

Guimarães 2012

The culture that creates a city. The city that creates culture

João Serra | Chairman, Guimarães 2012 European Capital of Culture

The condition of the European Capital of Culture, a title displayed annually by two European cities, meets a dual requirement. One element that spawns from the accumulated representativeness of values: historical, symbolic, economic, artistic and another that lays on their willingness to be, during a given period, a privileged stage for the presentation of significant cultural and artistic events with European origin and projection.

At Guimarães, these two ways converge in a unique fashion. It is an ancient city associated with the foundation of one of the oldest nations in Europe. It is a city that has assimilated the successive movements of industrialization, from liming to textile manufacturing, shoemaking to cutlery production. It is a city that hosted some of the most relevant figures of Portuguese culture, history and archeology (Alberto Sampaio, Martins Sarmiento), philosophy and science (Abel Salazar), literature and journalism (Raul Brandão, Novais Teixeira), the architecture and the arts (Fernando Tavora, José de Guimarães). It is a youngsters city with a strong university dynamism and a city with a civic energy that surpassed various tests. Finally, it is a city with a strong cultural network, and a cultural programming reference towards contemporary music (Guimarães Jazz, International Music Festivals), in cinema, in theater (Festival Gil Vicente) and dance (Guidance).

This Guimarães, which is now the European Capital of Culture, is thus a city that, although keeping its origins and the uniqueness of its heritage and history, embraces the anxieties, the perplexities and the difficulties, as well as the opportunities and exhilarating challenges of all the cities of these early decades of the XXI century.

In every European city there is a city with cultural awareness, a diffuser of modernity, a developer of territories, a center of innovation and wealth that percolates through the network to which it belongs. That is why Europe emphasized this construction, and assigned to the urban agenda enhanced importance.

We are aware that, whatever the perspective we'd like to highlight in this agenda may be, the cohesion or sustainability one, or the competitiveness and governance one, the challenge of creativity is crucial in its propagation to education, culture,



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EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE

1 | Largo do Toural, Guimarães European Capital of Culture 2012 opening ceremony by "La Fura dels Baus"

2 | Exhibition "O Ser Urbano – Caminhos de Nuno Portas"

3 | One of ninety concerts that integrated the event "Mi Casa es Sua Casa"

arts, architecture, science, technology and innovation. Without creativity and knowledge, nothing is allowed to stand, settle down or last, nowadays.

The program of Guimarães 2012 remains faithful to this commitment, which is also a goal. Therefore, it holds the culture and the creativity, and the relationship of both with the economy and development, as irreplaceable foundations of the affirmation Europe and European cities.

As we have all learned from ancient Greece, the city is the vitality of its citizens and the common heritage which is built up over generations. That common heritage, rather than a result, it's a process. In it there is a sense of construction and destruction, in its movement there is innovation, dynamism and amazement. So we say: what matters, above all, in the cultural and artistic program of Guimarães 2012, it's the process, the discovery, the new creations and new works

that enlarge themselves and add to the common heritage of the city, of the cities.

A process, is experimentation, invention, learning. In the program of Guimarães 2012, training and education take a lead role. Learning by doing requires not only technical resources but also a friendly environment where people are invited to create and the audience is included in the space of artistic production.

Today, less than four months after the opening of the European Capital of Culture, the result of these wagers is significant. Over half a million viewers, a very diverse range of cultural events, both artistic (music, performing arts, cinema and audiovisual, art and architecture), and civilly (thought, economics, citizen participation) call on the region, on Portugal and in Europe. The programming has invaded the whole city, from the usual areas into new spaces, such

as former factories and public space. Over a hundred new creations were designed and presented on the latter.

The program understands innovation as an interactive process, made through cooperation, collaboration and dialogue. All spaces of creation, both the ones already existing and those added by the European Capital, are managed according to this model of participation. In this process, inhabit together artists and public, professionals and amateurs, designers and authors from abroad and locals, major institutions like the University and small voluntary associations, projects developed in the public space and projects developed in laboratory. Researchers, artists and entrepreneurs, curators, collectors and authors, visitors and residents, interact amongst themselves, in summary, performing the interaction of the different strata that compose a city open to the country, to Europe and to the World ■