

PRESS FILE

CULTURAL
MANIFESTO
FOR THE
MEDITERRANEAN



Paris, 2nd of April 2013

PRESS RELEASE

The Cultural Council of the Union for the Mediterranean is publishing the English version of the « Cultural Manifesto for the Mediterranean », a flagship work realised with the collaboration of Mediterranean artists and cultural operators, in order to draw the attention of decision-makers and public opinions to the core issue of culture in the Mediterranean.



The Cultural Manifesto for the Mediterranean is:

- a founding text under the shape of a Manifesto with a strong commitment and 7 concrete propositions to impulse new dynamics in favour of culture in the Mediterranean
- 64 pages of accounts from 23 personalities of the Mediterranean contemporary culture

In the context of the construction of a cooperation framework in the Mediterranean – more indispensable than ever at the time when many countries of the region are building a new future – and at the time of the launching of Marseille Provence European capital of culture 2013, this work is a contribution to give a central role to culture in the current debates.

Designed under the shape of a Manifesto which explains the reasons for and the principles of this commitment, it is signed by a group of Mediterranean artists and cultural operators with whom the Cultural Council has been working since 2009: **Michelangelo Pistoletto, Blanca Li, Plantu, Nadim Asfar, Karima Berger, Slimane Benaïssa, Sébastien Cailleux, Meriem Bouderbala, Sandra Bessis, Kamal Mouzawak, Patrick Bouchain, Dima Bawab, Jean-Pierre Blanc, Elias Anastas, Syhem Belkhodja, Maurizio Galante, Giuliana Sétari Carusi, Aldric Beckmann, Samira Ibrahim, Aadel Essaadani, Vanessa Rousselot.**



All of them are committed in their own field to promote art and culture as an instrument of progress, dialogue and peace in the Mediterranean. These personalities are sharing their Mediterranean commitment in this book through personal texts reflecting their thoughts and experiences. These points of view bring an additional vision to the text of the Manifesto itself, both in concrete and poetic ways.

Last but not least, this Manifesto aims to gather and mobilise all the operators and institutions ready to join this initiative in favour of the crucial issue of culture for the future of the region. It offers indeed concrete proposals and guidelines, easy to be implemented or initiated, which could be the first steps of a common effort in favour of culture in the Mediterranean, for example in the field of heritage, creation, artistic mobility, or training opportunities.

To download the Manifesto in pdf:

http://www.conseilculturel-upm.gouv.fr/MANIFESTE_EN.pdf

For further information or to ask for a printed version of the Manifesto:

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CULTURAL MANIFESTO for the MEDITERRANEAN

the text

“The wonder of Mediterranean civilisation is that as it spread it marked out the path our culture would follow. It is behind every major reference of our history and made us guardians of a rich and varied heritage with its Phoenician alphabet, Greek concept, Roman law, Semitic monotheism, Punic ingenuity, Byzantine munificence, Arabic science, Ottoman power, Andalusian cohabitation, Italian sensitivity, Catalan openness, French freedom and Egyptian eternity.”

Joseph Maïla, « Mare Nostrum » in *Études*, 1997

THE MANIFESTO TEXT

The Manifesto itself is a committed text which aims to set culture at the core of the Mediterranean partnership. It acknowledges its role as a key factor for exchanges, dialogue and development in the region. In the printed version of the Manifesto, it is located in a pull-out supplement and in the first twenty pages of the pdf digital version. Here are some extracts.

"IF I HAD TO DO IT AGAIN, I WOULD START WITH CULTURE." Jean Monnet

« Too little consideration is given to the ideological, philosophical, spiritual, religious, cultural and civilisational exchanges that have united – and continue to unite – people on both shores of Mare Nostrum. Yet these exchanges are the glue that holds the Mediterranean mosaic together.

"CONTINENTS SEPARATE PEOPLE, THE SEA BRINGS THEM TOGETHER." André Malraux

The peoples of the Mediterranean Basin are joined by a thousand invisible bridges, for example their lifestyles, dietary habits, heritage, their conception of the family, of happiness, and a certain form of spirituality. In short, there is a certain unity in diversity that is particularly disconcerting on a Mediterranean scale and that sheds some light on the paradoxical feeling of closeness and otherness experienced on both shores.

In this respect, cultural exchanges cannot be regarded as merely contributing a “little extra soul” or as pleasant but less important companion to conventional diplomatic and political exchanges. On the contrary, they are the foundation stone of these exchanges and, in many cases, are what saves them. While the Middle East peace process remains at a deadlock, exchanges among artists and civil society have continued uninterrupted, forging ties that ignore separation barriers and borders. At a time when UfM Foreign Affairs Ministers refuses to sit down at the same table and the meeting of the Heads of State had been put off indefinitely, the Mediterranean region remained the scene of countless cultural initiatives and artists, as well as cultural operators went on talking together.

CULTURE OPENS UP VISTAS THAT REACH FAR BEYOND ECONOMICS AND POLITICS, ESPECIALLY WHEN POLITICS BREAKS DOWN.

