



ENCATC

The European network on cultural
management and policy

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Résonances

Hémisphères - Installation scénographique, création Territoires Imaginaires.
Festival La Grand' Fabrique de l'imaginaire - Lesneven / Côte des Légendes (29-France). © Fersen Sherkann

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Culture that matters: Interdisciplinary Approaches for Sustainable futures

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Editorial

RÉSONANCES

With midsummer recently passed and the holiday period already underway, we're all keen to get some fresh air, relax and enjoy ourselves. But life is not a long quiet river, and we cannot ignore the situation in Europe and internationally. These are serious times. It is tempting, perhaps, in the face of a world in turmoil, to turn a blind eye to what is happening, and to concentrate our attention on the joys of life. However, democracy and the environment are under threat, and there are other paths to explore if we are not to be locked into the one we are now following.

Resonances! This vibrant link between me and the world. This motif quickly emerged, connecting people and places, challenges and problems, the intimate to the universal. "If the mind reasons, the soul resonates," said François Cheng. The interplay between the diverse contributors to this issue gives life to this theme, creating cascading reverberations. Issue 7 of ENCATC magazine takes us into different worlds, inviting us to listen to a diversity of players, to question our assumptions, our habits and our prejudices, to share our views, to examine alternative perspectives, to get young people on board, and finally to stimulate our ability to mobilise ourselves more than ever in favour of a better shared culture and more inclusive and integrated policies.

The first step is to take stock: to understand outside of political positions a shared notion of culture, to recall the fundamentals, to 'revive' texts such as the European Cultural Convention adopted by the Council of Europe in 1954, and through this to open up new perspectives. Thus, Matjaž Gruden shares his reflections on culture and democracy today, asserting that together they require constant care, unwavering support, and investment. The tone is set, the way is paved for all stakeholders in culture, including civil society, and in particular the ENCATC network, which brings together trainers, researchers, managers, operators and policy-makers in all fields of culture. Could some of our regions, often plagued in pessimism and disappointment, find inspiration in the 'culture of optimism' exemplified by Lithuanian youth?

Free to create, create to be free! Literature, like other forms of artistic expression, offers us an immense repertoire of works, both contemporary and inherited from the past, to nourish our minds at any age. Alain Mabanckou, a writer from three continents, talks about "French speaking culture" and the creative intensity of its margins. As language is the vehicle of thought, we considered it fitting to publish his interview in French: a precedent?

At European and international levels, principles and rights have been defined and there exists an abundance of evolving instruments for public action to promote culture and democracy. Some are relevant to all groups and communities, even the smallest territories, and should be more widely known and put into practice. In Naples, for example, the essence of the Faro Convention is put into action through the work of the La Paranza cooperative, summed up by its motto: "Caring for cultural heritage is caring for people." This initiative was rightly selected as one of the winners of the European Heritage Awards

in 2022. Similarly, the holistic approach of Strategy 21 for heritage is applied by the association *Territoires Imaginaires*, which reveals the beauty and the meaning of landscapes through artistic proposals. Other, more selective and equally inspiring schemes are also represented in this issue: Kaunas (Lithuania), European Cultural Capital in 2022, among other distinctions; the European Heritage Label, which now brings together 67 sites intends to open a new chapter in cultural heritage, transforming the EHL Sites into a "Community of Practices" centred around themes such as youth engagement and greening, but also upskilling and democracy. As for the cultural landscape of the Val de Loire, a UNESCO World Heritage site, it offers a unique playground for exploring the ancient and evolving relationship between human communities and a river in the age of the Anthropocene.

There are also a host of equally inspiring events in every cultural field. Some, like the Atlantide festival, 'Words from around the world', depart from a predominantly European-centric perspective to highlight the "poetics of relationships" and dreams, as vital as utopia. Others, such as the classical music festival, La Folle Journée, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary, export their disruptive concept internationally, as far as Japan.

On the heritage front, a number of events have caught our attention. In April 2019, just five years before the tragedy that occurred at the Copenhagen Stock Exchange this Spring, the fire that ravaged Notre-Dame de Paris triggered strong international emotions and inspired an enormous effort to carry out an exceptional project of restoration. Hundreds of people from all professions were involved in the project, which concentrated on leading-edge scientific and technical research, and shared this knowledge with a wide audience. Soon, the building will be restored to its original function and will once again resonate with voices and music. This was the perfect opportunity to give the floor to one of Notre-Dame's carpenters, showcasing how the arts and crafts are committed to passing on their values and know-how to younger generations. The resonance is also perceptible between medieval European architecture – the cathedral in Angers – and the contemporary work of the Japanese architect Kengo Kuma, who designed a new gallery to protect the polychrome portal.

Scientific rigour that goes hand in hand with critical distance is needed as much as ever, particularly when dealing with conflicting narratives or sensitive subjects, which requires reconciliation with a dark past. It is self-evident that dialogue between disciplines, between the creations of yesterday and those of today, between generations and communities, requires constant attention. There's no better way of achieving this than by promoting exchanges of all kinds, throughout Europe and beyond.

As a talisman for a summer that I wish to be bright and invigorating for you, I would like to share with you the reflection of the German philosopher Harmut Rosa, for whom "resonance is an antidote to the acceleration of the world and increases our power to act."

Claire Giraud-Labatte
Guest Editor-in-Chief
ENCATC Magazine, July 2024



Dr. Claire Giraud-Labalte is an esteemed Art and Cultural Heritage Historian and Senior Lecturer. From 2004 to 2013, she led a Master's programme in cultural management at Université catholique de l'Ouest, Angers, which uniquely integrated cultural heritage and performing arts management.

At the European level, Claire is a deeply committed actor to advance the discussion and advocate for continuous education and the necessity of a multidisciplinary and integrated approach to cultural heritage. She is involved in several key policy forums both regionally and across Europe. Since 2012, she has served as an ENCATC Ambassador. From 2013 to 2023, she was the Chair of Territoires Imaginaires which designs and organises immersive events to highlight landscapes and heritage, inviting a large audience to live unique experiences, nourished by the knowledge of the territory and the imagination. She was President of the Pôle des acteurs du patrimoine en Pays de la Loire (2018-2021). Additionally, she is a member of the Académie Littéraire de Bretagne et des Pays de la Loire, the Deputy Chair of the Mission Val de Loire UNESCO Scientific Committee, an expert to the European Commission and the Council of Europe, and a member of the European Heritage Label Panel.

Claire has significantly contributed to various projects, including the Niger-Loire Governance and Culture UNESCO project (2007-2012), Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe (2015), and the European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century (2017).

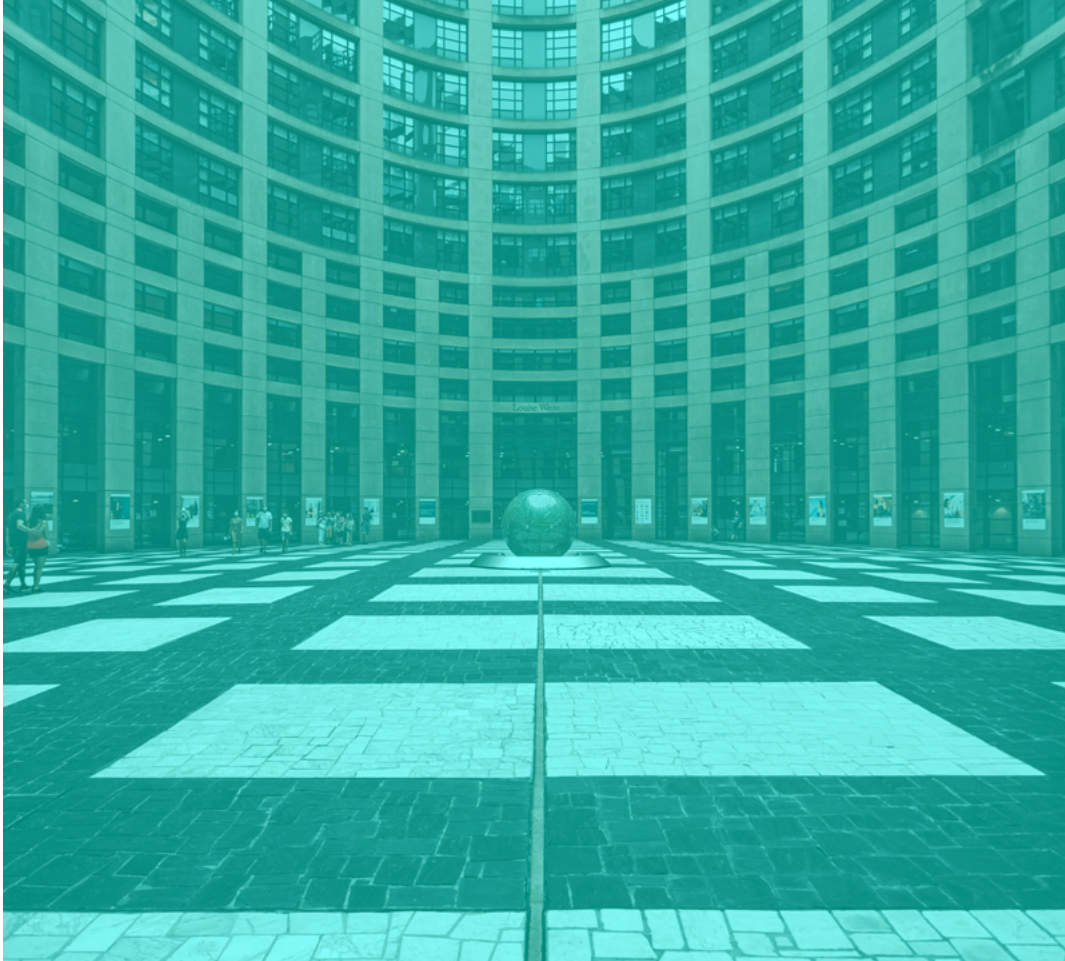
She remains highly dedicated to her research activity, with a focus on cultural heritage and also on the point of view of European travellers in the 19th century.

[Link to Publications](#)



Hémisphères - Installation scénographique, création Territoires imaginaires. Festival itinérant *L'eau de Là* - Chaumes-en-Retz / Pornic Agglo (44-France) © Céline Gracia.

Hémisphères, a poetic and unique moment offered to everyone to trace their path in a renewed landscape. An invitation to let sensations, emotions and reflections resonate freely, with your feet on the ground and your head in the stars.



Jonathan Marchal (Unsplash)

THOUGHTS ON CULTURE AND DEMOCRACY NOWADAYS



MATJAŽ GRUDEN

Director for Democracy at the Council of Europe

Culture and democracy is something that needs constant, uninterrupted care, nurturing, investment and support.

There is a sea of difference between the understanding of what culture is, by genuine democrats on the one hand, and nationalists and populists on the other. On one side, we have artistic creation, and on the other, we have 'culture' reduced to religion, race and skin colour. The former is defended by talent and creativity, as well as by the attention and support of the society, while the latter is defended above all by intolerance of others and of the different.

On the one hand, then, we have culture as artistic creation, which transcends political, ideological and all other definitions and divisions. A culture that inspires and one that disturbs, as the European Court of Human Rights calls it. The culture that we like and the culture that gets on our nerves. The one that carries important social messages and the one that – quite legitimately and socially useful – is an end in itself. On the other hand, we have 'culture' that is a myth- and stereotype-laden baseball bat with which nativist and nationalist populism divide people into 'us' and 'them'. A 'culture' that does not tolerate and is afraid of creativity, openness and freedom. 'Culture' as a hammer with which to beat the Others and the different. A 'culture' that not only annoys, offends and upsets, but above all and solely hates.



@iStock, 2023

Let us not forget that **Culture and Art have been the catalysts of human progress and humanistic ideals since, well, forever.** Still, every time we should really acknowledge their essential contribution to human freedom and dignity, we somehow manage to ignore them.

However, in 1954, Council of Europe member States adopted the European Cultural Convention, the first major Council of Europe treaty after the European convention on human rights and fundamental freedoms. This was no coincidence, but a deliberate political act. The founders of the European project understood that, just a few years after an unprecedented cruel and devastating war, this project had little chance of success without a democratic European environment, a sense of unity that would bring Europeans together, an identity based on progressive values and humanistic ideals, one that came in addition to, not as a substitute for, their national or other identities. And they knew exactly how to go about creating such an environment. Through culture, art, heritage, history, language learning and education. And it worked. For a while. **So where are we today, as a society and Europeans, 70 years after adoption of the European Cultural Convention?** We are a long way from the lessons of the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment. We are a long way from the culture that the European Cultural Convention of 1954 identified as an opportunity to develop mutual understanding among the peoples of Europe and reciprocal appreciation of their cultural diversity, to safeguard European culture, to promote national contributions to Europe's common cultural heritage respecting the same fundamental values and to encourage the study of the languages, history and civilisation of the Parties to the Convention. These days, culture often means something very different to many. Culture in the

discourse of nationalist populism often serves as a uniform and a weapon to fight against the Other and the different. A culture without art and artists. A culture for cultural struggle. A culture for the cultural war. As a society, we are tempted to reject openness and solidarity and are building our future on intolerance and selfishness towards our fellow human beings. Knowledge and creativity are getting on our nerves, conspiracy theories are dearer to our hearts than reason and rationality.

Art, as the expression and driving force of creativity, ingenuity, innovation, self-reflection, comment, criticism, openness, daring, exploration and freedom, has become a distraction. Many of those who are said to be deeply concerned that European civilisation and national culture are under threat feel that culture is a waste of money, so they send artists into the marketplace to compete with entertainers on the commercial stage for the public's affection and survival.



Igor Miske (Unsplash)

So, what can we do in this 21st century in Europe? Despite all the difficulties, the Council of Europe has chosen to support Culture and Arts and to make, through the Freedom to Create, the locomotive of humanistic ideals work again and again to provide sense for human lives, space for democracy and the freedom of expression. As we know, **whenever autocracy attempts to advance, its first victim happens to be culture. Culture is an expression of humanity and a desire for freedom.** And as we know from the history of Europe, when all means to resist autocracy seem to fail, culture remains the only isle where desire for democracy can still be expressed, albeit in a hidden and sometimes underground way. In the past and today, it is frequently the artists, experts and cultural professionals who hint at problems, spell out uncomfortable truths, speak the unspoken and make the unseen visible – using their artistic and cultural means, and creating spaces for societal debate within and beyond the mainstream bodies of political discourse and in social media. **By sustaining culture and the freedom of artistic expression, we stand for the soul of democracy.**

[As the 2020 Council of Europe Manifesto on the Freedom of Expression of Arts and Culture in the Digital Era](#) puts it, freedom of expression needs to be protected, be it from abuse of technological developments, attempts to muzzle dissenting voices in a society or misuse of the freedom of expression to foster divisive narratives, intolerance and hate. Artistic and creative expression is a part of the freedom of expression and artists must be protected against censorship and any form of pressure or intimidation. The only limitation should be the European Convention on Human Rights and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights.

So, in fact the founders of the European Cultural Convention had it right 70 years ago: **"no culture, no democracy"**.



MATJAŽ GRUDEN

Matjaž Gruden is Director for Democracy at the Council of Europe, which includes Council of Europe activities and programmes in the area of education, including education for democratic citizenship, youth cooperation, civil society, media freedom, culture and cultural heritage, and sport.

Matjaž Gruden previously served as Director of Policy Planning, Deputy Director of the Private Office of the Secretary General, political adviser and speechwriter for the Secretary General and President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Prior to his career at the Council of Europe, he was a diplomat at the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, posted in Brussels. He holds a law degree from the Law Faculty of the University of Ljubljana, as well as a post-graduate degree in EU law from the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium.



LE MONDE EST MON LANGAGE

Interview with

ALAIN MABANCKOU

by **Claire Giraud-Labalte** and **Henri Copin**

Vous êtes actuellement aux Etats-Unis, à Los Angeles, où vous enseignez la littérature francophone. Comment définiriez-vous votre enseignement aux étudiants francophones des Etats-Unis ?

“

le Congo est le lieu du cordon ombilical, la France la patrie d'adoption de mes rêves, et l'Amérique un coin depuis lequel je regarde les empreintes de mes errances

Le sanglot de l'homme noir, 2012

”

Je vous remercie de rappeler ce fait qui me tient à cœur, cette sorte de trinité identitaire, c'est-à-dire l'Afrique, l'Europe et maintenant l'Amérique. Je le dis souvent, c'est aussi une trinité qui me permet de lire à la fois l'ironie et la tragédie de l'histoire. Pourquoi ?

Parce que mes ancêtres, eux, avaient vécu cette trinité dans le désespoir, dans la tragédie et dans le malheur à l'époque du commerce triangulaire. Et moi, je l'ai fait de

manière volontaire. Je suis arrivé en France volontairement, je suis allé aux États-Unis volontairement, alors que mes ancêtres n'ont pas eu cette possibilité d'exercer leur volonté, la volonté qui est la liberté fondamentale de l'individu.

Et donc, partant de cela, je me suis dit : au lieu d'être celui qui se lamente sur ce triangle, je vais voir dans ce triangle la définition de mon rapport avec le monde. Je vais aller dans chaque espace, dispenser ce que je peux avoir de sagesse, et prendre aussi ce qui peut me permettre d'être celui que je suis aujourd'hui. C'est pour cela que l'Europe a été mon territoire d'adoption.

L'Amérique est désormais le lieu où je réfléchis, où je fais un bilan sur ce que je suis comme Africain, comme Européen, et peut-être sur ce qui va advenir par la suite. C'est cela que j'enseigne aux étudiants américains. Je leur enseigne la richesse africaine, je leur enseigne la culture européenne, je leur enseigne aussi leur propre histoire, parce que leur propre histoire ne peut pas se lire sans regarder la mienne dans le miroir.

L'histoire des États-Unis est aussi une histoire d'intégration des communautés noires dans leur histoire. Or, ces communautés noires se revendiquent comme provenant de mon continent. Donc partout où je vais, la question de mon identité sera posée.

Elle se pose en France, parce que je suis Noir en France, elle se pose aux États-Unis parce que les Noirs américains me regardent comme leur prototype authentique et originel, et elle continuera à se poser. Et donc j'ai le devoir d'enseigner aux Américains le bonheur de la littérature africaine mais aussi, comme la littérature africaine est liée à la littérature française, le bonheur de la littérature française. Et c'est cela qui fait le succès de ce cours, parmi les plus courus à l'université avec une cinquantaine d'étudiants à chaque séance.

Votre activité de poète est moins connue. Vous êtes poète, directeur de collection de poésie, que représente la poésie dans votre vie et dans votre parcours ?

“

L'eau chaude n'oublie jamais qu'elle a été froide;

L'écorce de ce figuier porte les traces de la légende de l'errance

”

A chaque fois qu'on me demande de me définir en matière de création, je me vois toujours provenant de la poésie et finissant un jour dans la poésie. Parce que pour moi la poésie est le genre qui m'a libéré d'une certaine frustration de créateur.

Parce que je ressentais une liberté lorsque j'étais dans l'écriture de la poésie. Je la ressens toujours dans le roman ; de temps à autre, il arrive que la poésie l'emporte dans la prose que je suis en train d'écrire. Les images, l'émotion, le fait de capter les éléments, de susciter auprès du lecteur une certaine émotion, ça je le dois à la poésie. Parce que la poésie, c'est le langage originel de la création.

C'est le seul genre pour lequel on a l'impression que ce qu'on est en train d'écrire vient d'une force transcendante, et ne mérite même pas une correction, parce que ça vous vient dans la brutalité, comme cette sorte de matière première qu'il est impossible de trop polir au risque d'abîmer de « gaspiller » le bijou, à la fin.

Beaucoup de lecteurs ignorent que j'ai publié cinq recueils de poèmes, passés inaperçus, avant de venir au roman. C'est le roman qui a ramené un peu les lecteurs vers ma poésie. La lumière que j'ai dans le roman et dans les essais rejaillit sur la poésie.

La poésie publiée aux éditions du Seuil est bien diffusée dans la collection poche. Le fait

de diriger une des plus grandes collections de poésie en France, cette collection Point Poésie, au Seuil, m'a permis d'avoir l'esprit tranquille. Pourquoi ? Parce que je guette tout ce qui se crée en poésie dans le monde. Et je suis comme le soldat qu'on envoie en guerre. Je prends mon armure, je m'en vais là-bas, je vais sauver la poésie, en disant: «Bon, qui sont les poètes ? Celui-là, celle-là. Je les prends, je les ramène et je les publie». Donc, ce rôle de soldat et de passeur me va très bien parce que ma définition de la poésie, c'est de pouvoir passer la parole.

Le poète est le plus grand passeur de la parole. En ramenant des poésies, des poètes comme Louis-Philippe Dalember, prix Goncourt de la poésie, ou Laura Vasquez que j'ai publiée dans ma collection, elle aussi prix Goncourt de la poésie, ou encore Dany Laferrière, ça me donne cette satisfaction d'être poète, de servir la poésie et d'être surtout utile. En littérature, c'est rare l'utilité, mais là, j'ai finalement trouvé son application.

Vos références de poètes...

Jean-Baptiste Tati Loutard, un Congolais, est le poète que j'aime beaucoup en Afrique. C'est un grand poète lyrique, couronné en Europe, en Italie, traduit, mais sa poésie n'est pas très connue. Ailleurs dans le monde, j'aime beaucoup Roberto Juarez d'Argentine. Je suis toujours curieux d'aller vers les poètes peu connus, ou pas forcément à la mode en France. En Amérique, ils sont nombreux ; des plus jeunes comme Smith, que j'ai publié dans ma collection, je continue vraiment à rechercher les têtes qui pourraient représenter l'Amérique.

