

PARIS 1989

1. AIMS AND OPERATIONAL FEATURES

1.1 Background

The approach to the City of Culture adopted in Paris differed from that of the other cities in the sequence. Paris alone chose not to mount a special programme of performances and exhibitions to mark the designation.

1.2 Designation and rationale

It was mostly on the initiative of the French national authorities (and the then Minister of Culture, Mr Jack Lang) that the City of Paris was designated European City of Culture for 1989. According to the City of Paris, there was no prior negotiation involving the City nor consideration of the partnership necessary to deliver the event. The choice of the year was guided by the French State's intention to make a major celebration of the bi-centenary of the French Revolution. The Council of Ministers confirmed the designation of Paris as European City of Culture 1989 at their June 1986 meeting.

1.3 Objectives and broad approach

No particular objective was in mind for the City of Culture in Paris when the designation was agreed. The arrangement of the event was jointly addressed by the Ministry of Culture and the City of Paris (Direction of Cultural Affairs). But the bi-centennial was the "main event" and the City of Culture was bound to be overshadowed by this. As it was very difficult to envisage how joint programmes might be mounted at a relatively late moment, it was decided that Paris would not undertake a large special programme for the Year but that it should adopt a relatively low profile approach. There was concern both to keep faith (and save face) with the trust shown in Paris by the EU Ministers of Culture who awarded the designation and to avoid any damaging competition between the City and the State. The aim was to promote the City of Paris by "highlighting the quality of its cultural and artistic relations with the whole of the Community". Considerations which inspired the particular French approach to interpreting the ECC designation were:

- Paris functions permanently as a cultural capital of Europe;
- the programme of the bi-centennial celebrations responded in part to the intentions of the ECC programme.

The overall strength of the European programming in Paris in the 1980s was built on the open-doors policy to foreign artists (e.g. Rudolf Nureyev, Robert Wilson, Peter Brook) and its well-established arrangements for importing foreign productions, especially in the field of drama and dance (e.g. through the Chatelet and the Theatre de la Ville de Paris). Of course, this gives substance to the claim that Paris already

played an important role in the diffusion of European culture. The designation European City of Culture might have been deployed to make this better understood at home and abroad.

1.4 Arrangements of the event

The City of Culture project elements were confined to ceremonies (two cycles) and a promotional plan. Execution of the project was shared between the City and the State. The ceremonials and their associated public relations were directly undertaken by the City (the Mayor's office) and the State (the Ministry of Culture). The promotional plan was contracted to l'Association Dialogue entre les Cultures (l'ADEC), an independent non-profit cultural agency (see below).

By deciding not to initiate any special additional cultural programming, the City of Paris entered into no specific relationships with previous or future ECCs or their governments. Nor did it have any specific mechanism for responding to proposals originating from these sources. The Greek Ministry of Culture's proffered exhibition "Eros Grec: l'Amour des Dieux et des Hommes" found its place directly in the Grand Palais Winter Programme.

2. FUNDING

The challenge Paris set itself to find something to do very quickly was made more difficult because no special budgets were granted. It has not proved possible to obtain a full assessment of the cost of the City of Culture in Paris. The only clearly identifiable sum of extra money was the EC grant of ECU 120,000. This was given to l'ADEC as the sole funding for its promotional work. Other expenses fell mainly on existing budgets (e.g. the opening event was paid for out of the City's communications budget), and in some cases the contributions were made in kind. One source from the City of Paris estimates expenditure at FF 2.75 million, excluding the EC grant. No equivalent estimate is available for the Ministry side.

Without extra programming, there was little need for sponsorship and none was sought. Phillips SA provided the floodlighting equipment to the Theimer monument.

3. PROGRAMME

The ceremonials consisted of:

- the "Cycle Inaugurel" (the "Opening Phase") lasting two days (23 to 24 June, 1989); and
- a closing ceremony linked to the awards ceremony of the European Film Prize (XX 1989).

