

# « Nice and the Fabulous Rio Carnaval » Exhibit Dazzles Viewers with High-End Carnaval Costumes



The exhibition will take place at the Musée Masséna from February 2nd to March 5th. ©Margherita Bassi

**At Musée Masséna, Alain Taillard's exhibit begins on February 2nd in celebration of the Nice Carnaval's 150th year anniversary.**

*"It's happiness. It's magnificence."* That's what Alain Taillard says about the opportunity to curate the exhibit "Nice and the fabulous Rio Carnaval," at Musée Masséna. Starting February 2nd through March 5th, his exhibit will be the art museum's principal attraction in its celebration of the Nice Carnaval's 150th year anniversary. The exhibit is a collection of some of the magnificently elaborate costumes that Alain Taillard himself has worn as a *destaque* in the Rio Carnaval.

*"The privilege of organizing the principal exposition of the Nice Carnaval, on La Promenade Des Anglais, at Villa Masséna, is magnificent,"* he says in French. This is the first time "Nice and the fabulous Rio Carnaval," will exhibit in the capital of the French Riviera: *"I have exhibited around Europe but in France, it's really... wow."* The day before the opening, Alain is still speechless with joy.

## Work of Haute Couture

It's not difficult to guess at the artisanship required of Carnaval costume designers, and some of those costumes are true works of high-end fashion. *"The costumes that we exhibit in Villa Massena are only costumes of haute couture, of marvels, [that are] unique pieces,"* Alain explains. In fact, some of the Rio Carnaval costumes can cost over 25 thousand euros because of the luxury elements that are incorporated into the design, including precious stones and colorful feathers.

What's more, each and every costume in Alain's exhibit was only worn once: *"The costumes are created for a 70-minute show,"* he laughs. And the maintenance of the costumes for the exhibit, especially the feathers, is almost as difficult as their creation. But Alain is experienced and determined to maintain them as they were conceived: *"The costumes in Villa Massena are in a perfect state. They lived, they were in the show, but after, they are perfect. Everything is perfect."*



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## An Outsider Becomes an Insider

Alain is one of very few Europeans who not only participates in the Rio Carnaval, but has worked his way up to the position of a *destaque*: one of the most important figures in the Carnaval performances put on by the famous Samba Schools in Rio. Destaqués have the honor of wearing the fanciest costumes and performing on the highest levels of the Carnaval floats. It's very rare for a foreigner to be given this honor, but after Alain became a participant in 1992, he was lucky enough to become close friends with a local celebrity *destaque*, Nabil Samir Habib, who offered for Alain to be his replacement in 2008.

*"That would be the start of a long adventure, rich with connections and intense emotions," Alain says in the description of his biography, L'homme du carnaval de Rio.*"

## **A Celebration Inspired by Nice**

Though Rio's is perhaps the most internationally famous Carnaval, it was actually inspired by Nice's. In the eighteen hundreds, Nice had already become a common destination for royals, including Emperor Pedro II of Brazil. In 1888 his visit with Princess Isabelle coincided with the Carnaval season, during which he admired the festivities including the "Batailles de Fleurs," known in English as the Flower Parade. It's no surprise that when he returned to Brazil, he started a similar flower-themed parade: a celebration that would eventually become the famous Rio Carnaval.

## **A Return to His Origin**

*"My history with the Carnaval in Rio was born from the Carnaval in Nice. For me, it's a return to my origin,"* Alain admits. Much like how the Emperor's experience in Nice led him to the Rio Carnaval, so too Alain went to watch the Nice Carnaval in his twenties, and eventually found his way to Rio.

Ultimately, he wants to change people's understanding of the Rio Carnaval. *"People's view of the Rio Carnaval is [limited to] almost-naked dancers."* With his exhibit, "Nice and the fabulous Rio Carnaval," Alain Taillard shows them that the Rio Carnaval is so much more.

**Margherita Bassi**

