

From March 3rd through March 12th, the Hoffman Estates Sister Cities Commission hosted three *artistes français extraordinaires*. The three French artists, Cédric Fortier, Julie Chea, and Louise Hullin, live in Angoulême, France. Angoulême is home to the *École des Métiers du Cinéma d'Animation*, or School of the Animation Arts and Trades. Each year the city of Angoulême also hosts the *Festival International de la Bande Dessinée d'Angoulême*, or the Angoulême International Comics Festival, which is the third largest comic festival in the world. The Hoffman Estates Sister Cities Commission is thrilled to have welcomed the three talented artists from their renowned sister city, Angoulême.

In January of 2017, the commission sent editors Megan Byrd and Lauren Burke of *Ladies Night Anthology*, a comic anthology, to the *Festival International de la Bande Dessinée d'Angoulême*. Upon returning, Ms. Byrd and Ms. Burke began to help the commission plan an itinerary for the visiting French artists.

During their visit, the three French artists had the opportunity to engage with local artists in Hoffman Estates, Chicago, and other suburbs. In Chicago, the artists visited Four Star Studios, Graham Cracker Comics, and had a chance to attend a presentation by celebrated French cartoonist, Penelope Bagieu at Volumes Bookstore. In the suburbs, the artists visited Keith's Comics and the impressive Barrington High School Art Department. Not only did the artists meet with local artists, they also had the chance to show case their skills alongside them at several events.

The commission, along with the help of local partners, hosted a week's worth of events during the artists' time in Hoffman Estates. The Schaumburg Public Library hosted Ms. Hullin, Ms. Chea, Ms. Byrd, and Ms. Burke for a panel on the role of women in comics. Later in the week, all three artists participated in the Artists Alley at the annual Schaumburg Public Library Comic Con, where they and their work were *très populaire*.

At the Hoffman Estates Village Hall, the commission hosted "Sip and Sketch on the Seine." It was a French themed event where guests could draw with the assistance of local artists Geoff Bevington, the Satrun Sisters, and Zack Lehner, as well as the French artists. While drawing, guests enjoyed light refreshments and French wine.

Later in the week, the commission was privileged to host its first ever drawing concert at Hoffman Estates High School. The French artists were joined in their work by Chicago based artists Geoff Bevington and Gene Ha. At the drawing concert, the artists drew to live music provided by the Hoffman Estates High School Symphonic Winds, directed by Jerry Lowrey and Hannah Drake, and the District 54 Jazz Band, directed by Eric Caliendo. Audience members were able to see the artists' work projected on a screen onstage as they drew to the music provided by the two spectacular student bands.

The commission was pleased to have partnered with so many local organizations, including the Chicago chapter of the Alliance Française, or the French Alliance. The Alliance Française hosted the French artists at an event, *Dessinés en Liberté*, or Drawing in Freedom. The theme of the event was expressing freedom of speech through cartooning. At the event the artists spoke on a panel and created several drawings which were later raffled off.

When they weren't busy with their craft, the three artists received a warm welcome from Mayor McLeod at the Village Hall, and from the Hoffman Estates Police and Fire Departments while touring the village. They also had a chance to experience a variety of local cuisine, enjoy Main Event, see Chicago from the Signature Lounge at the John Hancock Center, and take in a Second City show.

The commission would like to extend their warmest thanks to all of the local artists, organizations, and businesses who opened their doors and their hearts to Ms. Chea, Ms. Hullin, and Mr. Fortier. The visit would not have been a success without them. A special thank you to Ms. Byrd, Ms. Burke, and Mr. Bevington for their creativity and input while planning. Many thanks to all of them.

The commission would also like to recognize its members who worked diligently to plan the artists' visit and ensure that everything went smoothly while they were here. *Merci Beaucoup!*

Julie (Daravan) Chea is a 2D animator at the school in EMCA, based in Angoulême, France, and a comic author for the edition Glenat and Edition Jungle based in France. She draws about her life humorously in her blog. She is currently working on two comics mixing humor and sensibility about handicaps and refugees.

Cedric Fortier is a comic artist. He is the Co-writer and the artist of the comic series "Braise". He is a comedian in the improvisational company "Les Dénaturés". He also teaches comic art and improvisational theatre in school.

Louise Hullin is an EMCA (École des Métiers du Cinéma d'Animation/School of the Animation Arts and Trades) student currently based in Angoulême, France. Beforehand she studied comic arts at the St-Luc Institute in Brussels, Belgium and plastic arts in Paris.