Just as human beings cannot be considered simply in terms of production-consumption, international relations cannot be seen only in terms of economic exchange – especially in the Mediterranean region where civilisations have interacted and interchanged for thousands of years.



CULTURAL MANIFESTO for the MEDITERRANEAN

the text

(...)

IN THEIR PERCEPTIVE INTERPRETATION OF REALITY, ARTISTS ARE OFTEN AMONG THE FIRST TO RAISE AWARENESS. PROTEST IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES FOR EXAMPLE, WAS LONG EXPRESSED IN THE ARTS – WELL BEFORE THE ARAB SPRING – OFTEN IN A ROUNDABOUT WAY, BUT ALSO WITH FORESIGHT.

Investing in culture is investing in democracy. Freedom of expression and creation is not just an inalienable right, it is one of the keys to the emancipation of peoples. Thus, creative and cultural vitality is closely interrelated with and contributes to the observance of public liberties.

THIS STILL HOLDS TRUE TODAY. DESPITE THE PRESENT TROUBLES, POLITICAL INSTABILITY AND ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTIES, DESPITE THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF EVERYDAY LIFE, MEDITERRANEAN ARTISTS ARE MORE ACTIVE THAN EVER, ASSERTING THEIR DESIRE TO CREATE AND TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES FREELY.

(...)

Investing in culture is also investing in regional development. Culture is an effective driver in this area. It is of both economic and symbolic value and its yield is far higher than that of any other type of investment. The European and Arab Capital of Culture initiatives offer the host cities and the surrounding regions an unrivalled opportunity to take centre stage and draw visitors, as well as to reap the substantial economic advantages that come with the title. At a time when the knowledge economy is seeing fast growth, it is important to remember that culture is also a key industrial sector.

THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN HAS AN INCOMPARABLY RICH MATERIAL AND IMMATERIAL HERITAGE. THIS IS OF TREMENDOUS VALUE FOR THE REGION'S ECONOMIC VITALITY AND SHOULD BE DEVELOPED FURTHER.

Investing in culture, creation and the transmission of knowledge is undoubtedly a wager on the future for the entire Mediterranean region. (...) Seeking inspiration not only in a sometimes painful present, but also in dreams for a better future, the Mediterranean artists at work today display great vitality, daring and energy. These qualities undoubtedly offer our greatest hope for overcoming our current problems and doubts. (...) It is therefore vital to foster exchanges, cooperation initiatives and the development of cultural projects, which are effective tools for bringing people together and consequently promoting peace and freedom.»

WHAT IS AT STAKE IS A FUTURE, RESOLUTELY CENTRED ON DEMOCRACY IN EVERY COUNTRY IN THE REGION, WITHOUT WHICH THERE CAN BE NO LASTING PEACE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. >>



CULTURAL MANIFESTO for the MEDITERRANEAN
the proposals

SOME LINES OF ACTION IN FAVOUR OF MEDITERRANEAN
CULTURE :

- Ⓜ Putting culture at the heart of political debate in favour of the Mediterranean (p. XII)
- Ⓜ Promoting the mobility of artists and artworks (p.XIII)
- Ⓜ Supporting the development of centres of creation for artists (p. XV)
- Ⓜ « Mediterranean Heritage Days » (p. XVI)
- Ⓜ Adapting education and training to the requirements of the Mediterranean countries (p. XVII)
- Ⓜ Developing a cultural operators network in the Mediterranean (p. XVIII)
- Ⓜ Initiating the concept of a « Mediterranean capital of culture » (p. XIX)



CULTURAL MANIFESTO for the MEDITERRANEAN *the endorsers*

THE ENDORSERS

The endorsers are artists and cultural operators of the Mediterranean world, supporting this Cultural Manifesto for the Mediterranean in order to raise awareness among the decision-makers as well as the public. It aims to draw their attention to the importance of culture in the Mediterranean, in the context of the construction of a regional cooperation framework, more crucial than ever at a time when many countries in the region are building a new future.

They have all agreed – each one with their own personal background, identity, and artistic experience – to join the initiative of the Cultural Council of the Union for the Mediterranean, with whom they have been working in recent years. They aim to act, with their own words and feelings, to promote art and culture as an instrument of progress, dialogue and peace in the Mediterranean.

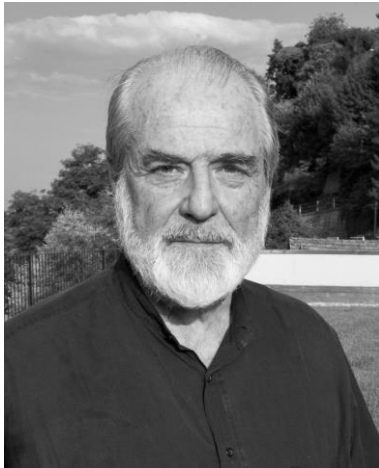
They come from different Mediterranean countries and represent various fields of culture and arts: plastic artists, choreographers, writers, architects, photographers, but also singers, documentary film director, journalist, fashion designer, initiator of gastronomy and heritage projects, contemporary art collector, cultural institutions and events managers...

