IN NANTES AND NOWHERE ELSE

CULTURE AT THE HEART OF THE CITY’S DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
“NANTES, ALONGSIDE PARIS, IS PERHAPS THE ONLY CITY IN FRANCE WHERE I HAVE THE FEELING SOMETHING WORTHWHILE MIGHT HAPPEN TO ME.”
Riding on the imagination of Jules Verne, the freedom of the surrealists, the poetry of Julien Gracq and the smile of Jacques Demy, twenty years ago Nantes – the sleeping beauty – awoke bursting with communicative cultural energy.

Since 1990, with Les Allumées, it has kept alive that flame which led it to swiftly redesign the city and once again enchant the lives of its inhabitants with ever more incredible productions and performances. Every day, from the city centre to local communities, there is magic at work in Nantes, bonds are forged and people take to the streets to see open, accessible, shared art. Young and lively, bustling and cheerful, imaginative and crazy, gentle and noisy: in Nantes, culture is everywhere and for everyone.

Whether it is understanding landscapes, getting inside paintings, experiencing the thrill of reading, finding one’s voice or affirming one’s ideas, in Nantes culture is intended as a means of empowerment for all. In this metropolis with an unrivalled cultural offering, each person must be given the opportunity to find themselves, to come into their own. Nantes puts the blossoming of the individual through culture right at the heart of its regional planning, by supporting artists and all art forms – professional or amateur, classical or avant-garde – offering access to reading and introductory workshops, and guaranteeing access to cultural facilities of all sizes. In Nantes, culture is a giant made up of thousands of initiatives.
What if our artistic and cultural richness increased in proportion to how we shared in it? If there were no dividing line between artists and spectators, closed venues and open streets, the city centre and outlying communities? In Nantes, cultural policy is approached as an educational tool and a powerful means of combating inequalities. Founded on proximity and reflecting diversity, cultural initiatives are in place in all neighbourhoods, so that each inhabitant has access to a wide variety of artistic practices and propositions. Here, cultural diversity is something that is made, experienced and shared in together.

Nantes – a port and place of departure, a city of confluences, a nautical centre and trading platform – is a cosmopolitan metropolis that is outward-looking by nature. Accepting its historical links with slavery as today it welcomes the cultures of the world, the city’s cultural policy builds naturally on its roots by developing relations of cooperation, solidarity and exchange with many foreign cities. From the Liverpool docks to the streets of Cotonou (Benin), Antwerp’s Grand-Place to the port of Niigata in Japan, one finds, and will continue to find, a piece of Nantes! By cooperating on joint projects between cities, increasing the number of partnerships between organisations and promoting artists’ international mobility, Nantes draws from new horizons and expresses its identity on all latitudes.
More than captivating, Nantes culture exerts a magnetic attraction. At the core of the city’s strategy to increase its prestige, culture is approached as a lever for economic development like nowhere else. At the service of this collective human enterprise are: a budget of 66 million euros, 600 city council employees, major municipal facilities and 220 subsidised cultural organisations. Besides the millions of spectators and users of these cultural facilities, this profusion creates thousands of jobs and boosts the entire local economy. Because it sets out an alternative vision of city planning, Nantes attracts increasing numbers of entrepreneurs and new arrivals, thereby creating a dynamic essential to the urban-planning projects of tomorrow. The new flagship of this cultural policy which sets store by the overlap between city, research, training, arts venues and businesses, the Quartier de la Création is today becoming the centre of the city’s magnetism. Nantes’ heart, beating with creativity, brings together fantastic animals, emerging artists, tourists and passers-by... and opens minds.
Nantes is a festival of culture! Beaming and stimulating, it transforms local communities and spreads all around like good news. Municipal cultural facilities, institutions, voluntary organisations, artists and collectives, all play a part in the ‘L’art en partage’ programme. Here, the policy of ‘cultural proximity’ creates a bond between city and communities, public and artists, amateur arts and professional sectors. It encourages and supports new talent, and is attentive to emerging cultures and open to diversity. The story it tells speaks to everyone and all generations. And with residents and artists cultivating together a taste for the performing arts, poetry and surprise, in Nantes social cohesion and educational success are also lasting works!
Getting the party started. From the concerts and shows of Grand Renc’art, Jard’in Jazz and Swing des Jardins, to the enigmatic and poetic festival of L’île était une fois, in Nantes shared art brings communities to life and wins over their inhabitants. Here, with each residency of artists or collectives, with each shared creative project, with each event created from scratch by the lifeblood of communities, artists and residents breathe life into works, performances, installations and exhibitions.

