

**Art and Cultural Identity in the  
construction of a cooperative world**

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### **Introduction**

In its original version, this document was presented at the World Meeting of the Alliance's Artists that took place between 29<sup>th</sup>

of April and 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2001, in Itapecerica da Serra, state of São Paulo. The meeting brought together painters, poets, writers, musicians, story-tellers, animists, sculptors, cultural producers, actors, art teachers, among others, from seventeen countries: an heterogeneous group, both in terms of their occupations and of their origins and cultural background.

Promoted by the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and Cooperative World and organised by the Pólis Institute, the meeting had as its main objective to encourage the debate on the role of art and of the artist in the construction of societies where solidarity prevails. It was in a previous meeting, in July 2000, in Canada, that, hoping to give a new impetus to the network of the Alliance's Artists, at the time still in an embryonic stage, we first thought of having this gathering. With this initiative - that later proved to be extremely successful - we also hoped that the various cultures might establish a dialogue about the possibilities of acting together. Our aim here was to overcome one of the planet's major obstacles for the development of solidarity between peoples, namely, the difficulty in breaking cultural barriers in order to reach an understanding and an acceptance of the other. It was under this assumption that we prepared the early version of "the Notebook of Propositions", entitled "Art and cultural identity in the construction of a cooperative world". This text, translated into Spanish, French and English, introduced the main topics debated in the meeting: globalisation, art and cultural identity, re-enchantment of the world, plurality and intercultural exchanges, rights of access to culture, the meaning of art and the contemporary role of the artist, among others. The seminar participants were given the opportunity to read the document before the event and were, thus, able to prepare suggestions for the lines of the debate and to reflect upon their own position in relation to them. In order to expand the reach of the debate, in the hope that it would have an impact on a greater number of people in various parts of the world, the Polis Institute organised, with the Alliance's help, the World

Electronic Forum of Artists. Some of the talks incorporated into this document came to us via the electronic forum.

In terms of its format, the document has been divided into five parts: Introduction; Art and Cultural Identity in the construction of a cooperative world; Propositions; Practices; Proposals.

The first item deals with the conceptual part of what, in our view, is the meaning of "art and cultural identity in the construction of a cooperative world"; the second proposes concrete actions related to the ideas contained in the first item; the third speaks of practices, both of the Alliance's members and of outsiders, that have already concretised the assumptions contained in the first item; and the last puts forward proposals for the future that are compatible with the Alliance's lines of thought and present action.

Returning to the first version of the "Notebook of Propositions" presented to participants in the meeting of Itapecerica da Serra, we would like to emphasize that the essential parts of the text were unanimously approved at that meeting. The participants also suggested that no alterations should be made to the premises behind the document.

Following these guidelines, we included in the original text ideas expressed through the electronic forum, responses originating from emails and letters, some of the talks given by participants during the debates, passages from the lectures by Fayga Ostrower, Octávio Ianni and Miguel Ángel Echegary and fragments from a few authors whose thoughts we believe to be compatible with the main lines of the "Notebook". We also added an item on art and education that had not been included in the original text but had become one of the major topics of the discussions that happened during the meeting.

In this document, we attempted to balance the principles behind our reflections with the practices that concretised them, hoping, through this, to make clear that the ideas expressed here have a practical application in the social reality.

Although we hoped to incorporate in this document the ideas of all those taking part in the debates, it is important to emphasize that, in the last instance, the document was prepared by two people only and therefore the way these contributions were selected and combined has its own peculiarity. Some people may feel over, others under, represented. This was unavoidable, since there were many contributors and any attempt to contemplate all equitably would generate a confused and almost useless document. Any perspective, no matter how universal it may claim to be, will have its own 'lenses'.

When we talk about the world we ask ourselves: who is speaking? Which world are we talking about? Will it have the same meaning for an Arab, a Japanese or a Bolivian? Certainly not. Thus, although we made serious efforts to put forward a proposal with universal characteristics, it is important we should contextualize our points of view. This relationship between the universal and the particular, especially in terms of values, is always tense and hard to equate. However, to try and put oneself in the Other's place, without necessarily abdicating what one actually is - always thinking that identities are changeable - is a healthy attitude. This is what we tried to do.

We believe that the idea of globalisation (or *world-isation*) must be considered not only in its perverse aspects but also in the possibilities it offers for fraternisation and solidarity. A tool like the Electronic Forum is an example - however tiny - of how this is possible.

It is also important to emphasize that art does not occur in a vacuum. The economic, political and cultural factors that interact with it, shape it in a given way, whilst, at the same time, being affected by it. Thus, even if we accept that art does play a significant role, we cannot overestimate its potentiality for bringing about change. In this case, it is important for us to play our role as best as we can, finding out about the reality around us, being aware of what history has already shown us: that occasionally

art can have a political and ethical orientation totally opposed to the one we intend it to have - for example, in the case of nazi art.

