

# ANGLOW

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Liverpool Football Club, one of the most successful British teams, is close to a deal with Dubai International Capital (DIC). If this deal goes through, Liverpool will be the seventh English club to pass under the control of foreign billionaires since 2000.

**FOCUS: SPECIAL INTERVIEW****Defending the poor, the homeless, the drug-addicted and the mentally ill: an interview with Bronx Public Defender Justine Olderman.**

*By Ninon VINSONNEAU*

Bronx Defenders is a private non-profit organization which provides free legal counsel to people who otherwise could not afford a lawyer. Serving the underprivileged communities of the Bronx, one of New York City's five boroughs, it handles about 15,000 clients a year. These clients confront many other problems and difficulties, which often account for their involvement in the criminal justice system in the first place, like mental illness, drug addiction, unemployment, poverty, etc. This organization attempts to take a global approach to their clients' needs, providing services that extend well beyond the legal.

Justine Olderman is one of thirty attorneys on staff, specializing in criminal defense. Although she admits that she sometimes gets discouraged, she remains committed to helping fight the injustices of the system and providing poor people with their constitutional right to competent legal counsel.

**- How does one become a public defender ?**

The requirements for being a public defender in the United States are no different than the requirements for any other legal career.

After four years of undergraduate (college) education, you must attend three years of law school. You do not need to attend any special kind of law school nor do you have to "major" in criminal defense while in law school. In fact, there is no such thing as a "major" in law school. After law school, you must take and pass "The Bar Exam," which is a lengthy exam which tests all different areas of legal knowledge. You must then pass a "character and fitness" test, which consists of a member of the bar questioning you about your background. Once you have graduated law school, passed the bar, and passed the character and fitness test, you are admitted to the bar and may practice law.

**- Did you know from the start you wanted to become a public defender ?**

I knew that I wanted to be a lawyer when I was an undergraduate student, but I wasn't sure what type of law I wanted to practice. Before I ever went to law school I interned for the American Civil Liberties Union, which focuses on issues relating to inequities based on race,

gender, and sexual orientation. I really liked the work and went on to intern with the Department of Justice in its Civil Rights Division. However, when I was looking for a summer internship after my first year of law school, I decided to try something a little different and worked for The Legal Aid Society, which is one of several organizations in New York that provides representation to poor people charged with crimes.

It was an eye opening experience. I was shocked by the disproportionate number of people of color in the criminal justice system and appalled at how badly they were treated by the system. I saw the public defenders that I was working with as the only thing standing between the power of the system and the individual and I decided that summer that I too wanted to be that person.

I also found that I really enjoyed spending time with the clients and trying to help them, not only with their criminal cases, but with the many issues and problems that resulted in their involvement in the criminal justice system in the first place. From that summer on, there was no question in my mind that I wanted to be a public defender.

### **- How does public defense work ? Are you a civil servant, employed by the state ? What is Bronx defenders ?**

The United States Constitution mandates that everyone charged with committing a crime is permitted to be represented by counsel. It further decrees that if such a person cannot afford a lawyer to represent her, the state must provide a lawyer free of charge. The states have devised various systems for providing such free counsel. Some states, for example, have a statewide public defender office, which is a state agency, meaning that the lawyers that work there are state employees or civil servants. New York does not have a state defender office. In New York, state law requires local municipalities to be primarily responsible for paying for free legal defense. Thus, New York City must budget to pay for lawyers for the poor. Rather than creating a city agency that serves as a city public defender office, the city takes the money allocated for that purpose and contracts with private, non-profit, organizations to provide such legal services.

I work for a private organization called The Bronx Defenders. We are one such private organization that has a contract with the city to provide legal representation in criminal cases. We serve approximately 15,000 people a year who come through the criminal justice system in one of the areas of New York City, called the Bronx. The office, located in the South Bronx, takes a holistic approach to criminal defense work, meaning that we address not just our client's criminal case but the underlying issues that caused them to become involved in the criminal justice system in the first place, such as homelessness, poverty, drug addiction, and mental illness. We also address the collateral issues that result from their involvement in the criminal justice system, such as eviction, deportation, forfeiture, and removal of children from the family home. To represent our clients and address their panoply of needs, we have about thirty criminal defense attorneys on staff, as well as investigators, social workers, family court attorneys, and civil lawyers, who specialize in civil rights, housing, employment, and immigration. The Bronx Defenders also has employees on staff who are working on criminal justice related issues such as voter disenfranchisement and the problem of re-entering society after spending time incarcerated. Because the city is only constitutionally mandated to pay for legal services for criminal cases, we raise money from private individuals and foundations to pay for the additional services we provide.

**- In retrospect, what cases or clients do you remember the most, and why ?**

I remember most of my clients but the clients who take their cases to trial are probably the most memorable. Trials are very intense, emotional experiences. You spend a lot of time with your client when you are on trial and often become very invested in the outcome of the case.

