

WILDE DAYS IN PARIS



A FESTIVAL FOR OSCAR

INTRODUCTION

David Charles Rose
Président, [Société Oscar Wilde](#)

For the last twenty years (and sometimes it feels much less, at others much more), I have been involved with Oscar Wilde. In 1994 I was appointed Director of 'Days Profundis', the Oscar Wilde Summer School, in Bray Co. Wicklow; in 2001 while a member of the Department of English at Goldsmiths College, University of London, I set up THE OSCHOLARS (<http://www.oscholars.com/TO/oscholarshp.htm> and <http://oscholars-oscholars.com>) as a scholarly resource for Wilde Studies; now, in 2014, as President of the Société Oscar Wilde in France, I have instigated 'Wilde Days in Paris', for it is fitting that the 160th anniversary of this most francophil of Irish writers be celebrated in the city he loved, chose as his last domicile, and in which he lies buried with a sepulture that is a national monument.

The twin leading features of 'Wilde Days in Paris' are the 4th European Colloquium on Oscar Wilde and the exhibition Wilde Art. The Colloquium follows the conferences in Monte Carlo (Rediscovering Oscar Wilde, 1993), Bologna (The Importance of being Misunderstood: Homage to Oscar Wilde / L'Importanza di essere frainteso: omaggio a Oscar Wilde, 2000) and Dresden (The Importance of Reinventing Oscar: Versions of Wilde during the last 100 Years, 2000), and will be a gathering of Wilde scholars from Australia, The Bahamas, Belgium, Canada, England, France, Greece, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Poland, South Africa, Sweden and the United States.

'Wilde Days in Paris' has also provided a platform for an idea long cherished, and long discussed with Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes, to have an exhibition devoted to Oscar Wilde in the imagination of 20th/21st century artists. Long cherished: I organised the first ever exhibition devoted to Wilde by contemporary artists, in Bray in 1995. Long discussed: the current exhibition has its roots in a proposal I drew up in 2008 with Dr Lerm Hayes, Dr Mark Llewellyn and others. The more we looked into this, the more we realised how many artists have been fascinated by the idea of capturing either an essential or an existential Wilde: Robert Ballagh, Jill Casid, Jean-Charles de Castelbajac, Enrique Corominas, Salvador Dali, François Heaulmé, Brian Lalor, Louis Le Brocqy, Danny Osborne, Mervyn Peake, Jennifer Pohl, Colette Richarme, Melanie Stewart, Alain Valtat, are just some of those whose work the Société Oscar Wilde hopes to show on other occasions. I was very pleased that Dr Lerm Hayes accepted my invitation to curate the present exhibition. For this, Dr Lerm Hayes has chosen an eclectic mix of artists whose work represents the many sides of contemporary art practice – video, performance, bande dessinée, installation. 'Wilde Days in Paris' very much welcomes this aspect of celebrating Oscar.

I must also draw attention to our programme of [theatre and film](#), and to the [talks](#) being arranged by other organisations in the cadre of Wilde Days in Paris.

I take this opportunity warmly to thank Sheila Pratschke, former Director of the Centre Culturel Irlandais, for her enthusiasm when the idea of 'Wilde Days in Paris' was first put to her by Bénédicte Prot and myself; Nora Hickey M'Sichili, current Director, for wholeheartedly taking up the idea, and her staff; our distinguished list of honorary patrons who by endorsing 'Wilde Days in Paris' enabled us to establish the credibility of the undertaking; Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes and her chosen artists, the actors Leslie Clack, Hélène Laurca, Jean-Baptiste Sieuw, Laurent Thémans and Christophe Truchi for their commitment to celebrating Oscar; Emily Eells and the Centre de recherches anglophones, Université de Paris Ouest, for inspiring and grant-aiding the Seminar; Pascal Aquien, for making available the Amphitheatre Descartes at the Sorbonne; Ariane Charton of Les Rendez-vous Littéraires, Grant Rosenberg and Charles Trueheart of the American Library, and Dominique Vibrac of 'Protagoras', who at a late stage threw himself enthusiastically into our venture; Alan Hart, Ann Cremin, Anne Ryan Hanafin for their helpful suggestions; all our speakers; and of course my wife Danielle Guérin-Rose for her inspiration, guidance, help and (sometimes) criticism. Without her neither the Société Oscar Wilde nor this festival would have happened,

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