Among these personalities, we can find in particular, the Italian and internationally acclaimed plastic artist Michelangelo Pistoletto, the Spanish choreographer Blanca Li, the French press cartoonist Plantu, the Tunisian plastic artist Meriem Bouderbala and the Algerian writer and theater director Slimane Benaïssa. Some extracts from their contributions are following below.



CULTURAL MANIFESTO for the MEDITERRANEAN *the endorsers*

MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO



Michelangelo Pistoletto, an Italian painter and sculptor, began showing his work in 1955. With his first mirror-paintings (1961-1962), which incorporate the spectator and the present moment into the work, he sought to bring life into art and to take part in society as an artist. Exhibited in major museums and galleries in Europe and the United States, these works quickly brought him international renown. In 1965 and 1966, he produced a series of works entitled "Oggetti meno", considered to be instrumental in the birth of the *Arte povera* ("poor art") movement, of which he was one of the leading figures. In 1967, he began to step outside the conventional models of art exhibition. He developed the concept of "creative collaboration", having artists from different disciplines interact with their society, a practice which he has continued ever since. His desire to develop the artist's social posture is a guiding force in all of his work, ensuring that art, "the most complete and sensitive expression of thought", can conceive new systems for civil society, especially new political systems.

This ambition materialised in the 1990s with the creation of the Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto foundation in an abandoned textile factory near Biella. Its mission is to engage art in an active relationship with the various spheres of society, in the aim of producing "responsible social transformation".

In 2003, Pistoletto won the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale for his complete body of work, and in 2004, he received the honoris causa doctorate in political science from the University of Turin. In 2007, he received the Wolf Foundation award for his career as an artist, educator and activist. In 2011, he was chosen as the artistic director of *Evento*, the contemporary art festival in Bordeaux, and in 2013, the Louvre is to host an individual exhibition of his work.

<http://www.pistoletto.it/>
www.cittadellarte.it/

« [...] AN INTER-MEDITERRANEAN POLITICAL UNION CANNOT COME INTO BEING WITHOUT FIRST CREATING A CULTURAL NETWORK BETWEEN ALL OF THE COUNTRIES INVOLVED. THIS IS WELL ILLUSTRATED BY THE DIFFICULTIES THAT THE EUROPEAN UNION IS FACING TODAY, WHICH ARE DIRECTLY DUE TO THE LACK OF A SOLID CULTURAL SUSTRATE.

THE PEOPLES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN ARE DISTINGUISHED BY THEIR ETHNIC, IDIOMATIC, AND RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES, WHICH REPRESENT A WIDE VARIETY OF CUSTOMS, TRADITIONS, TASTES, BEHAVIOURS AND FORMS OF EDUCATION. CREATING HARMONY BETWEEN ALL OF THESE DIFFERENT COMPONENTS DEPENDS PRIMARILY ON ART. IT MEANS ENGAGING IN THE PROCESS OF CREATION, AS WHEN PREPARING A CONCERT, PLAY OR PERFORMANCE, BUT ON THE SCALE OF MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETY AS A WHOLE.

GREAT HARMONIES CAN BE CREATED WITH DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS AND LANGUAGES. AMONG THE GREAT VARIETY OF LANGUAGES, CUSTOMS, TASTES, SOUNDS, PRODUCTS AND SPECIALITIES, ART CAN FIND THE HUMAN AND INSTRUMENTAL MATERIALS NEEDED TO PUT ON AN ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL CONCERT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. « LOVE DIFFERENCE » WANTS TO USE THIS MATERIAL TO MEET AND BRING TOGETHER ARTISTS, IN ORDER TO INCORPORATE THEM INTO A PROJECT OF INTERCONTINENTAL SCOPE. [...] »



CULTURAL MANIFESTO for the MEDITERRANEAN *the endorsers*

BLANCA LI



Blanca Li, an Andalucian from Granada who has lived in France for twenty years, is a choreographer, dancer, director and designer of interactive museum installations on the theme “Come dance with me”.

From traditional flamenco to modern dance, in which she trained with Martha Graham in New York, Blanca is multi-faceted, insatiable, polysemous and popular, an embodiment of multiculturalism and openness to the unknown, like the Mediterranean itself, to which she feels closely connected. In 2013, her dance company will celebrate its 20th anniversary and 13 creations. It made its debut in 1993 with a show entitled *Nana et Lila*, at the intersection between modern flamenco and Marrakech Gwana trance. From *Songe du Minotaure* (1998) to *Al Andalus-L'amour sorcier* (2004), the original Mediterranean is never far-off. It can be found in the ancestry of most of the dancers, and in the two flagship shows currently on international tours: *Macadam*, *Macadam* (1999 and 2011), which won the *Globe de Cristal* (2007) in the Best Opera/Ballet category, and *ElektroKif* (2011), with young hip hop and electro dancers.