The field of art - like the role of the artist - is a huge one and involves a large number of conceptualisations. Fayga - an extraordinary artist who died recently, a little more than three months after having opened our seminar, in that which may have been his last public presentation - spoke of art as the link between human beings and between them and the cosmos. We feel that in this statement, art is implicitly an affirmation of Eros, of life, in opposition to Tanatus, to the destruction and death so present in the society we live in.

In the guise of conclusion, we created a fictitious dialogue that might well have taken place:

- What do you intend to do?
- Re-invent the world, putting art at the service of this change. A change that, before anything else, is a statement of life.
- Is this not a utopia, in the sense of it being impossible to achieve?
- Maybe. But in order to expand the field of the possible, it is necessary to hope for the impossible.
- And where do you want to get to?
- We have a starting point, but not a final one. Human beings are in permanent construction. We believe that our own steps will act as a compass, helping us to find our objectives. And it must be said: we have already started on our journey.
- And what are the assumptions behind these changes?
- We feel that imagery plays an important role. Both in the creation through art and in the art that seeks to recreate the world.
- And how is this possible?
- Here, education plays an essential role. In alliance with art, as it already happens in various practices,

it generates new agents of change and multiplies the radio of action of this movement.

- And how do you spread this to the world?
- We believe that the new means of communication will make this task easier.
- It is a huge task...
- Surely. A task for various generations. But for now, we must play our part.

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The huge dangers, the very absurdity contained in the development that is made in all directions but without a true "guidance" from techno-science, cannot be discarded by "rules" decreed once and for all, nor by a "company of wise men" that could only become the instrument - if not the very subject - of a tyranny. What is demanded is more than a "reform of human understanding"; it is a reform of the human being him/herself as a social-historical being, an ethics of mortality, an overtaking of Reason. We have no need for a few "wise men". What we do need is for a greater number of people to acquire and exercise wisdom - something that, in its turn, will demand a radical transformation of political society, establishing not only formal participation but also developing everyone's enthusiasm for ordinary issues. As we know, wise human beings are the last thing contemporary culture produces.

- So, what do you want? To change mankind?
- No, something a bit more modest: that mankind should change itself, as it already did two or three times.

**Cornelius Castoriadis** <sup>1</sup>



# **Art and Cultural Identity in the construction of a cooperative world**

## **Global Context**

In our times, events happen far too fast. Our categories have become too narrow to deal with them. The fall of the Berlin wall, the demise of real socialism, AIDS, neo-nazism, ethnic intolerance, threats of unruliness here and there, social exclusion, are all signs of a barbaric world.

As the "Letter to Candidates" of the Inter-municipal Forum of Culture tell us, one of the 'negative results of globalisation is a de-rooting that destroys local ways of living and robs millions of human beings of their cultural references and of their own lives. Thus, the entire cultural process begins to decay and, in its place, we are offered standards manufactured by consumerism, that have in the media a permanent advocate and blur each and every type of difference". <sup>2</sup>

The period in which we are living has been called post-modern. A vague noun, announcing that something has become outdated, that we are already at another moment, although we may not know exactly which and not even what is meant by it.

The belief that we are going through a crisis seems consensual. And it is not just an economical and social crisis. We are dealing with something much bigger, a crisis of civilization. The word "crisis" can both mean the erosion of something that has been built and is now in decline or an appropriate moment for renovation, for some sort of re-invention.

In our case - and we are thinking here from a Western perspective - we have lost the paradigms that used to be our source of reference. The general feeling is one of pessimism. But will that not be just one side of the coin?

Eduardo Prado Coelho, a contemporary Portuguese thinker, questions the meaning of the "vacuum of ideas" usually connected with the "crisis of paradigms": "Vacuum of ideas? Supposedly so, for some. And they tend to draw a rather distressing picture of the times we live in. We would be roofless and among ruins - to use an expression sanctioned by the literature. According to the perspective regarded as most 'progressive', after communism, the landscape would be that of an expanding desert. At the limit of all types of dismantlement, they wait, on their knees, for the improbability of a miracle. Others, more conservative, more linked to an aristocracy of the spirit, see with genuine horror the levelling and trivialisation of a mass culture and of a school of continuous degradation. Others still, disturbed by the invasion of a techno-science they believe to be acephalous, perceive in the horizon the frightening signs of nihilism and barbarism. Nevertheless, through the very disaster, in this loss of regulating heavenly bodies that every disaster actually is, something moves and, if we encourage ourselves to follow the tenuous thread of this movement, it can eventually provide us with a bit of happiness and enchantment - the enigmatic smile of the turning of a century. We can even suspect that, when people speak of a 'vacuum of ideas' they are basically deploring the fact that today there are no ideas to save us, nor ideas to be used as foundation. In other words: no idea can guarantee our salvation, no idea is carrier of a saving truth, no idea can release us from being ourselves and from creating our own model and itinerary for salvation. And more: no idea is sufficiently strong to act as basis for a practice, to function as the exact science for praxis. Without heavenly bodies to guide us, without a navigation science that we could just apply, we go forward now in a sea of surprises and uncertainties" <sup>3</sup>.

