
**LAUNCH OF THE FRENCH-AUSTRALIAN
CULTURAL EXCHANGE FOUNDATION
BY FRENCH MINISTER FOR EUROPE & FOREIGN AFFAIRS
5th DECEMBER 2023, NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA**

Dear Tony Burke, Minister for the Arts,
Dear Tony Ellwood, director of the National Gallery of Victoria,
Dear board members of the French Australian Cultural Exchange Foundation,
Dear guests,
Thank you for being here,

We are all gathered today in one of the temples of French culture and arts in Australia to launch the French-Australian Cultural Exchange Foundation (FACEF). With this powerful project, we are reinventing the great tradition of « villas », but in an innovative and adapted way.

Artist residencies constitute key mobility mechanisms for the dialogue of cultures and the dynamism of artistic creation. They allow longer mobility and co-construction, while adapting mobility to the challenges of ecological transition.

After Italy, at the time of the founding of the French Academy in Rome, Villa Médicis, almost four centuries ago, or more recently in the United States, where we created the « Villa Albertine », Australia today represents an interesting crossroad of creation which can constitute for us a formidable sounding board.

And I would like to thank all the people present here who are committed to the smooth running of this flagship project for our two countries.

The current cultural connection between France and Australia is strong, long-lasting, as Tony Ellwood accurately said, and growing through our shared efforts. It is also rooted in History.

It started more than two hundred years ago. From Lapérouse to Baudin and D'Entrecasteaux, the first French expeditions had sustained peaceful interactions with the aboriginal people, in particular in Tasmania. They studied their culture, traditions and language, and collected unique information, which is not known enough, but can now be shared to the public.

Yesterday in Canberra, I had the privilege to hand over a digital copy of the D'Entrecasteaux Expedition Archives to our respected friends from AIATSIS. We hope this humble gesture will be the beginning of a long journey through shared memories.

These archives held in France and in Australia could soon be listed on the UNESCO Memory of the World register, thanks to a joint proposal from our two countries, presented to UNESCO just a few weeks ago in November.

These amazing and unique archives include valuable traces of Australian Indigenous first languages.

It brings me to a cause at the heart of our cultural ambition: plurilingualism and the promotion of French language.

Bilingual education is thriving in Australia, with new French immersion programs every year.

We have 29 Alliances Francaises promoting French language throughout Australia. Quite a good record for such a large country, and it is my hope that it grows even further. Some of them were created one hundred thirty years ago. They organize every year the Alliance Francaise French Film Festival, the largest outside of France. March 2024 will mark the thirty-fifth edition.

The depth of the French-Australia cultural connection owes a lot to all of you present today, our friends of the arts, and to the cultural institutions in Australia, with the support of private philanthropy.

I want to thank the very generous individuals who contribute to our cultural exchanges. Some have built entire collections of French artworks, like Krystyna Campbell-Pretty at the National Gallery of Victoria. Thank you so much, we commend you for this contribution Madam.

Australian institutions have longstanding partnership with French ones, like le Musée du Quai Branly - Jacques Chirac, or Centre Pompidou, which played an instrumental role in promoting Australian Indigenous art in Europe. It is no coincidence if we have here with us today representatives from Musée Picasso, whose new Foundation is chaired by a Melbournian, Ms Lisa Fox, whom I recently met in Paris. We also have a representative from Quai Branly, Jérôme Bastianelli.

French institutions are also acknowledging the quality and diversity of Australian arts and culture. In Paris, the past two years have seen a range of exhibitions dedicated to Australia, including the Sally Gabori and Ron Mueck exhibitions at Fondation Cartier, and Songlines at Quai Branly. It was my pleasure to hand a catalogue of the latter exhibition to Senator Wong.

Culture does not only address the minds but also the hearts of the people and that is why France takes pride in being the country of cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy makes it possible to bring people into dialogue with each other and honour at the same time their own cultures.

This is the whole point of the French-Australian foundation: to be a powerful lever to boost and irrigate our friendship in all its facets, past and future.

We all know that this friendship is based on common values as well as a common geography far from mainland France: the Pacific.

You know that we are countries of the Indian Ocean, and countries of the Pacific Ocean as well. Our two countries also share one common feature: they are societies marked by the diversity of origins, peoples and cultures. As we know, it is both an asset and a challenge, and, in my opinion, this foundation can be a powerful intercultural vector.

**I am glad to announce that the Foundation will begin with 4 flagship projects:
- a cross-residency of photographers between Marseille and Perth,**

- a program intended for emerging artists,
- and two residency schemes aimed at strengthening, for one: the artistic links between Australia and New Caledonia represented by the Tjibaou Center - as well as by the presence here today of a representative from the government of New Caledonia; and as for the other: those of the aboriginal centers of northern Australia and France.

The next step should be to open and extend our future network of residencies not only to New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis et Futuna but even further, to Pacific Island Countries. This is the intention stemming from the joint statement of President Macron and Prime Minister Albanese in July 2022 that we are launching today.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the Australian curators and heads of institutions for being such incredible advocates of the Australian and French cultural connection. Australia wouldn't be such a Francophile country without you, without them.

As a mark of continued support for the project, the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs will contribute altogether with 2 million Australian dollars in endowment and fulltime staff support. For each project, the Foundation will be seeking at least one partner Australian institution. The whole project is indeed designed to become a big bicultural initiative.

This foundation will also allow our two countries to develop strong links in the cultural and creative industries, which is a structuring priority of our cultural diplomacy.

The cultural and creative industries in France already represent 1.3 million jobs. As this number keeps growing, I am glad to announce that we have identified Australia as the next country where France will deploy its "CCI Immersion" program in 2024.

Once again, I want to thank everyone involved in our cultural partnership. We have inventive people, creative people, talents on both sides; and it is our duty to bring them together so that they nurture one another.

I'll now give the floor to the Foundation chairman Ms Boisbouvier-Wylie, but not before acknowledging the outstanding role she has played in Melbourne, since 2011, as our honorary consul. Thank you everyone for your support and your presence today.

Thank you./.