Drawing from many different forms of corporal expression, Blanca Li has also developed an individual career separate from her company, in various artistic fields, such as directing operas and musicals, acting in films (e.g. *Gazon maudit* and *Le code a changé*), and directing both short and full-length films (e.g. *Le Défi* which was released in 2002). She has also produced numerous audiovisual works and collaborated on various advertisements and video clips. In the visual arts and multimedia, Blanca Li gave her first individual exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum in León in 2008, which she followed with an interactive installation at the *Noche Blanca* in Madrid in 2009. She designed an exceptional and developed version of this installation for the Blanca Li *Fête de la Danse* at the *Grand Palais* in 2011.

<http://www.blancali.fr>

« [...] WHO COULD FAIL TO SEE THE BEAUTY IN CREATING BRIDGES BETWEEN THE THOUSAND SHORES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN ? HERE, ARTISTS HAVE MORE THAN THEIR SHARE.

EXPOSED TO MULTICULTURALISM FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, TO THE MIX OF STYLES AND PASSIONS, TO THE CREATION OF A MIXED AND MULTIPLE IDENTITY, THE MEDITERRANEAN IDENTITY IN AND OF ITSELF COULD BE A METAPHOR FOR THE ARTISTIC PROCESS. MORE CONCRETELY, MEETINGS AND COLLABORATIVE WORK BETWEEN THE ARTISTS WHO IDENTIFY WITH THIS ORIGINAL SEA STRIKE AS ESSENTIAL AND VITAL, TODAY MORE THAN EVER. AS HISTORIC CURRENTS ARE SWIRLING AND SOCIETAL MUTATIONS ARE AT PLAY IN MANY COUNTRIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, CREATIVE LIBERTY, AS WELL AS MEANS OF CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION, EXCHANGES OF KNOWLEDGE AND MOBILITY OF ARTWORKS, PUBLIC AND ARTISTS, STRIKE ME AS AN ESSENTIAL CONDITION FOR CREATING GREATER INTELLIGENCE BETWEEN THE PEOPLES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN.[...] »



CULTURAL MANIFESTO for the MEDITERRANEAN *the endorsers*

PLANTU



© Plantu 2012

After taking several drawing classes at Ecole Saint-Luc in Brussels, in 1972, Jean Plantureux, or “Plantu”, joined the newspaper *Le Monde* in 1972, and starting in 1985, published a daily drawing in the paper. His drawings have also been published in *Le Monde diplomatique*, *Phosphore* and *L'Étudiant* as well as in *L'Express* since 1991. Fairly quickly, he was approached to exhibit his drawings in France and abroad and won several awards: the Mumm award in 1988, the Dark Humour award in 1989, the Spanish trophy of the Prix Gat Perich (international caricature award) and in 2011, Second Prize at the 13th Porto World Cartoon Festival. Plantu also creates sculptures of political characters and has published more than fifty books of his drawings.

In 2006, Kofi Annan and Plantu brought together twelve of the greatest press illustrators at the United Nations. This event gave birth to the Cartooning for Peace/Dessins pour la Paix initiative, aimed at promoting mutual understanding and respect between peoples, with press illustration as a means of expressing a universal language. Since its creation, the association has organized many exhibitions and gatherings; it is particularly active in the Middle East, where it allows illustrators from countries in conflict to share a common project.

<http://www.cartooningforpeace.org/>

« [...] ILLUSTRATORS ARE NOT JUST PEOPLE WHO DRAW PICTURES. THEY ARE ALSO THERE TO CREATE MEANING, TO CAUSE A CERTAIN DISCOMFORT, AND ABOVE ALL, THEY QUESTION THEIR RESPECTIVE SOCIETIES. SOMETIMES THEY EVEN PREDICT THE FUTURE. THE GOAL OF CARTOONING FOR PEACE IS TO BRING TOGETHER ALL OF THESE ILLUSTRATORS, WHO HAVE SO MUCH TO SHARE WITH EACH OTHER, REGARDLESS OF THEIR CULTURE OR RELIGION. TOGETHER, WE TRY TO CREATE DRAWINGS THAT MAKE PEOPLE THINK AND REACT, BUT WITHOUT BEING BLASPHEMOUS OR OFFENSIVE, REMAINING RESPECTFUL OF EVERYONE'S BELIEFS.

ENRICHED BY THEIR EXPERIENCES, I THINK THAT WE NEED TO PUBLISH DRAWINGS FROM THE ARAB WORLD, ISRAEL AND ELSEWHERE, IN ORDER TO INCREASE OUR KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THESE CULTURES. IT IS EASY TO SEE HOW PRESS DRAWINGS, HUMOUR AND OTHER FORMS OF CULTURE CAN BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER, BRING US IN TOUCH WITH, HUMANISE, AND HELP US UNDERSTAND THE MAJOR POLITICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL STAKES OF OUR TIME, THROUGH THOSE WHO ARE LIVING THEM, AND WHO ARE ALSO OUR CLOSE NEIGHBOURS IN THIS WORLD. »



CULTURAL MANIFESTO for the MEDITERRANEAN *the endorsers*

MERIEM BOUDERBALA



© Amel Zmerli

Born in Tunis, Meriem Bouderbala studied engraving and painting at the Aix-en-Provence School of Fine Arts, and Chelsea College of Art and Design in London.