One trial of mine that I will always remember was the trial of a middle aged man who was charged with selling two small bags of crack-cocaine to an undercover officer. The client was a long time drug user who happened to be out one night when the undercover was looking to buy drugs. The client was not a drug dealer. He was a drug user, a fact that would be obvious to anyone, including the undercover officer. Unable to get a dealer to sell to him directly, the undercover approached the client and enlisted his help. The client took the officer to a building, had him wait in the lobby, and then went inside an apartment and purchased the drugs for the officer. The officer thanked him by giving him one of the bags of crack as a tip and then left the building. The client was immediately arrested by members of the undercover officer's team and charged with selling drugs, a crime that carries a minimum sentence of 1-3 years in a state prison. The theory of the prosecution was that the client was working with the seller to bring in business and therefore was just as guilty of the sale as the person inside the apartment (who was never arrested). When the client had his first court appearance, the judge had to decide whether to release him pending trial or set bail. Because he had a criminal history for drug use and possession, no job, did not have a working telephone, and did not have a stable residence, the judge declared him a flight risk and set \$1,500 bail. It might as well have been \$15,000. The client had no money and could not afford the bail. As such, he was forced to await his trial date in jail. It took over a year to get a trial for the client. At trial, the defense theory was that the client was not a dealer nor was he working for a dealer. Instead, he was a drug user, who helped out someone he thought was a fellow drug user in need of a fix. The only thing, we argued, he was guilty of was being an addict. Luckily, the jury found the client not guilty and he was immediately released. I remember that trial because it highlighted not only the ineffectiveness of the war on drugs, but the incredible disadvantage that indigency has on those involved in the criminal justice system. It was a great day when the client got released. But it would have been far better if he had never come into the criminal justice system in the first place.

**- What is your rate of « success » ? Do you think in those terms ?**

Success is hard to measure in a job like this. The vast majority of cases do not result in a trial. Instead they are disposed of with some sort of plea bargain, where the client pleads guilty to the top charge or to a lesser charge in exchange for a promised sentence. So sometimes success means winning a trial, but other times it means obtaining a favorable plea bargain for your client. Because our office tries to address the client's issues holistically, sometimes success has nothing to do with the outcome of the client's criminal case, but is measured more in terms of how much I am able to address the underlying issues that resulted in the client's involvement in the criminal justice system.

**- Do you ever get discouraged?**

It is hard not to get discouraged from time to time in this job. As a public defender you are always fighting to get the system to recognize your client's humanity. It is harder to accomplish this goal than it should be and that can be disheartening. It is also discouraging to meet clients who have been so mistreated by the system that they do not trust anyone associated with it, even the lawyer who is fighting for them.

**- Are there clients you turn down because you don't think they stand a chance? or because you don't feel comfortable defending them?**

As a public defender, we do not pick our clients. Indeed, the constitution requires that everyone charged with committing a crime, guilty or not, has the right to a lawyer. If we, as public defenders, chose to represent people only if we thought they were innocent or had a good chance of winning, that constitutional mandate could not be satisfied. But more importantly, I do this work because I want to help people. There are no clients that I feel uncomfortable representing. It does not matter what crime they are charged with or whether they are guilty as accused. I accept that many of my clients are guilty, but that doesn't mean that they don't deserve help, either in trying to reduce their prison sentences, or helping them with issues that brought them to the criminal justice system in the first place.

**For more information, please visit: <http://www.bronxdefenders.org/>**

## POLITICS & SOCIETY

### [Are apologies for past events useful or mere empty gestures ?](#)

By Maud BRIZARD

**For the past several years more and more politicians and public figures have thought it their duty to apologise for mistakes and crimes that took place decades or even centuries ago. Is this self-flagellation cathartic, or merely an empty gesture ?**

On 17 November 2006 British Prime minister Tony Blair became one of the latest politicians to offer a public apology for an historical event. To mark the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery, in March 2007, he expressed his regrets for the slave trade by saying that : "The bicentenary offers us a chance, not just to say how profoundly shameful the slave trade was, but also to express our deep sorrow that it ever happened."\* That speech aroused mixed emotions nation-wide, with some claiming it was not the Prime Minister's role to apologise for past failures and others believing he didn't say enough. These are well established viewpoints when it comes to apologising for historical events. Some think that nothing can be done to soothe past traumas, while others think that it is our duty to remember them publicly.

In the last few years, there has been a rash of public apologies for historical events. Jacques Chirac apologised for the part played by the Vichy government in deporting French Jews to death camps. The Japanese Prime Minister apologised for his country's behaviour in World War II ; in 1997, Boris Yeltsin apologised for the mistakes of the Bolshevik Revolution, and in 1998 Pope John Paul II formally apologised for centuries of Catholic anti-Semitism.

The main criticism about these public apologies is that, for onlookers at least, it seems easier to apologise for mistakes made by someone else. There is also the suspicion that, more often than not, these are merely carefully calculated PR gestures designed to enhance the public image of the speaker. Some also say that it is a convenient way to limit damages, by apologising for some things while conveniently omitting others. For instance, when Jean Paul II apologized for the Church's failure to combat Nazi persecution of the Jews, he made no mention of the silence of the 1940s pope, Pius XII, on the Holocaust. Many felt that he had not gone far enough.

One of the problems with apologies for historical events is that people's expectations of them are so high. In fact, these apologies mainly serve to acknowledge publicly that the pain and sorrow endured by some has not been entirely forgotten by others. Apologies do not claim to fix and heal anything other than our memories.

Clearly the most honest apologies are the ones which are truly meant. They are not as easy to articulate as they might sound. And there are still plenty of apologies to be made. However, they do represent a determination to avoid history silently repeating itself.

Sources: \* "Slaves to self-flagellation" *Spiked* 28 November 2006.

"Are apologies for historical events worthwhile or just empty gestures?," *The Belfast Telegraph* 28 November 2006.

"Blair 'sorrow' over slave trade," *BBC News* 27 November 2006.

"The hardest word," *Guardian* 1 December 2006

"The Queen should apologise to Dresden," *The Independent* 3 November 2004.

## POLITICS & SOCIETY

### Good British Food synonymous with Slow Food ?

By Florie VINCENT

**Fast-food and ready-to-eat meals have been a staple of the British diet for decades, but will not remain so if the Slow Food Movement has its way: it has launched a gastronomic crusade to teach the British (and others) the joys of cooking and eating.**

'Good, clean and fair food' is the motto of the Slow Food Movement, founded in Italy in 1986 by food journalist Carlo Petrini. Petrini was appalled by the development of fast-food restaurants and processed foods in Italy endangering culinary culture, agricultural biodiversity and indeed the whole fabric of social life. Slow Food is now an international non-profit organization involving 80.000 members worldwide.

