



Celebrating
50 years: EU-Australia

Commitment to creativity and *culture*

Important, ongoing cultural links exist between Australia and Europe. These are seen in a myriad of ways from language and family histories, to food and design, to art and education. And despite the global financial crisis, Europe has retained its commitment to creativity and culture.

Right: *Foodjects: Design and the new cuisine in Spain* was held at the Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre, in July 2012.

Over the past 50 years, cultural relations between the EU and Australia have been transformed. In part, this reflects the continuing migration of Europeans to Australia (especially from eastern Europe and the Balkans), complementing the earlier waves of southern European immigrants. However, it also reflects the evolution of diplomatic relations between the EU and Australia, and Australia and various Member States. Some European communities have been in Australia for many years, yet they still have close connections with family and business partners in their home countries. These communities support film festivals, concert tours, language programs and musical events. >

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Lyn Gallacher, EU-QANTAS Journalist Award, 2010





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Lyn Gallacher, EU-QANTAS Journalist Award, 2010

European cultural events in Australia

EU Member States regularly hold cultural events across Australia. Some of these have become an important part of the Australian cultural landscape. Some examples of recent events offered by the Member States include the following.

AUSTRIAN EMBASSY

The Austrian Embassy proudly presented an Australian Premiere of Karl Markovics’ masterpiece *Atmen (Breathing)* in the World Dramatic Competition at the inaugural Cockatoo Island Film Festival in October 2012. The film was awarded the Jury Prize for Artistic Vision.

EMBASSY OF BELGIUM

On 21 November 2012, the Belgian Embassy hosted a classical piano concert for 200 guests in Sydney Opera House in honour of HRH Prince Philippe of Belgium, who was heading a large trade delegation. Harpsichordist Jos Van Immerseel, a Belgian born in Antwerp, played on a (remake) instrument from the time of the composers.

BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION

The British High Commission organised a Francis Bacon event as part of the GREAT campaign on 29 November 2012. A coffee tour started at the Restaurant of the Art Gallery of NSW, and was followed by a guided tour of the exhibition. *Francis Bacon: Five Decades*.

EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

On 5 December 2012, *Domovina*, a concert inspired by Croatian folklore, was held at the ANU School of Music. Realised in partnership with the Embassy of the Republic of Croatia in Canberra and the Centenary, this gala concert combined music with poetry and song, and embraced the traditional Croatian cultural practice with western art music.

However, culture is much more than artistic expression. At its heart are questions of identity, meaning and language. The cultural ties between Europe and Australia take on a much deeper and significant character when considered from this perspective. Over 70% of Australians can trace their roots to Europe, and even now, the number of Europeans visiting Australia each year (1.3 million), and Australians visiting Europe (1 million), is very important in sustaining cultural ties. For many Australians, these ties are most public through food: not only the number and diversity of Italian, Greek, Spanish restaurants (and of course, French), but also in the transition that has occurred in home cooking. However, the implications of the cultural ties go much further than this, not least through ties of language, values and family histories.

Despite the growing connections between Australia and Asia, this pattern is likely to continue as the European Union and its Member States recognise the importance of culture. All invest considerable resources in supporting cultural activities for their own citizens, and some do so globally, particularly in relation to language studies as well as cultural events.



Europe's commitment to culture

The strength of this commitment can be seen through the words of Lyn Gallacher, winner of the EU–Qantas Journalist of the Year award in 2010. The EU–Qantas Journalist Award began in 1992 and is conducted by the Delegation of the European Union in conjunction with the National Press Club. Dr Gallacher, a features producer on ABC Radio National, was concerned about the fate of culture in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. In spite of her gloomy expectations, on her European journey, she saw:

'...Creativity and culture creeping further and further up the EU Agenda, to the point where creative industries, arts, education and culture were being touted as a survival tactic. It was put to me like this by the Deputy Mayor of Paris, Christophe Girard: *Culture is expensive, but ignorance is more expensive. You start with education and culture then maybe you have a good economy, NOT the other way around.* Interesting. Not the kind of the thinking that fuels the Australian economy and our mining boom.