Chacun de vos romans puise à la source des racines familiales : votre mère, votre enfance, la ville de Pointe-Noire. Sur ce socle, vous élaborez des romans, à portée universelle. Ce processus est-il lié à l'exil, à la mémoire, à la prégnance du passé pour regarder l'avenir ?

“

Tout commence à Pointe Noire

Il ne s'agit pas de gommer l'Afrique dans notre création, il s'agit de récuser celle qui nous est servie depuis des années

”

L'exil, j'ai toujours écarté cette idée parce que je préfère réserver ce thème à ceux qui le vivent, dans la souffrance, dans la difficulté, dans le fait qu'ils sont cloîtrés dans un pays contre leur gré. On fait souvent des nuances sur les formes d'exil, en imaginant l'exil qui concernerait le créateur comme une sorte de manque, de trou béant, de nostalgie, une sorte d'exil convoqué par le créateur lui-même comme une raison de faire revivre son passé. Moi, je partirais plutôt sur le thème des souvenirs, de la mémoire, de la nostalgie.

Mes livres sont tissés de ces fils de nostalgie, de souvenirs, de mémoire, et en particulier des pages de mon enfance. Parce que j'ai toujours tendance à penser que l'écrivain est resté un enfant dans son âme et un adulte par son corps ou par sa vie quotidienne. Et j'ai toujours été ému par les écrivains qui ont gardé leur faculté de demeurer des enfants, des adolescents.

L'enfance et l'adolescence sont les choses les mieux partagées au monde. On peut discuter des actes des adultes, mais on est toujours d'accord sur les actes de l'enfance. Même lorsque l'enfant fait une erreur, on a tendance à pardonner car on dit qu'il n'a pas encore l'âge de comprendre ce qu'il fait.

Les romans les plus aboutis sont les romans dans lesquels nous reproduisons cette innocence que nous avons perdue. Et donc moi je suis l'écrivain de la nostalgie, des souvenirs, de la famille africaine. L'écrivain de la célébration des petites émotions africaines qui ont été longtemps absentes de la littérature du continent noir. Cette littérature était tellement préoccupée d'embrasser des questions sur la colonisation, sur l'Europe, sur les indépendances, qu'elle ne regardait pas ce qui se passait à l'intérieur du cercle familial. Et dans ce sens, je me définis comme un écrivain de la famille. C'est pour cela que tout au long de mon parcours, j'ai essayé de présenter par exemple une femme comme Pauline Kenge, ma mère ; je voulais qu'elle fût l'une des mères les plus connues de la littérature francophone.

Je pense que j'y suis un peu parvenu parce que j'ai croisé un étudiant qui prépare une thèse sur ma mère. Ça l'aurait peut-être fait tomber dans les pommes, parce ma mère qui n'est jamais allée à l'école, qui ne savait ni lire ni écrire, est aujourd'hui l'objet d'une étude sérieuse dans de grandes universités.

C'est aussi ça, la force de la littérature : faire croire aux lecteurs, aux étudiants, aux chercheurs que les personnages de fiction sont aussi importants que les personnages réels.

Vous avez publié de nombreux ouvrages, dont beaucoup ont obtenu des prix prestigieux. À quel titre tenez-vous le plus?

Plus j'avance dans les publications, plus je me rends compte que chaque livre devient comme un maillon d'une chaîne, chaque maillon dépendant de l'autre. Il y a des éléments qui sont parfois répétitifs, à dessein, donnant l'impression d'avoir déjà lu ça. Mais c'est bien parce que ça constitue désormais un univers que chaque livre a son importance.

Mais au-delà de cet univers, on ressent toujours quelque chose qui prédomine. Et moi, j'ai toujours pensé que là où j'avais peut-être le plus rassemblé de souvenirs, c'était dans deux œuvres, *Demain j'aurai 20 ans* et *Lumières de Pointe-Noire*. Pour moi, ça donnait vraiment la photographie du roman familial congolais. En même temps, d'autres romans ont particulièrement séduit le public, comme *Verre cassé* ou *Black Bazar*, parce qu'il y recherchait le côté gargantuesque, cocasse.

Mais lorsque vous posez la question à un écrivain, il va toujours vers le livre dans lequel ses parents sont les plus présents. Les miens sont très présents dans *Lumières de Pointe-Noire*, le livre de l'enfance, et aussi dans *Demain, j'aurai 20 ans*, le livre de l'homme adulte. *Le Commerce des allongés*, c'est aussi un pont puisqu'on y parle de l'hôtel de mon père. Ou bien encore *Bleu, Blanc, Rouge*.

Que signifie ce titre d'un de vos essais? Voulez-vous dire que la langue dans laquelle vous écrivez, le français, est apte à exprimer toutes les réalités, en particulier celles d'Afrique, ou bien que la diversité du monde fonde votre réflexion et votre création?

“ Le monde est mon langage ”

Pour moi les deux sont vrais. Je suis persuadé que la force du langage est dans sa composition. Plus la composition du langage est hétéroclite, plus elle héberge les

disparités du monde, mieux c'est pour l'évolution de notre destin commun. Le monde est mon langage dans la mesure où je dois chercher à comprendre les civilisations qui sont censées avoir été dominées.

Parce que ces civilisations sont comme des êtres qui voulaient prendre la parole, mais on ne leur a pas accordé la parole parce qu'on leur avait déjà collé une étiquette. Vous n'avez pas le droit à la parole parce que vous n'avez pas la civilisation. Et ce qui fait aujourd'hui la force de notre reconquête, de notre humanisme, c'est que, de plus en plus, tous les chercheurs, tous les individus cherchent à comprendre le désespoir de ces populations lointaines, ou d'autres populations qui sont en voie de disparition, de ces cultures qui jadis étaient considérées comme sans éclat, mais qui aujourd'hui sont nécessaires à la compréhension de ce que nous vivons dans le présent. Et donc, quand je suis parti de l'idée « le monde est mon langage », je me suis dit que dans chaque chose que je faisais, dans chaque réflexion que j'opérais, je devais intégrer la dimension mondiale.

Je ne suis pas complet si je n'ai pas un regard synoptique sur le monde. « Le monde est mon langage », c'est aussi une attitude. C'est ce que j'ai fait dans mon existence, de vivre dans chaque continent avec la même aisance. J'ai vécu chez moi. Bon, ce n'était pas difficile, je suis né en Afrique, je n'avais pas le choix. J'ai vécu en Europe sans avoir de problème de civilisation. Je vis aux États-Unis sans avoir de problème de civilisation. Je vais en Amérique latine où je suis reçu comme si j'étais moi-même un Mexicain. Ma philosophie, c'est de toujours prendre dans n'importe quelle civilisation ce qui peut enrichir la mienne.

Je parle la langue du monde parce que je suis heureux lorsque je parcours ce monde-là aussi.

Quels sont vos projets en cours ?

Une Lettre à « Angela Davis, cette femme qui nous regarde » va paraître en septembre prochain. J'écris un roman sur *Koreatown*, le quartier dans lequel je vis et je prépare un *Dictionnaire amoureux de la poésie*.

Vous êtes directeur artistique du festival 'Atlantide, les mots du monde' à Nantes. Quelle place occupe cette activité de passeur dans votre parcours et quel sens donnez-vous à cet engagement quasi militant ?

Ce que j'aime dans le festival Atlantide, c'est l'impression d'y retrouver le prolongement même de la réflexion que j'ai menée jusqu'à présent. Ce festival est l'exemple incarné de ce langage qui est le monde. Quand j'ai accepté d'en être le directeur artistique, je savais que je pourrais convoquer les mondes les plus divers pour pouvoir donner au public l'occasion de sortir d'une vision trop européen-centrée des choses.

Le festival Atlantide est sans doute l'un des rares festivals en France qui donne au public une vision plus « disparate », dans le sens des grands penseurs comme Édouard Glissant qui disait que l'important pour nous, c'est la poétique de la relation. C'est-à-dire que la relation est ce qui forge notre culture. Être dans une relation « éclatée » nous donne la possibilité de nous enrichir. Car le monde demain sera non pas celui de la division ou de la soustraction, mais sera le monde de l'addition et de la multiplication.

On peut rêver, on doit rêver. L'utopie est importante. Jean Cocteau disait qu'un enfant qui ne rêve pas est un monstre. Donc je pense qu'il faut continuer à rêver. Aujourd'hui,

ce qui nous fait défaut, c'est l'absence des utopies. Dès que vous commencez à rêver, on dit « arrêtez de rêver, vous êtes un utopiste ». Karl Marx, Lénine, Victor Hugo étaient utopistes. Ce sont leurs utopies qui font marcher le monde d'aujourd'hui.

En ces temps troublés, avez-vous un message à transmettre aux lecteurs de ce magazine ?

Quand les temps sont dans la confusion, c'est qu'il y a en général un trouble culturel avec des tendances idéologiques qui veulent imposer un mode de pensée, et forcément une tendance au repli sur soi-même. Il y a alors urgence pour les acteurs culturels de convoquer les autres cultures afin de les intégrer dans notre champ de réflexion. Une culture auto-centrée, qui ne donne pas aux gens la possibilité de voir ce qui se passe ailleurs, peut créer des aliénés culturels.

Pour moi la culture, la culture d'expression française, contrairement à ce qu'on pourrait penser, est aujourd'hui en bonne santé car dans les marges réside une intensité créatrice qui fait que cette culture des marges ne dépend pas forcément du centre qu'est la France. Ce qui se fait au Québec, en Suisse, au Congo, en langue française, dans la poésie, dans les romans, etc. se fait parfois sans que Paris ne le sache. Paris n'est au courant que lorsqu'émerge dans ce tumulte francophone des voix qui sont reconnues ailleurs ; alors la France se retourne et dit : « Ce sont mes enfants, ce sont mes filles, revenez à la maison ! » Et c'est ce que nous avons fait, je veux dire que nous sommes allés à l'école française et aujourd'hui nous devenons les ambassadeurs de la culture française. Jamais je n'aurais cru que dans ma vie j'enseignerai Gérard de Nerval, Marcel Proust, ou Baudelaire à des Américains.

Pour clore cet entretien, quel message souhaitez adresser aux jeunes ?

“

La culture sera toujours le passeport le plus diplomatique qui soit

”

Quand on était jeune, la lecture était une chose fort importante. J'ai l'impression que la lecture devient une denrée rare à l'ère des écrans, des jeux, etc. La priorité pour ces jeunes est de privilégier la lecture. Que ce soit vingt minutes ou quelques pages par jour, consacrez du temps à la lecture, travaillez votre langue, ouvrez-vous aux autres cultures.

Lire ou relire les Victor Hugo, les Verlaine, les Dostoïevski, les Ernesto Sábato, lire les *Mémoires* du Général de Gaulle, *L'abeille et l'architecte* de Mitterrand, revenir aux sources fondamentales, être un honnête homme culturel. L'honnête homme culturel est celui qui a goûté un petit peu de tout, peut discuter d'un petit peu de tout avec tout le monde. C'est cela qui est important. La première fois qu'on vous voit, on peut vous juger physiquement: vous êtes blanc ou noir. Mais, dès que vous commencez à parler de culture, s'effacent toutes les formes de préjugés sur l'être humain. La culture sera toujours le passeport le plus diplomatique qui soit ! Elle vous permettra de traverser les frontières avant tout le monde car un homme qui sait, même si économiquement il ne pèse pas, fera toujours partie des êtres qui seront respectés.

Voudriez-vous répondre à une question que nous n'avons pas posée ?

Je voudrais que vous rappeliez que je suis très heureux d'être membre d'honneur de l'Académie de Bretagne et des Pays de la Loire. C'est très important pour moi parce que je me trouve dans un espace qui me rappelle ma jeunesse, du côté de Nantes où j'ai fait mes études. C'est peut-être l'une de mes plus grandes joies que d'avoir intégré pour la première fois une académie alors que j'aurais pu postuler à l'Académie Française, ce que je n'ai pas fait. Cela fait plaisir d'être accueilli au sein d'une famille. Comme disait Alfred de Musset: « Mon verre est petit mais je bois dans mon verre. »



ALAIN MABANCKOU

Né au Congo-Brazzaville, Alain Mabanckou est poète, romancier, essayiste, et passeur de cultures. Il enseigne la littérature francophone aux Etats-Unis et vit entre l'Afrique et la France où le Collège de France l'a invité à sa chaire de Création artistique. Il préside à Nantes le festival Atlantide, les Mots du monde. Auteur traduit dans nombre de langues européennes, en hébreu, arabe, ou vietnamien, il a reçu des prix prestigieux, français ou américains.

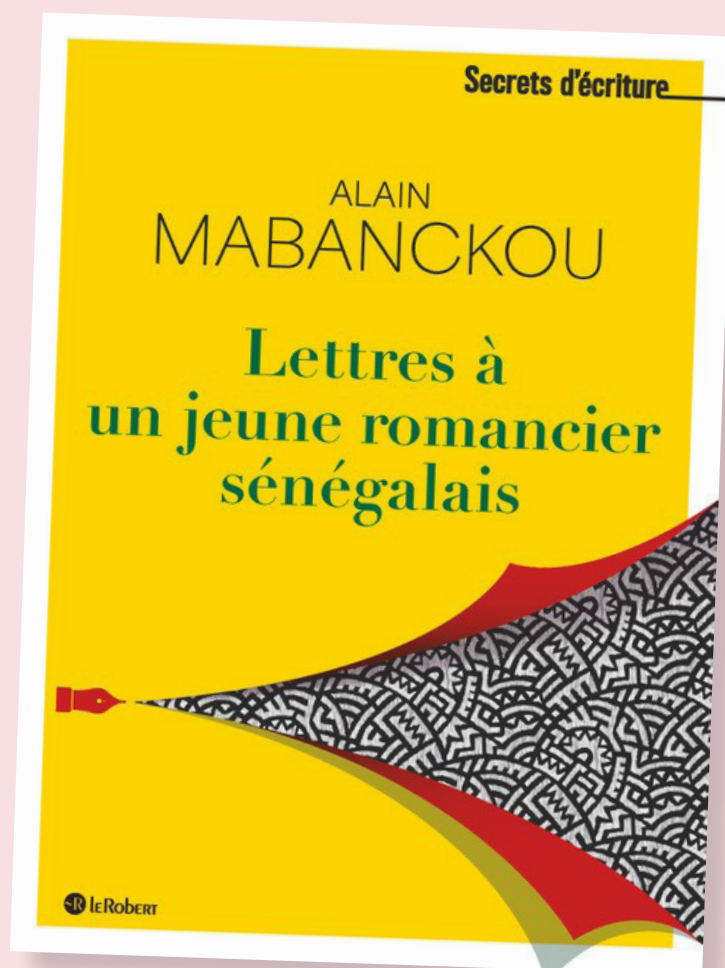
Les échanges entre les cultures africaine, américaine, européenne, nourrissent son œuvre généreuse, ouverte au monde. Enracinée dans le concret lié à l'enfance, à la famille, aux premières émotions, elle se déploie dans l'universel.

Interviewers

Claire Giraud-Labelle, Art and cultural heritage historian, learned a lot by participating in the Unesco project *Niger-Loire, governance and culture*.

Henri Copin, Literature teacher, first focused his research on the place of Indochina in French literature, then on the literatures of Asia and Africa, and the cross images they generate.

Both are members of l'Académie littéraire de Bretagne et des Pays de la Loire.





LE TRAVAIL DU BOIS, DE LA FORÊT À NOTRE-DAME



JEAN-LOUIS BIDET

Ateliers Perrault

La cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris est un chantier iconique, suivi par des personnes du monde entier, simples amateurs ou professionnels du patrimoine. De nombreux artisans prennent part à la renaissance de ce magnifique édifice et font la fierté de leurs entreprises, comme les Ateliers Perrault en Anjou.

Les Ateliers Perrault, la quête de l'excellence depuis 1760

Ancrée en Anjou depuis le 18^e siècle, notre entreprise, la maison Perrault, œuvre dans les métiers de la charpente et de la menuiserie. Nos ateliers transmettent les

savoir-faire les plus ancestraux comme les technologies les plus élaborées au service de l'architecture, et ce, aux quatre coins du monde. Dès 2006, l'entreprise obtient le label « Entreprise du patrimoine vivant ».



Sélection des bois en forêt

A partir de notre village de Saint-Laurent-de-la-Plaine, situé à quelques kilomètres au sud de la Loire, nous intervenons un peu partout en France. Nous travaillons principalement en Anjou, dans l'ensemble des régions des Pays de la Loire, du Centre-Val de Loire, et de la Bretagne. Les projets menés avec des maîtres d'ouvrages, tantôt publics, tantôt privés, y sont nombreux et concernent aussi bien des édifices anciens, civils, religieux ou militaires, que des bâtiments contemporains. Parmi nos chantiers les plus emblématiques, nous pouvons citer en Anjou : l'abbaye Royale de Fontevraud, les châteaux d'Angers, de Saumur, du Plessis-Bourré, de Brissac, etc. ; dans le Val de Loire: les châteaux de Chambord, de Chenonceau, d'Amboise et bien d'autres ; sans oublier à Paris et en Île de France, la cathédrale Notre-Dame, l'Opéra Garnier, le musée du Louvre, les châteaux de Versailles, de Fontainebleau, etc. Nous intervenons aussi dans le monde entier et pour cela, nous avons appris à voyager !



Equarrissage, transformation des arbres en pièces de charpente

Il n'y a pas de petits chantiers, de petits clients, chaque projet est unique ! Nous pouvons aussi bien intervenir pour créer une lucarne sur un toit ou restaurer une petite maison ancienne en Anjou, que s'en aller reconstruire le Phare du Bout du Monde sur l'île des États au Cap Horn. Nos limites se déplacent à chaque fois un peu plus...

Une histoire de transmission et de formation

Les Ateliers Perrault sont composés aujourd'hui de différents ateliers: charpente, menuiserie/ébénisterie, fenêtre, forge/serrurerie, débit des bois. L'effectif est de 180 personnes, dont 27 apprentis en formation par alternance. Un jeune charpentier se forme à son métier par un apprentissage en alternance (entreprise centre de formation et/ou compagnonnage). Pendant ses premières années, il étudie aussi l'histoire des charpentes et l'histoire de l'architecture pour comprendre et connaître les différents types de construction et leur évolution, c'est indispensable. Nous disposons d'une bibliothèque (livres, plans, etc.) au cœur de l'entreprise. Au fil de sa vie, le charpentier continuera de « se construire », de voyager, de recevoir et surtout de transmettre, de partager à son tour les connaissances et expériences qu'il a reçues. Il pourra aussi évoluer vers d'autres métiers, créer son entreprise, devenir architecte, comme le montrent de nombreux exemples parmi nous.

Au fil des restaurations effectuées, nos savoir-faire s'enrichissent et notre devoir est de les transmettre pour l'avenir à de nouvelles générations. Il y a tellement de



Montage à blanc dans l'atelier

diversité dans la longue histoire des constructions. Chaque jour qui se lève, nous devons remettre l'ouvrage sur le métier ! Pour que le fil ne soit pas coupé, nous avons créé cette année une « Académie Perrault » pour transmettre les connaissances, savoir-faire et savoir-être, promouvoir nos métiers d'art et aussi sensibiliser les acteurs de nos métiers aux enjeux environnementaux <https://ateliersperrault.com/academie-perrault-2>

La fierté d'avoir participé au Chantier Notre-Dame

Je m'appelle Jean-Louis Bidet. Responsable de l'activité Charpente aux Ateliers Perrault, je suis le responsable technique au sein de l'équipe constituée pour la restitution des charpentes médiévales de la cathédrale Notre-Dame, endommagées par le terrible incendie du 15 avril 2019. J'ai commencé mon métier de charpentier en apprentissage, à l'âge de 15 ans. Au bout de 43 années de travail, la pratique de mon métier et mon évolution avec celle de l'entreprise m'ont conduit, à travers différentes fonctions, à être aujourd'hui acteur de ce projet ambitieux de reconstruction des charpentes incendiées. La connaissance acquise au fil de ces dizaines d'années dans les métiers de la restauration/restitution de charpentes patrimoniales, grandes ou petites, nous a permis de gagner la confiance du maître d'ouvrage et des architectes de ce chantier pour mener à bien ce projet hors du commun.



Levage de la charpente du chœur

Ce chantier occupe une place unique dans l'histoire des Ateliers Perrault et dans la mienne, bien sûr. C'est exceptionnel de redonner vie à un tel édifice car chacun d'entre nous a été meurtri par ce drame. Nous sommes si petits devant cet édifice qui a traversé les siècles en étant au cœur de l'histoire.

Aujourd'hui, nous voyons le chemin accompli: il est unique. C'est une œuvre collective. Pour la réussir, nous avons réuni, en plus de notre effectif habituel, 50 charpentiers pour travailler à la reconstruction des charpentes de la nef et du chœur ; des charpentiers qui, pour certains, sont venus spontanément d'un peu partout, de France et d'autres pays, en disant : « *Je veux travailler pour Notre-Dame...* ». Nous avons vécu des moments formidables de partage, de notre métier et de nos vies. L'objectif de restituer le plus fidèlement possible ces charpentes médiévales a été atteint ; c'est une grande fierté pour toutes les équipes. Nous nous sommes mis dans les pas des charpentiers des 12^e et 13^e siècles pour



Pose du traditionnel bouquet

comprendre les techniques/méthodes utilisées afin de reproduire les charpentes le plus fidèlement possible. Comme choisir les arbres en forêt, les tailler à la hache et à la doloire (sorte de hache servant à amincir ou régulariser l'épaisseur d'une pièce de bois) pour les transformer en pièces de charpente, tailler les assemblages entièrement à la main, réinitier des techniques de levage pour mettre en œuvre les charpentes dans le ciel de Paris et assurer la pérennité de l'ouvrage. Pour ce chantier, il s'est dégagé une « *énergie Notre-Dame* » au cœur même des Ateliers Perrault.