The British branch was only established in 2005, but it already boasts more than 1.500 members, all keen to spread the Slow Food gospel in the land of fish & chips and frozen steak and kidney pies. The basic tenets of the Slow Food creed are that everybody should take time to shop, cook and eat simple, good food, produced in a way "that does not harm the environment, animal welfare or our health" and whereby " food producers receive fair compensation for their work."\*

The movement is gaining momentum as more and more Britons become concerned about their health and are willing to change their eating habits.

Fairs and markets are organized to promote the movement, to connect producers and co-producers (ie. consumers) and to inform the latter of how their food is produced. The Salone del Gusto that takes place every two years in Turin, is the biggest of all these gastronomic gatherings. At the 2004 fair, Britain had the second largest group of producers after Italy. The Shortbread House of Edinburgh and The Real Ale Society were both hugely successful.

The *cittaslow* ('slow city') scheme is also developing steadily in the UK. The aim of the scheme is to introduce Slow Food values to local communities, like in Aylsham (Norfolk) and in Ludlow (Shropshire) where the new national Slow Food office opened in December 2006. Towns join the scheme in the hope of seeing the growth of approved local farms in the country. Groups of members or *convivia*, gather several times a year to organize thematic meals, taste workshops or visits to local farms. There are already 40 *convivia* throughout the UK. Each *convivium* has its own leader and committee elected by the members, and gets administrative support from the national office. Many of the Slow Food apostles are cooks, farmers or wine growers who draw up lists of recommended restaurants who operate according to the principles of the movement. However, there is neither an official guidebook nor an official label.

The *convivia* also organise educational programs in *cittaslow* schools. They help to improve school lunches and organise afterclass activities for children, like the creation of school gardens.

Hopefully the future of British food will be buoyantly Slow.

#### Sources:

\*Official website of the Slow Food Movement, [www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com), 2006.

Website of the Slow Food movement in UK, [www.slowfood.org.uk](http://www.slowfood.org.uk), 2006.

"Slow Food," *BBC Food*, [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), 30 November 2006.

## POLITICS & SOCIETY

### [A big apple a day keeps trans-fats \(and overweight problems\) away](#)

By Romain DONDELINGER

**The Big Apple is fighting the scourge of obesity. Mayor Bloomberg has introduced a ban on the use of trans-fats in restaurant cooking, a move that will radically transform how food is prepared in the kitchens of McDonald's and (some) gastronomic restaurants alike.**

On Saturday 4 December, the New York City Board of Health approved the first major municipal ban on the use of artificial trans-fats in restaurants. Trans-fats are accused of having a link with cholesterol and heart disease causing up to 70 000 deaths a year. New York's mayor, Michael R Bloomberg has pushed for this measure in order to combat "the nationwide epidemic of obesity"\*. The rule will take effect from July 2007.

No less than a thousand restaurants will be affected. Under the supervision of the health department's restaurant inspectors, they will have to eliminate all form of trans-fats in their dishes and remove all items which contain too high a level of them. Moreover, all restaurants will now have to specify the amount of trans-fats next to each item on the menu. If it is higher than a half-gram per serving, the owner of the recalcitrant restaurant will have to pay a \$200 fine.

This new ban has triggered mixed reactions.

To date, a few restaurant chains like KFC have agreed publicly to comply with the decision but the food industry in general condemns the law as a threat to civil liberties. Some restaurant owners also claim that they do not have enough time to find alternative oils for cooking. A few say that removing all trans fats is too difficult and expensive as they have been a staple of the American diet since the rise of fast food in the '70s.

Some chefs like Joe Bianchi, owner of *Ponzo Pastry Shop* or Eillen Weinberg, owner of *At Good and Plenty*, say they will comply with the legislation, but in their own time. "Items will be changed, but not until after the holiday", said E. Weinberg.

In an attempt to placate irate restaurant owners, Mr. Schwartz, a chef at *Le Cirque* and *Osteria del Circo* has agreed to conduct a cooking trial at the Institute of Culinary Education in mid December. The challenge is to find the best alternative to trans fats between Crisco, coconut oil butter and canola oil.

The trans-fat ban came about after the ban of smoking in restaurants and public places a few months ago. According to Public Health Advocacy, New York city's health crusade should be a model for other US cities. "New York City has set a national standard [...] and other communities should follow suit", said Harold Goldstein, executive director of the California Center for Public Health Advocacy.

"We are just trying to make food safer", answered mayor Bloomberg modestly.\*

#### Sources:

\* "New York Bans Most Trans Fats in Restaurants" *The New York Times* 5 December 2006.

"In City's Fat Ban, a Challenge Fit for a Chef" *The New York Times* 11 December 2006.

**POLITICS & SOCIETY****[On unexpected demographic trends in New Orleans, AIDS in Zimbabwe, and the SA/Australian climate club](#)****[New Orleans is becoming Latino...](#) by Julie LE COZ**

More than a year after Hurricane Katrina, life is still precarious and unpredictable for many evacuees from New Orleans. About 102,000 families are still living in government trailers scattered around the region, and 33,000 are living in apartments paid for by FEMA.\* Mayor Ray Nagin said he did not expect the city's rebuilding plan to be finished by mid-January.

Katrina has also influenced the city's demography in unexpected ways, creating, for instance, a surprisingly large increase in the number of Latino immigrants. Historically, New Orleans was mostly a black and white city, with only a small Latino community. Researchers from Tulane University estimate that there are now 5,000 to 7,000 illegal Latino workers in New Orleans. These newcomers have arrived from Texas, Florida, California, and sometimes Mexico.

