



Quai Branly Museum : Interview given by M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, to "France 3".

Paris, 14 June 2006

Q. What does this new museum, the Quai Branly Museum, mean to you?

THE PRESIDENT Firstly, it is, obviously, a great joy, as you might expect when a project you've supported and nurtured for a long time comes to fruition. I'm also thinking of Jacques Kerchache who was, in a way, the key person behind the idea and its realization and who sadly won't be at the opening, since he is no longer with us he would have been happy. It's also the sign and the symbol of a France who knows and recognizes world cultures and the imperative of dialogue between those cultures.

Q. So one of this museum's aims is to encourage intercultural dialogue. This mutual respect, this cultural diversity are values which are dear to you and reflect your vision of the world. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, do you think these values are even more important than ever?

THE PRESIDENT They are increasingly essential. As you know, France wholeheartedly supports these values. We have long promoted the values of cultural diversity. France was, for several years, the country which led the battle at UNESCO for the recognition of cultural diversity, and the resolution on this, which UNESCO adopted almost unanimously, was a major victory for France, just recently. And so in a way, with the Quai Branly Museum also comes the recognition of cultural diversity, of what it brings to today's world and why it's necessary, if only for inculcating respect for man and for peace. It has to be understood just how unproductive it is to pit people against one another. Respect for everyone and their cultures is essential.

Q. Does that mean the exhibits at the Quai Branly Museum carry a political message?

THE PRESIDENT Obviously it all depends on what you mean by political. Obviously, there's a political message, i.e. a message of confidence and hope in the affirmation of the respect we must have for the Other.

Q. We have long known your passion for these cultures, for these arts from distant lands. What would you like visitors to feel when they come to the Quai Branly Museum?



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

THE PRESIDENT First of all, respect for the works and the affirmation that, as Jacques Kerchache often used to say: "All masterpieces are born free and equal and must be recognized as such"; that nothing is worse than the scornful look, which pseudo-intellectuals give the art, production and talent of other cultures; and that they have also to understand that the world is made up of an infinite number of cultures which have developed throughout the ages and have all produced essential elements ensuring the balance of our world; and that, for this reason, they must be respected and, to be respected, they must first be known, hence the importance of a message like that given by the Quai Branly Museum.

Q. The Quai Branly Museum has only got the name of its location. It isn't very original. If one day one of your successors at the Elysée decided to rename it the Jacques Chirac museum, would that be a good idea?

THE PRESIDENT I don't know if it would be a good idea, at any rate, it would be a great honour for me. But the name was a big problem; we talked a lot about what the museum should be called: "Arts primitifs" didn't mean anything. "Arts premiers" ["premiers" often used in French to mean "indigenous", as in the English "first peoples"] was a suggestion I made ten years ago, but "premiers" in relation to what? That wasn't obvious either. "Arts lointains" [art from distant lands] might have been more appropriate, but in the end wasn't adopted, and I believe it was wise to call it quite simply the Quai Branly Museum, just as there are the Louvre and Quai d'Orsay museums.

But what I'd like to say, and it's essential, is that France today provides an exceptional showcase for art and culture thanks to a whole series of initiatives: the Georges Pompidou Museum; the remarkable renovation carried out, moreover, under my predecessor, of the Louvre museum; the renovation of the Guimet Museum [Asian art] which I have been closely involved with and was very keen about; and La Villette [science and industry]. Indeed, this partly explains why France has been the leading world tourist destination and this is, to a large extent, because of her heritage and arts. We are recognized throughout the world as having an absolutely exemplary cultural showcase.

Q. Thank you for granting us this exclusive interview here at the Elysée.

THE PRESIDENT Thank you.

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