

The *C'est Pas du Lux* festival brings together the social sector, artists, and cultural structures to around creative projects to promote the empowerment of vulnerable people. In this article, Sibylle Arlet and Florine Siganos present a handful of inspiring creative projects that feature in the festival alongside testimonies from the people who have taken part.

C'EST PAS DU LUXE ! *(THIS IS NO LUXURY!)* :

ACCESS TO AND EMPOWERMENT THROUGH CULTURAL ACTIVITY

By **Sibylle Arlet & Florine Siganos**, Fondation Abbé Pierre

For 30 years, the Abbé Pierre Foundation has been working to ensure that the most disadvantaged have access to decent housing.

Our strategy is threefold:

Raise awareness / through our communication campaigns and publications, but also through our recognized expertise with the annual publication of the report on the State of Housing Exclusion in France.

Act / to reduce housing exclusion, by providing financial support, and by stimulating and accompanying a multitude of actions within our network.

Innovate / we advocate for decent and dignified living conditions. As such, we support access to culture and citizenship, especially for the most vulnerable. In fact, alongside vital needs, culture occupies a primary place in our organization. It was an intuition of our founder, Abbé Pierre, who included culture in the statutes of the Foundation: «To promote neighborhoods and communities' social and cultural life, which contribute to improving the promotion and integration of families in housing exclusion.»

OUR CONVICTIONS IN FAVOUR OF ART-BASED PRACTICES

The connection with the sensory, the place of art, is not superfluous nor a supplement to the soul. Culture is first and foremost a right, the right to express oneself freely, to experience one's own cultural practices, to develop and share knowledge. It enlightens everyone

in their understanding of the world, in their ability to make common sense. In addition to a roof and basic needs, culture is fundamental as a powerful lever for empowerment, dignity and citizenship. Many people in precarious situations have little or no access to an artistic practice despite the fact that for them it can mean regaining self-confidence, being looked at differently. Culture makes it possible to expand the relationships induced by social work so that people can be better helped and supported. Quite simply, art and culture create spaces of joy and wonder.

We are working to create a common sense with which to break down stigma. With our approach *C'est pas du luxe!* we believe in the fertility of crossroads, in the absolute need to share collective time, sensitivity and emotions, through that which animates us: our voices, our bodies, our movements, our ideas. Engaging in artistic projects allows us to "make society."

OUR APPROACH

We promote meetings between artists and social structures, allowing for the development of artistic workshops, residences, and shared creations.

This commitment is materialized through the *C'est pas du luxe!* approach and festival, co-founded in 2012 with *La Garance: Scène nationale de Cavillon* and the association *Le Village*. *C'est pas du luxe!* brings together the social sector, artists, and cultural structures around artistic creation. It supports the long-term development of creative projects, all disciplines combined, between professional artists and people in a situation of exclusion, in a dynamic of

co-construction and strong artistic ambitions. These projects aim to promote the empowerment of vulnerable people and restore their dignity, as well as to decompartmentalize professional practices. Every two years, some of these projects are brought together during a festival, in September in Avignon, France. The objective is to exhibit these creations, which are not otherwise visible to the general public, and to promote the sharing of good practices through debates, discussions and conviviality.

***C'EST PAS DU LUXE!* IS BASED ON FOUR LEVERS FOR ACTION:**

1. The mobilisation of its network and the coordination between social and cultural operators for support in setting up the projects.
2. Artistic production between professional artists and disadvantaged people.
3. The organization of an exhibition to show these creations: to give visibility to disadvantaged people and work to change the way society looks at them.
4. Capitalization on what is learnt in order to better understand the effects of these approaches for the most excluded groups, as well as for artists, social workers, social and cultural policies and society as a whole.



“It is not easy to express your problems in life. With dancing I can do it, it’s quite an art.”

Fawzia, beneficiary of Passerelle association

SOME PROJECTS EXAMPLES

« Vous dansez ? » (Do you dance?)

Foundation Abbé Pierre had the idea for a project that would reposition dance as a universal need, based on the understanding that dance was not very present within the structures of its network, and in response to the impossibility of being physically close to each other during lockdowns. The choreographer Marinette Dozeville and her company were entrusted with the creation of a participatory ball attended by people in vulnerable situations or living in social structures (day centres, temporary accommodation, etc.). Workshops, that were run during 7-day artistic residencies in 3 different places, brought together a dozen structures fighting against exclusion. These residencies were an opportunity to bring together the beneficiaries of these social structures, dance enthusiasts, volunteers, and local residents, among others. The grand participatory ball will be presented during the *C'est pas du luxe !* festival 2021.



Testimony:

Fawzia – beneficiary of Passerelle association: “I express myself by dancing. While dancing I express my problems, there is so much sadness, it is deep. It is not easy to express your problems in life. With dancing I can do it, it’s quite an art. There was a very strong and very sensitive communication, the current flowed on, barely touching each other. There are people we didn’t know and we could communicate without knowing each other. I didn’t notice the cameras, I was living my life, I was dancing, it was beautiful!”

« Prendre place » (Settle in)

The Abbé Pierre Foundation called on the artists Nicolas Tourte and Christophe Loiseau, respectively videographer and photographer, to imagine the “Prendre Place” project. They proposed to work around a painting of the entourage of Peter Bruegel the Younger: the village fair with a theatre and a procession, exhibited at the Calvet museum in Avignon. In a village square, guests are seated, others are dancing. Part of the crowd attends the performance of a farce, a kind of vaudeville. This painting is, in a way, an allegory of the challenges of living together in today’s world. Using a green screen shooting technique, participants from several regions played the game and were introduced to acting, re-enacting the postures of the painting in period costume. Everyone was led to reflect on what makes society today. The final animated work was presented on a giant screen measuring over 4 meters in a square in the city of Avignon during the 2020 festival.



Testimony:

Bernie - social worker: "The most important thing for residents is access to culture. I am amazed by all the fields we have been able to address through this project, from social bonds and conviviality in the Middle Ages to the challenges of life in society that we face today. We have discovered and shared other forms of art, evoking political subjects, memories shared with their family, their friends.... Participants are valued and proud to participate. This greatly helps our support in self-esteem and the recovery of confidence. Colleagues as well as migrant families joined us, as did the head of the European Institute for Food History and Culture. Throughout the project, no one had any labels, we were all essential characters in this painting, the prejudices had fallen. We had a lot of fun and laughed a lot! And after the lockdown period, this project helped restore the collective momentum that had been somewhat silenced."

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