

French museum displays artist's fetish with visceral visual creations

ART? from page 12

checked cherubs that grace the Louvre.

This Fragonard's brushes were scalpels, his canvases the bodies of men and beasts. Carefully skinned, preserved and posed, they reveal what fascinated their maker but repulses many visitors — the hidden world of blood and bone, of muscle and flesh.

"The guy was obsessed. I think he went a little too far," said Colin Herrick, a tourist from San Francisco gawking at the mummified bodies of three skinned human babies.

Reeking of formaldehyde, the Fragonard Museum is housed in three rooms of the fortress-like National Veterinary School in Maisons-Alfort, a bleak industrial town on the eastern outskirts of the French capital.

Over at the skinned babies, the tourist from San Francisco ponders one posed like a miniature Humphrey Bogart, with one hand on a hip and the

other bent at the elbow as if holding an unseen cigarette.

Fragonard set up the museum himself in 1766 at the school, where he was a teacher. Distressed by the sinewy sculptures, the school fired Fragonard in 1771 — but it kept the museum.

Even stranger, perhaps, was Fragonard's popularity among members of the aristocracy, who liked to keep "curious" objects in their homes. By the time Fragonard died in 1799, at age 66, hundreds of his sculptures were serving as icebreakers at dinner parties.

Imagine one of these in your living room: A jar of fluid containing a lamb with 10 legs. The dried trachea of a steer, branching out like a Bonsai tree. Or a llama looking none too friendly without its fur.

"Fragonard was crazy or a genius," said Daniel Brunet, a high school student who looked a bit pale as he left the museum. "Tonight, when I can't sleep, I'll figure out which."

Temple ghost leaves much to imagination

ATTIC from page

9:38 — Felt like a complete moron.

9:38 — Realized it was only a rat.

9:39 — Fed the rat a SweetTart.

9:40 — Rat spat out SweetTart and scurried away.

9:41 — Named rat "Fred II".

9:43-9:47 — Wondered more about the ghost. Supposedly people heard the ghost tap dancing.

9:48-9:52 Attempted to tap dance. Play stopped dead.

9:53 — Realized I just added to the ghost legend.

9:55 — Heard another noise.

9:56 — The cleaning lady closed the door and locked it again. Either she didn't like the tap dancing or still didn't know I was in the attic.

9:57-10:36 — Fell asleep somehow.

10:37 — Woke up with imprints of "qwerty" keyboard on face. Realized Fred was probably laughing his head off.

10:39 — Group of apparent thespians invade attic.

10:41 — Guys from "The Eagle" radio station arrive.

10:42-10:49 — Thespians and Eagle guys wandered around, pointing out cool props. An Eagle guy tells a story about how a sign had been "mys-



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY LANE HICKENBOTTOM

teriously" moved during set-up operations earlier in the day.


10:51-11:00 — Thespian and Eagle guys group gradually increases to a dozen people, plus a few ghost "experts."

11:00-11:11 — One ghost expert says a group of us should explore the building and "touch" things to discover their energy.

11:26 — I realize if I were Fred, my butt wouldn't be staying around this entertaining bunch.

11:27 — Fred's a smart guy. I'm getting out of here too.

11:28-11:30 — I search for the package of SweetTarts, but can't find them anywhere. Funny ... if a rat doesn't like SweetTarts, I wouldn't think a ghost would either.



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First-edition Shakespeare brings \$250,000

BOOK from page 13

buyers. All the prices include a 10 to 15 percent buyer's premium.

A well-preserved, third edition of the Shakespeare collection, printed in 1664 sold, for \$112,500, more than double the estimate sale price of \$35,000 to \$50,000.

It had an engraved portrait of

Shakespeare, carefully repaired tears, and seven more plays than the 1623 edition, only one of which, "Pericles," is accepted as the bard's.

A damaged second edition, printed in 1632 and marred by numerous readers' notes, sold for \$49,450. It also includes Milton's essay on Shakespeare and Milton's

first English essay to see print. Its estimated value was \$20,000 to \$30,000.

A copy of George Washington's farewell address, signed by Andrew Jackson and with a maximum estimated value of \$5,000, sold for \$23,000.

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