

[Entreaty]

OBJECTION D'ART

From a September 2010 open letter to French president Nicolas Sarkozy by the Committee for the Defense of Versailles concerning an exhibition of work by the Japanese artist Takashi Murakami at the palace last fall. Prince Sixte-Henri de Bourbon-Parme, a descendant of Louis XIV, filed an injunction against the exhibition in October. In 2008, Versailles displayed the work of American artist Jeff Koons. Jean-Jacques Aillagon is the director of the Versailles museum. Translated from the French by Anthony Lydgate.

Mr. President,

Versailles, in the eyes of the entire world, is the symbol of France's cultural excellence, of the glory of the Sun King and the universality of European Civilization, of which France has been the emblem for three centuries. Murakami at Versailles is the symbol of the annulment of France's prestige, of contempt for its sovereign People, and of the triumph of New York-style cultural barbarity—its aim being worldwide hegemony.

In 2008, during the Koons exhibit, we drew your attention to the fact that “this sacrilegious taint on the most sacred values of our History, our Culture, and our Sovereignty opens a Pandora's box of unpredictable consequences.” Blind to this mockery of the symbol of our cultural identity and national prestige, you ignored our request, going so far as to invoke those who are “won over by such audacity”! And so misfortune—cultural, political, economic, and touristic—has descended upon us. Ridiculed in her showcase of excellence, France has lost her prestige, her respect for the office of president, along with, may we point out, 14 percent of her tourism, which threatens her supremacy.

With the exhibit by the Japanese–New Yorker crossbreed Murakami, this policy of suicidal mockery continues, placing France's most prestigious showcase in the service of the “rival culture.” A growing number of French people see in this caricature of Versailles a veritable act of cultural treason, one that aids those who are waging war against European intelligence, art, and Civilization.

A growing number of French voters are dismayed that, contrary to campaign declarations, it appears you do not love France, that you alas no longer represent her. Why are you willing to see France made a laughingstock for the benefit of a small number of foreign interests? How, disregarding all diplomatic rules, can you countenance that, under the pretense of ridiculing Napoleon's coronation at the palace of the Sun

King, Murakami, that plunderer of mangas, comes to Versailles to humiliate the Japanese, thumbing his nose even at the Emperor of Japan, land of the Rising Sun?

You, who have decided to put culture at the center of policy, do you think that with 2012 on the horizon it is desirable, in terms of our patrimony, that Versailles become a symbol of the widening rupture between the people and a certain style of autocratic government, both deaf and blind, that they cannot recognize as French? To escape from the infectious trap of ridicule created by Mr. Aillagon, we see only one way of closing the Pandora's box of the sorcerer's apprentice: disavow the man who is playing Sun King at France's expense and secure the resignation of Mr. Aillagon.

Anticipating a positive response, we are,

Yours faithfully,

Pierre Charie-Marsaines

Honorary President

Arnaud-Aaron Upinsky

President

[Anthropology]

DON'T MENTION THE WAR

From a series of “market profiles” by VisitBritain, the official tourism bureau of the United Kingdom. The guides, which were released this summer in preparation for the 2012 Olympic Games in London, are meant to help British businesses “provide an even more efficient and helpful customer service that takes account of cultural needs.”

Cleanliness is of major importance to Austrians.

The Portuguese take great pride in wearing good fabrics and clothes of the best standard they can afford.

New Zealanders are accustomed to high-pressure showers, not a weak dribble from a nozzle, and are also used to gallons and gallons of hot water being available.

Although Italians give little care to public places, they are scrupulously clean in their own homes. Don't be offended by Argentine humor, which may mildly attack your clothing or weight.

Canadians often identify themselves as Canadian by wearing a maple-leaf pin or a maple leaf on their clothing.

Czechs are very sensitive to price changes.

Brazilians do not travel lightly.

As a nation, Germans are interested in many