On Campus

# Columbia Literary Festival is Highlight of the Fall Season in Paris

Winter 2013-14



Salman Rushdie discusses his book Joseph Anton with French literary critic Nelly Kaprièlian. Photo: Jeff Balinger / Columbia Global Centers

You know you’re on to something when the Louvre Museum and representatives of the Paris media praise Columbia for doing what the French themselves hadn’t been able to do for decades. Visitors to the Louvre website must have done a double take when they read, “Happily, the Americans are around to remind us that Paris is a major literary center — at least for a weekend.”

The Louvre was one of the venues for the Festival des Écrivains du Monde (World Writers' Festival), a partnership between Columbia and the Bibliothèque nationale de France, held in September in Paris and Lyon.

The festival drew some six thousand members of the public to readings, discussions, and musical events with twenty-eight prominent authors from around the world. Salman Rushdie spoke, as did French writer and *provocatrice* Catherine Millet, Israeli author David Grossman, Sri Lankan–born Canadian novelist Michael Ondaatje, and Pakistani British novelist Nadeem Aslam. Alumnae Lila Azam Zanganeh '02SIPA and Jhumpa Lahiri '89BC participated, along with faculty members Richard Ford, Deborah Eisenberg, Gayatri Spivak, Elisabeth Ladenson, and Carol Gluck, and journalism-school dean Steve Coll.

Beyond its impact in the world of letters — highlighted in a special supplement published by the newspaper *Le Monde* — the festival also made it plain that Columbia is a serious player in Paris and Europe, according to Paul LeClerc '69GSAS, director of the Columbia Global Center in Paris. LeClerc, who was formerly the president of the New York Public Library, conceived of the event. It was brought into being by several institutions and numerous individuals under the leadership of artistic director Caro Llewellyn.



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