



Carla Bruni announces Paris-New York arts scholarship

"Arts and education bring governments together," says a senior member of Sarkozy's staff

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Carla Bruni-Sarkozy visits a studio painting class at NYU's Steinhardt School

French President Nicolas Sarkozy joined his wife Carla Bruni-Sarkozy at the French Institute Alliance Francaise on Monday to support the launch of her foundation's exchange programme for underprivileged French and American arts students. Addressing a small group of dignitaries and arts patrons, President Sarkozy expressed pride in the US-funded private initiative which he says "will develop an ambitious educational programme for the disadvantaged on both sides of the ocean." The exchange starts this fall, and will annually provide transportation, tuition and

housing for 25 undergraduate or graduate students from Paris and an equal number from New York, for up to one year of study abroad.

Bruni spent the rest of the rainy day touring institutions that will be partners in the programme. At the Juilliard School she visited studios where students performed Ravel, Handel and Shakespeare, and visited the rare book library. At New York University's Steinhardt School she sat in on a class taught by Lyle Ashton Harris and talked with students in painting studios. "I would like that all my days would be like this one. It's a great pleasure and an apprenticeship for me," she said.

The programme is funded by Jenny and John Paulson who pledged €1.5m. Paulson, 54, heads NY-based hedge fund Paulson & Co. and is number 45 on Forbes March list of the world's wealthiest people with net worth of \$12 billion. A graduate of NYU, he insisted that the programme take place in New York. Other partner institutions include the School of Visual Arts, the Fashion Institute of Technology, the Sorbonne and the Ecoles Nationales Supérieures des Arts Décoratifs, among others.

Asked what inspired her to undertake the exchange, Bruni replied, "I think that art is a country. So I like the fact that you can have a link through art, music and dramatic art." President Sarkozy's Assistant Chief of Cabinet, Gregoire Verdeaux, elaborated on the diplomatic dimensions of the project. "President Sarkozy is acutely aware of the possibilities of arts and education in bringing governments together," he told *The Art Newspaper*. "He thinks a lot like an American, and the concept of soft power does not escape him at all. He is also touched by the speed with which this has evolved with his wife's foundation and US donors. It plays a role in US-French relations in general," he said.