This prompts us to ask: is it true that the certainties we had, and now have been proven false, were better than the uncertainties with which we navigate at present? Is it loss or liberation? We think both: loss because we deposited too much hope in that we lost; liberation because, free from the ties of a project

pre-determined by strict presuppositions, we are open to new adventures.

According to Octavio Ianni, it is "in the ambit of globalism that the meaning of world history is instituted, in a new, evident and astonishing form. The ties, the compromises, the tensions and the fragmentations developed in a world scale are such and so many, that we can already speak of the formation of a world's civil society; or of the early stages of a real cosmopolitanism of things, people and ideas; or of the constitution of globalism as a new and surprising historical arena, in terms of ways of being and mentalities, forms of sociability and of thinking, games of the social forces and class conflict, wars and revolutions; of new modalities of space and time; of a new paradigm for the social sciences, philosophy and the arts".<sup>4</sup>

In sum, the frontiers of the market are crossed, financial circuits are created, possibilities of coming and going are open, commercial, scientific and cultural exchanges are intensified. If, on the one hand, this process promotes a coming together of peoples, the establishment of networks of human rights and solidarity and proposals for world peace - besides the possibility of building a true intercultural dialogue, still to take shape - on the other, it has huge negative effects on the life in this planet and on peoples' self-determination. As the decline of the nation-state progresses, strong global power structures - such as the IMF - are strengthened.

This situation has as a tragic consequence the development of islands of prosperity and huge oceans of extreme poverty, de-characterizing cultures as it imposes on them the accelerated pace of a sophisticated technology, incompatible with the socio-cultural conditions of the majority of the population.

On the other hand, as Michel Sauquet reminds us, the problems of social injustice, exclusion and cultural identity are not necessarily related to globalisation, for they are part of "human nature, always confronted with nihilism and barbarism".

We live in an extremely unequal world in which high technology and illiteracy, abundance and famine, genetic engineering and death

from malnutrition co-exist. In the battle between Tanatus and Eros we have to make choices. In simple and radical terms: either we re-invent society or we will fall into barbarism. The victims of the 11<sup>th</sup> of September in New York are already warning us of civilization's imminent decline into barbarism.

### **Art as the re-enchantment of the world**

Max Weber, in a text called "Science as vocation" defined the disenchantment of the world as the possibility man has of dominating everything through calculus. In this disenchanted world, the meanings of existence, time and knowledge have taken other courses. The notion of progress, that involves linearity and constant improvement over time, has lost its power.

What would the enchanted world be like? Mircea Eliade tells us of civilizations in which the myth was fully lived. The world communicated with man and man reconstructed it, and reconstructed himself, through the language of symbols. Everything made sense in this live cosmos: the world revealed itself through language, far from the disenchantment that gradually took place in Western culture.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, when Nietzsche establishes the connection between science and myth, he tells us of the annihilation of the latter, an event that determines the Republican poets' expulsion. Poets, that is: dreamers, creators of utopias, saints and others of similar specimens - a whole errant tribe, roaming around the world and carrying the torch of re-enchantment. Re-enchantment that is not a return to a mythical past, although it is possible to think of a restored myth capable of reconquering that bit of the present that still offers a possibility of enchantment.

Maybe we should first define what we have lost in order to be able to identify what can be re-conquered later. In terms of language, we have lost our innocence.

What do we mean by that? That what we enunciate no longer has a meaning, and for this reason it becomes necessary to find the truth of

the word once more: the unity of the word with the enunciated object. Something children believe in, until that moment when they perceive that the word and the object are different things.

Before the invention of writing, the oral word established the present facts, preserved the past and predicted the future. Naming something gave that something its existence. The being lived in the language. And the lords of the word controlled events; hence the plenitude of poetry and the power of the word.

One of the earliest texts we know of, "the Babylonian Creation Epic" tells us of a time "when, in its heights, the sky had not yet been named and below, the hard earth had not been mentioned by name (...) when the gods had not been created, no name had been uttered, and no destiny had been fixed (...)."

No name uttered: sky, earth, man, gods, destiny. To name in order to bring to life. Five thousand years before Christ, the Babylonians established that truth. Since then we have been walking a long road in which language gradually lost its strength. In Elie Wiesel's words "when language fails, violence replaces it. Violence is the language of those that no longer express themselves through the word. Violence is also the language of intolerance, that begets hate".

