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A D-Day tribute hits rough seas

By Joseph Fitchett

PARIS

For nearly a year, the sculptress Anilore Banon has been readying the most ambitious project of her career: a monumental steel memorial to rise from Omaha Beach in Normandy, at the water's edge where U.S. troops fought their way ashore in 1944 to start the liberation of France. Called "The Brave," the 10-ton work, marking the spot where the first waves of GIs died, will celebrate courage — a value Banon thinks is direly lacking in our times.

In the sculpture, the memory of brave action is expressed in seven black steel figures, abstract forms springing from the sea and sand that form columns standing for selfless valor. The work is due to be installed on June 6, 2004, for the 60th anniversary of the D-Day landings in ceremonies to be attended by Jacques Chirac and George W. Bush.

But the plan now seems in jeopardy of becoming an aesthetic casualty of the political tensions in the wake of the U.S. war on Iraq. The sculpture — marking what many view as the finest hour of U.S.-French cooperation — could be killed in its cradle by the sour mood between Paris and Washington.

Officially, Banon's plan is buoyed by support from the French authorities. Nor has she been notified of any change of heart among its supporters. But some corporate sponsors are showing symptoms of cold feet. Apparently they feel queasy about a project that could become controversial if the anti-American climate continues to worsen in France and casts doubt over the big D-Day celebration next year.

The sudden problem encountered by Banon is particularly poignant because it involves Normandy — a symbol of trans-Atlantic bonds that has been hallowed in France, even at low points in U.S.-French relations. The retired U.S. general responsible for American battle monuments in Europe, William Leszczynski Jr., calls Banon's project "a tremendous and fitting tribute." In Caen, the nearby city largely razed by Allied bombing, the municipal council and Mayor Brigitte Le Brethon want to place castings of Banon's small-scale maquettes on permanent display in Caen's port.

The motives for French corporate anxiety, despite such compelling official endorsements, can only be guessed. (None of the fence-sitting companies could be approached for comment: Banon declined to supply their names for publication lest they formally drop out.)

Clearly, French business leaders are still smarting from a blunt rebuke by Chirac last month after they collectively suggested that anti-American rhetoric could hurt their U.S. exports. They also appear fearful of a possible backlash if French critics treat Banon's trib-



A drawing of Banon's project, a giant steel memorial to the soldiers who died.

ute to heroism in 1944 as an unspoken rebuke to France for its stance on Iraq.

Banon is married to Pierre Lellouche, a member of Chirac's party who publicly opposed the president's stand in the run-up to the Iraq war. Professionally, she refuses to use her married name, so there have occasionally been surprises for patrons of her French shows when the parliamentarian Lellouche turned up on the artist's arm.

At any rate, the project seems to be slipping into limbo — with no declared opposition, but no final approval for payments to meet her \$700,000 budget. The organizers have now given her until July to find the money: Past that deadline, she would not have time to complete the work and complex cement foundations.

Until the Iraq war, she seemed to have the wind in her back, including strong support from the Defense Ministry. The naval shipyard in Cherbourg has promised Banon the use of special technology for shaping the steel hulls of patrol boats. With it, she would be able to forge giant wing-like shapes, one-ton sheets of curving steel that seem to swirl on the sand because they stand on tiny points like pivoting ballerinas at the water line.

The site where Banon has obtained authorization for her work is unique, especially because there are no other monuments on the beach. "All I can think about these days is the risk of losing this occasion," she says. The 2004 commemoration is "probably the last time a lot of veterans will turn up, so it's the moment to install art that provides an imaginative link between that heroic past and our times," Banon says.

This ambition — of transmitting and transmuting the sense of past deeds for future generations — is a preoccupation in her work. She has exhibited in a dozen cities from New York to Tokyo, and of course Paris. The Place Vendome was the venue for her series of sculptures on

the "Ten Commandments" (now permanently displayed outside Rome), which she subtitled "Ten Statutes of Liberty."

"I'm always trying to articulate an exploration of human behavior," she says. The core message is unmistakable. "My work is all about courage, and the enduring grace that comes with courageous decisions and courageous acts." Courage became her mantra for decoding people, she says, as she moved through a half-dozen civilizations before starting to paint in New York and then falling in love again with Paris six years ago.

That view was clear in her Normandy sculpture's first working title: "Debout!" "Pour la Liberte!" — "Stand up!" "For Freedom." In this core group, seven figure-like shapes thrust up eight meters out of the sand like uncurling fingers, a powerful but delicate cluster suggesting resurrection.

Now Banon has decided to flank the centerpiece with two groups of curving steel shapes, like sails whirling on their tips, that suggest the glorious clouds accompanying epic figures in classical images. The steel sails, which she says also symbolize freedom arriving from the sea, will be visible even at night thanks to messages projected on them in light written by visitors and by veterans.

Banon insists that she is mystified by the way her project has suddenly become becalmed. "My enemy is time," she says.

Time has now shed a controversial light on the question of courage. As the French debate Iraq, there is an implicit question: What took more courage, waging war or defying America? That debate seems to color attitudes toward the Normandy work, at least subliminally. "The timing has become complicated," Banon concedes. "But maybe it will work out, so then the timing could prove magical."

International Herald Tribune

Microsoft still with tough ta

Discounts for biggest users at keeping software rivals a

By Thomas H. Doherty
BRUSSELS — More than 90 percent of the world's personal computers run on Microsoft software. For Orlando Ayala, that was not enough. Last summer, Ayala, then the top sales executive at Microsoft, sent an e-mail message titled "Microsoft Confidential" to senior managers listing out a strategy to dislodge governments around the world from choosing cheaper alternatives to the ubiquitous Windows operating system.

Ayala's e-mail told executives that if a deal involving governments or large institutions looked doomed, they were authorized to draw from a special in-store discount or even from a secret "steep discount" or even from a secret "steep discount" or even from a secret "steep discount." The message, which focused on systems software for desktop computers, specifically targeted Linux, a

small but emerging competitor. "Under 300 circumstances Linux is a threat," Ayala said. The message, as well as other e-mail messages and internal Microsoft documents obtained by the International Herald Tribune, offers a glimpse into the inner workings of a company with so much cash — \$41.4 billion, as of December — that it can aggressively discount its products in a bid to protect its market share.

The documents show the muscle that Microsoft, the world's largest software company, is prepared to use to spread its dominance, including a relatively benign form of espionage: spy and discounts to capture "big players" — a Microsoft term for deals involving the world's biggest clients. For these deals, Ayala said, the company's top executives are

gathered — where a Microsoft executive is a Linux market consultant to an aggressive business — where a Microsoft executive is a Linux market consultant to an aggressive business — where a Microsoft executive is a Linux market consultant to an aggressive business.

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KEYS MISSING AT CALIFORNIA MUSEUM

LIVERMORE, California: A set of keys that opened a door to a museum's vaults last month, but officials have since changed the most important locks and sold national security was not compromised.

The missing keys at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory are the latest in a series of security breaches at the University of California, which manages the site. On the Web: www.llnl.gov

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