'Of course there have been cuts, known in current parlance as 'austerity measures' that, like everything else, have left the cultural sector reeling. All this most people know about from reading news reports, but what I learnt from being there was that there is more to the story, and that the slash and burn mentality is not as universal as you might expect. If you take the time to dig a little deeper, you find that in spite of the fiscal crisis, or perhaps even because of it, a transition is happening. Meaning that many of the more agile-minded individuals, policy-makers and creative thinkers are using the global economic crisis as an opportunity to further the cause of culture, rather than embark on more cuts. >

Left: Handwritten: *Ten centuries of manuscript treasures from Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin* presented 100 significant manuscripts from Germany's largest library at the National Library of Australia.

Middle: A key cultural event, *Rubber Duck* by Dutch artist Florentijn Hofman, was held at Darling Harbour during the Sydney Festival 2013. Image: Jamie Williams.

Right: The annual *Alliance Française French Film Festival*, held in six Australian capital cities, is the most important French film festival outside of France.





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CYPRUS HIGH COMMISSION

To highlight the *Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union*, the Nicholson Museum at the University of Sydney and the High Commission of the Republic of Cyprus collaborated in the opening of an exhibition of Cypriot Antiquities titled *Aphrodite's island: Australian archaeologists in Cyprus* on 29 November 2012. This exhibition was preceded by an extraordinary exhibition, *Ceramic art of ancient Cyprus*, in collaboration with the Ian Potter Museum of Art of the University of Melbourne, which ended on 7 October 2012.

CONSULATE OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

One of the key Czech cultural events of 2012 was the performance of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra on the occasion of the re-opening of a premier concert hall in Melbourne. It was a rare opportunity to hear one of the great orchestras of the world in two exclusive concerts at the Art Centre in Melbourne, on 26 and 27 August 2012.

EMBASSY OF FINLAND

On 19 October 2012 the Embassy of Finland hosted the *National Youth Opera Concert* at the function room of the Embassy of Finland.

EMBASSY OF FRANCE

The biggest event of the Embassy of France is organised in collaboration with the Alliance Française network - the annual *Alliance Française French Film Festival* held in March and April each year. It is the most important French film festival outside of France with more than 120,000 people attending. It starts in Sydney and then continues to the five other capital cities.

Right: The Prague State Opera ballet ensemble presenting *Giselle*.

'The really heartening aspect to all this, and the thing that impressed me more than anything else, is that the people care. In Britain, I heard talk-back callers telling the Arts Minister on live radio that they would rather have the money to go to a music concert than to fix up the bathroom tap. The Paris Opera Ballet put its ticket price up 10%, and much to its surprise, audience numbers also went up 10%. While I was there, crowds filled the streets in Rome protesting about cuts to the Italian opera. Students were at the barricades in London to protect their universities, and in Germany there was a furore surrounding changes to Stuttgart's historic railway station. All of this points to a widespread and deep conviction that in Europe, the arts matter, that culture is worth fighting for, and that education is what a democracy should do.

'So the story I saw unfolding was about more than money. Sure, that was part of the equation, but it was not the whole equation and it was certainly not the most interesting part. My feeling was that, for Europe, culture is not an optional extra. It is not something you can get back to after the economy has been fixed. It is an ongoing fire in the belly.'

Continuing cultural linkages

Similarly, the winner of the German award for an Australian journalist in 2012, Michael Shirrefs, was struck by both the strength of the continuing cultural linkages between Australia and Europe, and by the commitment of the EU and its Member States to supporting cultural activity. Mr Shirrefs, the presenter of ABC Radio National's weekly arts feature program, *Creative Instinct*, gained insights through his visit to German cultural institutions. He says:

'Despite the current fixation that both Australia and Europe have with the vast economies of China, India and Korea, they still have more in common with each other. This conversation is still rich and relevant and must not be allowed to falter. >





'It highlights the value and necessity of keeping cultural and economic conversations in constant sync with each other.'