Opening minds. In Nantes, we know that artistic, cultural and scientific education and training offer fantastic opportunities for self-discovery – and the discovery of others – at all stages of life. Since everyone is different, there are different ways available for each individual to discover, learn and practise the art form of their choice. During La Folle Journée, for example, Nantes Conservatoire offers young musicians from local communities singing, guitar and keyboard master classes. And throughout the year, teachers endeavour to strike a chord with children in the city’s schools and community centres.

Being of all cultures. Nantes’ history of cultural mixing means it navigates quite naturally at the heart of diversity. Alongside voluntary organisations, it promotes integration, cultivates remembrance and encourages intercultural dialogue. With Tissé Métisse, it engages citizens in a debate on equality and the fundamentals of our society, access to culture, discrimination and living together, while at the same time celebrating this fantastic richness. Aux Heures d’Été, a festival of world cultures, presents events based on exchanges between local and foreign artists.

Encouraging reading. To the City of Nantes, this means making it easy to register with your local library – free for under-18s – while at the same time developing online digital content. To cultivate the pleasure of reading, Nantes enriches both its network of libraries and media libraries, open to communities and their residents, and its network of voluntary and institutional partners, to offer a packed programme of literary events throughout the year.

Encounters for all. In its fight against cultural exclusion, Nantes boasts social and support services which transcend the notions of disability, social fragility and the ‘generational divide’. For example, Stereolux, hosted by La Fabrique on the Isle of Nantes, introduces senior citizens to digital creation. Similarly, the Cultural Development Fund set up by Nantes City Council and La Folle Journée is an original tool which funds actions throughout the year to make the event accessible to as many people as possible, with writing and computer-aided music workshops, concerts and plays for disabled people.

Bringing small venues to life. By supporting small arts venues, Nantes offers young artists from all areas of artistic expression – theatre, dance, music, puppetry, contemporary circus and the visual arts – the chance to perform to audiences. In Nantes, there are loads of these small venues with big ideas! Dedicated to live performances, contemporary music, theatre and the visual arts, they are as singular as they are plural.
CULTIVATING ETERNAL YOUTH

Starting small. Because culture has so much to teach us, Nantes offers an ambitious programme of artistic activities and performances for children and families, including outside school time. The City supports small venues and productions which, throughout the year, give children a taste for the performing arts. Meanwhile, the festival Petits et Grands stimulates local theatre companies and attracts the best new European productions. In this way, young people are given a taste for the performing arts, both as audience and actors.

Incorporating new art forms. With the Graff Plan, Nantes has paved the way for street art. Across the city, walls, pillars and fences serve as open-air canvases for the art form of graffiti. The Graff Plan thus offers a different approach to art in public spaces, by making them a gallery in their own right.
Les Anneaux (The Rings),
Daniel Buren and Patrick Bouchain,
Estuaire

Last year, over 300,000 people visited the 'MACHINES DE L'ÎLE'.

Is Nantes an attractive place? Most definitely. A city as a way of life, following its passions and desires, proudly displaying its open-mindedness, inventing what it alone is capable of imagining.

In twenty years, Nantes has succeeded in taking modernity by surprise, to become a metropolis whose prestige extends far beyond the city limits. Underpinning its formidable powers of attraction is the combination of a shared, popular culture and a real breeding ground for artists, making a recipe for sustainable creativity.

