animal. None is longer than an inch.

Exhumed: Italian and American scientists will exhume the remains of 49 members of the Medici clan, the powerful Renaissance merchant family that ruled Tuscany, to study what they ate and what illnesses they suffered.

The two-year project is unusual because it concerns an elite group of people for whom there already is a vast amount of documentation. That information could be compared with any new scientific findings. Lots has been done on crypts of monks, but nobody has ever worked on a royal population. The medical history will trace the painful arthritic disease gout that the Medicis suffered, a genetic predisposition but also compounded by a meat-based diet.

Stolen: Souvenir-hunting thieves have stolen part of an ancient fresco from the Israeli archeological site of Masada, removing a 6-inch-square section of the fresco that decorated the ancient Roman headquarters of Masada, located on a barren mountain overlooking the Dead Sea.

Lost: An Indian mob has destroyed 30,000 ancient manuscripts and rioted in retaliation for Oxford University Press publishing a book about a Hindu king.

The incident was sparked by an allegedly objectionable observation by author and teacher James Laine in a book on the parentage of Maratha warrior king Shivaji.

In the process, he paints a new and more complex picture of Hindu-Muslim relations from the seventeenth century to the present.

The controversy had seemed to have been resolved when Mr Laine apologized last month for his statements on Shivaji. The book's publisher, Oxford University Press, withdrew the book from the market.

But soon after, thousands of rare Sanskrit manuscripts, ancient books and palm leaf inscriptions were destroyed in half an hour as 250 protesters ransacked the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

One of the worst losses includes a clay tablet dating back to the Assyrian civilisation of 600BC. The protesters, members of a group called Sambhaji Brigade, pelted stones and broke glass at the institute. Some

cut the telephone lines so the police could not be contacted. Police have arrested 72 people for the vandalism.

Saved: Mies van der Rohe's legendary Farnsworth House was saved in a Sotheby's auction by preservationists, paying \$7.5 million. The National Trust will operate the house along with the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois. The house was sold by Lord Palumbo, a British arts patron and former chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain.

Found: Two sketches by Michelangelo have been found by the Prado art museum, languishing in a storage room. The modest drawings of a shoulder and a man's arm are studies for the "Last Judgment", part of a set of eight drawings donated to the museum in 1930. Purported to be by Michelangelo and his school, they had never been studied or published until now.

BEST SHOWS OF 2003

The International Association of Art Critics/USA in a ceremony on 12 January at the Japan Society presented their annual awards, voted on by the nearly 400 members of the organization, recognizing exceptional work by artists, curators, critics, scholars, cultural institutions and others. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art received awards of excellence for 1) Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle (Guggenheim); 2) Matisse/Picasso, a collaboration between the Museum of Modern Art and museums in London and France as best thematic museum show organized in New York, and 3) Manet/Velazquez: The French Taste for Spanish Painting, organized by the Metropolitan Museum, as best historical show. "Kazimir Malevich: Suprematism", organized by the Menil Collection of Houston and the Guggenheim Foundation in New York, was the best monographic museum show organized nationally, and "Dia: Beacon", organized by the Dia Center for the Arts in Beacon, NY was the best thematic museum show organized nationally.

MUSEUMS

Museo Picasso has opened in Malaga, a melange of buildings that combines new structures with a carefully restored 16th-century Andalusian palace, the Palacio de uenavista. 204 works spanning Picasso's long career in the permanent collection, coming from two of Picasso's heirs: Christine Ruiz-Picasso and her son, Bernard. www.museopicassomalaga.org

Year Dali 2004 is being celebrated in Catalonia, with the big revelatory exhibition "Dali: Mass Culture" at the Caixa Forum thorough 23 May and then to Madrid, St. Petersburg, FL and Rotterdam. Other shows include Dali's Land, Dali and Lorca, Dali and Optical Illusions, and Dalimitating, a look at his influence on later artists. For more information, go to www.dali2004.org

The **Metropolitan Museum of Art** is expanding its gallery space to the tune of \$180 million to display some of its ancient Greek and Roman artworks and objects, as well as 12,000 objects of Islamic art dating from the 7th to the 19th centuries and spanning Muslim cultures from Spain to India.

