

## ARTS & BOOKS NEWS BRIEFS

By Pauline LAVAGNE D'ORTIGUE

### **On a naked and disabled statue, Nollywood, hyphenated museums, sexy safety devices and floating art**

#### **Public art and debate in Trafalgar square**

The newly pedestrianised Trafalgar Square has been adorned with a controversial 13-tonne marble sculpture by Marc Quinn, depicting the disabled artist Alison Lapper naked, pregnant and proud. A statue of Nelson Mandela is due to be installed in the square shortly, but the mayors of London and Westminster are arguing as to where.

Source : "In Praise... of Public Art" *The Guardian* 3 October 2005

#### **Nollywood**

Nigeria has one of the fastest growing film industries in the world, churning out an average of 1000 films a year. Nollywood now ranks third behind Hollywood and Bollywood. It exports its productions all over Africa, particularly in neighbouring anglophone countries, but also has a great outlet in the USA thanks to the African-American market. Like its rivals, Nollywood also faces an increased trend to piracy as nine of every 10 CDs, VCDs, and DVDs circulating in Nigeria were pirated.

Sources : "Hooray for Nollywood" *Vanguard* 16 October 2005 ; « Nollywood Generates 200 Million Dollars » *Vanguard* 8 October 2005 ; « A Culture of Survival » *The Guardian* 5 March 2005.

#### **The Arab American National Museum**

This museum opened in May 2005 in Dearborn (Michigan) where some 30 % of the 100 000 residents identify themselves as Arab-Americans. Although few people agree on the exact figures, a Zogby poll suggests that there were as many as 3.5 million Arab-Americans in 2000, amongst which 66 % identified themselves as Christian and 24 % as Muslim.

Source : "A Mosaic of Arab culture at home in America" *The New York Times* 24 October 2005.

#### **Safe design at MoMA**

The exhibition "Safe: Design Takes On Risk" opened on October 16 at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. It displays contemporary products and prototypes designed to protect body and mind. The show was originally conceived in early 2001 with a strong emphasis on rescue and emergency equipment. After September 11, the project was mothballed.

Sources : "if You're Going To Be Safe, May as Well Be Stylish." *The New York Times* 20 October 2005 ; <http://www.moma.org/>

#### **Floating art: Smithsonian island**

From September 17 to 25, a new feature was added to New York's geography. Robert Smithson's « Floating Island to Travel Around Manhattan Island » was towed by a small tug boat from 8 am to 8 pm every day. Smithson died in a plane crash in 1973, aged 35, without having been able to realise his miniature replica of Central Park. The Whitney museum and Minetta Brook (a New York-based arts organisation) joined to build this 30-x-90-foot barge, landscaped with earth, rocks, and live trees and shrubs. While Smithson island was being towed art students attempted to board it in order to plant a small saffron gate, as a criticism of the 7 503 Gates put up by Christo & Jeanne-Claude in Central Park last February.

Sources : "Smithson's Floating Sculpture" *The New York Times* 17 September 2005 ; "A Miniature Gate in Hot Pursuit of a Miniature Central Park" *The New York Times* 24 September 2005 ; <http://whitney.org/exhibition/>