This increase has led to a baby boom in the latino population. In the New Orleans maternity hospital, about 96 per cent of patients are latinos (against 2 per cent before the hurricane). The 300 millionth American was born on October 17, 2006, in New Orleans, to Mexican immigrants. His name is Jackson Antonio Alvarado.

Sources: \* FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Agency; "Rebuilding, Not Revitalizing, New Orleans," *The New York Times* 25 November 2006; "Storm Evacuees Remain in Grip of Uncertainty," *The New York Times* 6 December 2006; "New Orleans Takes a Step to Raze Projects," *The New York Times* 8 December 2006; "Katrina Begets a Baby Boom by Immigrants," *The New York Times* 11 December 2006.

**[AIDS world record in Zimbabwe](#) By Adeline MAUNOURY**

A recent report published by the United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF) shows that Zimbabwe now has the world's highest percentage of children orphaned by AIDS. This alarming piece of information also revealed that this scourge kills 3 000 African children every week.

Source: "UNICEF: one in four Zim Children Aids Orphan," *The Mail and Guardian* 5 December 2006.

**[South Africa / Australia cooperation on climate change](#) By Adeline MAUNOURY**

On Wednesday 6 December 2006 South Africa and Australia signed a letter of intent to cooperate for three years on climate-change issues. Because these two countries are at comparable latitudes in the southern hemisphere, they have similar climatic conditions and face similar challenges due to climate change. This cooperation should lead to domestic laws and actions in order to facilitate and encourage new environmental policies.

Source: "SA, Australia to cooperate on climate change," *The Mail & Guardian* 6 December 2006.

## ARTS & BOOKS

### [The world's first creationist museum to open next spring in Ohio](#)

By Mélanie SEPTIER

**The Creation Museum, 10 miles from Cincinnati, Ohio, will open to the public next spring. It will be the first museum to present the biblical account of the creation of the world as “historically accurate”.**

Designed as a natural history museum, the Creation Museum is a tourist attraction in which nothing, except a few turtles, is authentic. Its designer, Patrick Marsh, used to work at Universal Studios in Los Angeles and in Japan. In the Creation Museum, spectacular robotic dinosaurs chew the cud alongside human figures, in scenes that tell the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and after the fall from Grace. A 180-seat special-effects planetarium tells the story of creation ; a 40-foot tall (12-meter) section of Noah's Ark is also to be built.

The main difficulty encountered by creationists when they want to debate with evolutionists is to account for embarrassing discoveries like dinosaur fossils. Indeed, there is no mention of any dinosaur in the Bible. So, the designers of the Creation Museum have found a way of getting round the problem, by integrating dinosaurs in the biblical story of Creation. Thus, although science has proved through nuclear dating technology that dinosaurs appeared 200 million years ago, on a planet which is more than 4 billion years old, this museum manages to incorporate dinosaurs into a scenario in which the world is only 6,000 years old.\* The curators use calculations made in the 17th century by Bishop Usher, who used the Bible as his only reference to count back to the dawn of time.

When asked about the remains of early humanoid creatures, Patrick Marsh said in an interview to the *Guardian*: « There are no such things. Humans are basically as you see them today. Those skeletons they've found, what's the word ? ... they could have been deformed, diseased or something. I've seen people like that running round the streets of New York. »\*\*

The director of the Museum is an Australian evangelist named Ken Ham, who used to be a science teacher and is now a preacher who lectures all over the world. He has worked on the project for twenty years, and claims he wants « to convince people using observable science, » and insists that « Nothing contradicts the Bible's account of the origins. »\*\* Mr Ham runs « Answers in Genesis », a prominent creationist organisation that owns the museum.\*\*\*\*

The Creation Museum is expected to receive 300,000 visitors the first year, who will pay \$10 admission each.\*\*\* It has cost \$25 million, of which \$21 million have been private donations. Two anonymous donors have given \$1 million apiece. \$12 million have been allocated to the building and land, and \$13 million to interior designs and exhibits.\*\*\*\*

It is located near one of the most populated areas of the US and not very far from Canada. Indeed, potentially 170 million Americans could drive there in one day, as well as millions of Canadians. This building reflects the increasing influence of fundamentalist Christianity in the US, where about 50 million people believe that the Bible tells the true story of the creation of the world.

Sources: \* “High-tech museum brings creationism to life,” *Newsweek* 31 July 2006 ; \*\* “Bones of contention,” *The Guardian* 24 November 2006 ; \*\*\* “In the beginning ... Adam walked with dinosaurs,” *The Daily Telegraph* 2 January 2005. \*\*\*\*<http://www.answersingenesis.org/museum/> the official website of the Creation Museum

## ARTS & BOOKS

### Tattoo boom

By Claire PESLHERBE & Ségolène PRADEAU

**The tattoo industry is flourishing in the US, and particularly in Illinois, where a law dropping the legal age to get a tattoo from 21 to 18 was passed last year.**

The oldest traces of human tattoos have been found in Japan, from 10 000 years ago. Depending on the times and culture, tattoos have been marks of social rank or religious belief, as, for instance, in India, where people had forehead tattoos denoting their caste. But tattoos have also often forcefully marked slaves, convicts, and concentration camp inmates. And until recently, tattoos carried a negative connotation in Western culture, as a hallmark of outcasts. Even nowadays, people with tattoos are often looked down upon by others, and many tattoo bearers claim to have been discriminated against when looking for a job.

However, public opinion seems to be changing fast, as many different kinds of people are now getting tattooed. Statistics are telling.

