

NIGHT OF IDEAS

TAKING ACTION
6 FEBRUARY 2025



Launched in 2016, the Night of Ideas has become a worldwide project staged in 190 cities and 104 different countries. In London and Edinburgh, the French Institute convenes debates and performances to challenge our understanding of the world.

The theme of this year's edition, **Taking Action**, invites us to reflect on the ability of governments, civil society and individuals to respond effectively to the world's geopolitical disorder. It also questions the growing polarisation within our societies and the frailty of social contracts in democratic heartlands. By crossing perspectives and bringing together leading figures from both sides of the Channel, we hope that visions for a brighter - if not less fractious - future will emerge tonight.

We thank our donors, among them the Friends and Patrons of the Institute, and all the speakers, with particular thanks to those who travelled from the continent, be it Paris, Brussels or Kyiv.

TIME	CINÉ LUMIÈRE	LA MÉDIATHÈQUE	LES SALONS
18.00-19.00	Opening event		
19.20-20.10	Europe at war?	Women fighting disinformation	Portrait of the artist in the age of AI
20.30-21.20	Ukraine wartime artists: narratives and national identity	Facts in fact: science & policy-making	Direct democracy or disorderly conduct?
21.40-22.30	Activism: by all means		
22.40-23.30		Closing event with DJ duo SUNANA	

Programme

Opening event

18.00-19.00 – Ciné Lumière – Opening

HE **Hélène Duchêne**, French Ambassador to the UK, will launch the Night of Ideas 2025.

Opening address by **Thomas Jolly**, actor and stage director, Artistic Director of the 2024 Olympic Games ceremonies, and **Alexander Zeldin**, writer and director for theatre and film.

Followed by a conversation with Thomas Jolly and Alexander Zeldin, chaired by **Anissia Morel**, Director of the Institut français du Royaume-Uni.



HE Hélène Duchêne



Thomas Jolly



Anissia Morel



Alexander Zeldin

Europe at war?

19.20–20.10 – Ciné Lumière

The end of the Cold War brought peace between European nations that has endured for most of the past three decades, until now. With the latest conflict in Ukraine entering its third year, and 10 years since the Russian Federation invaded for the first time, the pressures on Europe are growing. What should Europe be thinking about with the Russian threat targeting Eastern Europe? How should European NATO members respond to growing pressure to bear more of the cost of their own defence? What are the changes that the Trump Administration will bring to Europe's understanding of its own security? Europe's era of peace appears to be ending; is it ready for war?

With

- **Catherine Colonna** – Former French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs
- **Anand Menon** – Director of UK in a Changing Europe

Chaired by **Marie Dumoulin** – Director of the Wider Europe programme at the European Council on Foreign Relations



Catherine Colonna



Anand Menon



Marie Dumoulin

Women fighting disinformation

19.20–20.10 – La Médiathèque

Many women – be they journalists, activists or working in public institutions – are strongly committed to fighting disinformation and upholding facts. Yet they are less visible in the public sphere and face harassment from those spreading disinformation in their attempt to intimidate them and stop their work. This round table discussion, which brings together women at the forefront of this fight, will spotlight their actions and experiences, and provide an opportunity to consider our collective response to this online violence.

With

- **Marie-Doha Besancenot** – NATO Assistant Secretary General for public diplomacy
- **Salomé Saqué** – Journalist and writer
- **Nabeelah Shabbir** – Deputy Director of Research at the International Center for Journalists

Chaired by **Natalia Foresti** – Press Counsellor & Spokesperson to the French Embassy to the UK



Marie-Doha Besancenot



Salomé Saqué



Nabeelah Shabbir



Natalia Foresti

Portrait of the artist in the age of AI

19.20–20.10 – Les Salons

The Artificial Intelligence (AI) revolution is driving significant change in our societies. This discussion will focus on AI's impact on art creation, including the ability to generate original artworks, compose music, and even produce literature. The panel will address the potential risks posed by AI in the arts, such as creative dependence, intellectual property issues, questions of authenticity, and the new prospects for co-creation raised by AI.

With

- **Gérard Assayag** – Research Director at IRCAM-Centre Pompidou
- **Marion Carré** – Co-founder of Ask Mona, artist, entrepreneur and author
- **Elaine Chew** – Pianist and Professor of engineering at King's College London

Chaired by **Eva Jäger** – Arts Technologies curator at Serpentine



Gérard Assayag



Marion Carré



Elaine Chew



Eva Jäger

Ukraine wartime artists: narratives and national identity

20.30–21.20 – Ciné Lumière

Almost three years after Russia invaded Ukraine, numerous works and sites of Ukrainian heritage have been destroyed, damaged or looted. Since the beginning of the conflict, culture has been a key strategic concern in a war that is aimed at eradicating Ukrainian identity. Could artists play a role in this war? How to combine an artistic approach with a political perspective? Can art influence how the war's narrative is constructed?