Nous avons vécu des moments marquants au cours de ces deux années écoulées et nous les avons partagées avec nos familles, nos amis, les habitants du village et bien d'autres, car Notre-Dame appartient à tous (chacun se souvient où il était et ce qu'il faisait le soir de l'incendie). Ce partage a montré le sens de notre métier, il a fait naître des envies de venir nous rejoindre : nous avons de plus en plus de demandes d'entrée en apprentissage. Lorsque l'on choisit un métier à l'âge de 15 ans, ce qui est mon cas, on se construit pas à pas, sans savoir où cela nous conduira.



Le bouquet, déposé le 12 janvier 2024 au sommet du chœur de la cathédrale, symbolise la fin du levage de la charpente.

Aujourd'hui, nous pouvons répondre présent sur bon nombre de projets. Il faut toujours se tenir prêt à toute situation nouvelle ou improbable. Un soir d'avril 2019, les charpentes de Notre-Dame disparaissent dans l'incendie... Le 12 janvier 2024, le benjamin de l'équipe pose le traditionnel bouquet au sommet des charpentes du chœur, marquant la fin de nos travaux et sa réception par le maître d'ouvrage. Nous en sommes très heureux, nous continuons sur nos chantiers en cours et à venir de travailler dans cet état d'esprit et avec cette même démarche. Cela donne un sens à nos vies !

Ces « *années Notre-Dame* » resteront marquées à jamais dans l'histoire des Ateliers Perrault, dans nos vies, dans la vie de chacun d'entre nous, avec la fierté du devoir accompli et avec toute l'humilité que nous nous devons d'avoir devant cet édifice. Au fond de chacun d'entre nous, une flamme restera allumée : « *Nous avons faits partie des re-bâisseurs de Notre-Dame de Paris !* »



JEAN-LOUIS **BIDET**

Originaire de Saint Laurent-de-la-Plaine en Anjou, Jean-Louis Bidet entre aux Ateliers Perrault à l'âge de 15 ans comme apprenti charpentier, obtient son Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle puis son Brevet de Maîtrise, spécialité patrimoniale. Charpentier et responsable de chantier jusqu'en 1990, puis dessinateur/projeteur et mètreur/conducteur de travaux jusqu'en 2000, puis responsable de l'activité charpente. Il suit également les chantiers outre-mer (Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyane). Directeur technique pour la reconstruction des charpentes médiévales du chœur et de la nef de la cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris (2022-janvier 2024), il est par ailleurs membre de la Société des Experts Bois depuis 2010.



Access to the vaults using scaffolding © Elise Baillieul - Stone Working Group

NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS, SHARING SCIENCE AND KNOW-HOW



MAXIME L'HÉRITIER

Associate professor in medieval history
University of Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis
and ArScAn CNRS laboratory

On 15 April 2019, Notre-Dame burns down. The cause of the fire, which was accidental, was never precisely identified. Such a catastrophe seems exceptional, almost unthinkable. How could one of the most visited buildings in the world fall prey to flames? How could an 800-year-old framework, the famous "forest", go up in smoke in just a few hours? History reminds us, however, that while such disasters are not always frequent, they are nonetheless commonplace. The Rio Library in Brazil in 2018, Shuri Castle in Japan, in 2019, Nantes Cathedral in 2020 and, more recently, the Copenhagen Stock Exchange are all examples of the implacable force of fire, which is, then as now, the leading cause of destruction of built heritage.

"Les Scientifiques de Notre-Dame"

These disasters are part of the history of these buildings. They help to write it. There will be a before and an after to 15 April 2019. Not just for Notre-Dame, but for heritage in general. The exceptional restoration project launched by the President of the Republic, with the aim of reopening the church in just five years, and the scientific research that has been organised around the building, bear witness to this. The first stage of the restoration project was to secure the site and assess the damage: a diagnosis prior to restoration. This was followed by the creation of [the public establishment for the restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris](#) (RNDP). Meanwhile, the scientists were organised. The emotion caused by the fire was such that within a few days, more than a hundred of them (and eventually nearly 250) formed an association: "[Les Scientifiques de Notre-Dame](#)", with the mission of helping to restore and save the cathedral and the building materials spared by the fire, recommending research and advising restoration workers throughout their work, and disseminating the results of the research undertaken to a wide audience. Scientists have been invited to the Senate to debate these issues as part of a joint parliamentary committee (OPECST).



The scaffolding in the nave seen from the crossing © Maxime L'Héritier - Metal Working Group

At the same time, the French National Scientific Research Centre (CNRS) and the Ministry of Culture followed suit, structuring and funding this grassroots initiative: the [Notre-Dame de Paris science project](#) was born.

It is made up of nine working groups, corresponding to the building's main construction materials (stone, wood, metal and glass, as well as structure and decoration), to which are added intangible themes (acoustics and soundscapes, heritage emotions) and cross-disciplinary themes (digital data). **The project brings together specialists from a wide range of disciplines, from art history to materials science, from archaeology to civil engineering, from anthropology to the environmental studies.** Never before has such a panel of researchers worked on a monument in such close collaboration with the architects and the commissioner of the works.



*Sorting of remains under the marquees set up on Notre-Dame's square
© Maxime L'Héritier - Metal Working Group*

The five years announced looked like a challenge for everyone. They turn into an [unprecedented scientific and human experience](#), which continues to this day.

But without archaeological material, there can be no research. The timber from the roof may be charred, but it can still be used to determine its date, and also to provide new information about the [medieval climate](#). Iron reinforcements, lead remains from the roof and spire, stones from collapsed arches and vaults were all mixed together in several piles, on the ground and on the vaults. The first step was to collect these remains from the charred rubble of the building. This was organised by government departments (Regional Archaeology Service (SRA), Regional Conservation of Historic Monuments (CRMH), Historic Monuments Research Laboratory (LRMH), , etc.) the day after the fire. Initially robotised due to the dangerous nature of access to the building, it later gave way to long-term collaboration with the site workers. Initially, the rope access technicians were the key players in the collection of data from the vaults. An orthophotographic coverage carried out by the "digital data" working group enabled the identification of certain materials, in particular the wood, which was marked individually before being lowered by these men of the air. The rest of the remains were marked according to the sections of the Notre-Dame vaults and sorted later, under makeshift marquees set up on the forecourt. This long and arduous task of sorting out the metal, wood and lithic archaeological remains from among the rubble and coals was a major undertaking. It took over a year, but will enabled us to collect some of the artefacts that can later be studied.

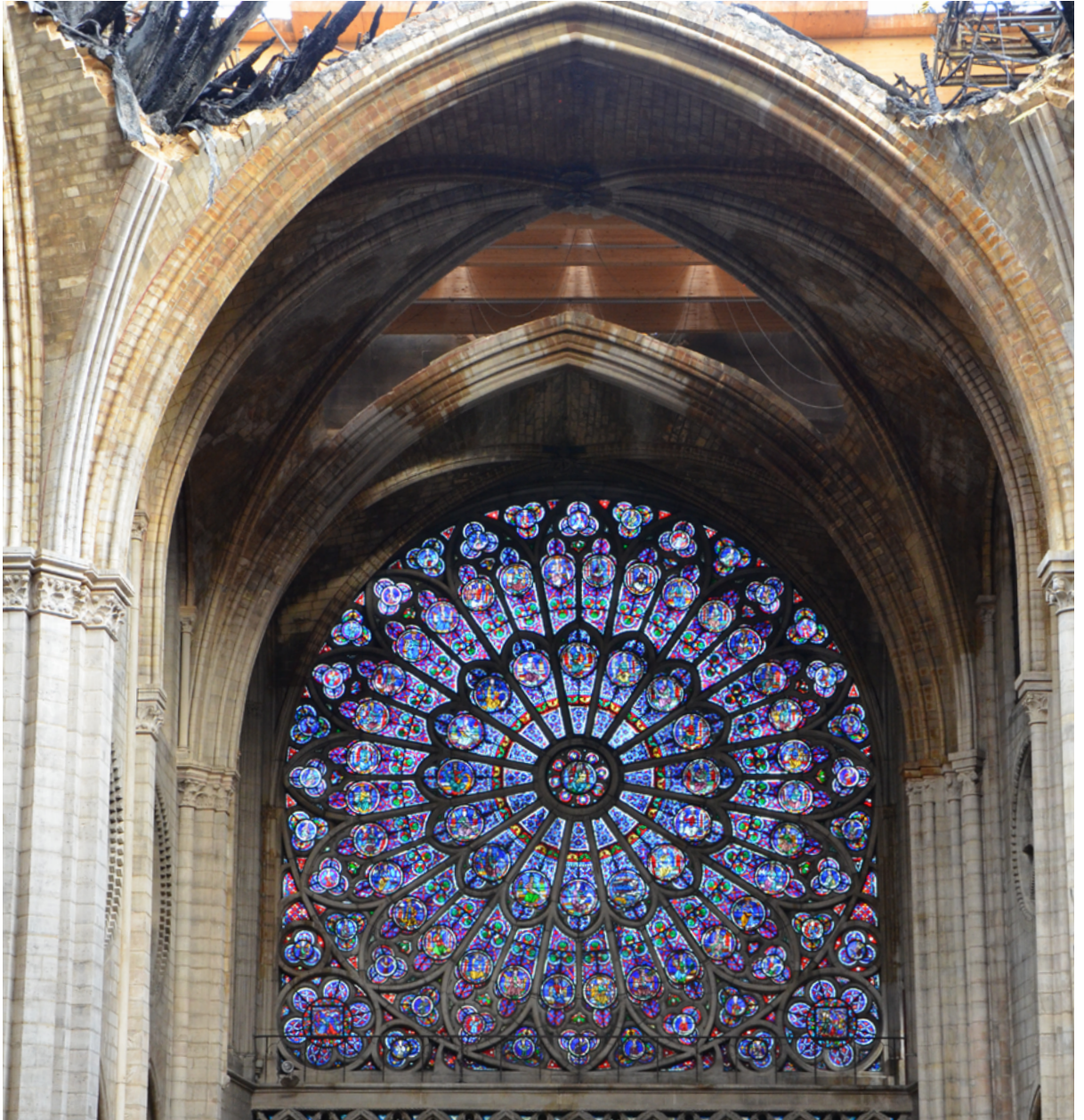


Sorting of remains under the marquees set up on Notre-Dame's square
© Aurélia Azéma - Metal Working Group

At the same time, the cathedral is gradually opened up to researchers. Scaffolding was erected so that it can be examined from every angle, as never before. The "stone" working group could carry out an initial study of stone marks, or find traces of the tools, straight blades or toothed blades, used by masons from the 12th to the 19th century.

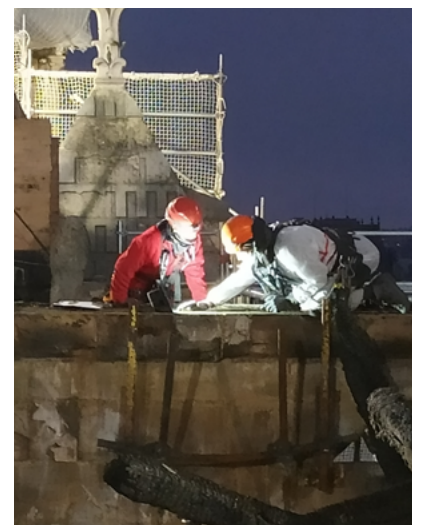


Inventory of metal artefacts under the marquees set up on Notre-Dame's square
© Aurélia Azéma - Metal Working Group



The north rose after the fire - © Maxime L'Héritier - Metal Working Group

Its researchers could also look at vaulting techniques, which differ in the choir and the nave. The collapsed double arch in the nave gave them the opportunity to take a close look at the arch stones (which are generally well-preserved despite their fall): cutting techniques, markings, assembly methods, type of stone.... and gain a more detailed understanding of the construction methods used for these great Gothic vaults. With the "wood" and "metal" working groups, the remains of several series of wooden tie rods were uncovered in the chevet ambulatory, series of hundreds of staples were discovered in the masonry at very specific points in the building: above the large arcades and on the top walls beneath the roof timbers. Modelling is underway to understand their role in the structure of the building and, more generally, to gain a better understanding of the mechanics of this exceptional structure, the first to raise its masonry vaults more than 30m above the ground.



Study of the cramps on the top of the upper walls - © Maxime L'Héritier - Metal Working Group

Tools, techniques and construction timeline

As well as shedding light on construction techniques, these studies provide a glimpse of the different construction phases, during which craftsmen using different tools, or using the same tool in different ways, worked on the building. Placed end to end and compared with the absolute dates obtained on the timber of the frameworks by dendrochronology or on the steel of the staples by radiocarbon, they make it possible to rewrite the chronology of the cathedral, hitherto known only from a few texts, the interpretation of which may be open to debate. The dates obtained for the first choir frame (dismantled and reused in the 13th century) indicate that it was probably laid around 1185. The consecration of the choir in 1182 therefore probably took place in a provisionally roofed building, without a vault or framework. This is how the chronicle of the abbot of Mont Saint Michel, Robert de Torigni, written in 1177, should be read. Until now, it has been interpreted as the imminent completion of the building work. When were the first choir vaults built? They most certainly date from after the frame was built, but when? The question is still open. And how far advanced was the construction of the nave at that time? Here too, the question is not yet settled, but the traces of tools found throughout the height of the building, as well as the offset of the masonry to the north and south, reveal a construction site that was far less linear than historiography currently accepts. We now know that the framework of the nave was set around 1215. There is every reason to believe that the vaults were not yet built at that time, as the techniques used put them at around 1220. The roof of the apse was built later, around 1230, following the raising of the choir to align the masonry with that of the newly built



Restoration of the choir's upper walls by CCR masonry company
© Maxime L'Héritier - Metal Working Group

nave. This new, as yet unfinished, reading of the cathedral's chronology is fundamental to understanding the builders' motivations and the organisation of the site, as well as the constraints (construction of the foundations, dismantling of the previous building, etc.). The various hypotheses about the rebuilding of the upper parts of the building (fire according to Viollet-le-Duc, better management of water run-off, etc.) should now be seen as a long, complex and uninterrupted construction site from the 1160s to at least the 1230s (leaving aside the work on the transepts and the construction of the chapels). They breathe new life into the construction site, which today appears less smooth, less orderly and less systematic than initially imagined. There is no such thing as a perfect cathedral. Beauty is also to be found in the irregularity of the structures. And so is Notre-Dame truly beautiful.



The nave and vaults destroyed in the fire © Maxime L'Héritier - Metal Working Group

Stones, wood, metals: source and recycle

Another major advance concerns the study of the supply of building materials for the cathedral, which, for the first time, looks at all the materials used throughout its history. The petrographic and geological approach to the stones and the morphological and chemical analysis of the ferrous alloys, lead and wood enable us to put forward hypotheses about the supply of materials for the building site. First of all, it's time to dispel the myths. The [oak trees](#) used for the framework are not several hundred years old (on average, they are around 80 years old) and represent the felling of only a few hectares of forest. But the meticulous study of the charred wood carried out by the archaeologists and dendrochronologists in the "Wood" working group takes the analysis further. The identification of floating holes on several beams attests to the fact that at least some of the wood arrived tied up in rafts by water, probably from the bishop's

or chapter's forests. Whenever possible, this timber was reused: the 13th-century choir frame uses a great deal of timber from the 12th-century choir frame, and still bore the marks of this before the fire. Iron and lead came from a variety of sources, not necessarily local ones. These materials could also have been recycled, both in the Middle Ages and in the 19th century, when the roof reinstalled by Viollet-le-Duc made extensive use of remelted lead from the old one. As for the stone used, medieval builders seem to have mastered the different qualities of Lutetian limestone quarried in the Paris region very early on. The stone chosen for the arches was harder, while that for the vaults was lighter. However, in certain parts of the building, the geological facies are more mixed, again reflecting the practice of reuse. So, **despite the richness of the building site, reuse and recycling of materials was widely practised at Notre-Dame de Paris at all times and for all materials.** Practical, economic and symbolic aspects are not to be overlooked. The current restoration project is no exception to the rule. Admittedly, the materials that were too badly damaged by the fire have been purged, and the framework and spire have been rebuilt "identically" using new materials, but the project team has sought to reuse what could be reused. This approach led the commissioner to request studies to determine the mechanical behaviour of the iron reinforcements in the upper sections (cramps, cresting, tie rods) and to study their state of degradation in the event of fire. Finally, while the cresting will not be reused, as the reforging work proved too complex, the cramps in the top row of the upper walls have been removed and methodically restored so that they can be reinstalled in their original position. Some of the remaining lead from the gutters has also been recycled for sealing. For the various people involved in the project, **from the architect to the stonelayer, Notre-Dame has become a short circuit, with both ecological and symbolic motivations.** On site, masons, archaeologists and anthropologists discuss the significance of this gesture, as well as sealing practices and the shape of the cramps, which differ according to the workshops that forged them in the 13th century. Everyone contributes his or her knowledge and expertise to the mutual enrichment of the work. But everyone agrees: replacing the 13th-century cramps at the top of the walls means respecting the work of the medieval builders.

The masons and stonecutters working on the choir are no exception. On their side of the site, there is no prefabrication, and each cramp is precisely marked out before being removed and reinstalled in the precise place where it was before the fire. The anchors are cut into the stone after laying, as in the Middle Ages, and the lead is cast in the traditional way. At the top of the building, they are the witnesses and vestiges of the original edifice. There seems to be a complete link between the restoration work and the scientific work.

Knowledge sharing

Research is nothing without mediation, without passing on the results. Every year, during the Heritage Days, the RNDP public institution organises this meeting between the public and the various professions involved in the restoration work, including research. In the medium term, the prospect of opening a museum of the work of art will be one of the extensions of the restoration and scientific projects, and of the issues involved in bringing the work to the public. But at Notre-Dame, this outreach has already taken many forms. Towards the craft trades on the one hand. The case of carpentry was emblematic here. In the New Aquitaine region, a pilot project was carried out to build a span of the Notre-Dame roof structure at the lycée des métiers du bâtiment Felletin. One of the challenges of this construction programme was to build bridges between professionals,

carpentry training courses and scientific research, and then to disseminate the results to the high schools and training centres concerned. Towards the general public on the other hand. **The digital twin of Notre-Dame created by the "digital data" working group is first and foremost a digital ecosystem, a research tool designed to interconnect interdisciplinary scientific data in order to encourage the sharing and capitalisation of knowledge to improve heritage conservation.** But this digital twin is also becoming a virtual reality object thanks to a partnership with Dassault Syst me. Now on show as part of an exhibition at the Cit  de l'architecture, it offers a unique immersive experience for the public, transporting them into a 1:1 scale digital model of the cathedral. Finally, in a more traditional context, the French National Art History Institute (INHA) was a very early supporter of the work of the scientists involved in the association of Notre-Dame Scientists. It was therefore very natural for me to enter into a partnership with them in 2022 to offer the public a return on the research undertaken on the building since 2019: the "Notre-Dame en chantiers" conferences. In all, fifteen talks have been or will shortly be offered to the public. They involve the participation of a wide range of heritage professionals and scientists, in particular researchers involved in the scientific project, and cover a wide range of subjects: analysis of the remains of the roof structure, study of the vaults, stone marks, portals, monumental decoration, use of metals in the structure, digital reconstruction of parts destroyed by fire, reconstruction of the building's acoustics, etc. Specialists who were not directly involved in the project, but who provided a specific perspective on the history of the building (the modern period, Viollet-le-Duc's restorations, the reception of Notre-Dame on the other side of the Atlantic) completed the panel. All the **presentations** were recorded and posted online so that they can be accessed by as many people as possible over the long term. The conference cycle will end in spring 2025 with a talk on the rood screen of Notre-Dame, another exceptional discovery from the restoration work.



The vaults of the nave after restoration   Elise Baillieul - Stone Working Group

With just a few months to go before the cathedral reopens in December 2024, the momentum created by the restoration and scientific projects is still very much alive. Numerous studies will continue after the project is completed. Notre-Dame is a wonderful laboratory for undertaking new research into the conservation and understanding of our heritage. Of course, this research goes beyond the Paris site alone. The question of lead brown alterations, for example, which has been observed at Notre-Dame for the last fifteen years or so, and on a number of historic monuments, will be the subject of more extensive research in the years to come as part of an ANR (EMBRUNI) project piloted by Aurélia Azéma. The exploration of other cathedrals as part of the ALTIOR ANR project, coordinated by Yves Gallet and which started in 2023, aims to gain a better understanding, beyond the case of Notre-Dame, of the material and technical milestones in the quest for height in Gothic architecture in France. More generally, a CNRS interdisciplinary thematic network is being set up to ensure that this collaborative research continues. The challenge is to be able to put the knowledge acquired and the practices tried and tested at the service of other restoration projects, while at the same time contributing to the themes of both tangible and intangible research relating to these monuments. One of the challenges today is also to extend this research internationally. The momentum created by the Notre-Dame science and restoration project will not stop there. After the fire at the Copenhagen stock exchange last April, current events remind us that the deployment of such interdisciplinary expertise in the service of a better understanding of our heritage is a challenge that concerns all curators, on a global scale.