In 1999 the word "tattoos" was ranked by the search engine Lycos as the eleventh most popular search term, in 2000 as the seventh, in 2001 as the fourth, and in 2002 as the third.

A study made by *Life* magazine in 1936 assessed that 10 million Americans, that is, about 6% of the U.S. population at the time, had at least one tattoo. In 2003, a Harris Poll estimated that 16% of the American people had been tattooed once or several times.

A study made by the American Academy of Dermatology in 2006 shows that 24% of Americans between 18 and 50 have at least one tattoo. The same survey shows that 36% of people from 18 to 29 are tattooed.

This new fashion seems very egalitarian. The percentage of men (16%) and women (15%) tattooed is almost the same. Likewise, the difference in number of tattooed people according to their ethnicity is not significant: 16% of white people, 14% of black people & 18% of latinos are tattooed.

The industry is booming: according to the most recent surveys, a new tattoo parlour opens daily, and the number of tattoo parlours nationwide is up to 20,000. Tattooing is said to be one of the fastest growing retail ventures of the last decade.\*

Nowadays, tattoos are more of a fashion statement than anything else; people get tattoos mostly for aesthetic reasons. Given the fad, lawmakers have had to adapt. In Illinois, their main concern was to prevent young adults from seeking "back alley" tattoo shops. Such shops, which tattoo with non-sterilized equipment, pose a serious health risk.

Sources: \* [www.vanishingtattoo.com](http://www.vanishingtattoo.com) "Tattoo Facts & Statistics". Vanishing Tattoo is a website dedicated to tattoo culture.

"Body of Art," *Red Eye* 28 September 2006. (*RedEye Magazine* is an edition of the *Chicago Tribune*) <http://redeye.chicagotribune.com/>

"Lower Age for Tattoos Welcomed," *The Register-Mail Online* 11 November 2005.

Tattoo Life Magazine: [www.tattoolife.com](http://www.tattoolife.com)

## ARTS & BOOKS

### [On Art awards, Stradivarius violins, a new beatles album-cum-show and Apocalypto's historical inaccuracies](#)

#### [Turner Prize 2006](#) By *Elodie LECADIEU*

The German painter Tomma Abts was awarded the Turner Prize on December 4, 2006 at Tate Britain, London. This prize, created in 1984, rewards a living British artist or an artist living in Britain for his/her work of the past year. It is one of the most sought-after art distinctions in Europe. Tomma Abts is the first woman (since Gillian Wearing in 1997) and the first painter (since Chris Ofili in 1998) to win it in almost a decade. She usually works on canvases of a single size, 19 in. by 15 in., painting sitting down.

Source: "I'm sure they were thinking it was time a woman won," *The Guardian* 6 December 2006.  
[www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk).

#### [The mystery of Stradivarius violins solved by a Texas scientist ?](#)

##### By *Eric GILLAUX*

The mystery surrounding Stradivarius violins and the uniqueness of their sound has been baffling violinists and scientists alike for the last three centuries. A biochemist from Texas A&M University, Joseph Nagyvary, has recently discovered what could well be the answer to their questions. After experimenting with infrared and nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy, he found out that the famous violins "had been treated with salts of copper, iron and chromium as wood preservers." Nagyvary published his entire study in *Nature* magazine. This could be good news for violinists around the world as Stradivarius's crystal clear sound is rather dear: one such violin costs anything up to 2 million dollars...

Source: "Wood in prized violins may have been chemically treated," *The Mirror* 29 November 2006.

#### [A new Beatles show cum album](#) By *Marie-Dominique BEAU*

The first authorised theatrical show of the Beatles' work will open at the Mirage in Las Vegas this summer. The current owner of the Beatles' catalogue, English record producer Giles Martin, and his father, Sir George Martin, famed producer of almost all of The Beatles' records, have agreed to use the original Beatles' recordings to provide a soundtrack for the Cirque du Soleil show entitled "Love". The project involved re-mixing and re-mastering of the Beatles' recorded performances into completely new music. This was initially George Harrison's idea. He wanted to organise a joint stage production with his friend Guy Laliberte, the founder of the Cirque du Soleil and originally a fire-breathing street performer. The surviving members of the group, Sir Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr helped shape the show, but will not appear on stage.

Source: "Beatles will release new album to mark opening of Las Vegas extravaganza," [www.Telegraph.co.uk](http://www.Telegraph.co.uk) 10 December 2006.

#### [« Apocalypto »: a controversial fresco.](#) By *Sébastien GERBAULT*

Mel Gibson's latest movie, released in the US at the beginning of December, is a violent fresco on the decline of the ancient Mayan civilization. It is partially intended as a political allegory about civilizations in decline, and opens on a quote claiming that: "A great civilization is not conquered from without until it has destroyed itself from within."

Anthropologists, archaeologists and historians, together with some descendants of the Mayan people, are not very keen on the way Mayans are depicted. Anachronisms and inaccuracies are rife, and scenes showing priests performing human sacrifices with graphic details about cannibalism have aroused controversy. Specialists such as John Arithson and Stanley Jones recall that the inhabitants of the Yucatan peninsula were a refined people, who knew about mathematics, writing, and astronomy. They deplore the confusion with the Aztecs. The dialogues are in Yucatek dialect.

Source: "Mel Gibson's 'Apocalypto': rape, torture, human sacrifice - and a thumbs-up," *The Independent* 10 December 06.

## BUSINESS & MEDIA

### Levi's green revolution

By Sandra DECKMYN

**After our plates and our moisturising creams, the organic world has now expanded to our bums and legs. Levi's latest creation, Levi's Eco, is not a pair of green jeans but a green pair of jeans.**

On 26 November, six months after Levi's came up with the idea, the first "organic jeans" were made available in select Levi's stores in Europe. The company claims that polluting the earth to produce jeans will soon be a thing of the past. Making denim jeans is an ecological disaster as cotton fields require huge amounts of pesticide and fertilizer, not to mention the pollution caused to rivers by the dye process.

