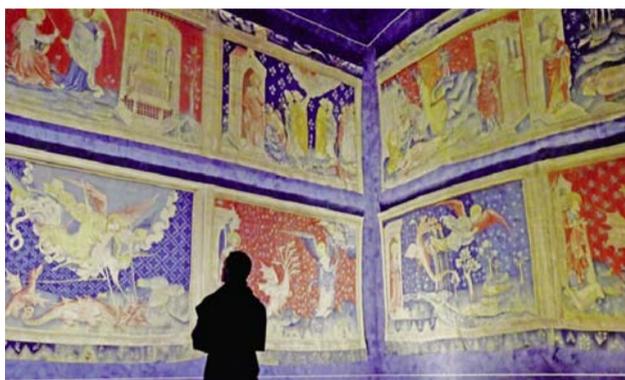


France's Apocalypse Tapestry to be restored to medieval glory



A visitor looks at the "Apocalypse Tapestry" (1377-1382), the world's largest and oldest surviving medieval set of tapestries, at the Angers Castle in western France.



A woman restores a section of the "Apocalypse Tapestry" (1377-1382), the world's largest and oldest surviving medieval set of tapestries. — AFP photos



Audience members wait to attend the opening ceremony of the 21st Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) in Busan yesterday. — AFP

Crisis-hit Busan Film Festival opens

The curtain was raised yesterday on the 21st Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) after two years of political infighting almost derailed the premier event of its kind in Asia. "I just hope the festival will become strong again and now we can all just focus on the films," said Yang Ik-june, star of the Zhang Lu-directed Korean drama *A Quiet Dream*, which opened the festival.

"Politicians should treat a festival like children and when children grow up they should be left to live their own lives." Disgruntled Korean film industry representatives had threatened to disrupt BIFF's opening ceremony over their support for axed former festival head Lee Yong-kwan, who they say is the casualty of the 2014 decision to screen the controversial documentary *Diving Bell*.

The film focused on the Sewol ferry disaster of that year that claimed more than 300 lives and BIFF had come under pressure from Busan mayor and then festival organizing committee chairman Suh Byung-soo to remove it from its program. In the end the main action taken has been a boycott of the event by a number of local film industry groups - including the Directors' Guild of Korea. But their protest over suggested political interference hasn't dissuaded international stars from the red carpet as BIFF prepares to screen around 300 films over its 10-day run.

There were wild cheers as the sun set over the Busan Cinema Centre for the likes of Japanese superstar Ken Watanabe (*The Last Samurai*) and local heartthrob Han Hyo-joo, who co-hosted the opening ceremony with her *Cold Eyes* co-star Seol Gyeong-gu. Hollywood's Miles Teller (*Whiplash*) and Aaron Eckhart (*The Dark Knight*) are among the international contingent set to appear during the course of the event. Workers meanwhile were toiling away on Busan's Haeundae Beach, which was battered by Typhoon Chaba on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Pavilions and stages were smashed and organizers forced to shift venues for a number of the festival's popular "meet-and-greet" events for fans and their idols. BIFF this year boasts 66 world premieres among its offerings while special programs include a focus on the life of the master Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami, who passed away in July and has been posthumously named BIFF's Asian Filmmaker of the Year. BIFF runs until October 15. — AFP

Dusty and somewhat faded, as befits its onetime use as insulation for horse stables, a priceless piece of medieval artistic heritage, France's Apocalypse Tapestry, is getting a welcome clean-up. As the French culture ministry says, it's high time "to see what state this old lady of upwards of 600 years of age is in." In truth, she is a little frayed at the edges, her once gloriously vivid red, blue, green and yellow threads less eye-catching than when the 104-metre (340 feet) oeuvre of wool and silk, showing the Apocalypse according to the Revelation of Saint John, was first crafted at the behest of Louis I, duke of Anjou, in 1373.