<sup>5</sup> For this reason, it is necessary to restore the creative power of language. For Calvin, "the appropriate use of language allows us to approach things (present or absent) with discretion, attention and caution, respecting whatever those things (present or absent) communicate without resorting to words". <sup>6</sup>

Through creation, through art, it may be possible to help this coming together of man and language once more. In this sense, it is important to reaffirm that art and creation are not just found in this recently created figure, the artist, but in man in his plenitude. For this, we must turn the world upside down; invert the proposition "to be is to have"; seek the funny side of the daily routine; look at the world in amazement (the amazement of being alive, as mysterious as that of not-being); and we must try to be dazzled like Heraclitus, when he tells us that man's dwelling is the extraordinary. Perhaps

this is the key. If man's dwelling becomes, once again, the extraordinary, man will have re-enchanted the world.

But let's land in our *chantier*, trying to establish a dialogue with our fellow beings in this tribe.

In a document sent as contribution to the debates of the World Meeting of Alliance's Artists, Gustavo Marin asks: "En las crisis de las diversas civilizaciones a las que asistimos a fines del siglo XX, ¿pueden el arte y los artistas ser un medio para que los pueblos vivan en paz en un mundo de diversidad?" (in the crises of the various civilizations we are witnessing at the turn of the 20th century, can art and the artists be a means to ensure that people will live in peace in a world of diversity?")

In this same line, Michel Sauquet notes that "the whole world agrees about the role of art in the re-enchancement of the world", the question is 'to see how this re-enchancement will, in practical terms, contribute towards social development, to the reduction of injustices and inequalities and to the struggle against exclusion".

Olivier Petitjean, in his text "L'art, l'artiste et l'identité culturelle dans la construction d'un Montreuil solidaire" tells us about the city where he lives, Montreuil, describing, on the basis of a concrete experience, how artistic practices can modify the perception of social problems and be a factor of innovation.

Marin, Sauquet and Petitjean, each in his own way, pose the question of the re-invention of the world through art.

As Cristovam Buarque assures us, perhaps the artists' and thinkers' moment has finally arrived, "after decades of the economists' predominance. We are entering a period of poets, playwrights and writers, who, with the help of intuition, will denounce and formulate; of thinkers who, through analyses, will criticize and propose a wider view of the human and national drama".

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Is this prophecy being fulfilled? We have seen some advance signs in random pieces of news, from various origins, that have appeared within a few days, while we were writing this document. On

17<sup>th</sup> August 2001, the Rio de Janeiro newspaper *O Globo* displayed the following headlines: "Poetry in the treatment of drug addicts". It was referring to the project of an institution intending to bring about a revolution in the treatment of drug dependent youths: the Centre Raul Seixas of Attention to Drug-Addiction. The idea - affirmed Hugo Fagundes, the then Mental Health coordinator in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro- is that the Centre Raul Seixas should be a youth club, with activities that will help young people to understand that it is possible to go through their youth with horizons that are different from the need to have immediate satisfaction, from the attraction towards drugs, from the constant impact of consumerism and from the impossible dream, like the Nike running shoes. In sum, the project is an attempt to replace the alienated evasion these youngsters seek in the drugs, with the imagery of poetry: a beautiful project. <sup>8</sup>

We read in the *Jornal do Brasil* of 11<sup>th</sup> August 2001, a reporting with the following title: "Culture challenges reality. Projects in poor communities are mushrooming in Rio, making of art an alternative for everyday living and the raw material for the future".

In this reporting, Cláudia Martins, a 21 year old woman that participates in one of the dancing groups, says: "It took me a long time to discover that just because I live in the slums I don't have to leave school early and become a secretary or a receptionist. Today I know I can be a ballet dancer, go to college and make of dancing my life activity. This work has changed my perception of reality". <sup>9</sup>

"Science for poets" is a course given by the House of Science of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. It started in September 2001, opening a space where artists, scientists and other interested people can exchange ideas about the theatre, science and the spread of scientific knowledge. Their leaflet provides information on the objective of the event: "In the arts and sciences man creates his own path, invents infinity and the adventure of searching for it. What brings art and science together is the

feeling that the more we walk, the longer is the road to be walked [...]

In Cristovam Buarque's view "it will be necessary to return to the essence of the human values, subordinating technique to ethics in a new logic, capable of understanding man and the rest of nature as part of a whole and of re-defining the concepts of freedom and of equality in these times of the *great and independent machines* that replace human labour and destroy the environment. Above all, it will be necessary to have imagination to invent a new concept of wealth, free from the ties of the economy, using the latter only as an instrument". <sup>10</sup>

This conversion of man into a type of logic other than the logic of capital must impose itself. In this sense, it would be interesting to mention a chronicle entitled "Far beyond the market" written by Clóvis Rossi, a columnist of the newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo*. In it, he speaks about a journalist from the *New York Times* a "self-proclaimed believer in the absolute superiority of the free market who, having spent a few weeks in Italy, came back convinced that there are more things in life - in civilized life - than the unruly competition of the market". What fascinated this journalist was the example of the "Italian public health system that sends a nurse periodically to accompany a patient that lives miles out and suffers from multiple sclerosis, obstacles that would make her displacement to the city rather costly and complicated" And he asks himself "whether this behaviour is a deviation, a waste - according to the logic of the market - or, on the contrary, it shows that a society is more civilized for all if it provides the necessary medical care to all those that need it". <sup>11</sup>

Obviously an isolated case, but it is through the multiple repetitions of isolated cases that change occurs.

