



PRIX
FRANÇOIS GUIZOT
INSTITUT DE FRANCE



Prix François Guizot-Institut de France 2024
Award ceremony

Monday 9th December 2024, 6:00 PM, Grande Salle des Séances

Speech of Xavier Darcos

Chancellor of the Institute

Mr. President of the jury and colleague, dear Éric Roussel,

Gentlemen members of the Institute, dear colleagues,

Mr. President of the François Guizot Association, dear Stéphane Coste,

Ladies and gentlemen members of the jury,

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

Eleven years after the creation of this prize, I am happy to welcome you to the Institut de France for its 6th edition. It welcomes a new president of the jury, my dear colleague Éric Roussel, whom I warmly thank for his commitment, and who will speak later.

This year, we are awarding the Guizot-Institut de France prize to Maryvonne de Saint-Pulgent for her wonderful work on Notre-Dame de Paris, *La Gloire de Notre-Dame, La foi et le pouvoir*. By a singular coincidence of the calendar, we meet

- while the Parisian cathedral reopened its doors last Saturday, with great solemnity,
- and tomorrow, we commemorate, under the dome, the 150th anniversary of the death of François Guizot, an anniversary listed on the France Mémoire calendar.

1/ Historian, philosopher, statesman, François Guizot was a member of three academies; he long sat right here, in the Grand lecture hall, during his very long career at the Institute. He was elected a member of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres as a historian in the 1830s, then the French Academy opened its doors to the political speaker, to the 40th chair, which I have the honor of occupying today. But before that, he had successfully proposed the re-establishment of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences to King Louis-Philippe in 1832. He can be considered its founder, and enter the short and prestigious list of illustrious men who created our academies: Richelieu, Charles Le Brun, and Colbert.

We are therefore very happy that the Institute welcomes a prize dedicated to his memory by rewarding a book of history or analysis of our contemporary world so that a broad audience can benefit from its insights – and I thank the François Guizot association for having contributed to this very happy initiative.

2/ Dear Maryvonne de Saint-Pulgent,

- Honorary section president at the Council of State, you have been director of heritage at the Ministry of Culture as well as a professor of musicology. You are also a correspondent of the Academy of Fine Arts.

- Your work that we award tonight has been widely acclaimed, as it deserved; you return to the fire of April 15, and analyze it as a "monster event," using a concept that Pierre Nora, my dear colleague, had developed. You have the talent to illuminate our immediate news, to give it meaning and depth.

- More broadly, you have sought to untangle how our Parisian cathedral has acquired a glory that surpasses its religious priesthood, how it has managed to conquer the beating heart of the world. Last Saturday, about fifty heads of state were gathered, reflecting an international emotion for a heritage monument, which is, it must be emphasized, extremely rare, perhaps unique. Notre-Dame, a global star, can rival in notoriety with Trump, Taylor Swift, or Elon Musk, which can only delight and astonish! Here we are gathered, thanks to you, in homage to its immortality, which, for once within these walls, is not that of our institutions. How has our Gothic cathedral forged such a destiny?

- I will not go back over all of your work which others will speak about after me; but you explain with great clarity and great erudition how much the spiritual heritage of Notre-Dame has counted – a cathedral school which was a powerful intellectual center and a place where Western music was invented with sacred polyphony even before the construction by Maurice de Sully.

Because Notre-Dame sings, and I will take only one example, its organs. You dedicate very beautiful pages to them, narrating the history of its five great fixed organs.

- The one by Cliquot, for example, sounded during the *Veni Creator* which opened the Estates General of 1789;

- or the one of today, by Cavaillé-Col, installed during the restoration by Viollet-le-Duc, and inaugurated by César Franck, Camille Saint-Saëns, and Charles-Marie Widor.

You have also brought back to life the virtuoso figure of Louis Vierne, the titular organist of Notre-Dame from 1900, who died at his post, 37 years later, in the gallery.

Miraculously preserved from the flames, this organ of Notre-Dame, cleaned and re-harmonized, played last Saturday, under the expert hands of Olivier Latry, Thibault Fajoles, Vincent Dubois, and Thierry Escaich, your colleague member of the Academy of Fine Arts.

Because many of our members have come to the bedside of Notre-Dame, I think of the tribute that was paid to it during the awarding of our Grand Prizes in 2019, and to Jean-Jacques Annaud's film, *Notre-Dame brûle*. Our foundations also wanted to preserve its spiritual heritage by helping precisely its organ to find its voices, but also its library to be safeguarded, and the choirs of its mastery to continue to perform.

I am therefore very happy that thanks to you, dear Maryvonne de Saint-Pulgent, we render tonight a double singular tribute to François Guizot and to Notre-Dame, and I leave the floor to Stéphane Coste.