This feast of dragons, angels and seven-headed beasts depicting in gory style John's vision of the last days, was done about three centuries later than the better known Norman conquest era Bayeux Tapestry embroidered cloth-but it is larger. The work, which purports to be the longest tapestry in the world, originally stood 5.8 meters high compared with its current 4.6 meters, and was around 40 meters longer but it has lost some 20 panels and part of its border over time. Surviving sections of the 14th century masterpiece, state property since 1905, are now showing multiple signs of wear and tear as well as the effects of gallery lighting after having been on permanent display since the mid-1950s at Angers Chateau, about 300 kilometers (190 miles)



This file photo shows a woman restoring a section of the "Apocalypse Tapestry" (1377-1382), the world's largest and oldest surviving medieval set of tapestries, at the Angers Castle in western France.

southwest of Paris. The culture ministry has been busy collecting data for "an autopsy to decide what we do in terms of restoration and guarantee its long-term public showing," says castle administrator Herve Yannou. As the deep clean progresses, the gallery has been plunged into virtual darkness with scaffolding erected to permit miniscule, "square centimeter by square centimeter," scrutiny of the huge work. It involves identifying, then quantifying all kinds of deterioration, say restorer Suzanne Bouret and Montaine Bongrand from the Loire region cultural affairs department (DRAC).

Delving into pictorial past
The inspectors have to probe

deeply and carefully. Is the tapestry dustier at the end on display at the entrance or the exit of the gallery? Is there greater deterioration towards the top or the bottom? They must also take into account temperature and humidity levels, grime, warping or tension in the fabric linked to hanging. Everything gets measured. Four sections out of a total of some 70 surviving scenes have been taken down. The rest remain on display while those removed from the work which, highly unusually, is reversible, undergo examination and cleaning.

Yannou points out a section depicting medical examiners on the reverse side of a scene called the Harvest of the Chosen Ones and the Sleep of the Just panel

showing seven men sharing two beds. Such scenes offer those who gaze upon them "a stunning smorgasbord of color," says Yannou, marveling that time has been kind to the color rendition of the section.

"The reverse side not only tells a story of the beauty of its color hue but also the different interventions which have taken place" over the centuries. "Here, part has been rewoven. There, one can see retouching techniques with new wool and threads going off in all directions," says Bouret, hunched over one section as a colleague vacuums away to suck up dust before weighing a tapestry that has endured being moved several times.

'Like an X-ray'

After a century in the keep of the dukes of Anjou, Rene of Anjou bequeathed the artwork in the late 15th century to Angers Cathedral. Some 200 years later, the bishopric was faced with what to do with the tapestry when the political climate conspired to see Church art fall victim to the chaotic aftermath of the French Revolution.

That period saw various works destroyed and the tapestry was cut up and used variously as floor mats, stable insulation and anti-frost covers for fruit. The work, which had fallen into "a thousand fragments," was rescued in 1850 by a church canon, who took a first stab at restoration, says DRAC curator Clementine Mathurin. — AFP

Robert De Niro's 'The Comedian' bought by Sony classics

Sony Pictures Classics has acquired North American rights to the Robert De Niro comedy "The Comedian" from Cinelou and plans an awards-qualifying run later this year. Taylor Hackford is directing from Art Linson's script. Leslie Mann, Edie Falco, Harvey Keitel, Danny DeVito, Patti LuPone, and Veronica Ferres also star. Producers include Hackford, Cinelou's Mark Canton and Courtney Solomon, and Linson Entertainment's Art

Linson and John Linson. Related Cutting Edge Invests in Robert De Niro's 'The Comedian'

Executive producers include Cinelou's Scott Karol, the Fyzz Facility's Wayne Marc Godfrey and Robert Jones, Mad Riot Entertainment's Mark Axelowitz and Lawrence Smith, as well as Iain Abrahams, Peter Sobeloff, Dennis Pelino, and Fredy Bush. De Niro plays a comic icon who has seen better days. Despite

his efforts to reinvent himself, the audience only wants to know him as the former television character he once played. He's a strain on his younger brother (DeVito) and his wife (LuPone) and is being forced to serve out a sentence doing community service for accosting an audience member. While there, he finds inspiration by meeting Mann's character, the daughter of a sleazy Florida real estate mogul (Keitel). Cinelou's Canton

said in a statement, "Robert De Niro has been nurturing this story for years, so we're incredibly honored to have been able to help bring it to life. Sony Classics is tailor-made to release the film, as Michael Barker and Tom Bernard have the perfect sensibility for it." Warner Bros. International will be handling foreign distribution, under its deal with Cinelou. The news was first reported by Deadline Hollywood. — Reuters