But let's return to poetry.

According to Octavio Paz there are no societies without poetry nor poetry without society. In this case, poetry must be understood in its *lato sensu*, as the peopling of the world by art.



For Paz, a "society without poetry would lack a language: everybody would say the same thing or nobody would speak", whereas poetry without society would be "a poem without an author, without a reader and, strictly speaking, without words. Condemned to an eternal conjunction that is solved by instantaneous contention, the two terms seek a mutual conversion: to poetise social life and to socialise the poetic word. This would be the transformation of society in a creative community, in a living poem; and of the poem in a social life, in an embodied image.

A creative society would be a universal society in which the relations between human beings, far from being an imposition by an external need would be similar to a living fabric. [...] This society would be free because, its own owner, it could not be determined by anything else apart from itself; and it would have solidarity because human activity would not involve, as it does today, the domination of ones over the others (or the rebellion against this domination) but, instead, the recognition of every one by all his/her equals, or, better still, by his/her fellow-beings".<sup>12</sup>

Borges expresses the visceral meaning of poetry extremely well when he says that poetry is not a merely intellectual occurrence but involves man in all his being.<sup>13</sup>

Nietzsche says something similar. In his view, only art has the power to produce representations of the existence that make it possible for us to live.<sup>14</sup> These representations - a fertile soil for the artistic creation - are those that, going through the individual and collective imageries, make it possible for us to re-invent the world.

It is this founding dimension of art that must be rescued, for, as Fayga Ostrower tells us - "when man shaped the earth he shaped himself". He built, let's say, his own image. Here, there is something slightly mysterious embedded in one of Fayga's questions: "Which type of language is this, that needs no interpretation and has been communicating for millennia, without losing the nucleus of expressiveness?".

Perhaps this enigma without an answer can help us in the search for another model of existence, reformulating the imagery that feeds our yearnings. What we seek depends not only on the circumstances around us and on the contingent, but also on our will and actions: our daring to do something. It is through this doing, with its errors and achievements, that we will be able to build a new, more equalitarian, more creative and altogether happier way of living.

Art - that through time has become the register, the document and the witness of various civilizations - plays an essential role for human and cultural development. Today, more than ever, with the current crisis of civilization, and the consequent monotheism of reason, the artistic language may be one of the few languages that speaks directly to people's hearts, particularly those of young people. Besides its ability to give impetus to social transformations, it can contribute to re-enchant the world through the establishment of strong symbolic forms, forming, therefore, a community of feelings.

Heraclitus affirms that man's dwelling is the extraordinary. It is this extraordinary that, to a large extent, contemporary man lost when he lost the cosmos, as D.H. Lawrence said in one of his books. How can we re-connect ourselves to the cosmos? Or, in the question posed by Vanda Chalyvopolou: how can we find again the magic sensation of things?

Since, in Borges' words, "beauty is on the watch everywhere"<sup>15</sup> we must promote meetings with it. Perhaps, in the way suggested by Bené Fonteles when he questions the production of art only as stimulus for the senses: "Why produce art only as stimulus for the senses when the discretion of the mind and of the spirit begs us to have more responsibility towards the matter, the word, the idea and the work? What art demands from us is a sensitive and intuitive exercise practising a new form of perceiving, of being and of belonging to the world; an exercise that, in this millennium, prepares us for the understanding of the other dimensions that science is already experiencing or foreseeing."<sup>16</sup>

Although materialism saturates the Western man's life, he never freed himself from the sacred that - in Mircea Eliade's view - feeds his unconscious already formed by figures full of sacredness. In certain cases - Eliade affirms - the artist's behaviour in the face of the matter reenounters and recovers an extremely archaic type of religiosity that, in the Western world, has disappeared millennia ago.

Will not this be what happened in the case reported by Bené Fonteles about a popular artist's explanation of his sculpture of an elephant? "I held the wood, listened to it, heard everything it had to say, and took away everything that was not an elephant."

Art permits a large number of interpretations. Brice Parfait, another participant of the artists' meeting, states that art is "the last step of knowledge" and the artist "the messenger of the invisible". For Kolakowski, art is "a way to forgive the evil and the chaos of the world". In his view, "art organizes the perceptions of the evil and of the chaotic, introducing the understanding of life in such a way that the presence of evil and of chaos is transformed into the possibility of my having an initiative with regard to the world, an initiative that carries its own goodness and its own evil.

