

# *La Gazette du Moulin à Nef*

Volume 1 Number 3, December 2001

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The world has changed for all of us since September 11th, and in some ways we have been brought closer together because of it. Each one of us tries to do something to make our world a better place. It may be a small thing to help our children grow up with an advantage that we didn't have. It may be a small thing in a large world, but it counts. When we began this endeavor to create a cultural exchange center, we all felt that cultural exchange was important to promote understanding and tolerance between people of different traditions. More than ever, we are dedicated to creating a place that will benefit Auvillar, our neighbors, our friends in Toulouse, Denver and New York, and a myriad of others elsewhere who haven't yet heard of Auvillar.

In the following pages are the stories of this past summer. The biggest story, of course, is that we opened the Moulin à Nef, and



invited many visitors to come and see it. Four visiting artists from the United States (Wendy Edwards, Jerry Mishak, and Nana Gregory) and Switzerland (Renée-Paule Danthine) came to work in Auvillar through the Pont Aven School of Art. David Schmal, an American composer, came to compose "The Auvillar Suite" on a grant from the Alliance Française. The Museum of Outdoor Art in Denver again sent us two professors, Tim Flynn (the wire sculpture man) and Amy Laugesen and four students who created a sculpture for The Port. A widely respected ceramist, David Davison, came to inaugurate the ceramic studio, and is considering a visit next year to work with some students from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Toulouse.

We had a small but dedicated group this year, and look forward to expanding our scope next year. Some of our ideas involve food and wine, films and photography, and visits from old friends. As with all new endeavors we are learning what works and what doesn't. We move forward with determination and optimism. We hope

## Mission Statement

The Cultural Exchange Center of Auvillar believes that the most meaningful exploration of another culture occurs through individual involvement and direct contact with that way of life.

The Center was created to facilitate programs conceived in this spirit and, in particular, to share the rich cultural and artistic heritage surrounding Auvillar, a charming and hospitable village in southwestern France.

To this end, the CECA provides facilities, including artists studios and a ceramics studio, assistance in designing and implementing programs in cultural exchange using these facilities, and most importantly, a natural link to the village, the people, and the region.

that you come to visit us, to be inspired by the creative atmosphere, by the history, architecture, food and the friendly people of southwestern France. Take advantage of our facility, the countryside and the lovely, soft late afternoon sun on your back as you sip a glass of the local wine on the hotel terrace or play petanque and talk with friends and residents under the plane trees.

*Susan Saarinen*

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**LA GAZETTE DU MOULIN À NEF**  
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*Contributions Welcome*

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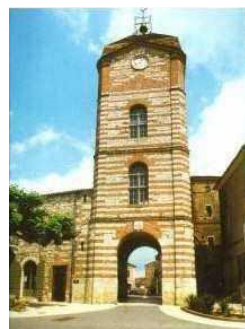


**SCHOOL EXCHANGE  
PROGRAM BETWEEN  
DENVER AND AUVILLAR**

In the context of an exciting new exchange program between the elementary school of Auvillar and the Denver International School, twenty American students accompanied by two of their teachers were scheduled to arrive in Auvillar this fall for a three week stay. In the aftermath of the tragic events of September 11, it was decided to postpone this trip. The children of Auvillar were disappointed, as were their American counterparts.



The program had been very carefully prepared by the Director of the Auvillar School, Made-moiselle Galan, and the parents of the students who were to participate. As one of the highpoints, the young Americans were to have joined their new French friends in harvesting the grapes in the vineyards of Monsieur and Madame



Combarel. They didn't get to cut the ripe bunches of grapes, crush them with their bare feet, and learn to make the new wine (which was so good!)...and they regret it.

But happily, the trip has already been rescheduled for spring 2002. The American students will come to Auvillar where lots of adventures and projects await them. Then they will return to Denver with their French friends in tow, to introduce them to sunny Colorado and to finish the school year together. So much to look forward to!

—Hélène Grall-Johnson

**A GRANT FROM THE  
ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE OF  
DENVER, COLORADO**

We feel it is important to bring attention to the fact that the program which brought David Schmal to France, and to Auvillar, in the summer of 2001 was made possible by a grant from the Alliance Française of Denver.

We would like to acknowledge our friends at the Alliance who have been associated with the "Auvill'art" cultural exchange programs in previous years.