A city which sets store by exchanges, steeped in Jules Verne’s invented worlds and surrealist reveries, Nantes has embarked on an adventure. With giant steps, from Buenos Aires to Tokyo, across the three continents of its historical triangle, it is on course to meet its audience and its destiny as a cultural capital, alongside the major European cities.
GETTING AWAY

Bon Voyage! An event to promote tourism and culture, Le Voyage à Nantes also brings together Nantes residents, tourists and lovers of the arts and creative/recreational fantasies. Throughout the summer, Nantes is revealed by means of a city trail that mixes art and landscape, historic heritage and contemporary art, and incorporates countryside and maritime elements – and food. A scattered monument, Le Voyage à Nantes invites you to discover an unusual, festive city, 'turned upside down by art'. From Crépetown to the Estuary works, Nantes captures the spirit of the moment, puts pianos in the streets and turns a monumental fountain into a playground...

Moving crowds. Firing the collective imagination is a Nantes speciality, with Royal de Luxe, the Machines de l'Île, the Marine Worlds Carousel, the Heron Tree, Utopiales and the Buren Rings being just a few examples. Raw and impertinent, these nuggets of Nantes’ cultural policy, straight out of the Vernian imagination and surrealist eccentricity, have changed the face of the city for good. From street performances on a grand scale to the daily sight of an elephant wandering along the riverbank, Nantes is a crazy place, always thirsty for new adventures.

Arousing mad desires. La Folle Journée, Rendez-vous de l’Erdre, Estuaire, Scopitone, Utopiales... Nantes’ major events are popular in the original sense of the word, attracting huge numbers of people. With its festivals, ranging from classical music to jazz to contemporary and digital art, Nantes has also earned an international reputation, exporting La Folle Journée around the world and revealing unique digital works as part of Scopitone.

CULTIVATING THE EXCEPTIONAL

Making stones move. After 15 years’ work, the Chateau of the Dukes of Brittany, an emblematic monument of Nantes and Brittany history, is today fully restored. It is home to the Nantes History Museum, with its temporary exhibitions, conferences and arts programme. The chateau’s courtyard, ramparts and moat, with free public access, have become places where residents and visitors alike come to stroll and relax in the heart of the city.

Exploring all art forms. Considered one of France’s finest collections, including works by Ingres, Courbet, Monet, Ernst, Chagall, Picasso and Kandinsky, the Museum of Fine Art covers the history of art from the 13th- to the 21st century. The extension and renovation work currently being undertaken by Stanton Williams Architects of London will increase its exhibition area to 17 000 m². A few cable-lengths away is the city’s atypical cultural centre and performing arts venue, Le Lieu Unique. Housed in a converted biscuit factory, with a bar, restaurant, library, crèche and hammam, it mixes genres and audiences. Here, the spirit of curiosity prevails, with everything from circus arts to theatre to philosophy, architecture and gastronomy.

Increasing talent. Even before being exported, culture and creation in Nantes form the basis of a crossing of disciplines and a veritable centre of excellence. The creative industries (communication, design, performing arts, architecture, visual arts) have established themselves on the Isle of Nantes. A platform for exchanges with an international impact, the Quartier de la Création draws together various different spheres: creators and cultural actors, business and higher education (schools of design, architecture and fine art, La Fabrique, etc.).
Forging links. Developing cultural and artistic exchanges, cooperation and solidarity with Europe and the rest of the world is an important aspect of Nantes’ cultural policy. Residency exchanges, the European jazz project, Royal de Luxe’s invitation around the world and cinematographic cooperation as part of the Three Continents Festival are just a few examples. Collaborations – in particular with Japan, which every year hosts La Folle Journée – are intended to increase the mobility of artists and culture professionals. With Eurocities, Nantes cultivates an exchange of best practice with European professional networks, such as On the Move, aimed at sustainable, responsible mobility. In partnership with the Institut Français, Nantes promotes the work of its artists overseas and organises the sharing of experiences by retracing their careers as artists.

