

La Gazette du Moulin à Nef

Number 7, December 2003

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

The CECA grew out of an informal exchange between French and American artists, dancers and musicians. In 1994 the idea was simple; to foster understanding between people of two different cultures through cultural pursuits. The type of cultural exchange we still consider most valuable is the one between individuals who find a common bond, not necessarily the one that has the highest visibility. It is the 2-hour conversations over coffee, or an impromptu petanque game in the wee hours of the morning that create the lasting memories and a personal connection between people of different cultures. Ironically, these kinds of exchanges are most important when they are most difficult.



Photo from Firstlight Auvillar Workshop

In an earlier issue of the Gazette, we announced some upcoming programs and events for 2003. One was a trip planned by Mlle. Geneviève Galan and members of her class, to visit students and families of the Denver International School. Another was a limited program on the gastronomic delights of France, featuring Serge François, the chef from the L'Horloge, and a tour of one of our local vineyards. A third was a painting class to be taught by John Lencicki, a painter well known to residents of Auvillar. And finally, there was to be a digital workshop offered by Working with Artists, a dynamic new Denver photography school. Unfortunately, the war in Iraq, a poor American economy, and a general sense of uncertainty caused many to change their plans and remain closer to home for the summer.

Of the programs that did run, some were noticeable and some were subtle. James Paradis returned in June, discovered the delights of Saint Noé and participated in a two-man art show with calligrapher, Bruno Riboulot. A young Swiss ceramist came to Auvillar for 10 days, and worked in the ceramic studio at the Moulin à Nef, where we also welcomed 14 children from Gache for a ceramics class. Then the terrible heat hit, and Bryan McFarlane had to paint late at night to avoid the worst of it. (You probably didn't see much of him!) In early Sep-

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Unless otherwise indicated, articles have been written by members of the CECA Board

tember a group of 18 photographers (very noticeable) came to Auvillar and practiced their photojournalism skills, photographing a number of residents making wine, carving stone, growing mushrooms, and making a living. Most recently, 15 students from the Denver International School spent two busy weeks in the village.

In short, we were busy. Despite the loss of several planned programs it was a good year. As always, many people helped to make it work. This is the spirit of giving. In giving to one another we participate in exchange, in building a strong bridge between peoples. That bridge is built person by person.

—Susan Saarinen, President

La Gazette on the Web

The Gazette is published in French and English and printed in black and white. If you would like to see or print out the color version, it is available on our website:

<http://www.moulinanef.org>

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Photo from Firstlight Auvillar Workshop

The Gazette

(The following information concerns primarily residents of Auvillar)

This issue of the Gazette (#7), printed in the US and shipped to France, has been distributed to residents of Auvillar by the local postal service. As always, the Gazette can also be found in either French or English on the Moulin à Nef website (<http://www.moulinanef.org>) in its full color version. From now on, however, the paper version in French will be sent only to those who request that service. You can do this by contacting Francis Sohier, Porte de Lecture, Auvillar 82340 France before the 31st of January 2004. In the future, there may be changes made to this newsletter and its distribution system. These decisions will be in the hands of the new management of the Moulin à Nef.

**The Future of the
Moulin à Nef**

According to plan, the Donnell Kay Foundation has begun in earnest its search for a new owner and manager for the Moulin à Nef. Early in 2003, the Foundation, which purchased the property in 1999, sent out a brochure presenting the Center to a list of organizations to whom it might be of interest (see Gazette 6). The mailing got the attention of a number of institutions, both French and American, who became candidates for ownership. In September, the Foundation began examining their proposals. The year 2004 will be a transitional year for the Cultural Exchange Center of Auvillar and the Association Auvill'art, a period of change both in the content and the form of the programs undertaken in the future.

An Artist's Vision

Auvillar for me signifies a chance to get away from the North American environment that can be so insular and stifling. 'Everything' in Boston is so big and overwhelming, so 'modern', so new and crisp. As a result, I feel a deep need to go to a place that is more poetic, more ancient, if not more medieval.

I first entered this village through the arch at the clock tower in 2000. It was a passage through time. The yearning for a 'sense of place' where things are slower, gentler, quieter, smaller makes the human scale, capacity and manageability welcome. The stress of academia as a university professor of art subsides into a more personal atmosphere as Auvillar allows me to reinvent myself in ways that garner inspiration for much artistic expression that is thereafter transcribed on my canvas. It is a small town of charming 13th - 20th century architecture and natural elements, transformed into an 'immensity' that is contained in my recent miniature paintings done in that village.