MAXIME L'HÉRITIER

Maxime L'Héritier is an archaeologist and historian who studies construction history and archaeometallurgy. His works deal with metal production and trade in the Middle Ages as well as constructive techniques, with a material and economic approach of great medieval building yards. He received his Ph.D. on "the use of metal in gothic architecture" from the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne in 2007 and is currently associate professor in medieval history at the University of Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis and at the ArScAn CNRS laboratory. Since May 2019, he coordinates the "Metal Workgroup" for the scientific project on Notre-Dame de Paris, funded by the CNRS (French National Scientific Research Center) and French Ministry of Culture.



Detail of the arches: angel with outstretched wings acclaiming Christ
© Drac Pays de la Loire/Tim Fox

THE POLYCHROMED PORTAL OF SAINT-MAURICE CATHEDRAL IN ANGERS: IN THE LIGHT AFTER AN EXEMPLARY RESTORATION



BÉNÉDICTE FILLION-BRAGUET

PhD in medieval art history



NATHALIE LE LUEL

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CLÉMENTINE MATHURIN

Heritage curator

Standing proudly atop the city of Angers, Saint-Maurice Cathedral is a major monument to the city's medieval past. Testifying to the beginnings of Gothic art, its sculpted western portal dominates the long and impressive Montée Saint-Maurice, which since the 19th century has linked the top of the city to its river, the Maine, below.

However, for the past fifteen years, thanks to an exemplary restoration project that has, among other things, enabled the rediscovery of its exceptional polychromy, and pending

the construction of a protective gallery, this major work of European medieval art has been hidden from view by visitors and tourists. In 2025, they will once again be able to admire this masterpiece, thanks to the construction of a protective gallery designed by the internationally renowned architect Kengo Kuma.

An early Gothic portal

The portal on the west facade of Saint-Maurice Cathedral in Angers (Maine-et-Loire, France) is one of the earliest examples, outside the Ile-de-France region, of portals with early Gothic column-statues. It was designed, sculpted and installed in the mid-12th century, as part of a major project to modernise Angers cathedral, financed by Bishop Normand de Doué (1149-1153). Until then, the nave of the building had been timber-framed. It was then vaulted with strongly curved ogives, characteristic of Western Gothic, and a western façade was built.

Like the royal portal of Notre-Dame de Chartres or the south portals of the cathedrals of Saint-Julien du Mans and Saint-Etienne de Bourges, the portal of Angers cathedral combines column-statues of kings and queens of the Old Testament at the doorways, to Christ in Majesty surrounded by the symbols of the four evangelists in the tympanum (above, the angel of Saint Matthew and the eagle of Saint John, below, the lion of Saint Mark and the bull of Saint Luke). The tympanum is highlighted by four arches featuring angels in the two inner arches and the twenty-four Elders of the Apocalypse in the outer arches. Finally, in its original state, the Angevin portal had a trumeau and a lintel sculpted with the apostles.

The sculpture was carved from tuffeau, a stone characteristic of the Loire Valley and one of the softest limestones available. It was protected from the elements by a vast gallery built in the early 13th century in front of the cathedral. This gallery, which was destroyed in the early 19th century, allowed the polychromies and gilding to be largely preserved.

A major work, little spared by man

Major interventions have hampered the initial programme, perhaps explaining the lack of interest in the Anjou portal to this day, which is often presented in the shadow of the royal portal of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Chartres.



Angers cathedral and its polychromed portal from the Montée Saint-Maurice (February 2024).

© Drac Pays de la Loire/David Gallard



General view of the polychromed portal.
© Drac Pays de la Loire/David Gallard

In 1617, the left side of the tympanum and the lintel were damaged by a violent storm. Two evangelists were rebuilt in a clear Baroque style. The whole structure was repainted to harmonise the new, restored and old parts. The entire portal was then re-coloured, but the colour palette was modified and the use of gold was reduced. Angers is not the only example of a portal repainted in the modern era: the Portico of Glory of the Santiago de Compostela Cathedral was covered in a new layer of paint at the beginning of the 17th century.

As in many churches and cathedrals in the 18th century (Notre-Dame de Paris, Notre-Dame de Rouen, St-Lazare of Autun), the trumeau of Angers cathedral's portal was removed in 1745 to facilitate the passage of the giant torches and floats displayed during the ritual processions of the Rite of Corpus Christi. These took place every year throughout the city. The lintel was replaced by a new arch to clear the doorway while supporting the weight of the tympanum.

In 1807, the west gallery was destroyed, leaving the portal unprotected. To conceal the imperfections and bring the portal into line with the façade, a whitewash was applied to the whole structure, covering the precious polychromy.

After the fire of 1831, a major restoration campaign was carried out on the portal. The nascent commission of the "Monuments historiques" took an interest in this early work, which foreshadowed the first restoration campaigns entrusted to Viollet-le-Duc from 1840 onwards (Vézelay abbey church, Notre-Dame of Paris, Notre-Dame of Amiens). The restoration of the portal was carried out by the sculptor Antoine-Laurent Dantan between 1838 and 1842. The work was extensive, involving virtually all the heads of the column-statues and most of the perfume cups held by the Elders of the Apocalypse.

From studies to restoration (2009-2019)

From 2009 onwards, the state of deterioration and presentation of the western portal led the Drac Pays de la Loire (Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles – it is a regional service of the French ministry of culture), to undertake a restoration of the sculpted ensemble. Initial scientific observations of the sculptures were carried out in 1995, identifying the presence of old polychromy. A cautious approach was therefore adopted, enabling the painted decoration to be uncovered by removing the whitewash that had

covered it. This project was conceived as the first phase in understanding the restoration issues that lay ahead. The quality of the ensemble uncovered and the complexity of the restoration work ahead prompted the Drac to set up a multi-disciplinary scientific committee comprising an architect, restorers, scientists from the French Laboratoire de Recherche des Monuments Historiques (LRMH, Champs-sur-Marne), an art historian, curators and an archaeologist, to steer the study campaign, draw up a restoration protocol and consider the long-term protection of the important portal. A vast campaign of studies was carried out between 2010 and 2016, with a number of objectives: to characterise the different materials of the portal; to map the polychromy and the old restorations, the most important of which was carried out in the 19th century; to describe, locate and explain the alterations.

Finally, and this is a fundamental aspect, the aim was also to gain a deeper understanding of this major sculptural ensemble. This cautious and exhaustive approach was exemplary, and took a long time to complete, but enabled us to decide on a restoration plan with full knowledge of the facts.

After a trial worksite, a restoration plan was drawn up that was both prudent and respectful of the heritage we had inherited. It was always decided to favour conservation over restoration, and to intervene only if the long-term preservation of the sculptures and their painted decoration was in question. Numerous analyses and discussions prior to the worksite enabled us to look more closely at the question of restoration materials and their durability, with the aim of limiting the use of external products in the portal. Lastly, the restoration was intended to be archaeological and ethical, as close as possible to the spirit of the Venice Charter (1964), neither suppressing nor privileging any phase of the portal's history. The work took place in 2018-2019, calling on the best expertise in terms of heritage conservation-restoration.



Laser cleaning of the portal (2018) © Drac Pays de la Loire/Tim Fox

The construction of a contemporary protective gallery: a preventive conservation approach unprecedented in France

From the outset, the scientific committee realised that it would be unthinkable to uncover the ancient polychromies of the portal of Angers Cathedral without also considering their long-term protection. The removal of the protective whitewash left them highly vulnerable to the elements. Restoration and protection were inextricably linked, so the two approaches were carried out in parallel. The construction of a new gallery to protect the portal of Saint-Maurice cathedral was quickly agreed, a remarkable decision supported by the Drac Pays de la Loire and validated by the French Ministry of Culture. This decision is the culmination of a long process of reflection that began, for other reasons, in the 19th century. Soon after the destruction of the old gallery that protected the gateway, the relevant authorities were considering rebuilding the aedicula, for architectural reasons that would enhance the building. However, the discussions were unsuccessful. At the end of the 1980s, a new project emerged, but it was not until the 2010s that the process was truly launched on a scientific basis.

As no reconstruction was possible - existing documentation on the former medieval gallery was insufficient - a contemporary architectural design was chosen. A set of specifications was drawn up, addressing the issues of preventive conservation of the polychromed sculptures - the *raison d'être* of the project - preservation of the ancient monument and its archaeological remains, and the siting of the building and its relationship with the surrounding urban area.

The project was enriched by the study of examples of protection for sculpted portals already installed in Europe at the St Mary of Ripoll monastery (Catalonia, Spain) and Lausanne cathedral (Switzerland). While the technical approach finally adopted in Angers (an open gallery with no climate control) differs from these two other projects, their analysis and the experiences developed in these two countries clearly demonstrate the importance of adapting to the local context. An international architectural competition was finally launched in 2019, with Kengo Kuma and associates winning the prize. The gallery, currently under construction, will be completed in 2025.

It's a bold decision: rather than a medieval pastiche, the Drac Pays de la Loire has opted for a contemporary architectural design,



Model of the future gallery (Kengo Kuma and associates) that will protect the cathedral portal
© Drac Pays de la Loire/David Guérin

making this restoration and protection project, right up to its completion, an exceptional case in Europe. This contemporary gallery brings this building of medieval origin into the 21st century, as a living building rather than one from the past.

Unpublished data from the worksite and scientific reflection: disseminating and sharing knowledge

During the restoration work, several study reports were produced by the restorers and scientists, in particular from the LRMH, on both the stone and the polychromy of the portal. This previously unpublished data on the portal has been essential in renewing our overall understanding of the gateway, from the time it was built right up to the present day: it has enabled us to pinpoint the initial period when the sculpture and its polychromy were installed, to identify precisely the alterations that have taken place over time, and finally to observe the material choices made during past restorations. This project, which has been closely followed by the scientific community, has undeniably brought back to light a medieval portal of the highest quality.



The tympanum of the portal of Angers cathedral: remains of polychromy.
© Drac Pays de la Loire/David Gallard

Following the restoration work, it therefore seemed essential to organise a symposium to present and share the discoveries and technical results of this research. The conference was jointly organised by the Drac Pays de la Loire, the Université Catholique de l'Ouest (UCO), the Université de Nantes and the Université de Poitiers. The aim of the colloquium was also to stimulate research, so that art historians, curators, restorers, scientists and archaeologists could seize on these new developments and combine their views to renew studies on the portal of Saint-Maurice cathedral in Angers. Through their analyses, they have contributed to our knowledge of Gothic sculpture and polychromy. The symposium also provided an opportunity to invite European specialists in other sculpted and painted portals, such as those in Lausanne Cathedral (Switzerland), the abbey church of Ripoll (Catalonia, Spain) and Santiago de Compostela Cathedral (Galicia, Spain).

These three days of meetings, organised in November 2021 with the support of the city of Angers, provided an opportunity to put into perspective the specificities and particularities of this portal, both within the Angers region and on the scale of the medieval West. They also provided an extremely fruitful forum for multidisciplinary debates. The richness of the discussions, encouraged by the fact that different areas of professional expertise were brought together in the same place, argues in favour of even greater interdisciplinarity in the field of historical research and heritage protection. They highlighted the challenges in the field of conservation, but also a number of scientific perspectives supported by current technological advances and digital tools. The fruit of these reflections and exchanges, which have continued to mature beyond the conference, now takes the form of a book with the evocative title *La pierre, la couleur, la restauration*, which has just been published (June 2024). Through 35 contributions, it constitutes a completely renewed study of the sculpted and painted medieval portal of Angers cathedral. It gives a voice to those involved in restoration and conservation, and combines their views with those of research historians, art historians and archaeologists.

The stone: the book provides an in-depth analysis of the historical and social context in which the portal was built, and revisits its material, stylistic and iconographic development. It restores the portal of Angers Cathedral to its rightful place in the history of art in the Middle Ages.

Colour: the book examines the polychromed remains of the portal, which, once rediscovered, have completely renewed our vision of the main entrance to Angers cathedral. The portal is placed in perspective with other European examples, as well as with synthetic studies on the use of colour in medieval monuments. In this respect, the book is a major contribution to the history of medieval polychromy and painted portals in medieval churches, some of which were re-coloured in the modern period.

Restoration: it presents the methodologies chosen in the 21st century to restore a painted portal that has already been renovated several times in the past. It is a valuable contribution to the field of conservation science and the restoration of ancient buildings and their histories.

Finally, this book takes part in the history of taste, from the taste for monumental polychromy in the medieval and modern periods - for shimmering colours obtained using natural pigments: gold, blue, red! - to the rejection of colour from the 19th century onwards and its gradual disappearance from medieval churches. Over the last forty years or so, interest in the subject of polychromy in medieval artworks has grown steadily, both among researchers and the general public: there is no doubt that the colours rediscovered in the portal of Saint-Maurice Cathedral in Angers, soon to be protected by the contemporary gallery of the Kengo Kuma and associates agency, will find their rightful place in the imaginations of their future viewers.

Link to the video recording of the conference (UCO-Angers):
<https://youtu.be/O1ROUB2fMO4>

Book reference

FILLION-BRAGUET Bénédicte, LE LUEL Nathalie, MATHURIN Clémentine (dir.), *La pierre, la couleur, la restauration : le portail polychromé de la cathédrale d'Angers (XIIe-XXIe siècle). Contribution à l'étude des portails médiévaux en France et en Europe*, Rennes, PUR, 2024.



BÉNÉDICTE **FILLION-BRAGUET**

Bénédicte Fillion-Braguet has a PhD in medieval art history on Angers Cathedral. Her research focuses on the study of monumental arts and funerary sculpture in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in western France, particularly in the Plantagenet domain.



NATHALIE **LE LUEL**

Nathalie Le Luel is associate professor in medieval art history at the Université Catholique de l'Ouest (UCO) in Angers. Her research focuses on the role of the image, both profane and sacred, during the medieval period, from the perspective of historical anthropology and art history.



CLÉMENTINE **MATHURIN**

Clémentine Mathurin is a heritage curator. As curator of historic monuments at the Drac Pays de la Loire from 2013 to 2022, she was responsible for monitoring projects in the Maine-et-Loire department, in particular the cathedral of Saint-Maurice in Angers and its sculpted portal.



Christian Boltanski - Animitas Kaunas (photo: Martynas Plepys)

CULTURE AND CHANGE IN LITHUANIA



VIRGINIJA VITKIENĖ

Commissioner of the Season of Lithuania in France 2024
Head of the project Kaunas 2022 – European Capital of Culture
Initiator and management board member at Creative Europe
platform Magic Carpets (2017-2024)

CULTURE OF OPTIMISM

On 20th of March, 2024 International Day of Happiness, the annual The World Happiness Report was issued by the Oxford University's Wellbeing Research Centre, Gallup, and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network¹, surprising even most positive Lithuanians. Lithuania tops the list for children and young people under 30. What country

¹ World Happiness Report 2024 // <https://worldhappiness.report/news/world-happiness-report-2024-most-comprehensive-picture-yet-of-happiness-across-generations>

do we live in and how is it even possible within current geopolitical and economic (post-soviet regime, post-Covid and currently neighboring war) circumstances? The Guardian took a chance to immediately research on this strange happiness phenomena of young Lithuanians², quoting of those young person 'You Can Do Everything Here'. This kind of proud statement hasn't surprised me at all. It just confirmed my proudness about *the culture of optimism* I witnessed through my career as a curator and artistic worker for the past 20 years, remembering my 20's. The feeling that everything is possible in Lithuania is a privilege of several post-regime generations who have taken responsibility for co-creating their country and its identity anew.

Historical and recent challenges I've mentioned seem to be generating a proactive social response in our region, and culture takes a lead in the most important processes – international networking, circulation of ideas, and co-creation.

Optimism is something what might summarise Lithuania through past three decades. But this approach finds its resource already in the period of the first Republic of Lithuania (1918-1940) when a young national state builds its bases for future. Lithuania had to establish itself during those two decades in unusual circumstances – from the *temporal capital*. Kaunas.

So, if the only Lithuanian city you knew before reading this overview is Vilnius, please be introduced to the second city Kaunas – a site of European Heritage Label, a UNESCO creative city in Design category, a UNESCO World Heritage site under the title of *Modernist Kaunas: Architecture of Optimism*³, European Capital of Culture 2022⁴, which slogan *From Temporary to Contemporary* became game changer for citizens and region (400 000 population all together). It is a hometown of Kaunas Biennial who runs for 7th year a Creative Europe platform *Magic Carpets*⁵, leading 17 European organizations for inclusive art processes within communities. These are only a few identity' shaping cultural projects, insider of which I am and therefore will try to share very few aspects of cultural management methods we developed and applied here in Lithuania together within our teams and together with European partners.

CO-CREATION AS A STRATEGY FOR CHANGE

The project Kaunas 2022 – European Capital of Culture (ECoC) was a biggest collaborative culture project in Baltic region, after *The Baltic Way*⁶, I believe. More than 500 professional managers, represented by 77 Lithuanian organizations and more than 500 its European partners implemented 4000 events in a period of 2017 – 2022⁷. But it started 10 years

² Kate McCusker. 'You can do anything here!' Why Lithuania is the best place in the world to be young // https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/article/2024/jun/04/lithuania-happiest-place-in-the-world-young-people?CMP=fb_gu&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#Echobox=1717482215

³ On Kaunas modernist architecture inclusion into UNESCO World heritage list: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1661>

⁴ The official website of Kaunas 2022 – European Capital of Culture, which now serves as an archive of knowledge on the management of mega cultural events: www.kaunas2022.eu

⁵ Magic Carpets is a Platform of Creative Europe programme, led by Kaunas Biennial: www.magiccarpets.eu

⁶ The Baltic Way: How Holding Hands Changed History: <https://lithuania.lt/news/life-and-work-in-lithuania/the-baltic-way-how-holding-hands-changed-history>

⁷ For more statistics of Kaunas 2022 please download an Investigation Report book: <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/library>

ago within a team of 7 people, who struggled seeing city's potential unrecognized and unused.


While working on the strategy, we decided to confront the city's obvious malaises, such as its close-mindedness, its critical attitude towards the different and even the same, and its general amnesia and insensitivity to history. The city seemed uninteresting for young people, lacked understanding of the value of its unique heritage and did not care to preserve it. It had not found its contemporary identity and place within Lithuania's urban fabric, and was not visited by local tourists, let alone foreign ones. It was a city with a nostalgic mentality, harking back to the Temporary Capital's 'golden' and 'irretrievable' glory.



Opening Kaunas 2022 (photo: Martynas Plepys)

FROM TEMPORARY TO CONTEMPORARY

The Temporary Capital is a historical phenomenon, which in 1919–1940 gave Kaunas the status of Lithuania's capital and European recognition, with all the diplomatic, intellectual, scientific, and urban breakthroughs that came with it. More than 6,000 public, cultural, religious and residential modernist architectural buildings were built in Kaunas, all the most important state institutions and diplomatic representations were relocated here, theatres and cinemas were established, social centres were founded, as was the University of Lithuania which hosted professors from all over Europe. The period of the Temporary Capital was the only memory, albeit selectively sifted, that gave dignity to Kaunasians of our generation. Sadly, it was followed by the brutal crimes of the early Soviet period. In 1940–1941 the city being cleansed of its educated and disloyal citizens, the closure of the university, imprisonments, deportations, massacres. The Nazi crimes against humanity, the extermination of a third of Kaunas's Jewish population followed in 1941–1944. Then almost five decades of Soviet regime transformed Kaunas from an intellectual Europe driven city into an industrial suburb of the Soviet Union. When the country regained its independence in 1990, the capital Vilnius received the greatest



share of attention and financial injections necessary for changes in infrastructure, not to mention inself-esteem, followed by financial injections from European infrastructure funds to small Lithuanian towns. And Lithuania's second city, once the capital of Lithuania, has remained stagnant, constantly patching up the mouldering corners, suffering from resentful teenager syndrome, 'second-city-itis'. Luckily, few culture professionals saw the title of European Capital of Culture as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to come together and discover a contemporary identity for the city and its citizens. In preparing Kaunas bid-book – a strategy of the change through culture, we decided to conceal not a single shortcoming, challenge, or insufficiency. We not only exposed each and every challenge, but also set goals for overcoming them, and listed the methods and specific targeted cultural projects for achieving them. We took up the task of changing the city's consciousness from the nostalgic 'temporary' to the creative 'contemporary' as a personal and professional challenge, which has turned into a seven-year dedicated effort. Inspired by one of our colleagues, we embarked on a journey of creating a new narrative for our city, a new Kaunas myth in which the city heals and comes to love itself. We had a vision of what change can be brought into effect by soft power – eight dedicated programme lines⁸. I will introduce you here to very few of them.