A visual artist, painter, photographer and video maker, she has been showing her work since 1987 through both individual and collective exhibitions in numerous galleries and museums, notably in France, England, Tunisia and Morocco. A central theme in her work is the question of Orientalism, particularly the fantasies projected onto eastern women. There is a diversity and creative boldness to her work which have not escaped the attention of art critics. She received the Paul Ricard Foundation Award in 1998 and the Michelin Prix Centenaire in 1999.

In 2001, she returned to Tunisia. She is working increasingly in photography, placing herself in the picture and using this medium as a painter would, as a material with which to work and experiment. She also works as an exhibition commissioner: in 2003 for the Rencontres d'art contemporain de la Medina in Tunis, in 2006 for the Tunisian portion of the exhibition "L'image révélée, de l'orientalisme à l'art contemporain", and most recently, in June 2012 for the Printemps des Arts at Abdellia Palace in La Marsa. This artistic event had significant political repercussions when certain works were deemed "blasphemous", sparking demonstrations and threats against the artists.

<http://meriem.bouderbala.free.fr/>

« [...] IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT IN TUNISIA, AS IN MANY OTHER MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES, AS IN MANY OTHER MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES, IT IS A MATTER OF OCCUPYING THE FIELD OF CULTURE AND ENABLING ITS ACCESS TO EVERYONE. IT IS NOT THE ELITIST AND SEGREGATIVE CULTURE VALIDATED BY THE ART « AUTHORITIES », BUT RATHER CULTURE IN THE BROADER SENSE OF THE TERM, LIKE FREUD'S *KULTURARBEIT*, « THE WORK OF CULTURE » OR « THE WORK OF CIVILISATION ». EVERYTHING IS AT STAKE NOW, WHICH IS WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO ACT QUICKLY, EVEN AT THE RISK OF CUTTING CORNERS, IN A HIGH-SPEED RACE AGAINST THE RETURN OF ANY FORM OF TOTALITARIANISM. IN SHOWING THEIR COMMITMENT, THOSE INVOLVED ARE SIGNING AN UNWRITTEN MANIFESTO IN FAVOUR OF CULTURE AND AGAINST WHAT DENIES IT. OCCUPYING THE FIELD MEANS PLOUGHING AND PLANTING IT.

[...]

THIS WORK IS INDISPENSABLE AND IS AT THE BASE OF WHAT IS PLAYING OUT IN THE ARAB WORLD. THE KNOWLEDGE OF DIFFERENT CULTURES AND OTHER FORMS OF EXPRESSION GIVES ACCESS TO SOURCES OF NOVEL PROFESSIONS, OF OTHER "CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS". ART DOES NOT HELP RESOLVE ALL OF THE "PROBLEMS OF SOCIETY", BUT IT IS A "NECESSARY LUXURY" THAT MUST BE DEFENDED. ART KNOWS HOW TO SAY WHAT THOUGHT OR WORDS HAVE NOT YET SAID ANYWHERE ELSE; IN THIS SENSE, IT DOES NOT OFFER ANSWERS BUT RATHER CONDITIONS FOR THEIR EMERGENCE. ART IS BREATH; APNOEA LASTING TOO LONG CAUSES CLINICAL DEATH OF THE BRAIN. »



CULTURAL MANIFESTO for the MEDITERRANEAN *the endorsers*

SLIMANE BENAÏSSA



Born in Guelma, Algeria, Slimane Benaïssa, is a well-known author and director and one of the pioneers of popular Algerian theatre. He began his theatre career in 1967 when he wrote *Boualem zid el Gouddem* (“Boualem moves forward”), while also codirecting Algeria’s first amateur theatre company. A friend of Kateb Yacine, he adapted the writer’s *La poudre d’intelligence* for the stage and went on to translate his entire body of work into dialectal Arabic. In 1978, he created his own independent theatre company in Algeria, within which he directed his own plays, such as *Boualem zid el gouddem*, *Babour ghraq* (“the Boat is sinking”), and *Rak khouya ou ana chkoune?* (“Beyond the Veil”, french title “Au-delà du voile”). Since its creation, the company has given more than 1200 performances in Algeria and abroad.

In 1993, Slimane Benaïssa had to leave his country and moved to France. The same year, he received the Grand Prix from the society of authors and composers of dramatic works in French (SACD). His renown in France grew quickly with his play *Au-delà du voile*, which he originally wrote in Arabic and then translated into French, and even more so with the great success of his first novel *Les Fils de l’amertume*, published in 1996. The play was adapted for the stage for the festival d’Avignon, and went on to enjoy a major tour. After this success, Slimane Benaïssa was nominated by Jacques Chirac, then President of the French Republic, to the Haut Conseil de la Francophonie (high council for the french-speaking world) in 2000. He enjoyed similar success the following year

with his play entitled *Prophètes sans Dieu*.

In 2011, he returned to the Algerian stage with a new play entitled *El Moudja Welat*, and he is now pursuing his career in theatre on both sides of the Mediterranean. In October 2012, he presented his new creation in French *Exils sans GPS* at the Théâtre de l’aventure in Lille.