The **Guggenheim Museum** has given Richard Serra a \$20 million commission to produce and install a room-size installation of monumental steel sculptures to be ready in June 2005 for the Guggenheim in Bilbao, Spain.

The **Museum of Fine Arts, Boston** has rented out 21 Impressionist paintings from its incomparable collection of 36 by Claude Monet to PaperBall, proprietor of a store at the upscale Bellagio hotel and casino in Las Vegas. PaperBall is operated by Pace Wildenstein in New York. The buzz is that the MFA will reap a \$1 million from this venture.

•Museum restoration is now being considered for fragile artifacts by using a digital camera and the computer.

•The Tate has acquired the controversial Barry Joule collection of material related to Francis Bacon. This comprises 1,200 items, including photographs and documents, which were given to neighbor Joule a few days before the artist's death. Initially the Bacon Estate questioned its authenticity and even its ownership. Valued at around £20 million, it is probably the Tate Archive's most important acquisition.

RUSCHA IN MUSEUMS

Three months after MOCA in Los Angeles acquired Ed Ruscha's "Chocolate Room," a conceptual installation that covers walls of an entire room with shingle-like sheets of chocolate-coated paper, Ruscha has given 456 photographs and prints to New York's Whitney Museum of American Art, making the Whitney the principal repository of Ruscha's photographic works. The gift includes 343 vintage photographs—most shot on a 1961 tour of Europe—original prints from the artist's books and a few unpublished photographs. An exhibition will open at the museum on 24 June, along with an exhibition of Ruscha's drawings.

BARCODE ART

Barcodes are everywhere, coming to symbolize consumer culture itself. Artists have been using bar codes in their work since their advent in the late '60s, and a growing number of sites play with, comment on and even generate them. At www.barcodeart.com, Scott Blake, an Omaha artist, creates computerized portraits of celebrities in which each pixel is part of a bar code. The result is a sort of digital pointillism. His aim is to show celebrities have commodified themselves. For instance, his portrayal of Madonna uses bar codes from her CDs and books. He also invites visitors to bar-code themselves by entering personal data like age and weight.

MURALS

More than 400 murals from Chicago public schools have been restored, largely through the campaign to save this artwork by Heather Becker, chief executive of the Chicago Conservation Center. Tours are scheduled in Chicago to see these murals done during the WPA Period in the 1930s through 1943.

ANOTHER BIG BOOK

GOAT: A Tribute to Mohammad Ali (Taschen Books) is a 75-pouond, 792-page, 20-by-20-inch book packed with 600,000 words and 3,000 images. It is covered in silk and Louis Vuitton leather and is being bound at the rate of a few hundred copies a week. *GOAT*, by the way, stands for (Greatest of All Time), in a limited edition of 10,000, with nine thousand at \$3,000 and 1,000 with a sculpture by the artist Jeff Koon, to be sold for \$7,500. The plastic sculpture, which requires assembly, is a porpoise leaping over the book and an inflatable tire that are resting on a wooden stool. Whether it is a megabook, a piece of art or an object of desire, the goal is to sell it, according to Mr. Taschen.

Arts Online: Aids Archive Project

The Estate Project for Artists with AIDS has announced the online publication of its resources on composers and musicians with the disease

ENDANGERED LIST OF WORLD MONUMENTS GROWS FASTER

They cannot keep up with the list compiled every two years from sites nominated by individuals, preservation groups and government agencies. Antarctica has appeared for the first time on the 2004 list, as well as Perm 36, the only intact gulag in Russia. Included are the Ghazni minarets in Afghanistan as well as the Ennis Brown House in Los Angeles, one of Frank Lloyd Wright's landmark textile-block houses from the 1920s.