Michael Shirrefs, Winner, German Award for an Australian Journalist, 2012

EMBASSY OF GERMANY

Handwritten: Ten centuries of manuscript treasures from Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin was on display at the National Library of Australia from November 2011 to March 2012. It presented about 100 significant manuscripts from Germany's largest library, covering a millenium of European history of ideas. The exhibition set a strong focus of German representatives of music, philosophy, art and science.

EMBASSY OF HUNGARY

In October 2006, Hungarians came together to commemorate the *50th Anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution* across Australia, from the NSW Parliament to Federation Square. Hungarians remembered the 13 heroic days of struggle against Soviet domination, they mourned those who gave their lives in the Revolution and gave tribute to those surviving freedom fighters that fled Hungary after hundreds of Soviet tanks crushed the uprising.

MALTA HIGH COMMISSION

In April 2012, the Malta High Commission celebrated the *70th Anniversary of the Award of the George Cross to Malta*, in recognition of the Island's heroic bravery during World War II. Activities included presentations, an exhibition and commemorations at the George Cross Monument and at the Shelter of Peace, Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne.

EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS

A key cultural event, *Rubber Duck* by Dutch artist Florentijn Hofman, was held at Darling Harbour during the Sydney Festival 2013. *Rubber Duck* was one of the biggest attractions of the festival. The exhibition was combined with the screening of *Dutch Profiles*, a series of documentaries about Dutch design, fashion and architecture at the Powerhouse Museum.

EMBASSY OF PORTUGAL

The Embassy of Portugal has hosted concerts performed by the popular Fado singer, *Mariza*, at the Sydney Opera House, which were big sell-out successes in 2006, 2007 and 2009.





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Above: Zoo Creative, *Lorea Fruit Basket Copia*, 2007, stratified, pressed natural wood. Photograph: Larrison An Pimoulier

EMBASSY OF ROMANIA

On 10 December 2012, at the Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Embassy of Romania with the support of the Kingston for Human Rights Association in Melbourne organised *Say NO to Violence* - a complex event reflecting the European approach of the theme in the general context of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Several activities, including two exhibitions were held at Kingston Arts Centre and City Hall.

EMBASSY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

The Slovak National Folklore Ballet *Lúcnic*, famous for its many successful international tours and known as "The Rolling Stones of Folklore", proudly presented its premiere *Beautiful and Young - Australia Tour 2010* in October and November that year. *Lúcnic*, inspired by national traditions, is a creation of mastery and fantasy combined with a unique dance and music show based on Slovak folklore which has triumphed around the world for more than 60 years.

'The problem for Australia is that it often lazily dismisses Europe as old, fixed, related to our past, not our future. There are some of us, working in various Australian media outlets, who still see the evolving European project as crucial to an understanding of ourselves and a reading of the future. My experience during my recent journeys through Europe has been of an urgent openness to the conversations and an easy sharing of wisdom. It highlights the value and necessity of keeping cultural and economic conversations in constant sync with each other.

'The skill of a country like Germany for example, in maintaining strong resourcing to its global cultural presence in direct parallel to its economic, trade and political interests across the world, is at odds with the cultural retreat of most countries in times of stress. What it demonstrates most is that, from both sides of the world, the need is for strong bridges on which to share the burden of an increasingly uncertain and mutually consequential future.' •

EMBASSY OF SPAIN

Foodjects: Design and the new cuisine in Spain was held at the Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre, in July 2012. The *Foodjects* exhibition highlighted the Spanish New Cuisine that has become a concept that goes far beyond the culinary dominion. This has incited a group of designers to bring their art into a fusion which has given birth to amazing new products.

EMBASSY OF SWEDEN

In 2012, the Embassy of Sweden celebrated the Centenary of Swedish author and playwright August Strindberg (1849-1912). Strindberg was a trailblazer in his time and his work still provokes audiences in theatres around the world. The Embassy of Sweden participated as a cultural partner in the production of one of his most famous plays, *Miss Julie*, at the Darlinghurst Theatre in Sydney from 12 October to 11 November 2012.

From left to right: Palau de les Arts, Valencia, Spain; Venetian masks; Le Louvre, Paris, France.