

INTERVIEW WITH NICOLAS BARRAL

“ART AND TERRITORY”

A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH USING SCIENTIFIC METHODS AND ARTISTIC PRACTICES TO ANALYSE THE CHALLENGES OF A SHARED HERITAGE LANDSCAPE

AN INTERVIEW WITH NICOLAS BARRAL IN CHARGE OF IMPLEMENTING THE “ART AND TERRITORY” APPROACH WITHIN THE INCULTUM PROJECT AT BIBRACTE

Could you tell us about your involvement in the pilot project “Ancient paths to the future”?

Past few months, my role has been to think about a programme of cultural events that could become spaces for cooperation and that bring different audiences together around issues linked to the attachment to the local landscape. Our aim was to use cultural action as a way to create links between people and attention to highlight a remarkable natural site. We also wanted to promote the people whose activities, directly or indirectly, are link to the preservation of this landscape.

How would you describe the “Art and Territory approach” that you have been running for the past two years as part of the project?

We believe that the aesthetic, playful, poetic side of artistic work can provide a unifying language, a creative space that makes cooperation, working together, both concrete and fulfilling. From this starting point, we offer a community of artists, researchers, technicians, elected representatives and residents the chance to imagine together inspiring events in the form of cultural walks, workshops, exhibitions, conferences or public performances mainly organised along the rural paths of Grand Site de France Bibracte-Morvan des Sommets considered as large open-air theatre stage. In this way, each participant takes ownership of part of the event that is created, as part of the realisation, success and satisfaction. The event is prepared over a long period of time on the basis of participatory approaches, enabling people from different backgrounds to get together, understand a diversity of issues and multiple realities. The audience naturally comes together and learns from each other's contributions through artistic, scientific, professional and passionate presentations. The themes (water, forests, agriculture, heritage) and itineraries are worked out together. Some of the guests are neighbours: farmers, hunters, foresters, walkers...

What concrete actions have been carried out and how do they link in with the “Ancient paths to the future” pilot project?

The actions carried out constitute a programme of events that have mobilised many people, organisations and associations on the 12 villages of the Grand Site de France. Each programme was identified by the public and by the participants as part of a collective and participative dynamic that brought together people who enjoyed walks, shows, art, nature, ecology, heritage, etc.

Over the past two years, some twenty events have been organised (with a low budget), including shows, nature walks, amateur art workshops, exhibitions, conferences and installations. Each event brings together between 50 and 100 people, an essential number for sharing knowledge, ideas and emotions.

How would you sum up the experience and what are your plans for the future?

The results of this initiative have been very positive. The people involved are keen to repeat the experience, because it allows them to circulate information, to give concrete expression to their action in favour of their territory and the preservation of living spaces, it brings people together, it confronts points of view and creates common references, moments of shared pleasure, both unique and constitutive of a culture to be nurtured.

From this achievement, an association will be (re)born to support Bibracte's work and ensure that the approach continues as a series of eagerly awaited events. Next year, events will be organized on the Tour du Morvan des Sommets, the new 140kms itinerary launched this year in the frame of "Ancient paths to the future".

Nicolas Barral has been a cultural player in the Morvan region for some twenty years. He has worked as an administrator for live performance companies, has been a programmer for associations, and has run cultural facilities and festivals. He is currently a member of the Facteur Rural cooperative, which pools skills to support cultural project leaders, artists, technicians and the general public in the realisation of creative projects, events and local projects.