Levi's Eco are entirely made of organic materials. The denim is made from 100% organic cotton; the jeans have coconut shell buttons on the waistband, non-galvanised metal fly buttons, and recycled zippers. The label is made from recycled cardboard, and the dye does not use any chemical since the indigo colour is produced from potato starch, mimosa flower and Marseille soap\*, thus reviving medieval techniques.

Geert Peeters, vice president of product management, claims these jeans are as stylish as any others. When someone asked him "how do you know it's a Levi's Eco?" Peeters answered "The whole point is that you don't. It looks like our other jeans"\*. The only detail showing it is a green pair of jeans is the embroidered lowercase "e" inside the front pocket or at the bottom of the right leg, depending on the range.

The jeans are produced in Europe. The factory is situated in Hungary where the machines were duly cleaned to comply with the rules of organic manufacturing. Materials come from Europe to reduce the costs of transport and fuel and are produced in neighbouring countries such as Turkey where the organic cotton comes from.

Even if everything is done to keep prices low, these jeans remain expensive: about £80 (120€). But Levi's is convinced that customers think high prices for high quality green jeans is normal. You Nguyen, the senior vice-president of Levi's product in Europe, said that "more and more consumers were making product choices based on the environmental and social impact" and that they were willing to pay more for green products.

But high prices may not last long, Nguyen explained. "In future, if this is successful we may look at ways of expanding it, but it will never be 100% of the Levi's product. This is because the availability of organic cotton is limited," even if, lately, the organic cotton industry has grown dramatically. Nguyen added that with their success they "may be able to persuade producers to grow more".\*

Robert Hanson, Levi's brand president, declared that "as the inventor of jeans, it is critical for us to continue to innovate [...] in order to drive positive changes"\*\*. By coincidence, Levi's revenues this year had fallen since last year\*\*. Levi's Eco is seen as Levi's hope for a new start. 30,000 pairs of Levi's Eco were produced for the launch. However, the only consumers that are benefiting from the new jeans are Europeans, since according to Mr Nguyen, European consumers are more receptive to green products.

Sources: \* "Levi's launches green jeans", *The Guardian* 24 November 2006.

\*\* "New 'green' jeans to hit the shelves", *The Daily Mail* 11 October 2006.

"Levi's Brand Launches 100% Organic Cotton Jeans", *The Newswire of Corporate Social Responsibilities* 7 May 2006.

"Transformer le jean en produit écolo et équitable", *Novethic, le média en ligne du développement durable* 8 September 2006.

"Idea of green jeans taking roots", *The Times Online* 16 September 2006.

## BUSINESS & MEDIA

### The peanut conundrum in Gambia

By Géraldine CHAMPAIN

#### **Peanut farming is a dangerous business for a small developing country.**

From the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, peanut farming has been widely developed in Africa. Gambia is no exception.

Gambia is a tiny country enclosed in Senegal with a population of about 1 650 000 people, 80% of whom live in rural areas.

This former United Kingdom colony became independent in 1965, only to be partly swallowed by Senegal as Senegambia in 1982, before regaining independence in 1989.

Peanuts are one of Gambia's very few agricultural resources with 60% of cultivated grounds in the country devoted to peanut farming.\*\*

Peanuts represent 12% of the world production of oleaginous seeds. The principal producers are India and China: 12M tons per year for China against 6M for Africa\*\*\*. The main African producers are Nigeria, Sudan, Senegal and Ghana.

Gambia comes much after, with only 80 000 tons per year and very unstable yields.

The main peanut buyers are the Netherlands (0,6M tons per year), Japan, the U.K and Indonesia.\*\*\*\* Peanut is imported mainly for oil, but also for butter and husked seeds.

Peanuts are difficult to farm. The seed requires damp weather, and the slightest drought (frequent in Africa) kills all production.

It is also an acid crop which contaminates the land. Only with controlled farming, and a strictly respected fallow can the land sustain this culture.

But in a country like Gambia, poor farmers tend to neglect the fallow, and the ground becomes acidic, therefore creating a vicious circle whereby they plant more and more and yield less and less.

With sea and forest resources totally unexploited, and tourism virtually non existent, Gambia relies almost solely on this suicidal crop.

The unstable political situation further hampers economic development. The suspension of most international aid and co-operation programs after the 1994 coup against Jawara's government does not help either.

#### Sources:

\* [www.africa.onweb.com](http://www.africa.onweb.com)

\*\* [www.sangonet.com](http://www.sangonet.com)

\*\*\* [www.museum.agropolis.com](http://www.museum.agropolis.com)

\*\*\*\* Wikipedia

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### [I ♥ Botox!](#)

By Celia MEURICE

**As more and more doctors turn to the lucrative trade of cosmetic medicine, Botox is hailed by many as the magic cure for wrinkles and age marks. However, Botox injections are not quite as innocuous as they sometimes sound.**

Botox is a commercial brand name. It actually contains a protein substance produced by the bacteria *Clostridium botulinum*. Though highly toxic when administered in large doses, Botox is used as a cosmetic treatment which, according to medical experts, is extremely safe when used properly. Botox is a purified form of the Botulin toxin which, once injected under the skin, temporarily paralyzes the muscles of the face responsible for unwanted wrinkles. These muscles then become unable to contract for 4 to 6 months. You can begin to use Botox from 35 years old, but many people use Botox injections at 45 or 50. Botox can be injected in your forehead, around the eyes, around the mouth... It does not come cheap and costs an average \$380 per area injected, with re-injections every six months to keep up the results.