MODERNISM FOR THE FUTURE PROGRAMME

Kaunas is an open-air museum of modernist architecture. But ten years ago, citizens, even those who lived in these buildings, hardly recognised and cherished those as a heritage and unique feature of their city. Majority of those buildings were in bad shape and lacked a proper story telling to reconnect with local citizens. So, we set a goal to promote an interest in this heritage and to put Kaunas modernism back on the European and global maps. In seven years, a community of several hundred Kaunesians, modernism enthusiasts, has been formed, whose members have gone on to become heritage experts, guides and animators⁹. Over 500 activities and events have been implemented in modernist buildings throughout Kaunas and Kaunas District. These included 'Modernism for the Future 365/360', an international residency and exhibition project, stop motion movie *Klostės* (Folds), co-created by 500 Kaunasians¹⁰, numerous concerts, guided tours, and creative writing workshops. International scientific conferences have been organised on the topics of architecture and heritage. As a result of growing demand from professionals and regular citizens, The Government of the Republic of Lithuania acquired the Kaunas Central Post Office building – an iconic example of Kaunas modernist architecture – in 2022, and this year established there the National Institute of Architecture, as a legacy of European capital of Culture. In 2023 Kaunas modernism was included into UNESCO World Heritage list, and one of the deciding factors for that was activated heritage community, a big recognition of the recent heritage among population. In ten years, Kaunas changed from being unknown grey unpreserved city into one of the most attractive places in Europe with local citizens who are now heritage enthusiasts.

⁸ A detailed strategy of the Kaunas2022 you may find on Bid-book and Monitoring reports of the project: <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/library>

⁹ <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/modernism-for-the-future/>

¹⁰ Film by Aideen Barry and Kaunasians: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGgDVpe0ovk>
More information on co-creation of this movie: <https://www.klostes.com/home>

MEMORY OFFICE PROGRAMME

Through ECoC opportunity we also aimed to revive Kaunasians' complicated memory and to promote openness to European values and multi-ethnicity. To reconcile the past with the present for the future.



Jenny Kagan - *Out Of Darkness* (photo: Martynas Plepys)

Memory Office¹¹ programme' curators worked to revive and re-contextualise the painful topic of the loss of Jewish citizens in 1940-1945. A long-term international interdisciplinary CITYTELLING FESTIVAL has been launched to give voice to Kaunas's Jewish and other ethnic communities, where personal stories can be told and heard. Numerous exhibitions have been organised on various historical aspects and on the topic of multiethnic Kaunas. A number of music and theatre works have been created. A global *Litvak Culture Forum* has been organised. Five publications were published, including research-based catalogue of exhibition 1972: *Breaking Through the Wall*, which exposes Soviet repressions and restrictions on cultural behaviour. The book *The Jews of Kaunas* - a first historical overview of Jewish life and culture in Kaunas¹² was published. *That Which We Do Not Remember*, the William Kentridge exhibition and catalogue, dedicated to the memory of Lithuanian Jews became a big trigger for discussions, a meaningful content of school children education programmes. As well as an unforgettable interactive Jenny Kagan's exhibition and catalogue *Out of Darkness*, telling personal story of her Kaunesian family, part of which survived holocaust, and part – didn't manage¹³. Kaunas city and Kaunas District area became an open-air museum, full of murals and other artistic interventions, which helps to revive a memory through connections to place, personal

¹¹ Please learn more about working with memory topics: <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/memory-office>

¹² Please find the *The Jews of Kaunas* and other publications at Kaunas 2022 Online Library: <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/library>

¹³ Full story and images might be find at Jenny Kagan's website: <https://out-of-darkness.co.uk/>

stories of those who contributed to development of the region, through reflection on traumas and reconciliation. To leave a long-lasting sound of this process, Christian Boltanski's *Animitas (Kaunas)* – a 220 Japanese bells installation was placed in a park of Kaunas IX Fort Museum, to give voice to the souls of the thousands of Jews who died tragically here¹⁴.

EMERGING KAUNAS YOUTH PROGRAMME

In order to revert the situation of young people leaving Kaunas for more vital places in Europe, we have decided to empower the younger generation and develop a Kaunas 2022 programme which would make Kaunas attractive to both local and European youth. A skills-building programme *Kaunas Challenge*¹⁵ was offered, which included entrepreneurship labs, internships in local and European cultural institutions and European Qualifications Framework (EQF) agencies, and international youth summer camps, as well as cultural programming and production. The goal was to train young people (16-18 yrs old), giving them tools to programme and implement their own vision for Kaunas. Since 2017 eight practical training programmes have been implemented, with alumni organising over 150 events in Kaunas City, Kaunas District and Lithuania. From 2022, the practical training programme is continuing to be delivered by alumni who have set up their own non-governmental organisation. AUDRA, the annual international Contemporary City Festival, has been launched by them, which is popular with young people and breaks attendance records¹⁶. It is a second year after young people do not have a financial nor tutorial umbrella of the mega event, but they do even greater events every year. One of the great outcomes of this youth culture life upgrade is that the rate of youth population in Kaunas stopped decreasing. There is a positive tendency of last few years to move to Kaunas from other Lithuanian cities, Vilnius including. It is obviously clear that young people now can relate to their city much more, as they are those who create the city's cultural habits and traditions by and for themselves and for upcoming generations¹⁷.

SE VOIR EN L'AUTRE / THE OTHER SAME: THE SEASON OF LITHUANIA IN FRANCE 2024

While still working on the last steps for Kaunas 2022 I was appointed to curate a Season of Lithuania in France¹⁸. The Season of every time other country is a long-lasting tradition, strategically nurtured by French government, run by *Institut français* in partnership with various cultural institutions. From Lithuanian side project is coordinated by Lithuanian Culture Institute. More than 200 events will invite audiences from September to December 2024 to various cities and regions of France. A bunch of French representation projects are under the final stage of preparation to be implemented in Lithuania as well. This mutual collaboration is based on co-creation of the programmes between 120 French

¹⁴ Christian Boltanski. *Animitas (Kaunas)*. 2021 <https://www.gfortomuziejus.lt/christian-boltanski-animitas/?lang=en>

¹⁵ More about Youth programme at Kaunas 2022: <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/emerging-kaunas/>

¹⁶ The Contemporary City Festival AUDRA (A Storm) is for all Europeans to join annually: <https://audrafestival.lt/en/>

¹⁷ Four methodology books on capacity building for youth, culture professionals, community facilitators and volunteers can be read and downloaded on Kaunas 2022 Online Library: <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/library/>

¹⁸ The programme and calendar of La Saison de la Lituanie en France 2024: <https://saisonlituanie.com>

and more than 100 Lithuanian cultural organisations, hundreds of curators, producers, who plan their collaboration not only for this Season, but for several years in advance.

The SE VOIR EN L'AUTRE concept is going to be unveiled through the themes of *Global Neighbourhoods*, *Empowered Identities*, and *Unleashed Imagination*.

Global Neighbourhoods topic will contain conferences, debates, literature events, exhibitions to question the validity of the differences between nations, cultures and civilisations. The Anthropocene is an insistent reminder that as long as we are not aware of our commonalities, we will not reduce the impact of humanity as a whole on climate, geopolitics, and migration. The themes of integration, discrimination and exclusion are becoming increasingly relevant, and will be reflected from post-political, East-West, South-North, centre-margins or other perspectives.

Theatre, dance performances, visual arts, cinema, and music projects will tackle *Empowered Identities* topic, trying to make the voices of the less visible and sometimes muted groups be heard, namely those of women, people and communities with different origins, LGBTQ+ individuals, those belonging to different subcultures, refugees, war victims, people with disabilities, and many others. We aim to strengthen the ability to visualise and embody diversity.

Through proposed topic *Imagination Unleashed* the Season invited Lithuanian and French artists to reflect on future scenarios and fictions as well as utopias and dystopias, using the most powerful tool of humanity – the ability to fantasise, to empower dreams, and to awaken imagination. It is an invitation to imagine and co-create the future of the place we inhabit. *Unleashed imagination* is the common thread across the whole programme: weaved into all the themes of The Season, it should encourage everyone to revisualize, embody and verbalise humanness. It is also an invitation to the empathy which is only possible when humans can relate to each other on the background of shared values and experiences.

Se voir en l'autre is all about proposal to look at each other's eyes through shared culture(s) and find commonalities, rather than to conquer (in various ways) others, simply because they are not the same as us.

POWER OF STORY-TELLING: CREATIVE EUROPE PLATFORM MAGIC CARPETS

What methods of management do unite these two time-framed projects – Kaunas 2022–European Capital of Culture and The Season of Lithuania in France? The main of it is co-creation. The success of what we as culture managers do, always depends on how open we are to work together with other organisations and professionals locally and internationally. It is well encouraged through European Union strategies and programmes such as Creative Europe, and some national cultural strategies across Europe. But it should come also from personal engagement, openness and curiosity of cultural managers to ask, to listen and to be involved into stories of others.

The long-term project I am involved since its beginning – *Magic Carpets* is a Creative Europe platform uniting 17 European cultural organizations (and plus 5 alumni) that create opportunities for emerging artists to embark on journeys to the lands unknown and to create, together with local artists and local communities, new works that highlight local specificities and compensate for the shortage of story-telling existing in the

modern society by enhancing cultural accessibility, cultural activism and participation. This project unites curators, organizations and institutions, communities and artists for processes, based on interest to listen to the stories of people you never met before, to create new artistic productions based on those stories and together with the owners of stories.

The same model of action was adopted at Kaunas 2022 programme WE, THE PEOPLE¹⁹, where local Kaunasians had hundreds of possibilities to work with artists from all over



Radio Angels (photo: Andrius Aleksandravicius)

Europe and became the characters of most touching cultural productions, such as miraculous project *Radio Angels* led by Italian contemporary circus director Robert Magro in Linksmakalnis, unheard suburb of Kaunas District²⁰.

I believe that a participatory approach to culture is a key to democratic society, active citizenship, culture optimism and even Europe optimism, in which Lithuanians take a lead since 2004, when Lithuania entered European Union.

¹⁹ One of the most recourse seeking and inspiring programme of Kaunas 2022 WE, THE PEOPLE reached in 7 years a half of population in Kaunas and Kaunas District. <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/we-the-people/>

²⁰ In Linksmakalnis Roberto Magro and other professional contemporary circus artists from all over Europe created a local story based performance, in which 300 local people participates, almost half of local population there. History of the town has no precedents in Lithuania. The soviet army unit located in Linksmakalnis during World War II was especially secret since its primary function was to intercept messages through radio and to report any kind of useful information to Moscow. Several thousand soldiers and translators worked at the totally closed from the rest of society eyes site and the personnel weren't allowed to work or live at any other place. The Soviet soldiers and families from Linksmakalnis left the place in 1993, 16th of June, with the last Soviet troops leaving independent Lithuania (Lithuanian independence was reclaimed on 11th March, 1990). All current dwellers of the post-military town moved here from over all Lithuania because of the cheap prices of very much abandoned housings.

After half a year of workshops with artists and final presentation of the performance together in 2019, Linksmakalnis people said it was the first time for their common activity and first shared experience: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikHGH41lWn8>



VIRGINIJA VITKIENĖ

Dr. Virginija Vitkienė is an art critic and curator, manager of international cultural projects.

She was the initiator and head of Kaunas 2022 - European Capital of Culture project (www.kaunas2022.eu), which in 2022 alone hosted more than 1500 events, implemented by 77 Lithuanian organisations with 500 European partner institutions. In the framework of this project, Virginija Vitkienė also curated William Kentridge's exhibition *That Which We Don't Remember* in Kaunas (January-November 2022), which was visited by 95,000 visitors.

Through 2010-2018 she was an artistic director of the Kaunas Biennial (www.biennial.lt), one of the leading visual art events in Baltic countries' region. She is the conceptual designer and artistic director of *Magic Carpets* (2017-2024), a Creative Europe platform (www.magiccarpets.eu) that brings together 15 European partners and empowers emerging curators and artists to co-create collaborative creative processes within communities of Europe's cities, towns, and suburbs, mostly in public spaces.

Virginija Vitkienė is currently an appointed commissioner of the Lithuanian Season in France 2024 (www.saisonlitanie.com), and is shaping a programme of more than 200 cultural and artistic events covering most regions of France, pairing more than 240 cultural institutions from France and Lithuania for long term partnerships.

Areas of interest and expertise: strategic planning and (mega) project management, co-creation, creative networks, empowerment of young professionals, socially engaged cultural action, capacity building, community engagement in cultural processes, inclusive culture, contemporary art, curatorial practice.

INSIDE GREAT MINDS

VIRGINIJA VITKIENĖ

Interview by GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens

This interview is part of the ENCATC's exclusive interview series, where we delve into the insights and perspectives of influential figures shaping the cultural landscape.

In this session of the magazine, we engage with leading managers of cultural organizations and policymakers, exploring their innovative strategies, challenges, and visions for the future. In these times of changes and need of rethinking our relation to the private and professional life, these interviews uncover the stories and wisdom behind their impactful roles in shaping the cultural sphere.

What gets you out of bed in the morning?

Curiosity. I have a natural gift – curiosity and observation of the world around me. There are no things taken for granted. Circumstances, stories and people, encountering them directly affects my attitude, feelings, and horizons. It is extremely interesting.

What gives you most pleasure in your day-to-day work?

Talking and getting along.
The feeling of togetherness towards a greater goal than you would lift alone.

What's your background, personally and professionally?

I have lived in Kaunas, Lithuania's second city, all my life. I belong to generation of a turn from Soviet regime to independant Lithuania, which regained its pride by *The Baltic Way* and *The Singing Revolution* in 1989-1990. While being a mother of three children, I studied art history and theory for 10 years, and I did my PhD research on contemporary visual arts. During and after my studies I wrote critical texts on visual arts and curated exhibitions in my hometown. I started my long-term career at Kaunas Biennial in 2004 as a volunteer writer, then became Executive Director, Art Director and Board Member of biennial, initiating 3 Creative Europe projects, *Magic Carpets* platform with 15 European partners including. I also taught art history and theory and curatorial practice at Vytautas Magnus University and Vilnius Academy of Arts for a decade. While working at the university,

I initiated and led a research project based on community art practice. But my life project, I would say, is *Kaunas 2022 - European Capital of Culture* (2014-2023), which I initiated by bringing together a few cultural professionals, with whom we analysed the history and current identity of our city and developed a plan for its positive upgrade through culture.

Together we submitted convinced local municipalities to go for it, then bidded to the European Union selection committee, and after three years of conceptual work, we won the title and got a once-in-a-lifetime chance to prove our ideas and strategies. It was a chance to put our ideals to the test and to contribute to the creation of a new Kaunas narrative. A chance to grow from 10 like-minded fans of our sad by then city in 2014 to a team of 800 managers with over 600 organisations across Europe in 2022. A chance for Kaunas citizens to get to know and love their city anew, and to share that feeling with the rest of Europe.

Just after the end of this mega project, I was invited to lead the programme of the Season of Lithuania in France (*La Saison de la Lituanie en France 2024*), which is again based on institutional long-term partnerships: 120 Lithuanian and the same number of French organisations will present a programme of over 200 projects across France in autumn 2024. But still I am based in Kaunas. Global connections and networked activities, even though I am 'hopelessly' entrenched in my own city, are what could define me. The city I identify with is the centre of my world.



What do you do to relax?

Our family has a cottage house in the middle of nowhere, in the woods. I escape there as often as possible to listen to the birds singing and the even more wonderful frogs croaking. It really brings me back to ground.

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Has your job eaten into your life?

If I said no, I would probably be lying to you and to myself. My work takes up more time in my life than I would like. Let's say I love what I do so much that work is also a hobby, so naturally the lines between work and hobby are very blurred.

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Do you read management books?

Not really... For many years management was a survival strategy for me, helping to balance childcare and education, other family responsibilities, studying and working. I had a management course at university of cause and know the main pillars of it. I remember an exam when I used my knowledge from the books but also my intuition to get 100% correct. I had read some pages from management books when Kaunas 2022 was approaching the 100-employee mark, but the need for real problem-solving solutions brought me back to practice then.

I know, I am not a classical manager, I am learning by doing, for more than 20 years growing my competences with new challenges. I am very interested in content and strategy making. Management is a tool, not a goal.

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Can you describe your management style?

I tend to bring people together with the ideas that fuel them, I combine everyone's ideas into one bigger vision, the pursuit of which not only increases the chances of all the ideas coming true, but also creates an emotional effect, that is to say, it creates a community out of individuals.

I encourage each idea bearer to form his/her own team, to plan, to implement his/her ideas, taking full responsibility for it. And not forgetting the goals of the one next to them, sharing resources and assets.

With this principle, Kaunas 2022 has been developed by 10 curators, who formed the teams and gathered partners to create over 4,000 events in 7 years, implemented by 19,000 artists, performers and various professionals, managers including.

Are tough decisions best taken by one person or by a group?

The decision is always personal. A leader will always listen to his closest team, analyse all contexts, ask for comments and advice, but the decision (good and even bad) is always the responsibility of the one.

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What do you find the most difficult part of your job?

To see unproductive competition between those whose could and should be successful partners.

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Do you prefer to be liked or respected?

I like people in general, so I would like others to like me too. But that is not my goal. In my work, I prefer to remain objective and invite people to compromise, so it is impossible to be liked all the time. I prefer to be respected. It is much harder because it depends on trust.



What have been your career highlights?

European Capital of Culture Forum in September 2023 – a year past the long term co-creative project, implemented by 77 partner organisations from Lithuania (with their 500+ European partners), leaving to the city 12 new international festivals and new cultural habits. A full house of newly reconstructed Cinema house from Modernist architecture period. The sense of unity raised through difficulties (Covid-19, Russian war in Ukraine and refugee influx) which we overcame together, but also through the brightest cultural experiences together. It was the last days I worked at Kaunas 2022, but I could feel the legacy behind every colleague there.

What's your communication style?

I think openness and empathy must be at the core of efficient communication. And healthy sense of humor should always follow it. Don't get too serious.

As for being open, I'd rather say and hear 'no' right away than 'maybe no' after 5 weeks.

I accept a reasonable rejection. But if someone postpones the answer, I think it is a disrespectful waste of time.

Sometimes I can be too direct or too soft. But I always tend not to judge, not to lose trust in person because of a mistake. Life doesn't always go according to plan.

Culture in general is such a privileged job. It is impossible to make an irreparable mistake here. No one will die or get hurt if your production fails in one way or another. The most that can happen is that it will be different than expected... (Re)action in the face of failure is what really defines us. I always try to keep that in mind.

Why should one visit Kaunas?

I feel like I live in the center of the world. I wanted it to become so. Almost all my professional life I created situations to update the city's narrative, to make it an interesting, inspiring place I want to live and others want to come. I suggest you choose the dates to visit one of the amazing Kaunas 2022 legacy festivals – performing arts festival ConTempo, Contemporary City Festival AUDRA, community festival FLUXUS, or memory based CityTelling festival and you will experience the power of co-creation and story-telling.





THE VAL DE LOIRE WORLD HERITAGE SITE – A PLAYGROUND



LOLITA VOISIN

École de la Nature et du Paysage de Blois



BRUNO MARMIOLI

Director of the Mission Val de Loire

Preamble

The Val de Loire, which has been included on the list of World Heritage sites as a cultural landscape, corresponds - more or less - to the Middle Loire, the section of the river that flows along the limestone plateau of the Paris Basin, cutting its way westwards through the schists of the Armorican Massif and on to the Atlantic. The geomorphology of this region, defined by the presence of the river, is based on alternating plateaux, hillsides and valleys. Internationally renowned for its many châteaux, associated with the

presence of the royal court from the 15th century onwards, the Val de Loire is less so for its rich medieval heritage and the many buildings of the 18th century.

Its landscapes are often associated with the vineyards that occupy the plateaux and are a powerful marker of the region's identity. The nature of the soil, the climate and the presence of trade routes by river and then by road have all contributed to the development of vineyards, which have undergone major transformations but whose presence has always been attested. Other types of landscape resulting from human activity should also be mentioned: the valleys of the Loire's tributaries, whose courses have been developed for mills or crops, the hillsides whose profiles have been redesigned as development has progressed, the floodplain valleys suitable for growing hemp or market gardening on the alluvial deposits of the Loire, the minor riverbeds dotted with structures designed to guide the waters... This polycultural landscape, perceived as unchanging and praised by 18th-century travellers for its preservation, has nevertheless undergone numerous transformations.



The confluence of the Vienne and Loire rivers.

1. Observing the area

In 2019, the Observatoire de l'Economie et des Territoires launched a wide-ranging study of the Val de Loire Unesco to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of an area inhabited by almost a million people. On the basis of an analysis of up-to-date data, the aim was to develop indicators for monitoring changes in factors linked to the landscape, such as demographics, young people, housing, land-use change, mobility, etc. More than a hundred groups of data were processed in this way to gain a better understanding of the Val de Loire Unesco, identify the issues involved in preserving the area and guide public policy. The results have made it possible to question a number of assumptions on which the actions undertaken by the Val de Loire Mission were based, in particular the attractiveness of the region, knowledge of and attachment to its heritage and demographic trends.

The Val de Loire may be internationally renowned, but that doesn't mean people want to live here. Demographic growth, which is fairly low, is essentially due to natural growth (excess of births over deaths), with virtually no migration over the last twenty years or so. A closer look at the structure of the age pyramid shows that, while the population is ageing in a traditional way, the youth index is favourable. The same is true for the level of education along the Loire axis. The presence of several university centres obviously plays a role in these findings. The towns of Orléans, Blois, Tours, Saumur and Angers are home to a large number of students who contribute to the vitality of the Unesco region.



The students organise a staged walk for an open public, made up of elected representatives, local authority technicians, scientists, ecologists and farmers.

Ecole de la Nature et du Paysage: Considering the complexity of river landscapes

Loire, with its intertwined struggles, representations and dreams, deserves a river-based approach: thinking in terms of the catchment area, considering the movements of the river and its continuities, from upstream to downstream, across the full width of its bed, through the depth of its water table, with all its smaller streams and tributaries. Learning about this complexity requires collective will and intelligence. That's what we're trying to do at the Ecole de la Nature et du Paysage with the students who will soon be graduating as landscape designers. For a week, they will be investigating a wide range of stakeholders who are transforming the region: elected representatives, technicians, farmers, associations, food banks and so on.

