

Paris is still the capital of the continent

Every time I go to Europe I try to schedule a few days in Paris. This astonishing city was the political and cultural capital of the continent for many centuries. Because of this it has become, for the person intrigued by either history or the arts, or by both, the most fascinating of all the great cities in Europe.

Take museums: My guide to the museums of Paris lists over 70 museums devoted to the arts and sciences! No other city in the world can compete with that.

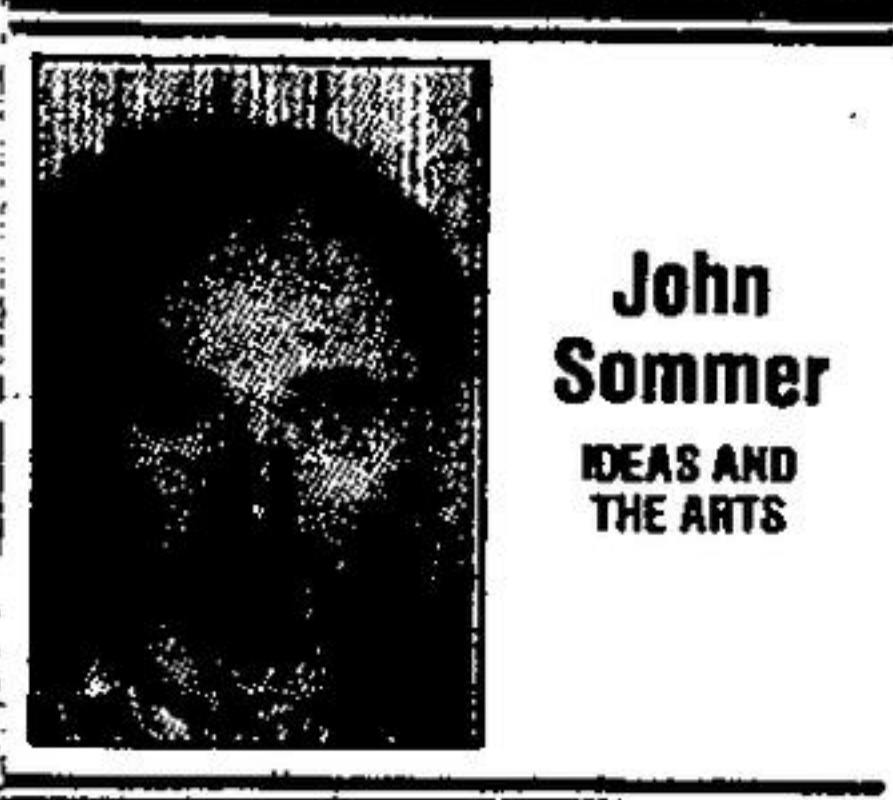
And what is more, Paris is constantly adding to these riches by creating new museums that throw light on formerly only partially understood periods. The latest arrival on the Paris museum scene is the Musee d'Orsay. It was to see this newcomer that we went to Paris late in April.

The Musee d'Orsay is housed in a spectacular former railway station, the Gare d'Orsay, built to bring the visitors to the 1900 world's fair into the heart of Paris. And what a pulsing heart it still is!

The new museum's most prestigious neighbour, just across the river Seine, is the Louvre, renowned storehouse for all that is greatest in the arts (it's the home of Leonardo DaVinci's "Mona Lisa", for instance).

The Louvre is making a major effort to enlarge and reorganize itself. A new entrance in the shape of a glass pyramid, transparent or reflective, depending on the weather, but otherwise as mathematically precise and pure as the pyramids of the pharaohs, is only one outward sign of this transformation.

But let me return to the Musee d'Orsay: We went there on a Saturday. When we arrived shortly after the doors opened, the line of people waiting to get in stretched for many hundreds of metres. The ticket buying procedure was so well-gearred to handle the big crowds however, that we got inside



John Sommer
IDEAS AND THE ARTS

within 30 minutes. Once inside the immense army of visitors melted quickly into the different valleys, caves and promontories of the huge edifice.

Yes, the Musee d'Orsay is an art-scene rather than a building housing art. The vast glass arch of the former station, under which the tracks for the trains were located before reconstruction, shelters a landscape now, of walkways, terraces, lookouts and enclosed spaces that lead the viewer, very pleasantly, from one exhibit to another. The museum shows paintings, sculpture, architecture, furniture and decorative luxury objects from about 1840 to about 1910, or, to put the names of some painters to this period, from Couture and Delacroix to Boldini and Matisse.

Unique is the completeness with which the epoch is covered. Nowhere else is there such an unexpurgated combination of official (traditional) and unofficial (avant garde) arts and crafts as at the Musee d'Orsay.

The visitor is getting an encyclopaedic introduction into all the different ideas and movements that battled and competed with each other during a century that we judge now as having been more inspired than any other.

And what is more, everything that came to pass in our century

announced itself already in the arts of the last century. The great artworks at the Musee d'Orsay in Paris are lofty and bracing and a joy to behold. They are also filled with warning signs.

In retrospect one senses that the murderous upheavals of our century were brought about by the fast changes and the only half understood faults that "destroyed" society in the wake of the industrial revolution. These changes

have in no way slowed down, nor have the faults been repaired. Let's hope that no further surprises will be waiting for us and the world on the threshold of a new millennium.

Attention dear readers: For only \$2 you can win a valuable piece of sculpture by Andreas Dreenters titled "Soccer". The piece is on view at the Halton Hills Cultural Centre in Georgetown to the day of the

draw on July 28. The raffle of this artwork is sponsored by "The Friends of the Halton Hills Libraries," and whatever money is left after "The Friends" have paid the artist, will go to the Halton Hills Libraries and will benefit you in one way or another. So please take the time and have a look and buy a ticket if you like what you see. Thank you and have a pleasant summer.

Air Force veterans invited to Collingwood gathering

The search is under way for World War Two veterans who served as air crew, or ground crew, in squadrons equipped with either Avro Lancaster or Hawker Hurricane aircraft.

Such veterans are invited to attend the second annual "Gathering of the Classics" as special guests. The gathering is scheduled to be held at Collingwood Airport on Saturday, July 21, 1990.

The Collingwood Classic Aircraft Foundation (CCAF), organizer of the gathering, wants to assemble as many veterans as possible at Collingwood Airport to have their photograph taken next to the classic Lancaster and Hurricane aircraft.

The CCAF has also arranged what is being described as a "chance of a lifetime draw" - to be made on July 21 - involving a flight in a classic Lancaster aircraft.

Dedicated to the preservation and restoration of vintage aircraft, the CCAF is staging a "one time" membership special for anybody who donates \$100 to the CCAF. The donation will entitle the donor to a

ticket in a "Ride The Lancaster" draw. Only 150 tickets will be sold, said CCAF spokesman, Doug Murray, chairman for the Gathering of the Classics.

"This is truly a chance of a lifetime," said Mr. Murray, adding "the gathering will also provide the opportunity for people to see other classic aircraft at the airport."

The Collingwood Airport is located in Nottawasaga Township, southeast of Collingwood, near the village of Nottawa, Ont.

Anybody wishing more information about the "Gathering of the Classics" should call (705) 445-1616.

Or, write to: Collingwood Classic Aircraft Foundation, P. O. Box 246, Collingwood, Ontario, L9Y 3Z5.



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