Slimane Benaïssa is also an actor and takes to the stage to bring his own characters to life. Since 2010, he has also made occasional appearances on the French television series *Plus belle la vie*, set in Marseilles.

www.slimane-benaïssa.com

« [...] WORKING-CLASS MEDITERRANEAN CULTURE, IN THE CITIES, LIVES IN THE PORTS. IT CLIMBS INTO THE CITY IN THE ARMS OF FISHERMEN AND IS TOLD IN NEIGHBOURHOOD CAFÉS AND LOCAL DIVES. IT IS MADE UP OF STORIES AND SONGS, AND ESPECIALLY A STATE OF MIND WHICH, FOR WORKING-CLASS PEOPLE, IS SIMPLY A VALUE SYSTEM WHICH IS PASSED ON ORALLY, A SORT OF SAILOR’S CODE PASSED ON TO EARTH-DWELLERS IN ORDER TO REMIND THEM THAT THEY TOO ARE CHILDREN OF THE SEA. THESE WORKING-CLASS CULTURES, WHICH HAVE BEEN FORGED OVER THE CENTURIES, ADAPTING FIRST TO CLIMATE, THEN TO BELIEFS AND INFLUENCES SHARED WITH THE REST OF THE PEOPLES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN, WERE REVISITED IN THE 1980S, AND THIS CULTURE OF THE SUN WAS VEILED.

[...] AS IF AN EBB HAD PULLED THE MEDITERRANEAN FAR FROM US, AND THE SEA WAS NO LONGER PART OF US, OUR BREATHING, OUR PLEASURES AND OUR COUNTRY. [...] ISLAMISTS HAVE RESTORED GOD’S PLACE; IT IS HIM WHO HAS CREATED THIS BEAUTY, AND WE HAVE TO COME BACK TO HIM, NOT BEAUTY. BUT BEYOND ALL OF THAT, DESPITE THE GREAT DIVERSITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, A SHARED CULTURAL DIMENSION REMAINS. IT IS TOWARDS THIS FOUNDATION THAT WE MUST GO, TO FIND THE MIRROR THROUGH WHICH WE ALL LOOK ALIKE. »



CULTURAL MANIFESTO for the MEDITERRANEAN *the endorsers*

With also the accounts of :

NADIM ASFAR, *photographer and video director*

« [...] THE LACK OF RECORDS AND WRITTEN, VISUAL, ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES FROM THE PERIOD BEFORE THE 20TH CENTURY, THE LACK OF CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND DOCUMENTATION, ARE OBSTACLES TO OUR KNOWLEDGE OF EACH OTHER, OUR ORIGINS AND OUR IDENTITY, AND CRACKS IN THE BODY OF THIS REGION THROUGH WHICH CONFLICTS, INTOLERANCE AND IGNORANCE SEEP IN. [...] THIS IS WHY IN LEBANON AND THROUGHOUT THE MEDITERRANEAN, WE MUST AT ALL COSTS CONTINUE THE EFFORTS AND INITIATIVES AIMED AT CREATING CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND A DEEP AND LASTING ARTISTIC SENSIBILITY. »

KARIMA BERGER, *writer, author of*

“Toi ma soeur étrangère. Algérie-France sans guerre et sans tabou » (éditions du Rocher)

« [...] IT WAS THE SEA THIS TIME THAT WAS PRESSING AGAINST ME, WHOLE WOMAN CONCH OPEN, ARDENT BENEATH MY BREATH, I WAS THE SHELL BURSTING WITH SONGS AND RUMOURS, RIGHT BESIDE ME, WE HEARD PEOPLE MOANING OR COMING THE GREAT SEA OF THE MIDDLE, THE STOMACH OF MANKIND. »

SÉBASTIEN CAILLEUX, *photographer, President of the association École d'art au village and initiator of the project « Dessine-moi la Méditerranée »*

« [...] ENSEIGNER LE PATRIMOINE AUX ENFANTS MÉDITERRANÉENS, LES CONDUIRE SUR LES SITES, LEUR PERMETTRE DE DÉCOUVRIR LES FABULEUSES COLLECTIONS DES MUSÉES, OU PLUS PROSAÏQUEMENT LES GUIDER DANS LEURS QUARTIERS, À LA RENCONTRE D'UN QUOTIDIEN IMMÉDIAT, C'EST OFFRIR À LA JEUNESSE LA POSSIBILITÉ D'OUVRIER UN LIVRE OÙ ILS DÉCOUVRENT CE QUI LES RAPPROCHE, CE QUI LES UNIT. C'EST LEUR DONNER LES CORDES QUI SERVIRONT DE LIEN. [...]»