Writing a new story. With the opening of the Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery in 2012, Nantes has chosen to confront its history as France’s main slaving port in the 18th century. A unique urban art project by Krzysztof Wodiczko and Julian Bonder, the Nantes memorial is a powerful work which bears witness to a deep commitment to human rights, in favour of migrants, the homeless, victims and the oppressed. But the city also plans to incorporate these ‘triangular’ ties through cooperation projects, such as the international alliance of cities for remembrance and development, set up in 2010.
1 Cirkatomik, shared production

2 L’absence [Absence], Atelier Van Lieshout, Estuaire 2009

3 Titan Crane

4 Le Lieu Unique, ‘Le Grenier du Siècle’ (The Loft of the Century)

5 Serpent d’océan [Sea Snake], Huang Yong Ping, Estuaire 2012

6 Cirkatomik, shared production

7 La Fabrique, artistic laboratories

8 Nantes Museum of Fine Art

9 Scopitone festival, electronic culture and digital arts
10 Studio Musiques Actuelles
11 Le Lieu Unique, Nantes’ performing arts venue
12 Royal de Luxe theatre company
13 Mont Royal(e), Block Architectes
14 Banquet d’Avril theatre company, shared production
15 Bâtiment Manny (The Manny Building), Angela Bulloch
16 La Villa cheminée (The Chimney Villa), Tatzu Nishi, Estuaire 2009
17 Rock opera, Chateau of the Dukes of Brittany
18 Alvéole 14 (Alveolus 14), Edwin Van der Heide, Estuaire 2007
19 Dance production by the Nantes National Choreographic Centre, directed by Claude Brumachon and Benjamin Lamarche
20 La Fabrique, artistic laboratories
21 Royal de Luxe theatre company
22 Écart dance company, shared production
23 La Fabrique, artistic laboratories
24 La Folle Journée, classical music festival
25 Municipal Library, Floresca Guépin Media Library
26 Les Rendez-vous de l’Erdre, jazz and boating festival
27 Street art
24 Hip Opsession festival
25 Association Lolab, shared production
26 La Maison dans la Loire (The House in the Loire), Jean-Luc Courcoult, Estuaire 2007
27 Christmas festivities, Chateau of the Dukes of Brittany
28 Scopitone festival, electronic culture and digital arts
29 La Folle Journée, classical music festival
30 La Fabrique, artistic laboratories
31 Passage Pommeraye
Nantes has been alive with culture since the 1990s. It is as if the city had been waiting for the Les Allumées festival – the blueprint for Paris’ Nuit Blanche – to at last give free rein to its creativity, dynamism and desire for movement and culture.

This strong signal made way for a multifaceted ‘cultural ferment’, both in the city centre and local communities, consisting of small and large events, individual and collective activities, a genuine openness to the cultures of the world, and a programme aimed at an ever wider, more numerous audience.

This desire to connect with as many people as possible remains an essential objective for Nantes. The city encourages a rich and diversified cultural programme and is committed not only to a grant-making policy but also, by offering assistance to artists, to supporting creativity and promoting the emergence of new art forms.
DIVERSE, EXCITING AND MADE IN NANTES...

Major events. There are, of course, the popular big events like La Folie Journée, Les Rendez-vous de l’Erdre, Royal de Luxe’s street performances and the Nantes Carnival, which attract enthusiastic crowds in their wake. But there are also others, such as Estuaire, a contemporary-art trail consisting of some forty works by international artists between Nantes and Saint-Nazaire. A whole host of events have taken over public spaces. A whole host of artistic encounters and discoveries which form Nantes’ cultural identity.

Essential venues. There is also national recognition for major performing arts venues, such as the Angers Nantes Opera, the Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire, contemporary music venues and a resource centre (Pannonica, Stereolux, Bouche d’Air and Tremplin), a National Choreographic Centre (directed by Claude Brumachon and Benjamin Lamarche), Le Lieu Unique national performing arts venue, the Théâtre Universitaire, Salle Vasse and Le Zénith, a concert venue with a capacity of 8 500.

Cultural diversity. But besides having the necessary assets for its projection as a cultural centre, there is also an acute awareness of the crucial role of culture in day-to-day life, integration and living together happily. As a result, Nantes has chosen diversity, supporting urban culture with the Hip Opsession festival and foreign cultures with the European film and Three Continents festivals. Today Nantes has a solid network of cultural institutions, small arts venues and art galleries, a significant movement of voluntary organisations and large numbers of well-known creators, companies, artists and collectives (including hub, pol’i, La Valise and Ciné Nantes). So there’s no shortage of incubators for young talent!