In 2006, Botox injection was the most common cosmetic operation in the United States;\* Americans spend an estimated 12 billion dollars per year in cosmetic surgery. With droves of clients, an easy lifestyle and no more midnight emergency calls, more and more doctors are turning to cosmetic medicine. As journalist Natacha Singer points out: "In the United States, all doctors with state medical licences are allowed to administer all kinds of treatments, regardless of their training."\*\* About 300 doctors went into cosmetic medicine in 2005: most of them were former emergency room physicians, internists, obstetricians or gynaecologists.

However, the world of lucrative cosmetic treatments is not entirely hazard free. In 2004, a couple from Florida received almost 3 000 times the estimated dose of the Botulin toxin. Fortunately, the couple did not die, but they got botulism: a paralytic illness.

People who want to receive Botox injections are advised to choose a licensed and trained doctor to avoid serious problems. Nevertheless, even if people are becoming aware of the risks involved, they are more and more compelled to try magic Botox: some even doing the injections themselves.

The risks of continued use of Botox are not well identified. "Eternal" youth and beauty do come at a certain price, but it is not quite clear yet what that price actually is.

#### Sources:

\* "[www.wikipedia.org/wiki/botulinum\\_toxin](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/botulinum_toxin)"

\*\* "More Doctors turning to the business of beauty," *The New York Times* 30 November 2006.

"Botox Treatment: Make sure it's the real thing," *The New York Times* 23 November 2006.

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### [You simply cannot believe your eyes](#)

By Fabien d'ANGELY & Pauline AUBEY

**A scientist has succeeded in explaining how some optical illusions trick our brains. Although these tricks have been known and used for years by magicians, this scientific breakthrough is an important step towards a better understanding of how the human brain works.**

Gustav Kuhn, a cognitive psychologist who works at the university of Durham, UK, and who also happens to be a magician, has been researching the various techniques used by magicians to influence and trick their audience. Scientists are using this research to understand how the human brain works. They have more or less mapped out how the optical system is organised, but are still conjecturing on optical illusions.

Magicians have known for years that we can be deceived by our eyes. They use optical illusions on a regular basis to build their shows. They play on this specificity to make people believe things they have not seen, in other words, to create illusions. For instance, a magician can influence his audience's perception by telling them to look into an empty box, when there is actually a hidden secret compartment. The word "empty" is a means to manipulate their perception. Another classic is when a magician claims there is nothing up his sleeves, accompanies this statement with a few theatrical gestures, and eventually produces an object... that was already "up his sleeves". Both tricks play on the audience's expectations about what is going to happen. A keen sense of psychology is obviously required.

One of the discoveries made by scientists is that eye movements and perception are separated in our brain organisation and function separately, thus creating the possibility of tricking the brain. How? Our brain does not perceive reality as it is, but reconstructs it from clues. Hence, it can be distracted into seeing what is not there. Spectators are fooled by the magician who leads them to look one way by using gestures or carefully chosen words. Magicians exploit this intrinsic weakness and build their illusions around it. This demonstrates that we should not take for granted what we call reality and trust blindly what our eyes see.

This goes against the universally accepted idea that "seeing is believing." It shows that however sophisticated our brain is, it is not perfect. It is also still very mysterious, and science has not unveiled all its secrets.

But even when magic tricks are explained, we can still enjoy the show. After all, who really believes that the magician's assistant has actually been cut in half?

Sources: "There's More to Magic than Meets the Eye," *Medical News* 24 November 2006.

"Abracadabra! A classic magic Trick Fools Expectations, Not Eyes," *Scientific American* 20 November 2006.

"Your eyes can deceive you, don't trust them!" *The New Scientist* 20 November 2006.

"How magicians can fool our brain," *Times of India* 22 November 2006.

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### On the fight against breast cancer, Indian students abroad, and houses on the moon

#### New hopes in the fight against breast cancer *By Benjamin SAFAR*

Scientists from the molecular pathology laboratory at the Breakthrough Breast Cancer Research Centre (UK) discovered that one in ten breast cancers is linked to a gene called FGFR1. When its activity is blocked, the tumours tend to stop growing.

Dr. Reis-Filho explained the importance of this discovery: "Breast cancer is a complex disease made up of many sub-types. Currently, most breast cancers are treated similarly, but we'd like to be able to tailor treatment for each type."\* For instance, women who test positive for this gene could be treated without using chemotherapy, and therefore be spared its noxious side-effects.

However, many more tests and clinical trials will be required before a new therapy is approved.

In the mean time, 44 000 women are diagnosed with breast cancers each year in Great Britain.

Source: \*"Scientists find genetic key to some breast cancers," *The Guardian* 4 December 2006.

#### India : a supplier of students *By Nicolas TREVILLOT*

It is reported that 76 503 Indian nationals are currently studying in America. They represent the biggest group of foreign students in the United States.

Although some of them do go back home once they have completed their degree, thousands stay in the US to work. Chinese and Korean students also contribute their skills to the world's biggest economy.

The Indian government is very worried by the consequences of this brain drain. It is therefore striving to change its universities in order to attract foreign students —particularly Asian students— and to prevent promising Indian graduates from leaving the country.

Source: "India's Education Crisis 101," *Time* 5 December 2006.

#### A house on the moon? *By Matthieu LEROUX*

Nasa has announced plans to build a self-sustaining permanent base at the South pole of the moon by 2024, raising the prospect of a manned space flight to Mars. The ambitious proposals signal the next phase of space exploration after the agency's space shuttles are retired in 2010. It also marks a radical departure from previous short trips to the moon.

The international base will be permanently staffed by 2024, four years after astronauts land on the moon to begin assembly. Once complete, astronauts from the US and other nations will spend up to six months on the base at any one time.