The Bridge

My second visit to this beautiful town made me more aware of the gigantic bridge that crosses the river leading into the town of Auvillar proper. The working studios at the

Moulin a Nef are an artist's dream. While in my newly renovated studio space, beautifully lit by tall classical French windows, I was able to see this obtrusive bridge at a fair distance, metallic, though elegantly designed, lit with phenomenal artistic sensitivity at night, while

that leads us from modernity to an authentic culture of the old. Ironically, I became a bit obsessed with the abstractions and imagery of this bridge and with the possibility that even the new can be planted side by side with the old if thought about caringly and carefully, to coincide

comfortably with this beautiful almost hidden part of French countryside. This place, still kept a secret, inspired me to do sixteen paintings in one short visit, leaving powerful impressions for the continuation of a possible series of paintings to be executed in my studio in Boston.

The Lost Coin

My next series in Auvillar might just be the light of the full moon with its silvery luminescence, embracing the main village road with cool blue shadows leading you through mystical passages, narrow streets and purple daunting shadows up the high road to the grand arch on top of the village square clock. One night at 3am, while taking a walk on that same road, I lost a Jamaican coin with the face of Marcus Garvey (a legendary Jamaican hero) on it, only to have it discovered by another visitor who was led to my studio after finding my lost coin.

Thanks to all the Auvillaraais.
—Bryan McFarlane



Oil painting by Bryan McFarlane

nature's light does an even better job at different times by day, especially when the bridge is bathed with the Mediterranean warm pinks and Naples yellow light during the summer months. It transported me psychologically into the technological world we seek to leave behind but yet is a powerful necessity given the metaphor of what it means to cross over the phenomenological bridge

DIS in Auvillar-October 2003

Fifteen students from the Denver International School again traveled to Auvillar in early October for two extraordinary weeks. This is a very brief account of two unforgettable days spent in the region with their friends at the Auvillar School.

Another great day for our little students.

We left the school at 8 am by bus to the “gouffre de Padirac”. Everybody was amazed by the majestic scenery. We went down to the bottom of the cave, using a lot of stairs (my calves still hurt!), but when we got there, we got to ride little boats to cross the underground river. Thankfully, nobody jumped into that cold water! It was incredible to see those huge stalagmites, some of them reaching more than 250 feet. Then we climbed more steps to go to the top of the cave. You can never see natural light, but it’s magical that way. Some places reminded me of some of the pools in Yellowstone, except everything is below surface.

For lunch we sat in a park where we had a picnic. The weather was very nice.

In the afternoon, we went to Rocamadour which is an old village built on the side of a cliff, very impressive. The kids got some time to get some souvenirs for mom and dad, and they were terrific during the whole day.

Well, enjoy the new pictures and have a good day.

—Edith

We are grateful to Edith Shriedel who kept a faithful daily record of the adventures of these young Americans and their French friends.

Here comes the last day of the week. But the day is not over yet. Everybody is getting ready for the big party: “la boum”. I will send pictures of this event on Sunday or Monday, in order not to put too many attachments on this email. But let’s go back to what we did during the day.

We left the school at 9:30 this morning, under a great sun, to go to the honey museum. We first started with a small movie explaining the process of making honey, and we went then into the museum to learn about the bee’s life. At the end of the visit, all the kids had some honey and bread tasting.

We had lunch in a park, in the middle of the fields(wonderful point of view). THANK YOU to Cécile and Gisèle, who are in charge of preparing all the food.