SANDRA BESSIS, *singer specialised in Sephardic and Mediterranean music*

« [...] THROUGH A VOICE, AN INSTRUMENT, A PEN OR A BRUSH, THROUGH EACH ARTIST'S ACT, SOMETHING IS SIMPLY SAID, CONVEYED, SOMETHING THAT HAS THE VERY PRECIOUS QUALITY OF SPEAKING TO THE HEART, ABOVE OR BELOW WORDS AND THEORIES, AND THUS THIS THING LIVES AND VIBRATES IN EACH OF US, BETWEEN US, OUTSIDE THE WALLS ERECTED BY MEN, THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND RELIGIOUS BARRIERS. BOTH STRONG AND BOUND, OF REVOLT OR POETRY, THIS IS WHAT EXISTS AROUND THE MARE NOSTRUM, WHICH HAS ALWAYS EXISTED, AND WHICH WE WOULD LIKE TO MAKE MORE VISIBLE, STRONGER, AND MORE FAIRLY SHARED IN THESE COMPLICATED TIMES. [...] »



CULTURAL MANIFESTO for the MEDITERRANEAN *the endorsers*

KAMAL MOUZAWAK, Founder of Souk el Tayeb, association of farmers' market of Lebanon, and Tawlet, cooperative kitchen restaurant

« [...] IN A COUNTRY AS FRAGMENTED AND DIVERSE AS LEBANON, WE WANTED TO BUILD COMMON UNDERSTANDING, TO FIND A COMMON GROUND BETWEEN ALL OF THESE PEOPLE WHO ARE SO DIFFERENT : DRUZE, SHIITE, SUNNI, CHRISTIAN, FROM ALL CHURCHES, MARONITE AND ORTHODOX, AND PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT POLITICAL PARTIES, A REAL MELTING POT. BUT AMONG ALL OF THESE DIFFERENT GROUPS, WHAT BROUGHT THEM TOGETHER WAS THE EARTH, THE FRUITS OF THE EARTH AND WHAT WE DO WITH THEM, AND THUS COOKING. [...] »

PATRICK BOUCHAIN, architect, founder of the *Construire* agency

« [...] HASSAN FATHY DEVELOPED A FORM OF ARCHITECTURE DESIGNED AND BUILT IN HARMONY WITH THE OCCUPANTS AND THE LANDSCAPE, RESISTING THE PREFABRICATED MODELS IMPOSED BY A RULING INSTITUTION. THIS IS WHERE HIS PRACTICE SHOWS US A DEEPLY CULTURAL CONCEPTION OF ARCHITECTURE, IN THE SENSE THAT IT EMERGES FROM ONE OF THE CRADLES OF CIVILISATION: FOR HIM, THE CITY EXPRESSES THE CULTURAL QUALITIES OF THE MILIEU IN WHICH IT UNFOLDS. THIS IS WHAT WE NEED TO GET (BACK) IN TOUCH WITH TODAY. [...] »

DIMA BAWAB, soprano opera singer

« [...] THE PALESTINE YOUTH ORCHESTRA IS ONE OF MANY EXAMPLES THAT PROVIDES LIVING PROOF OF TOLERANCE, HOPE AND POSSIBLE MEDITERRANEAN UNITY. DURING THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS, IT BRINGS TOGETHER YOUNG MUSICIANS FROM THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN, FROM PALESTINE, JORDAN, LEBANON, SYRIA AND EGYPT WHO GATHER TO PRODUCE AN ORIENTAL AND WESTERN CLASSICAL PROGRAMME. (...) MUSIC HAS ALLOWED ME ACCESS TO THE COUNTRIES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN; MY VOICE IS STAMPED WITH VISAS FROM MANY COUNTRIES IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES. SO, IF CULTURE COULD NOT OPEN THOSE DOORS FOR ME, WHAT COULD HAVE? [...] »

JEAN-PIERRE BLANC, Director of the Villa Noailles, art centre in Hyères

« [...] THE MEDITERRANEAN IS FASCINATING AND MAGNETIC. IT HAS SCULPTED FASHIONS AND PERMEATED MINDS. ITS SECULAR TRADITIONS, MYTHS, HISTORY AND KNOW-HOW ARE EXTRAORDINARY. THE MEDITERRANEAN, THE ONE I LOVE, CONTINUES TO PROVIDE DESIGNERS WITH EXCEPTIONAL TOOLS FOR EXPRESSING AND ASSERTING THEMSELVES. [...] »

ELIAS ANASTAS, architect, founder of Local Industries

« TO RESPOND TO SOCIAL QUESTIONS AND TERRITORIAL ISSUES THAT ARE VERY COMMON IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION, ARCHITECTURE MUST INTERACT WITH THE FACTORS OF MODERN-DAY LIFE TO SHAPE THE SOCIETIES OF TOMORROW. (...) MY ANSWER DRAWS INSPIRATION FROM THE ARCHITECTURAL CULTURE OF AN ARAB NATION, PALESTINE, ITSELF ENRICHED WITH A WESTERN ARCHITECTURAL CULTURE. [...] »



CULTURAL MANIFESTO for the MEDITERRANEAN *the endorsers*

SYHEM BELKHODJA, Choreographer, Director of the festival of dance in Carthage, the Tunis documentary film festival and the festival "Design and fashion in Carthage"