—Alain Delsol



**LETTERS FROM  
OUR READERS**

In the next issue of the Gazette, we will be reserving space for you, our readers, to express yourselves. We invite your comments on the Moulin à Nef, on this newsletter and its contents, on our projects for the future and on our programs in the past.

Please send your remarks and ideas, whether in French, English or any other language to any one of these addresses:

*M. Francis Sohier  
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82340 Auvillar  
France*

*Cultural Exchange Center of Auvillar  
3200 Cherry Creek South Drive  
Suite 460  
Denver, Colorado 80209  
USA*

or by e-mail to

*[ceca@moulinanef.com](mailto:ceca@moulinanef.com)*

We look forward to hearing from you.

—Alain Delsol



# ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

Artists have always seen the world a little differently from the rest of the world. As artists, we train ourselves to see detail and proportion by drawing or sculpting it. This teaches us to see it better. We also train ourselves to comment on the world, to express ourselves and our point of view, through the images that we choose to draw or sculpt. Sometimes artists become political commentators, or protestors. More often we simply try to draw or sculpt the world (or its elements) as if through children's eyes; new, different, unexpected. Jerry Mishak, Wendy Edwards and Nana Gregory, all professors from Pont Aven School of Art, are such artists. They try to help us look at the world with a fresh eye, causing us to think, and often causing us to be surprised.

Jerry and Wendy arrived on a gentle afternoon in July. They began their visit by exploring Auvillar and absorbing the feel and look of the countryside so different from Brittany. A few days later



Wendy came to the ceramic studio and asked if she could work with clay. We set her up, and she began to explore her own images and form language translated into three dimensional earth. Jerry seemed to disappear. When he reappeared he was wearing a large yellow hat made of cardboard and tape, and taping wine bottles together. Inside each wine bottle was a story of the wine,

dinner and conversation at the table. The wine bottles were leant against both the Veilhescazes and Sailor's Chapel in The Port, as some of the stories related to these two buildings. We took photographs of the bottles and then dismantled them, and put them into the recycling bin. This particular kind of art, temporary, is called an installation. It is never meant to survive for long.

A few days later, while Wendy was busy glazing her little pieces in the studio, Jerry was building another installation, making a giant pot out of construction materials found in the dump. Did you see it? Some

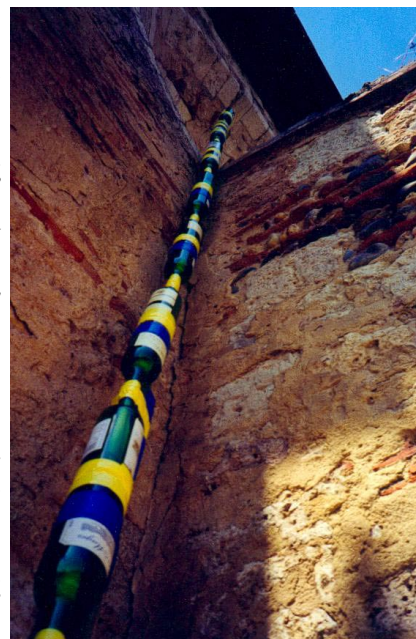
of Wendy's little pieces remain in the ceramic studio along with other pieces done last summer by David Davison, myself and some of our visitors.

Then Nana Gregory arrived. We shared a couple of bottles of wine and conversation that probably should have been in the earlier installation. (Too bad!) Nana was interested in working on a technique for her students back in the states. She took specially treated paper, and snippets of plants found in Auvillar, and exposed them and the paper to the sunlight. This left white images on a blue background. Then she cut up the paper and made a collage of all the images. You can see an example of her work in the Cloucado next summer.

It was fun for me to see such different work being done by these artists. Even as an artist I can benefit by seeing the world through someone else's eyes. We hope to have you again in Auvillar soon!

—Susan Saarinen

*A footnote: Renée Danthine, a Swiss print maker who works on fabric, came to Auvillar in September with her husband. Although I did not have the opportunity to meet her, I am sure she absorbed herself in the culture of the village. (Sometimes I find it difficult to miss the comings and goings in Auvillar!)*





# MORE THAN TWENTY CENTURIES OF HISTORY

## Then why 33 vine stocks?

The need to teach and to experiment with wine-growing has led to the creation of collections of vine stock in various places around the region for pedagogical reasons. The vineyard at the Moulin à Nef will have the same purpose.