The programme of the opening ceremony included a performance of Abel Gance's Napoleon, an airship manifestation conceived by artists from the Soviet Union and the USA (illustrating the role of Europe, France and Paris as a bridge between East and West), and a firework display. The occasion was also used to inaugurate a monument to the Declaration of the Rights of Man (conceived by Ivan Theimer). The monument incorporates stone provided by the capital cities of the 12 member states of the EU. It was one of six sculptural commissions made by the City of Paris to mark the bi-centenary.

L'ADEC was contracted jointly by the City and the Ministry to devise and implement a promotional scheme. This organisation was established in 1982 on the initiative of the Ministry of Culture in order to encourage cultural and intellectual exchanges between countries. Its work mainly took the form of exhibitions and conferences with some elements of exchange programming. It has subsequently been disbanded.

The period of the promotion was condensed to a mere six weeks in June and July 1989. L'ADEC put together a promotional programme as follows:

- print: a listings brochure covering selected events from the established cultural programming of Paris, highlighting the "European" elements; this was printed in six to seven European languages (print run unknown);
- distribution: this was addressed domestically by hotels, airports and tourist offices; the international distribution was to other European countries and was achieved largely through French official channels;
- logo: design jointly determined by the City and the Ministry; it was used on print and in merchandising;
- merchandising: carrier bags (quarter of a million) and matches which carried the logo; free distribution; and
- public relations: press dossier distributed widely to French media.

The content of the listings brochure showed clearly the strong European dimension in the established cultural programming of the City. In the sphere of dance alone, for example, there were visits to Paris in 1989 from the Stuttgart Ballet, Frankfurt City Ballet and Wuppertal Dance Theatre, the Netherlands Dance Theatre and Spanish and Italian groups, together with an extensive young choreographers' programme. The brochure covered the standard art form field and extended to conferences, cinema, architecture, "world music", design, and bi-centennial programmes with a European or international character. The City of Paris devoted one edition of its cultural journal *Tete d'Affiche* to the City of Culture theme. This presented portraits of writers, painters, musicians, theatre producers, couturiers, photographers, architects, film-makers, businessmen and others, all born abroad who had chosen Paris as a place to live and work.

4. IMPACT

Invitations to the opening ceremony were extended to the Mayors of the previous Cities of Culture and to the Mayors of other capital cities of EC member states. In order to reflect the "wider cultural Europe", the Mayors of the capital cities of the remaining member states of the Council of Europe were also included. This gesture served to mark 1989 as the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the Council of Europe. Of the 27 invited mayors, 11 were present in person and seven sent representatives. The party further included ambassadors of the Council of Europe countries and a number of French and European "artistic personalities".

A careful balance of responsibility was struck between the City and the State for managing various parts of the ceremonies and in the protocol. The Minister provided lunch and the City provided dinner. In the closing event, the film prize ceremony was managed by the Ministry in premises provided by the City as a contribution in kind. On that occasion, the Mayor and the Minister took part, together with the Mayor of Glasgow, in formalities which transferred the "flame" from Paris to the succeeding European City of Culture for 1990, Glasgow.

In the opinion of those involved in planning the 1989 City of Culture, the event had little impact and proved of no great value for Paris itself. The ceremonials passed with little public notice and the promotion was too poorly resourced to make any mark against the clamour of the bi-centennial activities.

5. CONCLUSION

It was inevitable from the approach adopted that the event would have little impact in Paris and that no specific additional contribution to cultural relations or cultural artistic linkages would be attempted or achieved. What may have seemed a good idea when the designation was decided (to link the ECC with another larger celebration) led to an exceptionally muted outcome.

Given the circumstances of the designation, there was no major incentive for any of the parties involved to deliver a stronger result. This is not to say that a major cultural metropolis could not devise a meaningful interpretation of the designation ECC. The particular circumstances prevailing in Paris at the time prevented this from happening.