Nasa said the two key reasons for establishing a base were to prepare for a manned mission to Mars - and ultimately the expansion of human civilisation to other planets. The project is likely to cost hundreds of billions of dollars and involve European partners, but no price tag was announced by Nasa officials yet.

Source: « Nasa plans lunar outpost, » *The Washington Post* 5 December 2006.

## ENVIRONMENT & TRAVEL

### Exotic pets: the dark side of a wild fad

By *Véronique JULLIEN*

#### **The exotic pet market is booming, especially in the United States. But is it a good idea to keep wild animals at home?**

Crocodiles in the subway or wild cats living in your neighbour's back-yard are familiar urban legends which are often funny rather than really scary. There are exceptions though.

For the past few years an increasing number of Burmese pythons have been spotted in the Everglades. It is estimated that there are now around 1000 of them. They breed rapidly and have perfectly adapted to their new environment. They feed on small and not so small animals: half an alligator has been found inside one python. But these monster snakes – usually about 5 metres but up to 8 metres long- are not indigenous to the Everglades and have never been brought there officially at any stage. It is presumed that they were originally exotic pets set free by their owners.

It is estimated that 18.2 million people in the United States own exotic pets, from venomous spiders to lion cubs. Most of the tired owners will try to contact a zoo or an equivalent institution once they realize they can't keep their crocodile in their bathtub any longer, and the cases when dangerous animals are set free are still exceptional.

But still, owning exotic pets is such a popular phenomenon in the US that a number of issues need to be addressed sooner rather than later.

First of all the care of these animals. Not everybody is fit and knowledgeable enough to take care of an exotic animal which needs special treatment and special food. 98% of exotic animals die within their first two years as pets.

An other issue is the health and safety factor. Some exotic animals carry diseases and there have already been cases where they almost caused a full scale epidemic. For instance in 2003, there was a monkeypox outbreak when imported diseased African rodents contaminated American ones.

These two issues are greatly worsened by the fact that the black market is so large. It is estimated that a quarter of the world's exotic pet trade — amounting to billions of dollars every year — is illegal. This means less sanitary control and probably worse conditions for the animals in terms of transport and control of the caring abilities of the future owner.

19 American states have either full or partial bans on the private ownership of large exotic animals, and now both states and federal lawmakers are raising the issue of wild animals as pets in general.

Sources: "Burmese days," *The Economist* 30 November 2006.

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"The Whims and Dangers of the Exotic Pet Market," [www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org) (website of an American animal protection organization)

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"Update: Multistate Outbreak of Monkeypox--- Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin, 2003", 11 July 2003., [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) (website of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, part of the Department of Health and Human Services, a US government agency)

## ENVIRONMENT & TRAVEL

### The nightmare of the fairy penguins

By Camille LE BARZE

**Australian fairy penguins are an endangered species. The Sydney Harbour colony struggles for life on a daily basis.**

Fairy penguins are the smallest penguins in the world. Unlike their North Pole-Hollywood famous Emperor cousins, they measure up to 40 centimetres only and weigh less than a kilogram. They live in large colonies to protect themselves from predators and they feed on small sea animals.

In Australia one of the largest colonies is established not far from Sydney Harbour. Living close to human habitation is a risky business, because of the local cats and dogs, and even foxes which can attack them in their nests. Humans can be dangerous too. Recently, a group of vandals has smashed penguin eggs, right in the middle of the breeding period.

The number of fairy penguins has been decreasing steadily in the last few years, and the colony living near Sydney is in danger of disappearing completely. A few years ago they were hundreds of them, but now their number is only around 120 penguins.

The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), which is in charge of monitoring the evolution of the colony, is trying to save it from extinction.

The DEC has placed special boxes for the penguins to make their nests in a safe place, away from the Harbour disturbances. This proved quite successful as the breeding rate reached 80% in 2005.

Many local inhabitants were shocked by this latest vandalism incident. The DEC wants to find out who was responsible. In the meantime it has declared that anyone caught damaging eggs or nest boxes would be fined AU\$220,000 .

#### Sources:

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[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org), «Little Penguin»

## SPORTS

### English football for sale

By Nicolas CHEVET

**Liverpool Football Club, one of the most successful British teams, is close to a deal with Dubai International Capital (DIC). If this deal goes through, Liverpool will be the seventh English club to pass under the control of foreign billionaires since 2000.**

On Monday 11 December, Liverpool said in an official statement that it was in exclusive negotiations with Dubai International Capital (DIC) about a possible £450m investment in the club.

The club has been short of cash for some time. It wants to build a new 60,000-seat stadium and hire top-players to boost its performances while it still has debts to pay back. Of DIC's proposed £450m, around £200m, which is likely to be borrowed, will be needed to build the stadium, and Liverpool's debts are around £100m.

The offer by DIC will involve purchasing the shares of the Moores family, founders of the Littlewoods retailing chain, who have been the majority shareholder so far. The club's chairman, David Moores is expected to make a little under £80m if the deal is concluded.

Liverpool fans are concerned that this takeover by a foreign private equity firm might endanger the club's heritage and culture. However, Rafael Benítez has promised them this would not be a short-term deal, and the potential investors want to make Liverpool a success in the long-term.

Any how, Liverpool fans are even more concerned to stay with Chelsea, Manchester United and Arsenal. Some of them also remember that Liverpool was originally formed as a commercial venture. Back in 1892, John Houlding, a brewer who was the majority shareholder at the time, hired Scottish professional football players to fill the stadium and make money. His "team of Macs" was a most innovative way to revive the prospects of an ailing football club. It seems Houlding's heritage is still alive and kicking.

#### Sources:

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