### Pedagogical and ampelographic\* goals

To discover the astonishing variety of vine stocks which decorate the landscape of southern Europe from the valley of the Rhine and the Caucase to Andalusia and beyond. They all have common characteristics: five-lobed, jagged-edged deciduous leaves that change color in autumn, winter dormancy, structure more or less erect, bunched or wild fruit, silver, bronze or emerald green buds. The branches can be yellow or striped with red, sometimes purple, round or oval, hard wood or tender; while some are good for grilling meat, others produce



too much smoke! As for the fruit, it can be white, pale green or golden, from black to silvered.

The amazing diversity of the European species of *Vitis-Vinifera*, even in the same environment, teaches us the necessity of accepting differences and appreciating the richness those differences can create.

\* From the Greek: *ampelos*=vine; *graphia*=description

### Scientific goals

Each vine stock has its own character: Some are very colorful but unpleasant tasting by themselves (Alicante – B). Others produce at the same time both red wine and sparkling white (Pinot Noir de Champagne et Bourgogne). Thanks to the winemakers art, red and rosé



may even appear from the same vat. Different stocks give birth to infinite shades of white wines known as "vin gris" or gray wine (Pinot Meunier), "yellow" wine from the Jura (Chardonnay-Poulsard), straw-colored wine or "vin de paille-Jura" (Savagnin), golden Sauternes (Barsac), even "green" wine from Portugal (Alvartinho). The sweeter wines speak of summer and terraces at sunset (the Musquets, Rivesaltes, Muscat and Spanish Moscatel, the naturally sweet Maury, Banyuls, Porto) so different from the images created by the Ice wines from the Rhine valley and the Austrian Tyrol (Muller, Thurgau, Tokay). Closer to home, we look with pride on typical regional wines (Pinot Rouge, Blanc des Charentes and the wonderful Floc de Gascogne from our own backyard). Our selection includes table grapes (Chasselas

AOC doré) from Moissac and its pink cousin (Chasselas rosé from Fontainebleau) and raisins (Sultanine from Greece and Chile).

### Esthetic goals

Esthetic, the palette of colors on hillsides humanized by rows of vines. Esthetic too, the nuances of the wines and of the aromas they develop on our palates.

### Cultural goals

Because in its natural state, a grape, or even a pile of grapes, does not produce wine. It is the skill, the acquired experience, the intelligence of the winemaker-become-oenologue who, by putting grapes in a vat, under pressure, keeping them warm – or cold – allows the ever-present yeasts on the skin of the



grape to transform the sugars into alcohol, to reveal the colors in the wine, to bring out the aromas and the flavors that delight our tastebuds.

Cultural, also because it was the Roman conquest that created a great extra-Mediterranean province and enriched our Gallic hillsides with a winemaking culture which the growth of Christianity pushed into northern Europe while the expansion of Islam erased the art of winemaking

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in countries where the climate would have made it easy.

Of the 1200 known vine stocks, thirty-three will make up the sampling on the small hillside of the Moulin à Nef. They will transport us in our dreams from the Rhine to Guadalquivir, by way of some small valleys close to home; they will even remind of us of America whose stock rescued French vineyards from total destruction in the 19th century when they were threatened by phylloxera, a tiny insect from...America. (Just for the record, remember, for example, the Concord grape, discovered in 1840 by children in Concord, Massachusetts; and do not forget the Clinton, the first American graft to cross the Atlantic but of which nothing remains).

We trust that this restored vineyard will become a marvelous tool which will allow the organization of creative cultural exchange projects as well as the conservation of a heritage descended from over twenty centuries of history, a heritage whose memory the people of Auvillar celebrate every year in June at the festival of Saint Noé.

—Rene Dauty

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## **From Geology to Art**

The 2001 Auvillar Summer program of the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design took place between June 18 and June 27. One instructor (Hélène Grall-Johnson) and four students par-



ticipated. The subject of this workshop was Art, Culture, Geography and Geology in Southwestern France. Everything, during these super hot summer days, went well and according to plans; if anything, we were too busy to have enough time to paint... Whereas our base in Auvillar was the perfect place to discuss Romanesque Art and the Compostella trails, daily fieldtrips to Moissac, Albi and Montauban added to our understanding of the tormented history of our region.

