

Art, Fancy Dress and Tuxedos at IALC Rouen 2015

Monday, April 27, 2015



It was a long journey, but boy was it worth it! Not only was the sun shining brightly upon our arrival in Rouen, but the sight that caught my eyes as soon as I stepped out of the train station was one of a quaint, colourful and blissful town. And this is exactly the impression I left with four days later. But in between the lovely walks through the cobbled streets of central Rouen, past gorgeous cathedrals, majestic palaces and colourful buildings, there were strong bonds being formed...and new ones too, and all of this was taking place in either of the various venues that IALC 2015 prepared for us to make this one of the best workshops ever!

90 organisations, represented by 136 schools and 138 school delegates; 155 agents from 33 countries; 14 exhibitors including two local ones (i.e. from Rouen itself) and 9 different venues spread over 3 days of meetings, networking and lovely

events. Everything at this workshop was of very high standards - starting with the seminars which consisted of interesting panels made up of industry experts who gave us the opportunity to think, discuss, maybe even question ourselves or each other at times...but in any case, evolve, which I think is a key word in our industry. We constantly have to adapt to change, we have to deal with issues and particular situations...and move forward. But it is also part of our industry's charm, isn't it?

And speaking of charm (though I should probably use a much stronger adjective for what's coming next!), once the seminars were over, we had some time to go back to our hotel rooms and make our way to the Musée des Beaux Arts for the evening's welcome reception. And what a welcome reception that was! Not only were we honoured by the presence of distinguished guests, but we were also surrounded by the likes of Monet, Renoir and Caravaggio, amongst others. After a lovely welcome speech by our host Eleri Maitland from French in Normandy and IALC's president Celestine Rowland, who gave a very moving eulogy to the late Tom Maitland, the evening continued in an artful way with French musicians, scissor-sculptors (I'd never seen anything like it before!) and, needless to say, Calvados and Cider!

A lovely short walk took us to a different venue for the workshop on the first day of official meetings on Friday - the Halle aux Toilles. This was a lovely characteristic of this year's workshop. We did some exploring and map reading around the central part of the city in order to go from one place to another. It was like a mini treasure hunt - distances were short, we learnt a lot along the way (at least I did - because I had to master the art of map reading, which I was not very good at, to say the least, and on top of that I got to practise some French with the very friendly locals, which again, was - and probably still is - quite rusty!). I personally appreciated the option to walk around because I feel that this is the best way to truly explore a new place. Wandering the streets, getting lost, asking for help, not always understanding, therefore, getting lost again, then miraculously always finding your way back! We'll definitely be there...and you?! In Jan Capper's own words, "This has been our biggest workshop yet. A log of effort has been put into organising the event in the different locations, but it has been worth it. Everyone seems to be happy and that makes us happy."

After a full day of networking and meetings we were all invited to a Drinks Reception at the Hotel de Ville, while the more adventurous (or should I say crazy!) of us were getting ready to go back to the 50's, 60's, 70's and 80's. For the first part of my walk to the Hotel de Bourgtheroulde, where the party was being held, I was mildly pleased that I am linguistically challenged when it comes to French, however, the group started gathering and getting bigger and bigger as we got closer to the venue. Hippies, the Beatles, Disco Dancers...all making their way to the very heart of Rouen. And that's not to mention the countless colourful wigs, the polka dots, a young Michael Jackson, the Peace & Love symbols of the oh-so-lovely 60's...and tens upon tens of other participants who just made it so difficult to be recognised but so much fun to be a part of. The event went on with great dancing and music and...of course, timeless dance moves.

Lots of coffee on Saturday, a good breakfast and some sore muscles...and we all made it back to the meetings Hall for yet another day of networking and showcasing of our services. Final bell, last meeting and it was time to doll-up for the evening's magnificent Gala Dinner, something which, over the years, has become synonymous with IALC workshops. A very entertaining evening indeed! The nice round tables gave us yet another opportunity to meet new people and continuing to consolidate existing relationships...but in the evening we surely wanted to relax and enjoy the feast of food and entertainment that Eleri and her team prepared for us. It went from an impersonator of Edith Piaf to learning how to cook duck the Normandy way to can can dancers. We did the Tour de France with the menu that was prepared for us as well...and we even got to take the booklet home with us which contained some lovely recipes of some traditional French dishes, courtesy of the French schools, members of IALC.

After years of hard work by the hosts it was time to close the curtain on IALC Rouen 2015 and starting looking forward to IALC Leeds and York 2016.

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