In order for this to happen, art must discover, in the world, whatever is not provided by the appearance of the world, that is, the secret charm of its own ugliness, the hidden distortion of its gracefulness, the ridicule of its ascent, the poverty of its ostentation and the cost of poverty; in one word, it must discover all the secret fibres smothered by the empirical qualities, that convert these qualities into particles of our failure or of our pride". <sup>17</sup>

Like the myth, art allows us to play with the mystery of the world, its comicality, pleasure and gaiety. It allows us to enter the unknown in the search of partial - always partial - answers that maintain the élan of living. And this is also connected with a search for solutions for the problems that trample us and threat our own survival. A survival that, in order to be valid, must be worthy.

That is to say, it must be shared, in a world where life is worth living.

We often forget that, besides the lack of material goods - something that causes extreme poverty and the death of thousands of people - we also lack symbolic and spiritual goods. In the confluence of symbolic and spiritual goods, we have art: it encourages the relationship between individual and groups, renewing experiences and ties of solidarity, creating imagery and poetic situations that are essential for the understanding of the other and of oneself. In this sense, to develop oneself through art may make our life happier and our regard more sensitive to everyday reality. It can contribute towards the creation of a rich imagery, based on our roots and on the collective creativity of the present; and it can retrace the poetry that can give a meaning to communal life through happiness, comicality and imagination.

As in the case of art, the figure of the artist is central in contemporary societies. A builder of social identities and imageries, s/he is an existential - and often mythical - reference. Finally, they are special people in the various contexts, both as agents of alienation, using art as a system of manipulation, and as agents in the search of a plural, cooperative and responsible world.

And because we are speaking of the artist, we will bring this item to a close with Makarand Paranjape's words: "The artist can help in the construction of the conditions necessary for changing the world. This can be achieved not by retiring in an ivory tower, but by making art more accessible to ordinary people, freeing them from the chains of the market forces, and also bringing to light people's hidden creativity".

### **Art and cultural identity**

Kobena Mercer affirms that "identity becomes a problem when in crisis, when something that we suppose to be fixed, coherent and stable is moved by the experience of doubt and of uncertainty".<sup>18</sup> And what is "moved by the experience of doubt and of uncertainty" is whatever I am. In times of cloning, when man boasts about the

possibility of creating other beings through genetic engineering, it makes total sense to bring the subject of identity to the agenda.

How does globalisation affect cultural identity? Giddens affirms that "in so far as the various regions of the globe are placed in interconnection with one another, waves of social transformation reach virtually the entire surface of the earth".<sup>19</sup>

This tendency towards a cultural homogenisation, tied to a global market that invades the privacy of homes through the TV sets, builds a collective imagery through an appeal to consumerism that spreads to almost every corner of the "global village".

Stuart Hall says that "it was the diffusion of consumerism, be it as part of reality, be it as a dream, that contributed to this 'cultural supermarket'. Within the discourse of global consumerism, the differences and cultural distinctions that until then determined the identity, were reduced to a sort of free international language or a global currency, into which all specific traditions and all different identities may be translated".<sup>20</sup>

In this homogenised scenario, and in the face of the overpowering process led by the so-called "only thought", the importance of the cultural identities of the various countries and regions is now growing. The populations located outside the European-American axle suffer even more: carriers of a "root culture", more compatible with human development, they are pressured by external dynamics that have a strong impact on their cultural development.

When we share this sort of critical assessment, in which the Other's culture is seen as a show or as exotic merchandise, we are not defending the "purity" of cultural manifestations. We know that the vitality of these cultures lies in the dynamics of their modernization; but a modernization that must not be achieved at the cost of a loss of identity.

As we well know, identity is plural and changes constantly. What must not occur, however, is a superposition of cultures dictated by the norms of the strongest that makes of the "weakest" something picturesque and de-rooted from their true origin.

This oscillating movement between conservation and change does not find its "just measure" every time. In some cases, the tendency to homogenisation produces the opposite effect and can lead an ethnic group towards exaggerated nationalism and religious orthodoxy.

On the other hand, there are situations in which the process of *transculturation* strengthens local identities, as it happened with the Ecuadorian Indians, who succeeded in building a worldwide circuit of support and recognition of their identity. Something similar to what Miguel Angel Echegaray called "glocality" - a neologism formed by the combination of globalisation and locality - recognizing that the local and the global are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the local is one aspect of the global.<sup>21</sup>

A large number of Brazilians of African descent have reaffirmed Black values and educational processes, whilst incorporating new technologies from the West into their work. This is Octavio Paz's proposal: to rescue the past integrating it into the present, claiming a full human existence (tradition and experimentation, the new and the ancient, the universal and the local).

Transculturation must seek greater human improvement and cultural exchanges. It must never aim at the reduction of life to a universal language and style.