With

- **Maria Kulikovska** – Artist, architect and actionist-performer
- **Sergiy Lebedynskyy** – Photographer and curator
- **Emeric Lhuisset** – Artist and researcher

Chaired by **Alexandra de Viveiros** – Gallerist and founder of Alexandra de Viveiros Gallery



Maria Kulikovska



Sergiy Lebedynskyy



Emeric Lhuisset



Alexandra de Viveiros

Facts in fact: science & policy-making

20.30–21.20 – La Médiathèque

Research makes a significant impact on public policies by providing evidence-based insights that help shape decisions and drive reforms. Research also evaluates existing policies, identifying gaps or inefficiencies and suggesting improvements or alternative approaches. But how does scientific evidence translate into policy-making? Do scientists and policy-makers really understand each other? Ultimately, how can they mutually increase their chances of success and help each other to achieve positive outcomes for society?

With

- **Julia Black** – President of the British Academy
- **Thibaud Boncourt** – Professor of political science at Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3 and junior fellow of the Institut Universitaire de France
- **Alyssa Gilbert** – Director of innovation at the Grantham Institute for Climate Change and the Environment – Leads Undaunted, Imperial College London's climate innovation hub
- **Pierre-Paul Zalio** – Sociologist and President of Campus Condorcet

Chaired by **Aurélien Saussay** – Assistant Professorial Research Fellow, Grantham Research Institute at the London School of Economics



Julia Black



Thibaud Boncourt



Alyssa Gilbert



Pierre-Paul Zalio



Aurélien Saussay

Activism: by all means

21.40–22.30 – Ciné Lumière

Activism often operates at the intersection of lawful action and civil disobedience, aiming to create social change through a combination of institutional and grassroots approaches. Legal action equips activists with tools to challenge and reform systems within established frameworks, while acts of civil disobedience are sometimes used to spotlight urgent issues that traditional channels may overlook. Balancing these approaches enables activists to raise awareness and advocate for justice while navigating the risks associated with each method.

With

- **Juliette Brown** – Consultant psychiatrist and activist
- **Graeme Hayes** – Professor of Political Sociology at Aston University
- **Rosalie Mann** – Founding President of No More Plastic

Chaired by **Lisa Vanhala** – Professor of Political Science at UCL



Juliette Brown



Graeme Hayes



Rosalie Mann



Lisa Vanhala

Direct democracy or disorderly conduct?

20.30–21.20 – Les Salons

In an era of declining voter turnout and waning youth participation in politics, some countries have embraced citizens' assemblies as a way to revitalise participatory democracy. Notable examples include France's Citizens' Convention for Climate (2019-2020), where 150 citizens developed climate policy recommendations, and Ireland's Citizens' Assembly, which proposed transformative reforms to national abortion policy. Should States use citizens' assemblies to guide law reform in contentious areas like environmental policy, criminal justice and abortion? Let's argue the pros and cons with the UCL Debating Society.

Proposition:

1st Speaker: Rick Tan

2nd Speaker: Judah Purwanto

3rd Speaker: Stella Stenou

Summary: Rick Tan

Moderator: Hope Arpa

Opposition:

1st Speaker: Rohan Campion

2nd Speaker: Maya Huang

3rd Speaker: Nav Dhaliwal

Summary: Rohan Campion

Closing event with DJ duo SUNANA



22.40–23.30 – La Médiathèque

Join DJ duo SUNANA, recognised for their vibrant and unique style incorporating a colourful array of cultural influences. They are on a mission to spread positive vibes through their music, creating explosive sets and selections that instantly lift spirits!

With special thanks to Olivia and Benoît Verbrugghe

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Admission

All debates and events in the **Night of Ideas** are **free** to attend and open to all, but prior registration is required.

Venue

Institut français du Royaume-Uni
17 Queensberry Place, London SW7 2DT

Food and Drinks

Food and drinks can be purchased on site.

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Images

The Institut français reserves the right to use pictures or videos taken during the event for marketing and media purposes. If you do not wish to have your photo taken or to be on the video, please tell the camera operator.

The Little Night

Pupils from British and French primary schools in the UK are invited to reflect on how to take action in today's world through drawings and visual creations at school and beyond. See their productions on our website.

See Who's Who



Info & Booking



La nuit
des idées
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www.nightofideas.co.uk