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Cultivating curiosity. In Nantes, cultural facilities are living places. The quality of the collections and the temporary exhibition policies of the Museum of Fine Art, Nantes History Museum, Jules Verne Museum and Natural History Museum mean there is always something new to discover. At libraries and media libraries, a programme of exhibitions and encounters with authors makes a connection with the latest developments in the literary world. Courses on image and film make Le Cinématographe a venue for the promotion of the 7th art, while L’Atelier and Le Temple du Goût confirm the importance of a breeding ground for artists in the field of the visual arts. So many cultural venues to whet your critical appetite and thirst for knowledge!

Embracing a culture of science and technology. In the city of Jules Verne, science and technology education is a serious matter. In addition to its outstanding collection, the Natural History Museum is both a leader of scientific education and a forum for debate and reflection open to universities and voluntary organisations. Among its principal partners are the Planetarium, the Jules Verne Museum, the Printing Museum and Séquoia, a fun, innovative municipal centre which puts science at the heart of its activities with schools and children’s activity centres.

Experiencing the city in your own way. With the collective work Urban Voices and at each edition of the Fête de la Musique, Nantes residents come together to sing. Symbolic of a passion for amateur pursuits, these gatherings are human ventures. In the musical sphere, the Musica Nantes guide catalogues all the activities available to residents. Likewise, in all artistic disciplines, each individual can enjoy practising an artistic activity.
BURSTING WITH FRESH IDEAS

Sharing experiences. Launched in this spiral of creativity, Nantes continues to innovate. Building on the success of its major events and carried to centre stage by the talent of its creators, the city is keen to continue drawing on its human capital and infrastructure to consolidate its status as a ‘cultural centre’. The Biennales Internationales du Spectacle, an absolute must, bring together close to 10 000 professionals to discuss and share experiences in the sphere of culture and the performing arts.

Crossing disciplines. Because culture is very much living matter, continually evolving and asking questions as new practices appear. Mindful of the need to offer collective solutions that are in step with cultural innovation, Nantes created La Fabrique, a complex of spaces designed for artists and production, support and distribution organisations. A cross-disciplinary site at the heart of the Quartier de la Création, La Fabrique was planned in consultation with the city’s cultural actors (Stereolux, Tremplino, Mire, Microfaune and Apo 33), and since then has developed across a number of Nantes neighbourhoods. Its concept of ‘artistic laboratories’ attaches major importance to experimentation.

Revealing talent. “It’s raining in Nantes”: strings, brass and a deluge of electric riffs. The Tri Yann, Jeanne Cherhal, Dominique A, Philippe Katerine and Pony Pony Run Run of tomorrow are already in residence at Stereolux or rehearsing at Tremplino, because Nantes is continually seeking to renew its artistic crucible. Iconoclastic like Sexy Sushi, top of the pops like Elephanz, sensitive like My name is nobody, vibrant like the duo Mansfield Tya or the Von Pariahs, they are the fresh talent of the Nantes scene. In the visual arts, Nantes also devotes attention to young artists, with the Prix des Arts Visuels awards and the Nantes Création programme, which offers artists the chance to display digital works on screens set up in urban spaces.
The Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery, the only one of its kind in Europe, bears a universal message of solidarity and brotherhood.

Every year, over 70,000 Nantes residents take part in the European Heritage Days.

Labelled a ‘City of Art and History’ in 2002, Nantes approaches the future by shedding light on the past. “The shape of a city, as we all know, changes more quickly than the mortal heart”, wrote Julien Gracq. Here, heritage is living matter which has a place at the heart of urban and regional planning policy. It is a broad vision, divided into different aspects of heritage: archaeological, architectural, industrial, maritime and river, landscape, intangible (knowledge, traditions) and local.

Following the successful reopening, in 2007, of the Chateau of the Dukes of Brittany, now home to the city’s history museum, and the creation of the Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery, in 2012, Nantes pursues an innovative and determined policy. The idea is to make heritage a lever for cultural, tourism, economic and social development, through coordinated action involving all local actors (local government, voluntary organisations, private individuals and businesses). The aim of this collective, sustainable dynamic, is to reveal both to French and foreign visitors, and to Nantes residents, the city’s rich heritage and evolution, through the major landmarks in its history.