CENSORSHIP

The faculty art show at St. Louis community College's Meramec campus was under wraps with black plastic shrouds covering their work. The National Education Association's attorney sent a letter to the college calling its order that art teachers remove black plastic shrouds from their work "discrimination and censorship that is constitutionally impermissible." The NEA will sue the college, asking for a temporary restraining order allowing the covers to go back on for the show's last few days. In response, the college backed down, and for the last few days of the show, visitors were invited to lift the covers to see the work underneath. Seems the teachers were protesting the college's new formulate for calculating art faculty workloads, requiring them to put in more hours to earn the same salaries.

GRAFFITI

Orgosolo, in Sardinia, has an economy based on sheep and cheese, yet the town has become the capital of "murales" or graffitied walls including religious imagery, local disputes, hyper-realism, impressionism, political rallying cries and a fondness for Picasso in his Guernica period. Nudes cover the length of a back street. The graffiti artists ask before they paint and assent is rarely withheld. In fact, graffiti was a way of lobbying against the government and corruption. Since the artists use water-based paints, which crack and fade, the artists paint over the top, latter-day exponents of the twin Italian traditions of fresco painting and political protest.

Dateline: CANADA

Istvan Kantor (or Monty Kantor as some of us know him), well known in Canada since the 1970s, who makes videos and performance and sound and automated machinery, has recently been awarded the Governor-General's Award for visual art, but he has been attacked in the media by those who think he is a charlatan and an outrage and a waste of taxpayer's money. They cite only one item, the time in the early 1990s when he used his own blood in various performances. They cite his "intervention" in the grand Dadaist/Situationist tradition, in the National Gallery in Ottawa and again at MOMA in New York that involved throwing his own blood at the walls. For this he was expelled from the gallery and banned for life.

This particular act was not typical of Kantor's aggressive anti-authoritarian stance, and his work which distills rage and noise into terrifying and exciting performances, usually concentrating on a body struggling to be human in a world of technological repression. He founded the Machine Sex Action Group which appears naked, and then gets strapped up with wires and protheses so that they look like fleshy

robots. Then he also uses filing cabinets, an image of office banality, and also of information storage, which is important in his view of the world. The filing cabinet becomes a kind of monster in his robot installations.

DATELINE: Tokyo

The Ashiya City Museum of Art and History in Tokyo is threatened with closure or being sold. Famed for its collection of works from the avant-garde Gutai group, which was formed in Osaka in 1954, famed for their conceptual and performance art, the Ayisha Museum is being championed by Japanese film director, Kazuki Ohmori, best known in Japan for his Godzilla films. In spite of its dramatic announcement, the council has yet to set out a concrete plan for the museum's collection and archives after 2006. There is also an online petition to save the museum drawing support from artists, collectors, and curators. The future of the museum now stands in the balance. If you are interested in signing the petition, see <http://www.petitiononline.com/ashiya/petition.html>

MOST ENDANGERED ARCHITECTURAL SITE

The World Monuments Fund has now listed the Great Wall in China as the world's most endangered architectural site.

Dateline: LONDON

Emma Kay's personal evocation of the story of art in a 10-hour animation is being seen at the Tate Modern until May. She works at a silver laptop in a spare studio. She has spent six months writing a definitive account of all she knows about art. Every artist, every work and every movement she can remember has been included, and the final text is an impressive 110,000 words. It has materialized into a 10-hour animated text that becomes increasingly detailed and scrolls faster and faster as it approaches the 21st century, covering a wall in the "History Memory Society" suite of Tate Modern's permanent collection, surrounded by works by Rodin and Warhol. The inspiration was Ernst Gombrich's original *The Story of Art*, published in 1950, but Kay's work is not like Gombrich. In fact, it is not coherent nor balanced.

• Bruce Nauman will be the next and last artist commissioned by the Tate Modern and sponsor Unilever to fill the vast space in the gallery's turbine hall. Nauman, who once described the effect of his work on viewers as "like getting hit in the back of the neck" now has the chance to inflict damage on an enormous scale. This is probably the largest palette Nauman has ever had to provoke controversy. As Nauman has said, he is motivated by humanity's innate cruelty and lack of understanding.