We do not want a "bad" globalisation, that is, the type of globalisation that attempts to render the world uniform and change us all into consumers, eliminating diversity and the awareness of the other. We want a "good" globalisation that brings people together, encouraging the exchange of knowledge and making possible the experiences that can strengthen our fraternity.

In the future, the world must strengthen diversity: a world full of other worlds. In the words of Boaventura Souza Santos: " I have the right to be different every time equality makes us homogeneous. I have the right to be equal every time difference makes us inferior". Or, in a similar version, spoken by Terena, a

Brazilian Indian leader: "I can be who you are without stopping being who I am."

The search for the universal involves the particular. Only by constituting myself as a subject can I aspire to equality in my relations with the other. And art fulfils its role in this respect. Saying who I am, through what I do, I can establish a dialogue with others in a porous process that allows for creative inter-penetrations, through forms, sounds, colours and words.

Creating is inherent to the human condition. The human being perceives him/herself and recognises him/herself in what s/he creates, transforming things, making sense of them, giving them a meaning. When man transforms things, he transforms himself, in a dynamic process in which he recreates things and himself.

We are all potential creators, and art, in its multiple dimensions, is an immense field of possibilities for the exercise of creation.

Art makes it possible for us to experience cultural diversity and to (re)-cognise ourselves in this creative process. Rooting out the ethnocentrism that leads us to stereotyped views of the other, we incorporate, through art, our plurality in its various forms of building and rebuilding the world. That is to say, in this process the identities are in constant mutation.

It is through imagery that the human being projects a recreation of the universe in time. The architecture of the future, which can be thought of through art, allows us multiple inventions, giving a meaning to our life and encouraging us to act.

For Ianni, it is "possible to say that a utopia is hiding itself in the future. It may be a perfected or purified projection of the present; but it can also be an idealized projection of the past. Whenever we imagine the future, as a possible and desired world, there is always a touch of utopia or nostalgia in it. In some cases, the imagination of the future involves not only nostalgia but also eschatology. There are catastrophic futures, side by side with paradisiacal futures. In all cases, the future has an element of a-historicity or of super-historicity. Even when it has its roots in

scientific forecasting, the future we outline acquires the characteristic of being suspended in space and in time, as a fantasy or allegory. And it is through this fantasy or allegory that it becomes possible to achieve the re-enchantment of the world."<sup>22</sup>

### **Art and Education**

According to what Werner Jaeger tell us in *Paideia*,<sup>23</sup> Plato reports that, in his day, the prevailing view was that Homer had been the educator of the whole of Greece. A poet that educates all his people seems a rather strange idea in our times.

In this 'global village' of multiple differences, would it be possible to think of a "plural, cooperative and responsible" world in terms of a collective poetical paradigm?

We are far from this utopia. We have numerous and quite different educational models and ideals about the society we want to form. If we leave aside all our prejudices, we may just about succeed in finding a model of international coexistence compatible with a more equalitarian world. But given the prevailing level of intolerance, with its numerous masks, even this is a difficult and complex issue.

The pursuit of this objective demands an educational proposal. The possibility that this proposal may be begotten by poetry is for us both a motivation and a challenge.

Octavio Paz speaks of the poem as the 'ideogram of a world in search of its meaning, its orientation, not in a fixed point, but in the rotation of the points and in the mobility of the signs".<sup>24</sup> What this proposal actually is, we don't know. We only know - and is still Octavio Paz who tells us this, when he compares "contemporary attitudes" with the ones prevailing "fifteen or twenty years ago" - that the poetic experience "is once again physical, corporeal: today the word enters our ears, embodies itself, incarnates. The fact that the reception of poems has the tendency to be a collective act is not less revealing: the embodiment of the word and its collective



incarnation correspond to the replacement of the book by other means of communication and of the written sign by the spoken word.”<sup>25</sup>

We speak of poetry as something that transcends the poem and moves us through the most different artistic expressions: dancing, painting, literature, sculpture, music, and the cinema...

From Paz's words, we would like to hold on to the expression "embodiment of the word and its collective incarnation". There is, here, a type of action that pertains to the intentional educational act.

And here a parenthesis: when we speak of art and education we are not advocating that art should be harnessed to education. Art fulfils its educational function by its very form of expression. An example of this is the project "If this road was mine" coordinated by Antônio César Marques da Silva, one of participants in this seminar (v. item on "Practices" in this Notebook). The project uses various artistic activity (circus, theatre and dance) to work with street children and adolescents. Although the project has no intention of making artists out of all the pupils, the activities in which the children involve themselves helps them to re-think their existence in the world.

