

Press release

**The laying of the first stone of the *Maison de l'Écriture*
in Montricher, overlooking the lake and the Alps,
by the *Fondation Jan Michalski pour l'Écriture et la Littérature***

Montricher, 10 September 2009 - The Fondation Jan Michalski pour l'Écriture et la Littérature was created in memory of Jan Michalski to perpetuate his work of promoting literary creation. Its mission is to encourage writing through the award of an international literary prize, grants and financial support, as well as hosting writers in residence, thereby offering them the means to create their works. The *Maison de l'Écriture*, entirely dedicated to literature, will allow all the Foundation's activities to be brought together on a single site.

It will be constructed in Montricher, at the foot of the Jura Vaudois, a site selected for the beauty of the countryside, its broad views over the plain, the lake and the Alps, which symbolize the openness of spirit of the *Maison de l'Écriture*. The construction is conceived as a small city, with certain of its buildings being anchored to the ground, and others suspended from a canopy, which may take on the appearance of a sculpted pergola covering the whole of the constructed area.

During the course of 2013, the *Maison de l'Écriture* will welcome its first guests. Five writers, including a couple, will be able to stay at the same time. Individual lodgings, resembling suspended cabins, *lifting their feet so as not to trample upon the garden*, in the words of the architect Vincent Mangeat, will all have a panoramic view.

These central activities reserved for the residents will be supplemented by those taking place in the anchored buildings of this small city, an exhibition space, a library and an auditorium open to everyone at select times, and which promise numerous cultural activities. In the meantime, the construction of the *Maison de l'Écriture* has been entrusted to the Losinger Marazzi SA company, which has agreed to take on the numerous challenges involved, based on the plans drawn up by the architects' studio V. Mangeat and P. Wahlen in Nyon.

As emphasized by Vera Michalski-Hoffman, who is at the origin of this large-scale cultural project, « *We are lucky to live in an extraordinary country, one of the countries with the highest cultural density in the world. I would therefore like to place the Foundation in this context by making a contribution to this beautiful building. My hope is that the *Maison de l'Écriture* will become a place of meetings and exchanges open to the world* ».

Jan Michalski

Jan Michalski was born in Poland in 1953. His interest in literature was nurtured by his classical and European culture. He studied sociology and philosophy at the Catholic University of Lublin. He completed his education by studying politics and devoted his energies principally to the issue of Poland's integration into the European Union, first at the College of Europe in Brussels and then at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (*Institut des hautes études internationales et du développement*) in Geneva.

It was in Geneva that he met Vera Hoffmann. They married in 1983 and, three years later, jointly founded the publisher *Noir sur Blanc* in Montricher. They published novels, narratives and eye-witness accounts from Eastern Europe. Their shared passion for publishing led them to Paris and Warsaw. For Polish readers, they published Henry Miller, Charles Bukowski, Paul Auster, Blaise Cendrars, Nicolas Bouvier, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Lawrence Durrell, Donna Leon, Slawomir Mrozek and Umberto Eco. Based on their conviction that culture is essential for the integration of East and West, Jan and Vera Michalski gained the confidence of historical figures of Polish culture and developed a substantial catalogue of classical and contemporary Slavonic authors in French. In Paris, they relaunched the *Librairie Polonaise*, *Editions Phébus* and *Buchet-Chastel* publishing, among other authors, Lawrence Durrell, Henry Miller and Guy Debord. Jan Michalski passed away prematurely in 2002, but his work continues.

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