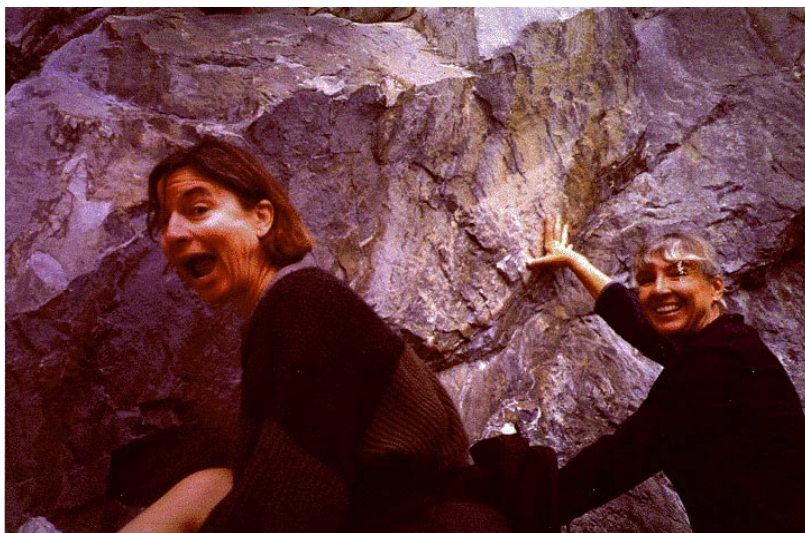
The striking geology of the Pyrenees was addressed during a two day field trip to the Aspe Valley, where we met Francis Bichot, a geologist with the French Geological Survey. We even got the chance to have cof-

fee in Spain! A succulent dinner featuring local cuisine was prepared by Andrée (the cuisinière extraordinaire) and was eaten before the students got the chance to paint the dishes (which was the original plan!). Accommodations in Auvillar were perfect thanks to the wise help of Francis Sohier. Mr. Brehm's swimming pool and his kind welcome was greatly appreciated by everyone at the end of the day! The RMCAD group also enjoyed very much meeting Tim Flynn's group as well as a lively and fun party at Lucy and Alain Delsol's house. Every student in the group would like to go back to Auvillar and spend more time quietly painting.

—Hélène Grall-Johnson



*Le Chemin de la Mature dans les Pyrénées.*





# THE PORT CLEANS UP NICELY

In the second issue of the Gazette, we updated you on the construction work going on at the Moulin à Nef. Two buildings have been restored: the Ceba and the Cloucado. The second phase, the interiors, began in December 2000 and was completed on schedule last summer. The final inspection took place on the 27th of June 2001 under the direction of the architect, Didier Médale.



Afterwards, the contractors, subcontractors and their spouses gathered for an “aperitif-buffet”, along with the mayor, several members of the City Council and the presidents of some of the associations in Auvillar. Mayor Sautede expressed his satisfaction with the rapid progress of the construction of the Moulin à Nef, which represents an important piece of the cultural complex which the City Council, as early as 1998, envisioned for the Port of Auvillar.

With its attractive reception area on the ground floor, the Cloucado is ready to welcome and inform visitors, pilgrims and other tourists in the Port, offer-

ing to artists and craftsmen, to students and teachers a pleasant retreat to pursue their particular interests.

The Ceba, whose ceramics workshop is fully equipped, was up and running early last summer. David Davison, a well-known ceramicist and a teacher at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, was with us to inaugurate this magic and mysterious space where both children and adults came to explore the alchemy of the four elements, earth, air, water and fire, that Gaston Bachelard thought of as the “hormones of the imagination”.

The first results are promising: vocations may have been born and hidden talents are ready to surface. Many neighbors and friends have stopped by and found the studio a welcoming place to spend a moment.

It may be useful to note that the Moulin à Nef is only a part of the cultural complex that many Auvillar residents would like to see realized; the other two elements are the Chapel of Saint Catherine (or Sailor’s Chapel) and the Maison Vielhescazes, both owned by the City of Auvillar. Of course, the harmonious evolution of this ensemble is of the utmost importance. Some might even think that the Moulin à Nef should take care not to get too far ahead of the development of this larger project as a whole.

At the same time, the search for a new owner and operator of the Cultural Exchange Center continues and even progresses. In order to better synchronize the development of the ensemble, and in the uncertainty with regard to the new owner and their priorities, the Donnell Kay Foundation has decided not to engage any major expenses in 2002.

Nevertheless, during the coming year, we will continue to maintain and improve the landscaping, restore the vineyard and complete and equip the studios and the office. In addition, architects, landscape architects and students will be invited to reflect on the Center as a whole and explore ideas to unify the buildings. At the same time, pilot programs are being planned for 2002. Details will appear in the next issue of the Gazette.