Then, together, listening attentively and with concentration, from the workplaces of the people they met, they analysed how the diversity of points of view nourished a new, broader, more complex image of the landscape they had been looking at for their years of study. The teaching exercise ends with the design of a tool for transforming representations and decisions: These include board games to help imagine a local food policy, decision-making tools for a future Local Food Council, a theatrical machine to help people express the conflicts of the Loire, and a walkabout to raise awareness of the complexity of agricultural landscaping... A way for the higher education school and the local players involved to transform their vision of spatial problems and to give themselves the means to invent new collective rules for decision-making and action, considering the landscape as a public space.

Further information :

www.ecole-nature-paysage.fr/comprendre-les-paysages-agricoles

www.ecole-nature-paysage.fr/une-machine-theatrale-capable-de-faire-exprimer-les-conflits-de-loire



The campuses enable many pupils to discover the river, in particular by taking traditional Loire boats, here with the association La Rabouilleuse école de Loire.

2. Towards a Loire culture?

Aware of the issues involved in preserving the landscape and the heritage associated with it, and keen to link the cultural and natural dimensions in the projects implemented in the region, the Val de Loire Mission has developed a number of schemes to encourage the sharing of a "Loire culture" with local residents, and particularly young people. In 2020, to mark the 20th anniversary of the Val de Loire, the theme of "Turning 20 in the Val de Loire" was used to implement a series of projects closely linked to the region:

The campuses, proposals for hosting students from the various educational structures within the Unesco perimeter for :

- Promoting a cross-disciplinary approach to knowledge of the territory;
- To gain a better understanding of young people's relationship with their surroundings, based on notions of attachment, use and appropriation of places that they do not see as "heritage" or "remarkable";
- Create, structure and/or strengthen links between teachers, students and the Val de Loire Mission team;
- Organise a forum to present schemes and completed projects, encouraging exchanges between teams and disciplines.

Les escales, a mobile mediation, listening and discussion facility set up along the banks of the Loire during the summer;

La garzette, a free newspaper dedicated to the Val de Loire, with an editorial focus on discovering the region's living creatures (human and non-human), its amenities and its expertise.

Podcasts, themed series in which you can hear specialists talk about technical subjects related to the region (the history of the Loire levees, bridges, etc.), the history of the UNESCO listing or the words of local residents who talk about their links with the river.



Recording of the words of the inhabitants of the banks of the Loire with the journalist Sébastien Rochard.

3. How do I find my way around?

The idea of using the region as a basis for experimenting with ways of raising awareness of the landscape emerged as soon as the Val de Loire was included on the list of World Heritage sites in November 2000. We can even assume that this perspective predates and is linked to the emergence of the concept of "cultural landscapes" from 1992 onwards, since it was necessary to invent, in parallel with the introduction of the term, the mode of narrative that was to accompany it.

While two of the three criteria selected by the international experts at the time of listing are associated with the heritage and historical dimensions of the Val de Loire, recognising the quality of its monuments, historic centres and river and land transport infrastructure, the final criterion, relating to the relationship between communities and the landscape, opens up new perspectives and allows other avenues to be explored. By identifying the harmonious relationship between human communities and the Loire as being of outstanding universal value, the World Heritage Committee has highlighted the ancestral link that unites and structures the area. In so doing, the committee has opened up a new avenue by also questioning the nature of this link and the ways in which it can be preserved.



La Garzette, newspaper from the banks of the Loire.

What is the relationship between human communities and the river, in an area punctuated by two metropolises, which has seen its fair share of urban development, road infrastructure and industry? Along a river corridor inhabited by nearly a million people, not all of whom want to live at the same pace as 19th-century inland waterway transport? How do we define the harmony of an area in the age of the Anthropocene?

The experiences that the Val de Loire Mission has been able to monitor or support have revealed the unique relationship that local communities have with their riverbanks and the water, a relationship that is growing stronger as the ecological crisis becomes more and more apparent. The harmony of the 2000s takes on a whole new meaning 20 years on. It takes on an essential character and echoes the question posed by the philosopher Bruno Latour when, at a hearing on the Parlement de Loire project, he asked: who are the people of the Loire?

Hearings towards a Loire parliament

On the basis of Bruno Latour's question and the questions raised during the many exchanges with the various players and institutions working in the fields of culture, landscape and heritage, the Mission has adopted a singular stance by trying to bring together two approaches: one stemming directly from the concept of cultural landscapes as defined from 1992 onwards, and the other, linked to the integration of human communities within the Loire "environment". This idea did not originate on the banks of the Val de Loire, as bio-cultural heritage has been promoted by UNESCO and the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) since 2010¹. Rather, it is a distant bitterness towards which we are collectively heading and which is guiding our actions.

The Auditions Towards a Parliament of the Loire project, which arose in 2019 from Camille de Toledo's residency at the Pôle art et urbanisme de Tours (Polau), explored the nature of our sensitive, scientific and legal links with non-human beings. The words of the specialists interviewed on this occasion have been published in a book that serves as a basis for exploring new, less anthropocentric perspectives, defining other ways of living together around the preservation of living things.

¹ This initiative has led to the implementation of a joint programme with the following main objectives:

- Building bridges between work on biodiversity and cultural diversity;
- To explore conceptual and methodological issues relating to the links between biological and cultural diversity and the role of indigenous peoples and local communities;



Hearings towards a Loire parliament - wildlife listening session at the nature and landscape school in Blois.

4. How and where to land?

The main objectives of the Val de Loire Mission were defined in the management plan (2012) and can be summed up as knowledge, promotion and transmission of the criteria for listing to the various communities. The research carried out in the fields of archaeology, landscape and history is directly linked to the constantly renewed knowledge of the area. As a non-academic partner, the Mission is involved in a number of research projects that contribute to a better understanding of the area and place it in a historical perspective: gardens and climates, the archaeology of tributary valleys, Renaissance furniture, the history of food, etc.

Its role is not to replace academic research, but to contribute to the production of knowledge. In this respect, it plays a unique role by conducting awareness-raising projects and designing mediation tools.

For some years now, in association with a number of partners, it has been developing projects that focus on listening rather than broadcasting an institutional narrative. It collects, archives and promotes local stories associated with knowledge, professions or practices linked to the Loire in the form of podcasts, radio projects or video montages based on amateur films.

Ports of call

To mark the 20th anniversary of the inclusion of the Val de Loire on the list of World Heritage sites, the Val de Loire Mission has designed and set up a travelling exhibition, similar to a "mobile museum", to welcome visitors to the banks of the Loire. Each year, it organises a series of stops along the Loire during the summer period (between June and September), in partnership with local authorities and cultural organisations in the region (art centres, networks of towns and villages of art and history, environmental protection associations, maisons de la Loire, etc.).

The "escales" provide an opportunity to take over a riverside site for several days and organise events linked to the area: open-air screenings, debates and discussions, model-building workshops and workshops on the history of landscapes for schoolchildren and local residents. It's a wide-open space that invites us to rethink the notion of public space as a place for debate and exchange.

Since the project was launched, the Mission has organised 12 stopovers, corresponding to around fifty days' presence within the Unesco perimeter. During these stopovers, the Mission team has been able to welcome and talk to 30,000 people who live on the banks of the Loire and who have a sometimes very strong link with the river. Whether consciously or unconsciously, they embody a people of the Loire who are concerned about the future of the landscape they inhabit and transform.



The "escales" event in the commune of Gennes-Val de Loire: two containers linked by a canvas under which screenings, debates and workshops take place... Set up for 4 or 5 days in each commune, this mobile event travels along the banks of the Loire, getting as close as possible to local residents.



Natexplorer scientists present the results of their research into river pollution at the 2023 stopover.

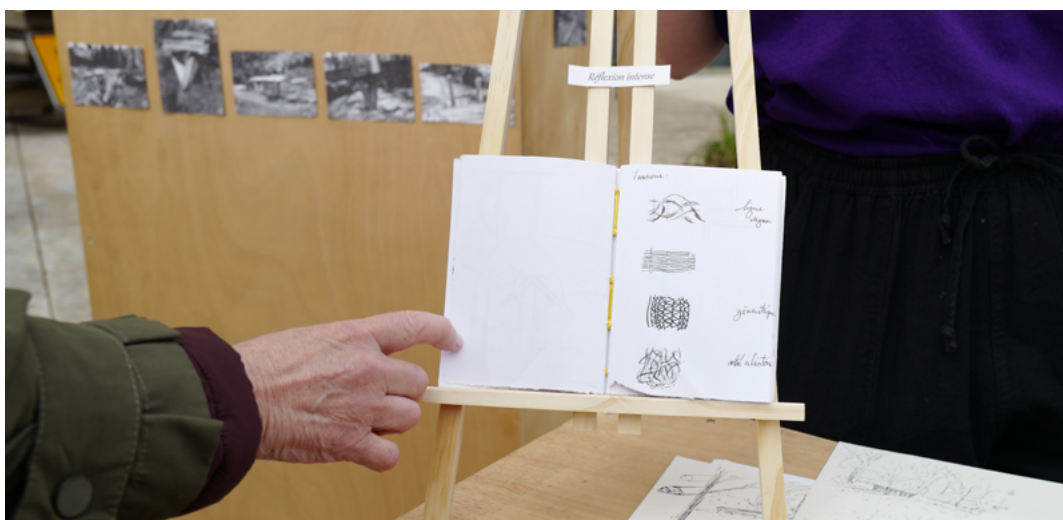
Designing uses

After years of successive developments, sometimes based on generic models applied locally, it is necessary to learn anew the techniques specific to the river, its materials and its natural movements. This involves physical contact with the places and materials specific to the Loire: water, fibres, wood, stones, sediment, sand and objects carried by the river. This attitude allows us to better understand the mutations and transformations of landscapes through the physical practice of natural elements, and to question inherited planning habits. Each year, as part of an educational exercise in construction and material experimentation, students from the École de la Nature et du Paysage, working with other students from the region, observe, collect, sort, transform, store and use materials from the site to come up with ephemeral designs for the banks of the Loire.

In a heritage site such as the Val de Loire World Heritage Site, which is frequented by both local people and large numbers of tourists, the scope of this type of experience is significant: it allows everyone to renew their use of the heritage and the experience expected of visiting these well-known sites. By incorporating natural movements into visitors' physical experiences, we can pay closer attention to the characteristics of the river: changing water levels, submerged paths, rain, shade, spontaneous vegetation, etc.

Further information :

Sébastien Bonthoux - Amélie Boulay - Lolita Voisin. City dwellers' experiences and attitudes towards wild places based on an urban river; Urban Ecosystems 2023 - <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11252-023-01485-y>



Presentation of work produced during a campus organised with students from the Ecole de la Nature et du Paysage de Blois (Insa-Centre Val de Loire) on the theme of "Designing uses".

Conclusion

The Val de Loire World Heritage Site is therefore a learning laboratory, which is necessary in order to share this common space and its resources as effectively as possible. This learning process, which is still in its infancy and experimental, demonstrates the importance of considering sometimes divergent interests on an equal footing: between the inhabitants of the river catchment area, in solidarity with the movements of the river and by including non-human elements, which we must above all learn to perceive.



BRUNO MARMIROLI

After training as an architect, then in the History of Technology at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Bruno Marmioli studied heritage and landscapes in the Middle East, before setting up a workshop for architecture and landscape projects on the banks of the Loire. Director of the Loire and Cher Council for Architecture, Town Planning and the Environment (CAUE) for 5 years, since 2018 he has been in charge of the Val de Loire Mission, responsible for promoting the criteria for inclusion of the Val de Loire on the World Heritage List.

He is the author of articles and books on the history of gardens and landscape (Actes Sud) and runs a seminar on gardens at the Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance (CESR).



LOLITA VOISIN

Lolita Voisin, a landscape architect with a doctorate in urban planning, works at the École de la Nature et du Paysage de Blois (INSA Centre-Val de Loire), where she was director from 2018 to 2023. Her research focuses on the politics of landscape since the early twentieth century and local experiments in decentralisation. She is also interested in listening postures and has conducted a number of sound and radio experiments.



The Palace of Spagnuolo is a valuable example of civil architecture in the Neapolitan Baroque style, situated in Rione Sanità

NAPLES: CARING FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE MEANS CARING FOR PEOPLE



DANIELE MOSCHETTI
Archaeologist



ANTONIO LENTI
Member of Social Cooperative La Paranza

La Paranza

When in the Naples Gulf you see two boats side to side fishing with the same nets, that's a "*paranza*", the *paranza* fishing technique is the procedure to fish together with the same nets, is a procedure so simple but so effective, and achievable only if the boats and their crew are ready to cooperate for a common goal.

We couldn't see a better word to describe who we are, and what our cooperative is, because the meaning beyond every single action made by the cooperative is just in the "*paranza*" style, and by that derived the name of *La Paranza Cooperative*.

La Paranza cooperative is born through the eyes of young guys that as the fishermen fishing from the depth of the Mediterranean sea, wanted to rescue from the deepest abandon the beauty and the community of the Sanità district, hidden by centuries of negligence. So we can clearly say that the cooperative embodies the concept of cooperation as the fishermen using the *paranza* technique, but even because with the common use of the term, *paranza* took another meaning, because it become even the word referred to a group of friends, because as the fishermen in the *paranza* are a group of people cooperating, so are the friends living together the moments as a unique body, and so even for this new meaning we have choose this name, seeing ourselves as a group of friends, involved as the fishermen in the *paranza*, in the landscape revaluation as a unique body aiming to the same result.

But to understand better all the process, we need to do an enormous step back in the historical core of the neighbourhood. Since the Greek foundation of Naples, the Sanità district was deputed to be the funeral site of Naples due to several reasons like the fact that was the outer space of the city, beyond the city walls, and so more hygienic to bury the people; or due to the reason that all the area was a valley made of tuff, tender and workable stone to easily carve out the funeral hypogeums so was really easy to open the hypogeums directly in the core of the hills. Then, due to these peculiarities, even the



The artwork titled "*Tieneme ca te Teng*" was designed by the youth of La Tenda educational center and created at the Rione Sanità bridge by Jerico. The neighborhood is currently in the process of urban regeneration, and this work is part of it.

Christians. Since the ancient age of Naples the neighbourhood contained a wide range of beautiful places and cultural and identity sites for the community back in time, but the enrichment of the area exploded during the 17th and the 18th centuries thanks to the nobility that started to live in the district seen as a detached area from the chaotic situation of the city center and next to the royal palace on top of the Capodimonte's hill.

This change started an economic, social and artistic engine bringing the district to the best period of all, this was a moment of architectural and artistic production, for example was the moment when the beautiful church of *Santa Maria della Sanità* was built, we are talking about a church which has seen artists of the stature of Luca Giordano or Caravaggio work inside. But unluckily this period had an unexpected end when the Napoleonic invasion took over Naples.

Indeed the Napoleonic government of Murat decided, in 1806, to build a bridge to overcome the Sanità's valley having a faster way of linking with the Capodimonte's hill and the obtained royal palace, but the great engineering idea hid a deep social sentence.



Vico lammadari, one of the street symbols of Rione Sanità, from which you can see the wonderful majolica dome of the Basilica of Santa Maria della Sanità.

Because the a new way for the royal palace meant the complete cut off of the Sanità district from the city. It resulted in the complete abandon of the district and the stop of that economic, social and artistic engine we have talked before, the neighbourhood was literally closed in a black hole outside the city, a suburb in the heart of Naples.

The forgotten community

So, to say, Rione Sanità has become, much sooner than other urban areas across Europe, a neighborhood without any hope, a place from which young people wanted to escape, and till the early 2000 this situation never changed. All of this abandon let the community of Sanità district to be forgotten and marginalized.

This situation was unacceptable in a city where the youth unemployment rate is of 60%, or in a district where every two days a child drop out the school, in the end where the possibility to dream the future has been cut off. An example of this situation is the story of Antonio, a 21-year-old from Rione Sanità, who saw hope and potential thanks to his father's influence knowing the renovation processes going on. At age of 10, he joined Sanitansamble, the youth symphony orchestra part of revaluation projects born in the district, that provided a positive outlet and community moments for the local youth, helping them stay off the streets and build meaningful relationships.

The COVID-19 pandemic was particularly challenging for Antonio, leading to isolation, fear for the future, and eventually dropping out of school. However, his parents asked help from La Paranza, that welcomed. Through La Paranza, Antonio received training and became one of the 40 guides of the Catacombs of Naples, playing a crucial role in the community's cultural and economic revitalization.

This support helped Antonio regain his self-confidence, resume his education, and earn his diploma. Now, Antonio feels no fear for what lies ahead. Now he proudly works for his community.

Don Antonio, the man who taught us the word cooperation

But in 2001 a new parish priest, Don Antonio Loffredo, arrived at Rione Sanità and with him, a new gaze also arrived. He was able to see opportunity where degradation reigned, a gaze that went beyond the Bridge and nurtured the young people's desire for redemption by appealing to their sense of belonging so that they might not leave.

From the journeys in which Don Antonio engaged us, we have never returned the same, yet we have become fully ourselves. Thus began that process of education for beauty that nurtures in us an awareness of the inestimable value of the cultural heritage preserved in Rione Sanità and which had always been there, before our eyes, and was just waiting to be enhanced and brought to light.

However, we needed to turn this awareness into action. To make the seed of change grow, Don Antonio did something so simple and at the same time so revolutionary: he trusted us. Only then did we find the courage to stay, we found the courage to act.

Not just understanding, not pity, not assistance. Trust! On these pillars we have built the vision that still inspires us today: we have decided to take care of the cultural heritage

of the hitherto neglected Rione Sanità, to create happiness and to change the destiny of our neighborhood and, therefore, the destiny of our community. Our mission was to open up the "ghetto" and create job opportunities for young people, attracting tourists from all over the world to the Rione Sanità, an area that Neapolitans themselves did not want to enter. Living in a city of saints and miracles, we have learned that what seems impossible can only be met with the unpredictable. First of all, that trust that we received turned into the availability of sites. And this is not so common in Italy. The Church of Naples entrusted the Catacombs to us.

This process led us to a natural evolution of ourselves, the funding moment of La Paranza Social Cooperative; we understood that was the moment to start evidently the social renovation in the neighbourhood, even taking the role and so the responsibility to become changemakers openly recognised through an organization on the territory legally recognized, finally in 2006 the revolution gently started. But the project spreaded really well, so in 2008 the cooperative reopened back even the other catacomb of Naples, Catacombs of San Gennaro, that was another important moment, because was the point from where began the wide established cultural system in the Sanità district.



In 2023, the Church of Santa Maria Maddalena ai Cristallini reopened after 40 years of neglect and closure. The interior of the church was "repainted" by the young people of the neighborhood with about twenty shades of blue, together with the artists Tono Cruz, Mono González and Giuliana Conte.

Let's do it in La Paranza way!

The instruments that we have used to manage these extraordinary sites and to generate happiness, are unpredictable too:

We have invested in youth entrepreneurship, in the ability of young people to be changemakers. Southern Italy and Campania are the European regions with the highest number of Neets; in Naples, the youth unemployment rate is about 60 percent; in the Rione Sanità, every two days a child drops out of school. But when these young people are given confidence and opportunities, results come that exceed expectations.

Investing in youth entrepreneurship means not only creating jobs but entrusting each young person with the responsibility to be a key player in the process of change.

La Paranza has 0 employees and 70 changemakers. Young people are the core of our heritage community. They welcome and guide visitors through the Rione, they collaborate with the local educational network, and they support events and folk festivals that allow traditions to continue. Young people are the ones that, through education-for-beauty projects, help adolescents to recognize themselves as an active part of the heritage community by ensuring that the story of the Paranza and Rione Sanità is continuously regenerated. The individual story of each of them finds space and takes on value within a collective story.

We have chosen the way of cooperation: the Paranza is a social cooperative, that is, an enterprise that does not aim at profit but at collective benefit and social utility. Doing business through the cooperative model has enabled us to link economic action to the principles of solidarity and reciprocity by putting people at the center.

Our experience managing the Catacombs of Naples has shown that Cultural Heritage is the *condicio sine qua non* for both the individual and local development.

We have focused on the decisive role that the for-profit world can play in building a heritage community. All funds used come from the private sector because it is capable of responding quickly to the urgency of doing. Collaborating with institutions and foundations has then allowed us to share values, goals and results of the process of social and cultural regeneration of the Rione Sanità. Major donors are among the founding members of the San Gennaro Community Foundation established in 2014 to respond organically to the needs of the area along with more than 30 local nonprofits organizations.

We have invested in the "discarded stones," in those young people who would have been excluded from society because they lacked educational qualifications or had a history of deviance and who, instead, became the "cornerstones" of a generative welfare system. They have become the leading actors of a process of self-development that has reduced economic inequality by improving the social status of previously marginalized groups and that has consolidated community identity and strengthened social cohesion.

This system became so crucial during and after the pandemic, when young people's fears grew, and it seemed impossible even to wish for and imagine the future. To work for La Paranza allowed 35 boys and girls, hired after the pandemic, to have trust in their abilities and capabilities to transform their context. They became aware that, thanks to their role, they could give others courage, hope, and opportunities.

