



## HUMAN INTEREST

Tuesday, March 23, 2010



### MoMA Adds @ Symbol to Permanent Collection

New York -- New York's Museum of Modern Art said today it is adding the "@" symbol to its permanent art collection. The museum isn't paying for the privilege since this curly emblem of the digital age is already part of the public domain, but the decision does underscore the museum's increasingly expansive definition of art. Paola Antonelli, senior curator of MoMA's Department of Architecture and Design, said she got the idea

last fall as she began preparing for an upcoming show called "Talk to Me," which will explore people's relationship to their communication tools. Beyond the @ symbol's role as a crucial connector in e-mail messages, Antonelli said she realized its shape is universally recognizable, a design icon all its own. The symbol even has a storied provenance. Latin speakers were using the coiled symbol as shorthand for "at" as early as the 6th century. Venetian merchants in medieval times often drew it as a stand-in for the amphora, a wide-bellied terracotta pot typically used to convey goods. The sign's modern turn as a commercial condenser —two oranges @40 cents = 80 cents — continued through the age of printing presses and typewriters until 1971. That's when Ray Tomlinson, a pioneer of e-mail programming, began using it as a way to differentiate between names and places so that computers wouldn't get mixed up when routing electronic messages.

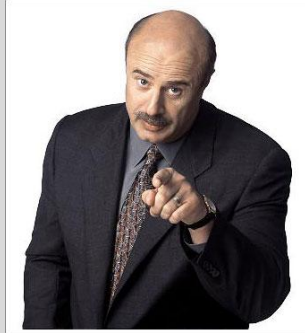
### Portion sizes increase in 'Last Supper' paintings



If your food portions seem to have grown larger over the years, you have some blessed company. Two researchers analyzed the food and plate sizes in 52 of the most famous paintings of The Last Supper and found that the portion sizes in the paintings have increased dramatically over the past millennium, from years 1000 to 2000. Using a computer program, they compared the size of loaves of bread, main dishes and plates to the size of the heads of the disciples and Jesus in the artwork, including Leonardo da Vinci's famous depiction of the event. Findings published in April's International Journal of Obesity:

Over that 1,000-year period, the main course size increased by 69%, plate size 66% and loaves of bread 23%. The biggest increases in size came after 1500. The researchers used paintings of this event "because it is the most famous supper in history," which artists have been painting for centuries, so the paintings provide information about plate and entree sizes over time, says Brian Wansink, director of the Cornell (University) Food and Brand Lab in Ithaca, N.Y. One possible reason for the increase: Food may have become more available and less expensive, he says.

### **Thieves sentenced after boasting on TV show**



California -- A California couple who boasted on a TV show they made as much as \$3,500 a week by selling shoplifted toys online have been sentenced to prison terms. Matthew Eaton, 34, got 27 months in jail. His wife Laura Eaton, 27, was sentenced to one year. The couple from southern California pleaded guilty to conspiracy to transport stolen goods. The pair were arrested last September - nearly a year after an appearance on the Dr Phil television show. The couple from San Marcos, north of San Diego, were sentenced by a district judge on Monday. Assistant US Attorney Nicole Acton Jones had earlier said the couple made at least \$100,000 from June 2007 to March 2009 by stealing Lego toy kits, transporting them across state lines and selling them on eBay and other

online auction sites, the San Diego 6 website reported.

### **Boat made of plastic bottles sets sail across Pacific**



San Francisco -- A boat made of 12,000 plastic bottles has set sail on a voyage from San Francisco to Sydney to spread awareness about pollution in the world's oceans. Environmentalist and banking heir David De Rothschild and a crew set out on the appropriately named Plastiki catamaran. Their 11,000-nautical mile journey will go past the Great Pacific Garbage Patch - a sea of waste about five times the size of the UK or twice that of Texas. Four out of five plastic bottles end up

in a landfill, according to the UN. "It is time we beat waste and this is an out-of-sight, out-of-mind issue that needs to be addressed," Mr De Rothschild told the BBC earlier this month. The 31-year-old adventurer, who has completed expeditions to both poles and various jungles, was already tweeting on Saturday, hours after the boat set sail on its three-month voyage. "Travelling 2.0 Knots ummm! That's a lot of ocean ahead!" he said on his Twitter page. "Just saw our first bit marine debris - a plastic cup!" The Plastiki takes recycling to a whole other level. The 12,000 used water bottles are filled with carbon dioxide to make the vessel durable and buoyant. The catamaran is powered by solar, wind and sea turbines. An exercise bike will power the boat's laptops and there is also a composting bathroom and gardens to grow food. Critics say the expedition only perpetuates the belief that it is acceptable to use plastic as long as people recycle it, rather than encouraging people to cut down on its use entirely. They also point out that if the Plastiki were to break apart mid-journey, it would dump thousands of bottles directly into the ocean.

## Unemployed D.C. man giving money away to strangers to help foster kindness



Washington, DC -- The guy behind the meat counter is looking at Reed Sandridge kind of strangely. Giving away \$10 every day to a stranger -- an idea Sandridge had soon after he was laid off from his job at a Washington nonprofit group last fall -- isn't as easy as it sounds. Carlos Canales, a 28-year-old butcher at Eastern Market, is hesitant to take the money. "What do I have to do?" he asks. No strings, no hook. Sandridge, 36, a businessman-turned-shoe-leather philanthropist, just wants to help. His mom, the daughter of a coal miner whom he remembers most for her kindness, always told him that when you're going through tough times, that's when you

most need to give back. So not long after he was laid off, on the third anniversary of his mom's death, he started his "year of giving," documenting each \$10 gift in a small black notebook and then blogging about the people he meets. By Day 94, he had given away almost \$1,000, handing out money in blizzards, in rainstorms, on the sunniest of days. He gave \$10 to a guy playing the trumpet outside Verizon Center, the president of a brewery, someone dressed up as the Statue of Liberty, a hard-drinking PhD, a man who held up a basketball to block helicopters overhead from eavesdropping on their conversation, the curator of a small museum and a whole lot of homeless people. Sandridge, who is outgoing and has a ready grin, and, sometimes, a brown scruff of almost-beard, knows \$10 is precious little, even to the most down-and-out. It feels significant only when the daily donations are subtracted from his shrinking bank account. He's been using his savings and a few hundred a week in unemployment benefits to pay the mortgage on his home in Dupont Circle. But he hopes he will network his way to a salary again long before he runs out of cash. ([His Blog](#))

## Suspect stole palm tree from doctor, Hernando deputies say



SPRING HILL, FL — Security cameras toppled a Spring Hill man's plan to purloin a palm tree from a gynecologist's office Sunday, authorities say. Louis E. Perri, 57, stole the tree worth about \$1,000 from 'My Gynecologist' on County Line Road, according to a report from the Hernando County Sheriff's Office. Deputies identified Perri with the business' surveillance cameras and found the tree at his home, at 1284 Mystic Court. Authorities tracked down Perri at a friend's house on Westerly Drive, where he initially denied stealing the tree, the report said. He was charged with grand theft and remained in the Hernando County Jail in lieu of \$2,000 bail.