

Speech by the French Minister of Culture,
Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres
February 14th, 2007

Presentation of the title of
Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres
(Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters)
to Gregory Annenberg Weingarten

Dear Gregory Annenberg Weingarten,

I am very happy to welcome you here today. These rooms are not only ours, but yours, for they belong to all who love French arts and culture.

Your love first showed itself when you were very young. After earning your degree in political science at Stanford University in California, you chose to begin your artistic career in France. Here, you learned lithography and undertook a course of study at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris, where you earned a degree in 1992.

An extremely talented young artist, you showed your work in a number of impressive venues here in Paris, including the Fondation Mona Bismarck in 1997, the Maison du Faubourg in 2000, the Mairie of the Fourth Arrondissement, in 2001, and the Galerie Beckel Odille Boïcos in September of 2005.

France and the United States are bound by deep friendship, and you have made this friendship the bedrock of your daily life, both in your art and in the numerous acts of patronage that I most specially want to honor today.

Through the work of the foundation established by your grandfather, Walter Annenberg, of which you are a trustee, you contribute most eminently to the creation and dissemination of ballet and the musical arts.

You are a rare artisan, a specialist in the publicizing of our arts and in Franco-american friendship and cooperation. It was you who engineered the endowment of an extremely generous Annenberg fund to finance cultural projects between our two countries, through the American Friends of the Paris Opera and Ballet.

Most notably, it was thanks to this endowment that the Opera was able to produce *Tristan and Isolde* at the Opéra Bastille in the spring of 2005, and to invite the Merce Cunningham and Trisha Brown companies to the Opéra Garnier. Thanks to you and to Marina de Brantes, the San Francisco Ballet was also invited to the National Archives in July of 2005, as a part of the Summers of Dance program (*les étés de la danse*).

Your exemplary support manifests itself in spheres as numerous as they are diverse, proving that your generosity is equaled only by your erudition and your curiosity. We don't have time today to enumerate the many artistic and cultural programs, projects, and organizations that have benefited from your support. We will, then, name only a few of your accomplishments in the cultural arena.

As a Member of the American Friends of the Louvre, the main patron of the festival "Les étés de la danse de Paris" (Parisian Summers of Dance), and also of the 2005 U.S. tour of the baroque orchestra "Les Talens lyriques", directed by Christophe Rousset, you supported both the Musée Rodin and the Centre Pompidou on the occasion of the exhibitions "Morphosis" and "Hergé". You also helped these institutions to create a web site for young people and you made possible the creation of a new space at the Académie américaine de danse à Paris (American Academy of Dance in Paris). Finally, you offered a new pedagogical space to the Musée des arts décoratifs (Museum of Decorative Arts.)

Through the remarkable actions you've taken with regard to our most prestigious institutions, and through your enormous generosity, you help to build bridges between our two countries. These bridges are solid and unshakable bridges because they are built of arts and culture.

Gregory Annenberg Weingarten, we award to you the title of Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters).

- Translated by Sasha Watson