For the community, with the community

We have always involved the community. Everyone, nobody excluded, should have the possibility to benefit from cultural heritage and have the right to decide how to enhance it. This is what has happened at Rione Sanità and it is the concrete manifestation of what happens when the principles of the Faro Convention are fully implemented. The case of Paranza shows that cultural heritages have not only an artistic and aesthetic function, nor even less a touristic one, but are capable of truly affecting processes of urban regeneration and social inclusion.

This is also our way to contrast gentrification's effects. Tourism-generated richness has allowed us to reduce economic inequalities and strengthen social cohesion. And if it is up to the young people to decide whether to stay and to take care of their local area to improve it, you can be sure that they will be the very first to do everything they can to counter the negative effects of gentrification, especially those related to the loss of cultural identity.

The "commons", the elements of cultural heritage that we have regenerated for 18 years served to promote the healthy growth of our young people. The cooperative used the background of the Cultural Heritage sites to guide a reopening process of the district, in order to restart again the cultural and social engine providing the fundamental services and welfare needed in the neighbourhood. The guided tour and the reopening of the archaeological and historical sites are only a part of the cultural services offered by La Paranza, indeed this main core activities activate a cascade structure of services like monitoring services on the "cultural health" of the district, reporting the condition of school services, thanks to the narrow net of cooperation with the school entities on the territory, monitoring even the accessibility of the youth to their cultural heritage, studying visiting path to offer the best experience to understand the value of the territory, but even more the cooperative offers even educational workshops in which the youngs can discover the beauty of Arts and History, often with their parents and relatives, contributing to build stronger relationship between the youth and their families. The reopening processes didn't stop only at the Catacombs and churches: La Paranza has also reopened and repurposed several churches and buildings in the district. For example, some have been repurposed as B&Bs, while the Sant'Aspreno ai Crociferi Church is now the contemporary art museum, and the San Severo alla Sanità Church hosts a recording studio and the youth orchestra Sanitansamble. The church of San Vincenzo and the Cristallini building have become public spaces where young people from the neighbourhood can practice theatre and sports for free. In the 2023 we had the reopening of the Church of Santa Maria Maddalena ai Cristallini, architectural jewel closed for almost four decades: embellished with murals by the great artists Mono González and Tono Cruz, all repainted blue by the boys of the district, it is experienced as a true community church which, in addition to worship, hosts workshops with children, conferences, cultural initiatives, concerts and theatrical performances.

For us this method of evolving the community in a process of bottom-up activities to take care of their own cultural heritage, awakening again the sense of belonging is the perfect application in fact of the concepts carried out by the Faro Convention, a cornerstone in the everyday action of La Paranza Cooperative. In the end we have to not forgot that if all these activities are possible, is thanks to the fact that are people working beyond them, and the important word is "working", because another effect of La Paranza Cooperative is the creation of job places for the youth of the district, creating the pathway for young people to set them free from the forced choice of criminality in a social scenario offering them nothing more than this.



Among the large spaces and fascinating galleries dug into the hill of Capodimonte, the lower vestibule of the catacombs of San Gennaro houses frescoes dating back to the second century AD.

Rione Sanità, province of Europe

For us all this effort in what we make everyday is not aimed to change the district only on a local scale, we would be glad to let know the Sanità's story broader, in European contexts, so we spend all our will to develop day by day new connection and relations all over the continent, and a first step is done.

For all of our work in 2022 La Paranza was among the winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards, in the category "Heritage Champions". The Awards were launched by the European Commission in 2002 and have been run by Europa Nostra ever since. The Awards scheme has the support of the Creative Europe programme of the European Union. For 20 years, the Awards have highlighted and disseminated heritage excellence and best practices, encouraged the cross-border exchange of knowledge and connected heritage stakeholders in wider networks.

We, as many other initiatives did, were awarded for our remarkable interest and commitment to the youth our patrimony, for our history and our cultural identity, factor of great relevance in the European Year of Youth.

But this one was only the first move in a wider horizon. Indeed, in 2023 for the catalog "Cultural Heritage in Action", the European Union decided to present the efforts of La Paranza, among the 60 best practices, with this title: "Caring for cultural heritage is caring for people" that is, in fact, our way to face the issues that have always affected our city: poverty, social fragmentation, and decay could destroy the beauty of one of the capitals of the Mediterranean basin. This is the way that we have chosen to address the major challenges of our contemporaneity: inequalities and social exclusion, rapid urbanization, distrust in politics, and climate change.

Beautiful things yet to come or also known as Future

This is just the beginning of a bigger travel that sees La Paranza cooperative engaged in project as much as possible and beyond the effort of cooperate in the broader scenario of the European cooperation to protect and enhance the cultural heritage, embracing the common and shared methods announced by the Faro Convention by encouraging the public participation in the process.

In the coming months, La Paranza will be able to return to the city of Naples another important common good: the Fontanelle Cemetery, the symbolic site of Naples' devotion.

The way faith is lived in Naples reveals a bond with death and with sanctity that is "present" and real. Tangible examples of this daily relationship with the afterlife are provided by the now abandoned cult of the anime pezzentelle, which has remained very much alive in the city's memory. Until a few years ago, in the cemetery of Fontanelle, the custom of adopting one of the skulls in the ossuary was widespread. The faithful would take care of the adopted soul, cleaning its skull and offering prayers to alleviate its pain, in exchange for a grace.

Through a special public-private partnership with the Council of Naples, la Paranza will manage this extraordinary site creating almost 25 jobs for the youth of the Sanità neighborhood.



DANIELE MOSCHETTI

I am Danielenrico Moschetti, 27 years old and born in Naples, Italy. Graduated in Archaeology and Art History at the University of Naples Federico II, my studies have always led me to look for Life and Art, in cultural heritage. My search for the human being and its manifestations has happily led me to know the Cooperativa La Paranza and the Catacombs of Naples of which I have become a guide. In this environment I finally saw how places exude life, past and contemporary. In the context of the cooperative I then discovered how cultural heritage can and should be managed through good practices of active citizenship, inspired by the concept of Community Heritage enshrined in the Convention of Faro.



ANTONIO LENTI

I am Antonio Lenti, 21 years old, born in Naples, Italy. I am a young member of Social Cooperative La Paranza, for which I work as a guide in the Catacombs of Naples. I graduated from a Human Sciences High School at 19, and after that I immediately went to La Paranza. Now in my young adult years I'm actively taking part in the valorisation of my community and our cultural heritage. My path in Paranza has just begun and I hope to continue to be part of the growth and regeneration of our territory with the same courage and open-mindedness that once led a young group of people like me to radically change the reality and vision of our neighborhood.

Contributions on **La Paranza in Naples**




CATHERINE MAGNANT

Head of Unit Cultural Policy at
DG EAC, European Commission

La Paranza in Naples

You should see the eyes of the founders of La Paranza in Naples - they shine with pride, with excitement, with passion. They rediscovered local cultural heritage, cherished and explored its beauty and history, and it changed their life and that of their neighbourhood, Napoli's Rione Sanità.



Naturally, it took a few twists and turns for this to happen, and the vision, courage, kindness and persistence of the priest, Don Antonio Loffredo. In 2001, he trusted a bunch of unemployed youth with the keys to the deserted catacombs of Rione Sanita, where the dead lay forgotten for centuries. The youths cleaned the place up, made its treasures of frescos, bones and history accessible to all and together founded the cooperative *la Paranza*. A new history started. They made a touristic and cultural success of this site, located in one of Napoli's most impoverished neighbourhoods. The article they wrote, published in this magazine, explains how it all happened, its origin story.

For me, meeting the team of *la Paranza* was unforgettable. The pride in their voice when they say that they created seventy permanent new jobs in a struggling neighbourhood, creating hope, one by one. Seventy jobs from a vision and persistence. They sought out local youth to become cultural guides, training each for a year, empowering disenfranchised young to become proud guides to thousands. *La Paranza* showed the seventy that they can have a choice in life, that opportunities can arise, when there is a will to make it happen. The catacombs were a foundation, but the ambition and impact far broader. The cooperative restored abandoned churches – one now hosts contemporary murals with the portraits of local people, declaring and celebrating the importance of locals in a local community. Another church houses a sports facility, a third focuses on music, a fourth exhibits the sculptures of the sculpture Jago – all accessible locally. The message is clear: first, community, beauty, sport, music, art celebrate and enrich lives, and can be yours whatever your background. Second, a vision matched with courage can change worlds.

I am very happy that *la Paranza* was awarded the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage. Their example is inspiring and deserves to be shared widely, sowing the seeds for others to build on their local realities and create something special.

Heritage is forged over time, locally and across borders and communities. It is made up of local stories and local inspiration, and together these stories make the history of Europe.

At the European Commission, we have been making the case that we need to help the heritage sector move with the times. We need to make heritage more people-centred and turn it into a driver of economic activity, as this happened in Napoli's Rione Sanita. Sites can become centres of knowledge, focal points of creativity and culture, and places of community interaction and social integration.

Public authorities must help communities to take ownership of heritage management, to make it part of their daily life and a factor of the sustainable development of their societies. We can do this by

developing innovative forms of community-oriented management that can enhance the economic and social potential of cultural heritage and contribute to the well-being of citizens.

Cultural heritage is our common wealth, our inheritance from previous generations and our legacy to those to come. It is an irreplaceable repository of knowledge and a valuable resource for economic growth, employment and social cohesion.

But heritage is not a passive inheritance. Its survival depends on the effort of every generation to rediscover and reinterpret it and to make it accessible to all so that it can enrich the individual lives of millions of people. This is exactly what la Paranza does.

CATHERINE **MAGNANT**

A Brussels-Savoyard at heart, a Parisian from afar, a European from very close, Catherine is in charge of cultural policies at the European Commission. Promoting European exception and cultural excellence are at the heart of her mission and her commitment. So are supporting Europe's cultural and creative sectors, and stimulating innovation through creativity. In 2018, she led the task force for the European Year of Cultural Heritage, which took place in 37 countries, and then coordinated the drafting of the first European framework of actions for cultural heritage.

Catherine began her career in Moscow, at a time when Russia was opening up to the world. Back in Brussels, she held various responsibilities within the European Commission, in connection with the enlargement of the European Union to Central and Eastern Europe, the promotion of human rights in the Union's external relations, and the fight against discrimination. She has been in charge of European cultural cooperation since 2011.



PATRICK TEN BRINK

Environmentalist, writer and freelance art critic

The Sanita will be the Manhattan of the future

"Jago is a sculptor contributing to a social awakening. When youth vandalised his work, he invited them to his atelier to show them what he was trying to do, how to do it, presenting them an alternative path. He works with the La Paranza Cooperativa, the social cooperative inspired by Don Antonio Loffredo, the parish priest at the Basilica of Santa Maria della Sanità who initiated the movement of engaging youth to recreate not only a local appreciation of their cultural heritage, but to engage and themselves create a new cultural heritage, helping rejuvenate their Sanità region of Naples

Within this movement, Jago supported these youth's skills, inviting them to his making of Pietà. Jago stated that "The Sanita will be the Manhattan of the future. Here there are human and artistic resources with amazing potential."

PATRICK TEN BRINK

Patrick is an environmentalist, writer and freelance art critic, who grew up in Germany, Australia, Japan and England, and lives in Belgium. His art reviews appear regularly in Travel Tomorrow.



CELEBRATING EUROPE'S SHARED HERITAGE

Future and Developments of the European Heritage Label Action



JUDITH VIDECOQ

Head of Creative Europe Unit
DG EAC - Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
European Commission

European Heritage sites are indispensable markers of the rich history and culture that created the Europe we live in today. Bringing to life the European narrative, they celebrate and symbolise our shared history, ideals, and values as Europeans.

Genesis of the Action

Established as an intergovernmental collaboration in **Granada, Spain on 28 April 2006 between France, Hungary, Portugal, and Spain**, the European Heritage Label was geared up in 2011 as a European action under a decision of the Parliament and the Council of the EU. It embodies the European Union's commitment to celebrate what is at the core of Europe: a set of shared values as *dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, collaboration, and tolerance*. Alongside the [European Heritage Awards](#), [European Heritage Days](#), and the [European Heritage Hub](#), the EHL has actively contributed for the past thirteen years to preserve and promote our rich cultural tapestry and bring it closer to communities all over Europe.

Celebrating Our Unity and Acknowledging Our Diversity

The EHL stands out from other cultural heritage actions thanks to its broad and modern definition of Heritage. As indicated in article 2 of the decision establishing the action, eligible 'sites' comprise of *monuments, natural, underwater, archaeological, industrial or urban sites, cultural landscapes, places of remembrance, cultural goods and objects and intangible heritage associated with a place, including contemporary heritage*¹. Consequently, the EHL equally celebrates cultural landscapes of historic importance such as the [Oderbruch \(Germany\)](#), memorials like [Santa Anna di Stazzema \(Italy\)](#), as well as customs and intangible heritage as in the [Hungarian town of Szentendre](#) EHL site.

In this sense, the EHL brings Europe in local and especially rural communities, cultivating new sense of identity and belonging.



© Historical Museum of the Resistance of Sant'Anna di Stazzema, 2019

¹ Article 2 (1), [Decision](#) No 1194/2011/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 November 2011 establishing a European Union action for the European Heritage Label

A Cornerstone of the European Union Action for Cultural Heritage

A rather recent development is the establishment of the [EHL BUREAU in 2023](#), co-funded under Creative Europe Programme. Its creation is a consequence of a thorough diagnostic evaluation of the EHL sites' needs, undertaken after the COVID-19 pandemic which revealed room for improvement in terms of an even higher visibility and stronger skills in project coordination.

Ten years after the launch of the EHL initiative, the newly established EHL BUREAU fills a gap between the sites and their European horizon by providing opportunities of exchanges of good practices.

With this action the Commission intends to open a new chapter, turning the EHL Sites from a *Community of Interests* (a set of sites sharing similar characteristics) into a *Community of Practices* (sharing a similar vision, structure, and objectives). **The EHL BUREAU will cluster EHL sites around themes such as youth engagement, greening but also upskilling and democracy and will announce new opportunities in June 2024.**

According to Mr Vincent Curie, Director of the [EHL BUREAU](#), *"In Coordinating the EHL network, we seek to create new partnerships and cooperation between EHL sites and effectively increase their sense of belonging. The EHL shows, at a smaller scale, the power and validity of the European project, where different people and institutions, united by the belief in the same values, can all prosper together"*.



Medieval wall painting in the Gemer and Malohont regions (Slovakia)

How to Participate: Selection Process

Following their competence for culture, the EU Member States also hold a pivotal role in the selection procedure of the European Heritage Label. **Every two years national ministries or agencies are invited to pre-select up to two sites. These nominees are** evaluated by a European panel composed of thirteen experts which are nominated by the European Institutions. Following this two-step procedure, seven new sites were awarded in 2023 the European Heritage Label:

- [Cisterscapes – Cistercian Landscapes Connecting Europe](#) (Austria, Czechia, Germany, Poland, Slovenia)
- [Monastery of San Jerónimo de Yuste, Cuacos de Yuste](#) (Spain)
- [Our Lord in the Attic Museum, Amsterdam](#) (the Netherlands)
- [Royal Theatre Toone, Brussels](#) (Belgium)
- [The Kalevala - Living Epic Heritage](#) (Finland)
- [Romanian Athenaeum, Bucharest](#) (Romania)
- [Sant'Anna di Stazzema, Stazzema](#) (Italy)

Benefiting from this strong institutional back-up EHL has become a dynamic community of engaged sites, real lighthouses of Europe in 22 Members States.

Recent participation of Finland (2019) and Ireland (2023) marks a significant expansion of the action.

- In addition to that, the label's importance for fostering a shared European identity was underscored once more under the **Belgian presidency** when the label took the stage in its high-level event "[Unity in Diversity](#)" in **April 2024** (Antwerp, Belgium).
- In **May 2024, the French Minister of Culture**, with the support of neighbouring countries (Germany and Luxembourg) hosted a strategic discussion about the future of the action in France, in the EHL site "[Robert Schuman House](#)" ([Scy-Chazelles, France](#)).

A forward-looking action

In 2024, thirteen years after the establishment of the EHL as an EU action we can only express optimism for its future. Benefiting from a broad geographical scope, strong institutional and an important mission, the European Heritage Label occupies a pivotal role in the European Union framework for Cultural Heritage. The European Heritage Label is more than just a recognition of our past; it is a commitment to our European future. By celebrating and preserving our shared heritage, sites should work to inspire future generations to value and uphold the principles that unite us as Europeans. With sixty-seven sites spanning various countries and periods, in 2024, the European Heritage Label serves as a beacon of unity, values and cultural pride. This great honour entails some responsibilities too for the selected sites.

From the [islands of Ventotene](#) to the [Aleksandrovo Tomb](#), the EHL sites remind us of our

struggle for peace, improved living and working conditions, food security, education and well-being. They encourage us to come to terms with our past while inviting us to admire works of art and forms of solidarity and dignity. Furthermore, they are the first steps to rediscover our common roots, values to shape a collective European future.

For further information about the EHL

- Find out more on the Creative Europe Programme <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe>
- Explore the EHL and its 67 sites in Europe: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-heritage/initiatives-and-success-stories/european-heritage-label>
- Engage with the EHL BUREAU activities <https://ehl-bureau.eu/en/>
- Contact the EHL BUREAU: Ehl.bureau@gopa-pace.com



JUDITH VIDECOQ

Judith VIDECOQ is serving as the Head of Creative Europe Unit of the European Commission in charge of the cultural strand of the programme. Previously the Deputy Head of Unit in finance at the Directorate General for Education and Culture, she also served as internal auditor at the Commission that she joined in 2003 and at UNICEF in New York. She studied business and administration as well as European geopolitics and started her career in the private sector working in several European consulting firms.



© Guy Buchheit

LA FOLLE JOURNÉE

Interview with
PATRICK BARBIER

by **Claire Giraud-Labalte** and **Juan Hegedüs-Gravina**

MUSIC HISTORIAN

You are an Italianist by training and a music historian. How did you move from the Italian language to the history of the castrati?

I was lucky enough to do my Italian studies (bachelor's, master's and doctorate) with the writer Dominique Fernandez, then a professor in Rennes and now a French Academician. As he was passionate about music and opera, he allowed me to do my research on music: a master's degree on Rossini and a doctorate on Spontini. From then on and after the publication of my first book (*La Vie quotidienne à l'Opéra au temps de Balzac et Rossini*, Hachette 1987), I did nothing but musical history. And as Fernandez had written a novel about eighteenth-century castrati (*Porporino ou les mystères de Naples*, Grasset 1974), he supported me in my project to work on castrati, based on in-depth research throughout Europe. The result was my castrato trilogy (*Histoire des Castrats*, *Farinelli*, *La Maison des Italiens*, all published by Grasset).



Farinelli

For several years you focused on the Baroque period. Why? Which interests you the most?

Through the castrati, I discovered a world that I already loved as a simple traveller and layman, but which attracted me more and more: the Baroque world, its fantasy, its excess, its incredible vitality and above all the immense repertoire that was gradually being discovered from 1970-1980. From a distance, I witnessed the renaissance of Baroque music, which was virtually unknown before the 1970s. Through my books and lectures, I have been able to express my passion for this artistic and musical period, to the point of recently writing, in 2019, a kind of very personal love dictionary, full of favourites from the last thirty years: *Pour l'amour du baroque* (Grasset).

The castrati were the superstars of the XVII and XVIII centuries, and we still find this stardom quality from the 80s on with counter-tenors, moving from Alfred Deller, René Jacobs, to Andreas Scholl and Gérard Lesne, to the most recent singers, Philippe Jaroussky or Jakob Orlinski, with highly visible careers in the classical music world. From your point of view, what do you think still generates such fascination for this voice register?

The last castrato left the Sistine Chapel in 1913. Since then, and especially with the revival of the Baroque repertoire, solutions have had to be found. The first, particularly in sacred music, is to use a young boy's voice before moulting. For opera, there are two possibilities: a woman's voice is better able to reproduce the incredible tessitura, spanning almost three octaves, of most castrati; moreover, it is a 'natural' voice, like that of the castrati. But of course this means that many of the male roles assigned to castrati have to be performed in drag. The last solution is that of countertenors, who have absolutely none of the timbre of castrati (in fact, they were never used in baroque opera in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), but they have the advantage of expressing a kind of vocal ambiguity, a form of androgyny that has greatly appealed to audiences in recent decades. The names you mentioned are now stars in this field. The other advantage is that they show us men in men's roles (those played by castrati), which often makes the staging more credible.



Pauline Viardot

Then you look at the lives of several women: musicians... La Malibran; Pauline Viardot and more recently on Queen Marie-Antoinette and her relationship to music, a work for which you were awarded the 2022 Château de Versailles History Book Prize... What do you mainly remember about these women?

After the castrati, the absolute gods of the Baroque era, I wanted to look at those who replaced them in the Romantic period: from the *divo assoluto* we moved

on to the *diva*, who became the new icon of singing in Romantic drama. The first two to take on this now mythical role were Giuditta Pasta and Maria Malibran. I wanted to devote a biography to the latter, who left her mark on the whole of Europe even though she died aged just 28. Then I realised that her sister, also a singer, composer and great European before her time, was also a fascinating figure. Through her, the whole of the artistic, musical and literary nineteenth century unfolded: I couldn't fail to devote a book to her! For me, Pauline Viardot was the first artist, perhaps along with Franz Liszt, who had a truly European conscience, who thought that borders were just accidents along the way and that we had to work hard to get people from different countries to live together and collaborate. Finally, my latest research has led me to explore Queen Marie-Antoinette's links with music. It is a little known fact that, while she herself played the harp and the piano, she played a considerable role in the development of the repertoire in France and its opening up to the rest of Europe.