The Shape of the City
The Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery, the only one of its kind in Europe, bears a universal message of solidarity and brotherhood.

Thinking big for the city

**Inspiring a dynamic.** Because long-term, coordinated action calls for a dedicated body and tools, in 2009 Nantes created a Heritage and Archaeology Department. Its actions comprise digs, architecture and ‘cultural mediation’.

**Expanding protections.** Beyond the scope of the Local Urban Plan, the City is committed to taking heritage preservation a step further, in order to keep better track of the changing urban landscape and take account of currently unprotected 20th-century sites. Meanwhile, discussions are under way with the State towards expanding the preserved area of Nantes’ historic centre to include further historic sites.

**Championing all heritage.** Heritage is not just about buildings. Heritage policy is equally committed to preserving municipal collections (paintings, sculptures, art objects) and other assets acquired by the city’s museums. Archive heritage is also a prime concern, with a planned new centre designed to take a scientific and cultural approach.

The symboles of history

**Remembering and acting.** The Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery, the only one of its kind in Europe, is a solemn monument to Nantes’ relationship with its past as France’s main slaving port in the 18th century. But above all it pays tribute to those who fought and continue to fight against slavery around the world. It bears a universal message of solidarity and brotherhood for future generations, by affirming the importance of human rights.

**Giving new life to the past.** Besides the revitalisation of the Cours Cambronne square, a major programme of restoration takes in many of the city’s emblematic buildings, such as St Nicholas’s Church, St Peter’s Gate, the Psaltery Cloister, the Graslin Theatre and the Pomeray Passage, with a lighting plan for each site. But Nantes also knows how to incorporate contemporary design in its heritage projects, for example transforming the St Cross Passage into a place to stroll and view artworks.

**Revealing industrial heritage.** Nantes’ omnipresent industrial and port heritage, more than just shipyards, bears witness to a great diversity of activities since the 19th century. A symbol of the city’s identity, new life has been breathed into the Dubigeon shipyards, with the rehabilitation of the site to house the Machines de l’Île. Not far away, in the shadow of the Titan Crane, La Cale 2 hosts a cultural programme devoted to history and the river. The City also supports actions concerned with the restoration of boats, testaments to Nantes’ close relationship with the Loire.

**Bringing memory to life.** In its neighbourhoods, Nantes conceals treasures bequeathed by history, including follies built by the city’s shipbuilders, gardens, parks, fountains, wells, ovens, oratories, washing-places and remnants of craft activities. Heritage policy aims to preserve this identity and make it compatible with the present-day urban functions of the city.
SHARING A LIVING CULTURE!

Raising awareness among residents. In Nantes, heritage is a favourable setting for meeting local residents. There are an increasing number of initiatives in place to raise awareness among citizens about the active role they can play in this sphere, and to build up a common core of knowledge, including commemorations, awareness actions aimed at schools, an annual programme of activities based around local heritage, and community memory.

Attracting visitors. Heritage is an important asset in the strategy to attract tourists. The urban tourism offering, centred mainly on culture and heritage, depends on the public activities policies of the main sites, the creation of heritage trails and viewpoints, and conditions of accessibility. In 2008, the Chateau of the Dukes of Brittany obtained the ‘Tourism and Disability’ label, rewarding the quality of the facilities of this 15th-century monument.

Engaging in dialogue. Nantes has long been committed to a process of social dialogue. Following the establishment, in 2010, of the Nantes Heritage Council and its Scientific Council, bringing together researchers and experts, Nantes was keen to broaden the debate on heritage preservation and development by creating an Annual Heritage Conference. Building on this initiative, increasing numbers of events centred on heritage (discovery trails, café discussions, conferences and debates) are now held throughout the year, under the banner ‘Enquête de Nantes’, giving people across the city the opportunity to understand heritage issues and have a say in the future of heritage.
Le Nid (the Nest), Jean Julien,
32nd floor, Brittany Tower

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Sé Nymphéa, Ange Leccia, work for Estuaire
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Monte-meubles, l’ultime déménagement (Furniture lifter, the ultimate move)

Great Elephant, the Machines de l’île (Machines of the Isle of Nantes)
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Invisibles, Arnaud Théval, shared creation
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