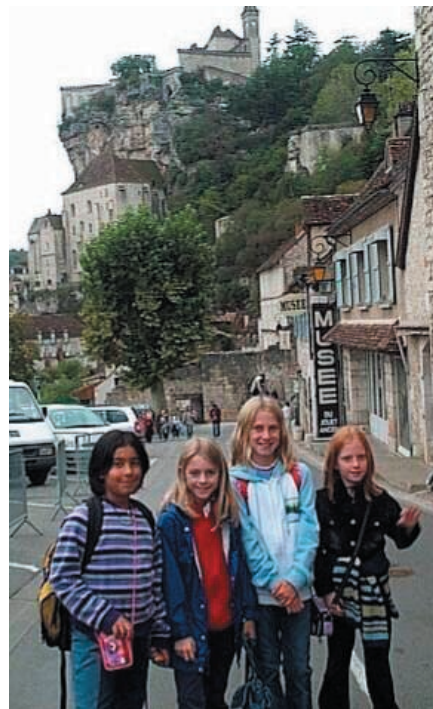
In the afternoon, we went to have a tour of a castle from the XVII century. We learned about the origins of this place, and why it’s still in excellent shape.

On the way back, we stopped in a small church, a little jewel. It’s incredible to find that kind of art in the middle of the countryside!

Right now, everybody is getting ready for the party. It’s so much fun to hear the conversations between the girls, wondering what they should wear...

Well, have an awesome weekend, I will talk to you soon.

—Edith



A Student's Voice

When we arrived in Auvillar it was quite humid. I think that everyone fell asleep in the car between Agen and Auvillar. On the next day, the visit of the village was fantastic! The outings on bikes were great. Golfech was really interesting; I did not know that one could use uranium to produce electricity. The Padirac cave surprised me a lot because it was so deep. During the weekend of the pottery market, a group of us sold more than 300 brioches for the school parents' association. We also played squash; I loved it. Our departure was happy and sad at the same time: our stay was super, but we did not want to leave our French friends behind. Fortunately, they are coming to Denver in May.

—Adrian Johnson, 5th grade

Denver Painters Inspired by Auvillar Experience

It all began as an idea put forth to the Art Student's League of Denver, Colorado, by Dennis Pendleton, who holds fond memories of his experiences during a visit to Auvillar in July 1996. Why not copy the idea of "Viens Peindre mon Village" which he had seen work so well in Auvillar and other small French towns every summer. Before long, the Art Student's League, one of the early supporters of the CECA program in the mid-90's, had decided to "import" the idea.

Word went out, and for a week in May 2003 nearly 200 Denver artists worked with a tight time frame and

a tight boundary...approximately 30 blocks of downtown Denver, to create their pieces. The resulting exhibition, which was juried by museum curators Mark Masuoka and Jerry Gilmore,

who expects to return to Auvillar in the summer of 2004, and Dennis, in front of his own entry.

—Barbara Lencicki



opened at the League on June 6. It later traveled to Denver's famed Tattered Cover Bookstore in lower downtown, and as a grand finale the 6 winners were invited to show at a major Denver bank.

This event, all based on a simple idea from Auvillar, was such a success that League Director Leona Lazar plans to offer it every year. Ms. Lazar is pictured here with League instructor John Lencicki,

Ceramics Studio

In case you were not able to stop by and see for yourself, we want you to know that the studio was active this summer. Children from the school of Auvillar and from the day camp at Gache spent time there exploring clay techniques. Passing artists, like Elisa di Bin of Switzerland (right), were also lucky enough to work in this exceptional facility. She tried her hand at raku firing and demonstrated her technique for creating stuffed animals dipped in porcelain.



Composition of ceramic tiles



Mothers of students who had participated in the exchange with the Denver International School assembled a mosaic of ceramic tiles made by the two groups of students, a genuine symbol of the growing bond between the children of Auvillar and Colorado. The composition, a part of which is visible in the photo (left), was installed in the dining area of the elementary school.

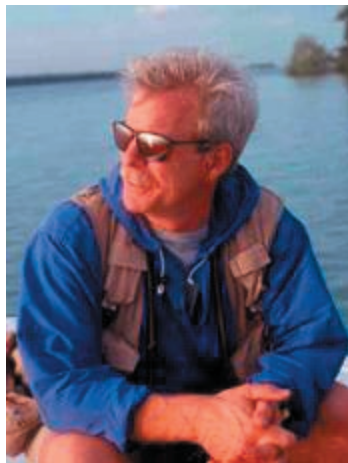
FirstLight Auvillar

The photographic workshop, “FirstLight Auvillar” was a tremendous success! Held September 5-10 of this year, the workshop hosted 17 students and 7 faculty members.

