



## THE FRANCO-AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP



### A Conversation with Honorable Laurent Gallissot Consul General of France in Miami



Hon. Laurent Gallissot, Consul General of France in Miami next to the Statue of Liberty in NY, Washington DC, and Miami

The celebration of the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, Bastille Day, was definitely the focus of the Franco-American friendship in the United States for the French people this year. France has sent a gift to the USA, a little sister of “Lady Liberty”, to celebrate the longstanding friendship between the two countries. Exhibited for more than 10 years on the forecourt of the [CNAM](#) (Conservatory National of Arts and Crafts) in Paris, she ultimately arrived in Washington, D.C., where she will remain for ten years.

In addition, in celebration of Bastille Day in Miami on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and to echo the visit of the bronze Statue to Washington D.C., an original and unique copy of the head of the Statue of Liberty made of fiberglass has been installed at the residence of the Consul General of France in Miami thanks to the support of the CMA-CGM group and the generosity of Olivier and Caroline Haligon, [Haligon Fine Art work-shop](#).

**Due to these important events, Laurent Gallissot, Consul General of France in Miami sat down for an interview with Christine I. Caly-Sanchez, Associate Director, Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence at FIU and reflected on this gift and its meaning, and the relationship between France and the United States.**

**MFJMCE: What do the Statue of Liberty and this gift represent to you?**

The Statue of Liberty represents a symbol of Franco-American friendship, allegory of hope, freedom and democracy. Miami can be proud of harboring its material heritage.

On July 14<sup>th</sup>, the French and Miami community at large gathered around this unique copy of the head of the Statue of Liberty sculpture at the residence of the Consul General of France. It was a unifying experience to gather around this sculpture, which is quite monumental (H 7ft x W 7ft x D 4ft)!

It motivated a lot of people first to come and see the object since it is quite extraordinary, and then to reflect on its message. I think it's an icon. It is an inspirational message that conveys hope.

What is also very important is that it is a gift from one people to another: it's people to people! The message was to thank the United States for the 100 years of the Independence of the United States and the abolition of slavery. In fact, very finely at the feet of the statue, there are broken chains in reference to the end of enslavement.

On the one hand, the fact that “she” was placed in New York as a welcoming of beacon, also conveys a message of liberation. It is a figure of recourse that became the “Patron Saint” of the USA, country of immigration. In Pulitzer’s words, she is already “**the door of hope for all immigrants,**” for **Lazarus, “soon newcomers will be greeted in the New World by a lady as caring as she is powerful.**” It later became a symbol of freedom from oppression, especially from Fascism and Nazism in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. “The Statue of Liberty Enlightening the World” is therefore recognized as a universal symbol of freedom and democracy over generations.



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#### **MFJMCE: Why was Miami chosen to receive this gift: the copy of the head of the Statue of Liberty?**

To echo the visit of the bronze Statue to Washington D.C., we received this gift thanks to the generosity of Olivier and Caroline Haligon, a French artist family living in Miami. [Haligon Fine Art workshop](#) .

It's family history. We wanted to make a variation on the gesture made to Washington D.C. by having one of the models of the statue molded by the Haligon family which has resided in Miami for 23 years. From generation to generation, **the Haligons** has preserved the know-how of their ancestor, Louis Haligon, who contributed to the enlargement of the original sculpture by Auguste Bartholdi. This French family settled in Miami and for 5 generations has been in the profession of molding. They practiced it with Bartholdi for a molding and an enlargement of the statue when it was first designed. The showing of both these beautiful copies and the expertise of a French artist installed in Miami is of tremendous importance. Nobody really knows that this family has this history, except connoisseurs. They most certainly deserved to be better known for their talent and their generosity!

▶ For more information on “The Legacy and the message of Lady Liberty”, [click here](#)

▶ For more information on Haligon Fine Art Workshop, [click here](#)

#### **MFJMCE: How has the French community in Miami responded to this gift?**

There is great interest in seeing this monumental sculpture. And, it is well-deserved attention. Not only the French community but all the communities in Miami are paying a visit to her: it is such an icon to which everybody can connect to! Everybody has responded because it is an inspirational message for all of us.

#### **MFJMCE: How long will this sculpture remain at your residence and where will it go next?**

The sculpture will remain at the residence for 15 days and then will be used in exhibitions and other events.

#### **MFJMCE: Do you have any last thoughts you would like to share with us?**

We are looking forward to working with you on the upcoming **French Presidency of the Council of the European Union**, and many other events such as democracy, climate change in view of the COP 26, cybersecurity, and the 9<sup>th</sup> of May to celebrate the European Union.

#### **MFJMCE: “MERCİ” Mr. Consul!**

*By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez  
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