Once again, I would like to emphasize that the enthusiasm and the support that we have received from the people in Auvillar have been and remain the principle source of the energy we need to see this project through to completion and to build the Moulin à Nef. Thanks to everyone!

—Alain Delsol



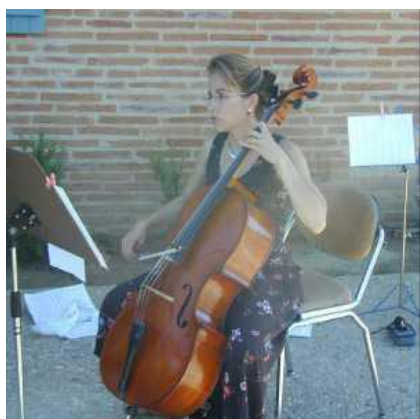
# The Auvillar Suite

I would like to give you my impressions of an unforgettable experience I had in Auvillar this summer during the last two weeks in June. I have played the violin for thirteen years, first in Russia where I was born and lived till the age of 14 and then at the Conservatory of Toulouse



where I received my gold medal.

My encounter with the American composer David Schmal happened quite by accident. Before we met I had some doubts about the use-



fulness of this kind of cultural exchange. Above all, I was uncertain I would be able to interpret the Auvillar Suite which we had less than two weeks to prepare. I was very nervous about my ability to

work in English. The village of Auvillar and its inhabitants were also unknown to me.

All of these fears disappeared as soon as I arrived in the village. I am grateful for the opportunity I was given and for the warm hospitality I found. During my stay in Auvillar I not only improved my English but I also made progress in my violin-playing, thanks to the advice of David and his wife, Shushawn.



More than that, I was able to discover the genuine simplicity, kindness and friendship of the American artists I met during my stay and to learn more about the American culture. Thanks to David, I even saw two of my dreams come true: to sing and to play a little jazz.

Finally, I was delighted to experience the very beautiful village of Auvillar, its festivals and its inhabitants.

I hope to be able to return to Auvillar and I hope others will have the same opportunity I did. It is a very positive thing to know that these kinds of exchanges tak-

ing place in small towns in France make it possible to establish important relationships between different countries in the world.

—*Dina Likht*

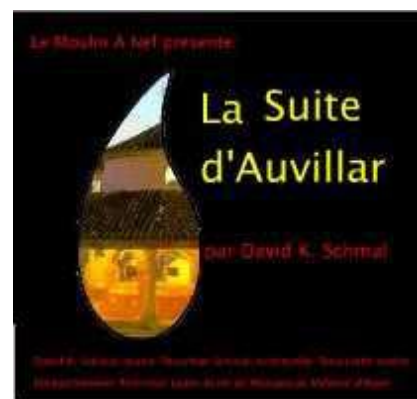
**AUVILLAR SUITE CD TO BE  
RELEASED SOON**

In June 2001, at the church in Auvillar, David Schmal gave a concert. The composer of the Auvillar Suite was at the keyboard that day, accompanied by his wife, Shushawn, on cello and Dina Likht, a student of the Conservatory of Toulouse, on violin. Their performance was recorded by M. Lezin, Director of the School of Music of Valence d'Agén, who then mixed and burned a master CD.

The Club Informatique of Auvillar will now make copies and package them with an attractive cover. When that is done, we will inform you that the CDs are ready for sale.

Some of you may have already reserved a copy. Others may wish to do so now. The price has not yet been determined but should be between 60F and 80F. The Moulin à Nef will also propose that the Tourism Office in Auvillar have copies for sale if they wish to do so.

—*Francis Sohier*





## The imagination will complete the picture

At the entrance to the Port, there sits a stylized boat ready to set sail on the silver waves of the Garonne.

It is there thanks to Tim Flynn and Amy Laugesen and their four students who articulated the simple structural lines and the shades of silvery blue to evoke in their symbolic sculpture what was once the life of the Port.

The imagination of each viewer will complete the picture.

We are grateful to the Museum of Outdoor Arts in Denver for making this program possible.

—Mme Elyan Brehm



*"La Nef" sculpture designed and built in one short week in June 2001 by students of the Museum of Outdoor Art in Denver, Colorado.*

***The Moulin à Nef wishes you a Merry Christmas and a  
Happy New Year 2002!***

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*Our next issue will be sent in the spring of 2002*