The workshop’s intent was to document daily life in Auvillar, with the images to appear in “FirstLight Auvillar” magazine. The assignments were shot, the photos were edited and critiqued (our ratio of faculty to student was about 1 to 3, which is very ideal) and 8 1/2” x 11” copies of the images, along with large prints of the magazine layout, were displayed in an evening event at La Halle.

Later that evening, after the final workshop dinner, we projected many of the images shot by the

students, using a large screen hung on the City Hall for the village to enjoy.



The students, were delighted with the response and openness of

the villagers and we feel that Auvillar enjoyed our being there (so we hope!) For many of our students, this was the first time they’d had an opportunity to step beyond the barriers that tourists usually construct.

FirstLight would love to make this an annual event, the village of Auvillar receiving copies of the images, and the magazine, as part of the town’s archives. We’d also like to thank all those in Auvillar (Robert Losson, Valerie Hartig, Francis Sohier, Jean Claude Delgal, Claude Rattier, to name a few) that provided their tireless assistance, without their help, this workshop would NOT have been possible.

—Jay Dickman



Poster for the Firstlight Auvillar Exhibit

Working with the very best photographers in the world

I just returned from a photographic workshop that was held in France. When I signed up for this, I was terrified: I would be working with the very best photographers and editors in the world and I would have to put my dream on the line. I shot assignments from the first light of the morning until mid-afternoon. Bert Fox, the photographic editor for the National Geographic, would then spend two hours going over each and every frame I shot. Then, back out to shoot until dusk, followed by meetings and lectures until midnight. This happened every day for a week.

I was challenged to do types of assignments that I had never done before - shooting people for example. By the end of the workshop I was feeling pretty down, not so sure that I had lived up to my potential. At this time John Isaac, one of the guest speakers at the workshop and a photographer of great renown, came over and complimented me on my work. John moved me deeply when he spoke at the workshop, as he is a man who is very well connected to his heart and his soul, and made it clear what the root of really great photography is. I was astonished.

—Walt Hubis

<http://www.hubisphoto.com>

The Mushrooms of Auvillar

When I agreed to pick mushrooms with Serge, the executive chef for the Hôtel L'Horloge, I would not have suspected I'd find myself hurtling through the French countryside in an old Audi. I had no idea where we were headed and it seemed that Serge and Jerome, his sommelier and assistant, weren't quite sure of the farm's location either. But after a few wrong turns, we arrived - with a cloud of dust that sent a variety of farm animals scurrying in a panic. In the midst of all this chaos, I began to sense that this trip was about more than just finding mushrooms.

We were met by the owner of the farm, M. Alibert, known as Sarcelle. He's wiry old man with a vice grip of a handshake. He takes great pride in his farm and the quality of his livestock and produce reflects that care. With a flourish of secrecy, Sarcelle took us to his mushroom patch, deep in a forest of deciduous trees. We walk carefully. Although the cèpes are large, often growing to a diameter of



M. Alibert, photo from Firstlight Auvillar Workshop
nine centimeters in a matter of days, they are well camouflaged in the forest undergrowth. It's easy to walk right past them, or worse, crush them underfoot.

After we had collected several kilograms of cèpes and paid Sarcelle, we returned to the L'Horloge where Serge prepared some of the cèpes for an early

lunch with his staff and family. He cleaned the mushrooms well, and sautéed them in butter with shallots, parsley, and white wine. The mushrooms were served simply, although they usually accompany roasted meats or pasta. Later, I returned to Sarcelle's farm to have a more traditional preparation of the cèpe. He built a fire of wood and dried corn husks, and grilled the mushrooms, along with some pork. This process gave the cèpes a delicate smoky sweetness that complemented both their earthy taste and the flavor of the pork.

But there's more to this mushroom than its delicate taste. It's also a symbol of the link back to the land for farmers like Sarcelle and for chefs like Serge. And that is the true wonder of this part of France: the connection back to the land is always present, always visible, and always honored.

—Walt Hubis



Photo from the Firstlight Auvillar Workshop

The Annual Meeting

Every summer, the board members of the Cultural Exchange Center of Auvillar and the Association Auvill'art meet frequently to discuss new programs, reflect on the future of Moulin a Nef, and occasionally, share a pleasant meal.



Best Wishes for the New Year

May the new year 2004 bring each of you health and happiness as well as numerous occasions to share your joie de vivre and your enthusiasm.

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Our next issue will be sent in the spring of 2004