« [...] BE IT DANCE, FILM OR MORE RECENTLY FASHION AND DESIGN, I HAVE ALWAYS SOUGHT TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FREEDOM AND EXPRESSION IN TUNISIA, BOTH FOR YOUNG ARTISTS UNABLE TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY WITHOUT A VISA, AND THE PUBLIC WHICH FACES THE SAME RESTRICTIONS. AS THEY COULD NOT DRAW ON INSPIRATION FROM "ELSEWHERE", I TRIED, WITH MY SCHOOLS AND FESTIVALS, TO BRING THOSE "OUTSIDE SOURCES" HERE. INDIRECTLY AND THROUGH ART, ARTISTS HAVE CREATED MEANS OF DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL AND CRITICAL INSTRUMENTS. [...] IN THE CURRENT SITUATION, IT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER TO CONTINUE THE EFFORTS WE HAVE TAKEN FOR THE YOUTH OF TUNISIA. [...] »

MAURIZIO GALANTE, fashion designer and co-founder of the design company INTERWARE

« [...] NIGHT-TIME WOULD RECOUNT THE POWER OF THE SEA. ITS ANCIENT, ANIMAL SMELLS CAME FROM THE DARKNESS OF THE DISTANT HORIZON THAT APPEARED, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE, IN THE NIGHT.
AS IF SLOWLY DIGESTING, THE SEA WOULD BREATHE THE FLAVOURS OF ITS DEPTHS. [...] »

GIULIANA SETARI CARUSI, President of the Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto and the Dena Foundation for Contemporary Art

« [...] IN EVERY DIRECTION, THE COASTLINES OF THE COUNTRIES BATHING IN ITS WATERS ARE CHISELLED WITH PENINSULAS, GULFS, BAYS, DENS AND RAMPARTS. THE DESIRE TO TRAVEL, DISCOVER AND LAY HOLD OF THE WORLD IS A POWERFUL LEVER THAT HAS STIMULATED THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE LIVED IN THOSE COUNTRIES [...] THE MEDITERRANEAN THUS EMERGES AS THE PLACE OF ADOPTION OF A CREATIVE IMAGINATION WHERE EACH CORNER CORRESPONDS TO A DIFFERENT *GENIUS LOCI*. A CRADLE OF SUCCESSIVE CIVILISATIONS INTERTWINING THE RELATIONSHIPS THAT HAVE FORGED OUR HISTORY OF THE WEST AND THE NEAR EAST, ITS MIRROR OF WATER HAS SHAPED AND REFLECTS THEM ALL. [...] »

ALDRIC BECKMANN, architect, co-founder of Beckmann-N'Thépé agency

« [...] THE SEA THAT UNITES SO MUCH DIVERSITY, WHERE IN A MELTING-POT OF CULTURES AND OPENINGS, EXCHANGES OFFER IMMENSE ADVENTURES IN LANDS AS FERTILE AS THEY ARE ARID, FROM EAST TO WEST. THAT MEDITERRANEAN WHERE OPPOSING RELIGIONS DIGEST THE PHILOSOPHIC CONCERNS OF THE CRADLE OF EUROPEAN MODERNITY IN DIALOGUE, TOLERANCE AND ALLIANCE OF CIVILISATIONS. [...] »



CULTURAL MANIFESTO for the MEDITERRANEAN *the endorsers*

SAMIRA IBRAHIM, journalist, TV-host of the "Planète Investigation" program on France Ô

« [...] CULTURE [...] IS VITAL TO COMPREHEND A COUNTRY. WE NEED THIS IN-DEPTH WORK, WHICH GOES BEYOND THE IMMEDIACY OF MEDIA COVERAGE AND THE ONGOING STREAM OF NEWS. A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OFFERS EXTENSIVE, ALTERNATIVE UNDERSTANDING OF THE MAJOR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AT WORK BEHIND THE TWISTS AND TURNS OF CURRENT AFFAIRS. [...] »

AADEL ESSAADANI, stage designer and technical director of the *Fabrique culturelle des Abattoirs de Casablanca*, President of the association *Racines*

« [...] CULTURE IS A FACTOR OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND LASTLY, ECONOMIC GROWTH. IT'S ALL INTER-RELATED, THAT IS WHY IT'S VITAL TO ENGAGE IN AMBITIOUS CULTURAL POLICIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. NEEDS AND PROBLEMS VERY OFTEN CONVERGE. CULTURE, HERITAGE AND DEMOCRACY FORM AN INSEPARABLE THREE- FOLD ISSUE ON WHICH WE MUST WORK. »

VANESSA ROUSSELOT, film director, director of the film « (No) Laughing matter. A quest of the Palestinian humour »

« TO ILLUSTRATE THE IMPORTANT ROLE CULTURE PLAYS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER MORE, I CHOSE A TOTALLY DIFFERENT APPROACH AND DECIDED TO LOOK AT THE POWER OF HUMOUR. IT'S AN EMINENT PART OF POPULAR CULTURE AND A KEY TRAIT OF A PEOPLE OR COMMUNITY. [...] JOKES ARE ALSO SO POWERFUL BECAUSE THEY ARE POPULAR. [...] ON SUCH A COMPLICATED, CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECT AS THE SITUATION IN PALESTINE TODAY, IN A WAY, "JOKES DO NOT LIE" [...] »