Maria Malibran



Farinelli



Teatro San Carlo, Naples

TEACHER AND CULTURAL LIFE

You spent your career at the Université Catholique de l'Ouest. What would you like to share about this teaching experience with (the) Encatc network?

I've been lucky enough to spend my entire career at the Université Catholique de l'Ouest (Angers), whereas nowadays it's customary to be more mobile, to change jobs and locations frequently. For me, this has enabled me to fit in well with this fine institution and to do very different things there: teach French culture to foreigners, introduce French students to the Baroque period in art and music, create a master's degree in cultural action (which, thanks to my colleague Claire Giraud-Labalte, has been a member of

ENCATC). I was also fortunate enough to be involved in the creation of a musicology degree, the only one in Pays de la Loire today, to direct it and teach in it, before taking up the post of General Delegate for Student and Cultural Life. In short, a multitude of approaches in the same place, always at the service of students.

You have been very involved in the cultural life of Nantes and its region for a long time. What activity do you enjoy the most?

Nantes is a city where cultural activity has grown steadily over the decades. When I was young, apart from the Théâtre Graslin (operas and concerts) and the Jeunesses musicales de France, there wasn't much for a music lover. Little by little, a host of festivals sprang up and Nantes became a city that was 'talked about' in terms of entertainment, and in a wide range of fields (cinema, music, theatre, contemporary art, etc.). La Folle Journée, founded in 1995 thanks to René Martin, has been one of the most remarkable examples, and we are proud to have just celebrated its 30th anniversary.

LA FOLLE JOURNÉE

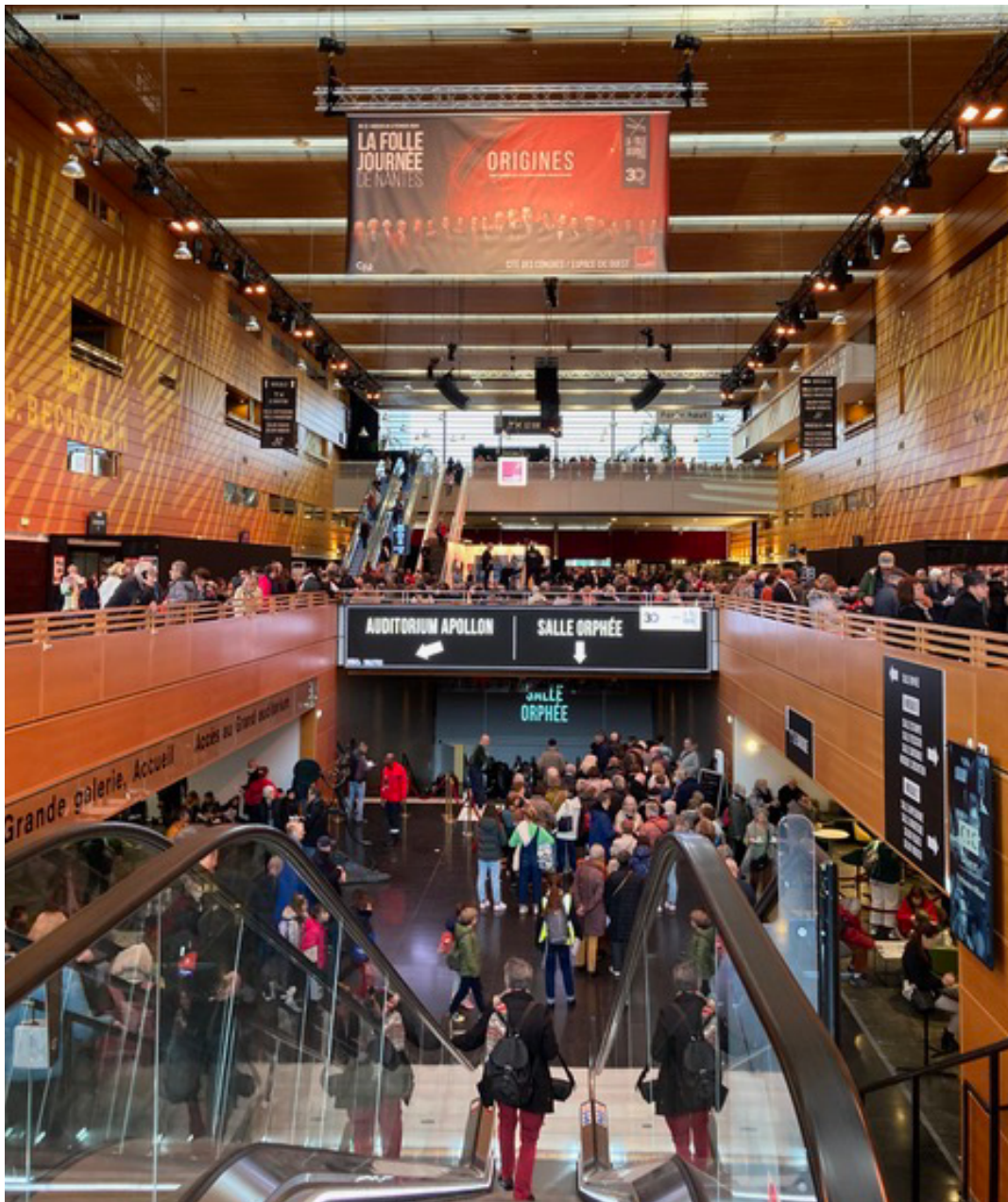
You have been participating in the Folle Journée since its creation by René Martin in 1995. This festival is of particular interest to us...

Classical music festivals had had a tradition of being very targeted and restrained arena for the wider audience, with elevated prices and an agenda curated strictly for the connoisseurs. What was the context and main motivations back in the date to design such a disruptive festival?

One day, René Martin saw thousands of people gathered in a stadium for a rock star concert and thought that the same thing could perhaps work with classical music. It was a time when the city of Nantes was looking for ways to showcase its Cité des Congrès. René came up with a fairly innovative concept: to create a two-day (now five-day) musical event where audiences arrive in the morning and leave in the evening, without ever having to leave the same venue, in a dozen or so halls with perfect acoustics: concerts lasting around 45 minutes at affordable prices. Its aim was to make classical music attractive, without being stuffy or with concerts that were too long. Meanwhile, a bandstand offered free concerts throughout the day, while lectures gave the public a closer look at the works and composers.

Was the Folle Journée concept accepted and positively welcomed at first stage, or the team had to incur in several negotiations and pitching to pass it through?

It worked very well from the first year, devoted to Mozart. With 40,000 tickets sold in 1995, it was already a winning bet. But it's not certain that the local authorities (city, department, region...) immediately believed in this success. Doubts remained and subsidies were not forthcoming so easily. Over time, the City of Nantes came to realise that the Folle journée was a major asset and a good 'visiting card', a great advertisement for Nantes. From 1995 onwards, the Pays de la Loire Region decided to partner the event with a Folle Journée relocated to several regional towns a week before Nantes (La Folle Journée en Région).



La Folle Journée 2024 © Claire Giraud-Labatte

Since the recent 2024 edition, it has been called "Ma Région virtuose". The CREA team, the staff at the Cité des Congrès and the hundreds of volunteers each year have had to prove themselves, work hard, show perseverance and passion, and make it happen year after year!

Back in the day when this was at project-stage, did you envision the festival as a format that could be exported and adopted by other cities? What are your impressions now to see the formula was able to be implemented in cities as Bilbao (Spain), Bogotá (Colombia), or Tokyo (Japan)?

Many cities were fascinated by the concept of La Folle Journée and asked René Martin to export it. Some did so for several years before stopping (Bilbao, Lisbon, Rio, Yekaterinburg...) and others continue enthusiastically, such as Tokyo (and other Japanese cities) and Warsaw. But not just anyone can reproduce the model without the creator/

designer that is René Martin. Success comes from his address book, from the strong and friendly ties he maintains with the artists, from the special conditions that these same performers grant him and that they wouldn't do elsewhere... La Folle Journée is a very special alchemy that works around René and the whole CREA team.

Back in the day when this was at project-stage, did you envision Now, we see a 30-year trajectory, with a festival which is strongly positioned in the French cultural scene. From that first 1995 edition until now, what are in your opinion the major transformations or developments the festival implemented?

Over time, La Folle Journée has evolved. First, it agreed to add two outdoor halls, which meant taking the public a few hundred metres away from the Cité for certain concerts. The range of concerts has multiplied, and René Martin has taken care to ensure that there is not just room for classical music: jazz, contemporary music and what is more broadly known as 'world music' now punctuate the different themes. From 24 hours at



La Folle Journée 2024 © Créa Folles Journées

the outset (hence the name 'La Folle Journée', inspired by the subtitle of Beaumarchais's *Marriage of Figaro*), we have gradually expanded to five days, and from 40,000 tickets we are up to 140,000 for the 30th anniversary. But the central idea remains the same: unity of time and place, an astonishing variety of offerings, a heterogeneous audience not necessarily used to classical concerts, and a certain closeness between audience and artists.

From your point of view and personal observations, do you think the typology of music lover that goes to traditional festivals, like Salzburger Festspiele or Aix-en-Provence, also attends La Folle Journée? Is there a classic vs. popular tension present?

Until a few years ago, some festivals were really reserved for the 'happy few'. The Wagner Festival in Bayreuth used to require an eight-year wait to get a ticket (which is no longer the case today, when access is easy). Salzburg is still an exceptional place, which charges outrageous prices with its veneer of worldliness (I'm thinking of those women who wear their mink on their arm in August, when it's 35°C!).



La Folle Journée 2024 : 30th anniversary. Poster Ouest-France
© Claire Giraud-Labatte

From the outset, La Folle Journée was seen as a popular festival, bringing together initiates and absolute beginners, eager to discover music with which they were not familiar. Several hundred places are reserved for schoolchildren on Thursday and Friday. Many people come as a family, often all three generations together, and they don't care whether they're dressed up or not, whether they applaud between movements or not...

When we look at the Folle Journée, we understand accessibility is a pillar of the festival, from ticket prices to the overall curation of the programme. Classical music faces several challenges in terms of concertgoers and attracting younger generations. Can we extract some lessons from la Folle Journée which could inform and improve this situation in auditorium or opera houses?

In any case, introducing young people to classical music is no easy task. But La Folle Journée has provided solutions. Firstly, because for the last 30 years, René Martin has asked me to write a new theatrical show every year to tie in with the year's theme. I write the text, which is then staged, performed by two actors and 'toured' to around fifty schools in the region. If these young people don't actually come to La Folle Journée, they get to experience it in their classrooms, through a musical show that their teachers can build on before and afterwards. We also have a whole team of lecturers who, during the event, shed light on the theme, the works and the composers. I've often seen high school and university students there, as well as adults. The free concerts in the bandstand also make it easier to get to know the music, and the concerts with commentary by the artists themselves are increasingly popular. For a number of years now, I've noticed that many opera houses and concert halls have been setting up educational projects with certain schools and their teachers (themed tours with artists, visits to halls, the chance to attend rehearsals, visit set or costume workshops, etc.). As La Folle Journée has been doing for a long time, everyone understands that it is by "immersing" themselves in the world of classical music, by desacralising it and showing the know-how that lies behind it, that we will create the future audiences of tomorrow!



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PATRICK BARBIER

An Italianist by training and Emeritus Professor at the Université catholique de l'Ouest, Patrick Barbier has written some fifteen books on the links between music and society in the Baroque and Romantic periods. His *Voyage dans la Rome baroque*, published by Grasset, won the Académie française's Prix Thiers in 2017, and in 2022 he was awarded the Château de Versailles Prize for a history book for *Marie-Antoinette et la musique* (Grasset). Patrick Barbier is vice-chancellor of the Académie littéraire de Bretagne et des Pays de la Loire and president of the Centro Studi Farinelli in Bologna.

Beyond the Page

Back and forth to Europe
Cahier 2024 de l'Académie littéraire
de Bretagne et des Pays
de la Loire - Label Encatc

CLAIRE GIRAUD-LABALTE

Encatc member since 2005, ambassador since 2012.

Interview by GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens
ENCATC Secretary General



Lavis, Eric Fonteneau, 2017

Could you please introduce us the Literary Academy of Brittany and Pays de la Loire and its Cahier: what are they?

The Académie littéraire de Bretagne et des Pays de la Loire was founded in Nantes in 1949 with the following aims: "the defence and improvement of literary and artistic culture" and "persevering action in favour of aesthetic urbanism and the protection of nature". It claims to be a descendant of the academic societies that flourished in France during the Age of Enlightenment, and is keeping pace with changes in society by opening up to all areas of literature, culture and heritage.

The Académie comprises up to thirty active members (authors, artists, scientists, journalists, architects, etc.) elected by secret ballot. Honorary members also include Amin Maalouf, recently elected perpetual secretary of the Académie française, French writer Alain Mabanckou and novelist Dominique Barbéris.

Each year, the Académie awards five literary prizes, organises cultural events such as Les Cafés littéraires, lectures and dictations, and publishes a Cahier on a theme chosen by the members: *Les Années folles*, *Destins de femmes*; *les îles*, etc.

Why did you choose this theme? In 2024?

I've chosen the theme of "Back and forth to Europe" to forge links and build bridges. Anchored by the Académie, Brittany and the Pays de la Loire have for centuries been lands of welcome and exchange. I thought it would be interesting to explore this topic and broaden our horizons.

More broadly, I felt it was important, even necessary, to address a subject that is particularly close to my heart: Europe. Unfamiliar with its diversity, its evolution and even the way it functions, Europe often seems far away, foreign, to many of its inhabitants; tragically, the war in Ukraine has brought it closer to us. Can the complex history of the 'old continent' be grasped by dates alone, the significance of which many people are unaware: the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), the Congress of Vienna (1815), Simone Veil, 1^{ère} President of the European Parliament (1979), the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), etc.? To answer this question, culture and heritage are undoubtedly privileged vectors of knowledge and dialogue.

Last but not least, 2024 will see a number of important anniversaries in the history of Europe: 70 years of the European Cultural Convention (Council of Europe), 80 years of the Normandy Landings, the European Parliament elections, and so on. These are all events that stimulate the desire to share stories from different perspectives.

In the masterly publication *Europa, Notre histoire*, a group of researchers set out to tell the story of a centuries-old Europe in a lively and subtle polyphony. For our part, we have chosen to attempt the European adventure from the perspective of men and women, and to tell a few simple stories from our two regions.



Vue de Clisson, *Voyage pittoresque dans le bocage de la Vendée*, 1817

What are the topics covered?

The theme of "Back and forth in Europe" is to highlight the encounters, sources of inspiration and cooperation between people from the West of France and people from other parts of Europe, and to tell stories that can unfold as they come and go.

This *Cahier* 2024 takes us on a journey through space and time. We discover a whole world through ephemeral or long-lasting migrations: a Greek grandmother, a Polish diaspora, a Belgian actress, a German man of letters / aka author of Breton thrillers, the Hanseatic trade, and so on. Art crosses borders, with the sculptor David d'Angers on his way to Europe, and a number of regional "Prix de Rome" artists. Europe has left its mark on our landscapes, with a polder on the island of Noirmoutier, a hint of Italy in and around Clisson, and the eclectic palace of a collector in Nantes. A series of portraits link us to other languages, other cultural expressions, from Spain to Sweden, from Lithuania to Germany, via Belgium, Italy and Greece, and so on.

Why do you think that Regions have a role to play in Europe and in particular for culture?

Each level of territory has a cultural role to play in Europe; one of the particularities of the Regions is that they combine urban and rural areas. My work at regional level has led me to make the following observation: the cultural players in the regions are not sufficiently well informed about what Europe is doing in terms of culture and heritage, and vice versa, or about possible forms of cooperation. Last April, at my suggestion, Encatc organised a Members Talk entitled "Towards a closer cooperation with Regions", which confirmed the importance of continuing exchanges with regional and local players and governments.



Alphonse Beillevaire and Anna Prelorenzo, wedding in Constantinople, 1922.

Why did it receive the Encatc label?

The Académie littéraire de Bretagne et des Pays de la Loire has had the honor of being awarded the Encatc Label for its annual publication. This publication contributes to the circulation of culture and perfectly illustrates the ideal of intellectual exchange that this European network aims to promote, between its members and more widely within the cultural and creative field.

The Label particularly concerns the Cahier 2024 "Back and forth to Europe", which highlights cultural diversity and tells the story of Europe from the perspective of people's lives, today and in the past, through literature, art, music, science or any other cultural field, thereby creating relationships that transcend geographical boundaries.

This intellectual journey fosters a sense of Europeanness, bringing people together, encouraging them to exchange ideas, open up perspectives and, why not, develop joint projects.

What are your next projects?

In my opinion, this Cahier 2024 is the first chapter in an adventure that could easily continue in different forms. Today's technologies could help to overcome the - still real - obstacle of language and, why not, enrich this dialogue which it would be a shame to interrupt. This initiative, hailed by European colleagues and friends, echoes other stories and even inspires new ideas.

In a way, *Allers et Retours en Europe* follows in the footsteps of the sixteenth-century philosopher Montaigne, who advised "travelling to rub and file your brains against those of others".

"Voyager pour froter et limer sa cervelle contre celle d'autrui"

Michel de Montaigne

OUR FAVOURITE THINGS

Claire Giraud-Labatte shares some of her favourite things from ENCATC!



My favourite book in the ENCATC Series is *Cultural Governance Current and Future European perspectives*, Edited By Chris Bailey, Elena Theodoulou Charalambous, Geert Drion (2023/2024), because, if cultural governance is currently considered as a transversal element of public policies in Europe, this assertion remains to be constantly analyzed and reinforced. I am very interested in the different contributions, from both academics and policy practitioners, which present new perspectives on the field, exploring its contemporary dynamics, dilemmas and challenges (cultural rights, climate change, etc.) towards a more integrated cultural policy.



My favourite ENCATC Happy Hour was a crazy adventure in Brussels (2013). The initial plan was for me to present our recent publication *Les Années du Romantisme* in a private art gallery *Maison Particulière*. There was then the exhibition: "Sex, Money and Power". The conference planned for this Happy Hour was not materially feasible. One thing led to another, and with the complicity of the gallery, the idea came to me to play on the resonance between the exhibition and the romantic movement in the 19th century, and from selected works to establish a free dialogue with the guests. An unforgettable evening !



My favourite ENCATC event is the annual Congress in which I have participated

regularly and actively since 2005. It is difficult to choose because each edition offers a rich program and leaves special memories: food for thinking, participatory sessions, dialogue with students in research sessions, studios and relaxing times with colleagues and friends, new encounters, discovery of a city and its cultural places and practices. I would like to mention in particular the 2018 Congress in Bucharest, during the European Year of Cultural Heritage : "Beyond EYCH2018. What is the cultural horizon? Opening up perspectives to face ongoing transformations". I am very grateful to Francesca Imperiale, then president, and to Giannalia Cogliandro-Beyens for putting their trust in me to contribute to the concept, to experiment with a participant engagement process as "Sharing Perceptions Experience" and the Poster's Gallery.



My favourite ENCATC activity is the ENCATC Members Talks launched

in 2020 during the Covid pandemic. It gives us the opportunity to take an active part in the life of our network by offering a subject of reflection to discuss with interested members and guests or by disseminating and sharing a particular method or practice. Two recent topics have discussed *Towards a closer cooperation with regions* (12 April 2024) and *How to benefit from the Strategy 21? Education, research & policy applications* (28 April 2023).



My favourite memory from ENCATC is a long history: almost 20 years within the ENCATC network, that counts!

I will put first human relations, based on common values and mutual trust both with members very committed to this network and with the small team around Giannalia Cogliandro-Beyens: among others Lluís, Lotta, Milena, Marie-Claire, Timo, Cristina, Isabelle, Jacques, Annick, Francesca, Alan, Cosenza, Liz, Juan, Fabio, etc. This type

of relationship, often undermined with reinforced changes during the Covid epidemic, is in my eyes a more precious asset than ever.

I also really appreciated having the freedom to propose ideas, create synergies, experiment outside the box, and benefit from the support of ENCATC for several projects.



Among all my memories, some come back to me, spontaneously:

- Experiencing a first multilingual bath in pedagogy followed by a joyful bike ride, in Potsdam (in 2005).
- Organising my first seminar "Mediation in historic places" at Fontevraud Abbey (2006), which meant: visiting a village with "streets that go up and others that go down", getting lost in cellars by candlelight, and offering his guests a memorable fishing trip on April 1st. When you don't have money, you have to find ideas!
- Proposing to the Understanding Heritage working group to experiment with the Touch Gallery at the Louvre, with the help of Matthieu Decraene (2009).
- Teaching in academies offered by Encatc members: Synaxis baltica in Russia (2008), etc.
- Participating in projects alongside ENCATC as Cultural Heritage counts for Europe (2013-2015), etc.
- Benefitting from the support of Encatc and several members for Trans Europ'Express, an educational and mobility project for master's students (4 thematic editions 2010-2013).
- Being an ambassador for the network. Raising the ENCATC colours in different forums and spheres.



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to this issue of
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Our contributors are leading academics, researchers, experts, practitioners, and policy makers. They are recognised by the industry we belong to as influencers. For our magazine, they are generously providing us with high-quality content, commentary, the best industry practices, and personal stories. Their contributions aim to help ENCATC to achieve its mission of helping the cultural sector become stronger and more sustainable. **This publication is made possible thanks to the financial support of the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.**

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