But on this, let us give the floor to two young Rio de Janeiro slum dwellers who discovered art in the place where they live. Seventeen-year-old Alan Pereira, from the project "Cultura na Favela" funded by the German Goethe Institute, studies dance. He says "I used to hang around doing nothing, up on the hill, maybe playing football. If I hadn't joined the Company, maybe I wouldn't even be alive today. I'd probably have become a criminal and died like my father and my foster brother." Twenty-two-year old Andrea Macedo, from the project "Casa das Artes da Mangueira", dreams of becoming a professional photographer. What calls attention in what she tells us is the fact the she now sees poetry where before she did not: "Before I didn't even like black and white photos, I thought they were sad. Now I can see poetry in them and see the things around me in a different way".

These testimonies <sup>26</sup> confirm the vital function of art in society. A function that, as Ernesto Grassi tells us, goes much

further than "a few people's expression of geniality, and should not be seen as a luxury; on the contrary it must be recognised as one of the essential aspects of human existence and must be considered in this function".<sup>27</sup>

Fayga Ostrower, in the opening conference of the meeting "Art and cultural identity in the construction of a cooperative world" speaks in a similar tone: creativity - she says - "is something inherent to the very human condition. Thus, far from being exceptional or perhaps even abnormal qualities, creativity and the many acts of creation that result from it must be understood as mankind's natural states and forms of behaviour. Natural in the sense that they pertain to the human being. Man is a creative being, naturally, spontaneously, and not exceptionally".<sup>28</sup>

When she makes this statement, Fayga is not denying the existence of exceptional artists who have reached the highest level of potential existing in the human being.

In order to try and change what is around us we need a project with a collective objective. Education, by forming, by transforming, is a road in this direction because it is an act of will, an intervention aiming at an objective that must be achieved.

However, in order to achieve what we want we have to forget the "realism" of those who - as the Peruvian economist Alfredo Romaña tells us, through Ernesto Sabato's words - destroy rivers, whole seas, bury nuclear waste ignoring [...] that a radioactive atom exists forever, destroy jungles like the Amazon. Finally, they destroy man's soul, since, in the so-called civilized countries, he has been converted into a mere cogwheel. And worst of all, they are destroying the soul of children and adolescents. For this reason drugs are not a police problem, as these stupid people believe, but a psychological and spiritual one."<sup>29</sup>

Makarand seeks the other side of this perverse realism when he speaks to us of J. Krishnamurti, who "believed that true creativity originates from a contact with Reality. Unfortunately, we really lost the ability to see, hear, touch, taste and smell. We see the

present through the past, by memory, by conditioning. The result is that we cannot experience the present in its purity. The present is always new, since it is always flowing, since it is the matrix of all creativity".

Makarand criticises our pedagogy, confined to intellectual development and asks us: "What can we say about the training of the senses? With this we open an entire field of reflection on which we are not used to think and which may be essential in our attempts to re-enchant the world.

## **Propositions**

### **The connection art-society**

Art is inseparable from the social, economic, political and cultural reality of the various countries. Today it plays an essential role in the re-linking of society and in the re-organisation of the social fabric torn by the commercialisation of relations and by violence. Particularly among young people, art becomes the only possible language for comprehension and for communication between generations. With the homogenisation of the discourse on change, politics has little to say and art takes on a unprecedented relevance.

The crisis of paradigms brings to the field of problem resolution the uncertainty, the poetic, the unpredictable and not only the previously certain. When we talk about the role of art, we do not mean that it should serve a good cause, impoverishing itself in aesthetic terms. Beauty is essential for human beings and thus art is valuable *per se*.

Nevertheless, we must contextualize its creative power, its uses and its capacity to generate enchantment. Everyone must be a creator of art, not just a few among us. Therefore, the right to create is the precondition of a higher quality of life. We must make the access to art more general and struggle for quality in consumption.

Finally, another role of art is to make the world worth living in by re-enchanting it, and making of it a place where, more than the everyday struggle for survival, there is also creative imagination, dreams and utopia. It is essential to reaffirm the importance of art as a transforming drive for people that carry in them a new vision of the human being; art is capable of raising their self-esteem, and of humanizing and emancipating their spirit; and not least, of contributing for the betterment of people and societies.

### **Encouraging the artist's social responsibility**

In Ezra Pound's opinion, artists are the feelers of the species. In our view, this means that sensitivity is able to pick up languages, images and realities that go beyond the concrete world and the imagery. Art is a product of the creative imagination, but it can also express the problems of the real world. Octavio Paz says that through poetry one world is revealed and another is created. For all this the artist has an important place in society. S/he is worthy special admiration for his/her sensitivity and creativity; s/he often becomes a reference and sometimes a myth. Art, in its turn, helps to establish a community of feelings. Therefore, the artist's role is central not only to change the reality of countries but also to enrich their imagery, thus helping to improve both the material and spiritual quality of life.

Besides his/her art, the artist as a citizen can create standards of ethical behaviour and contribute towards political and cultural changes in society, since modernization and globalisation tend to create a market culture that denies the rich cultural processes of various countries.

### **Defending the right of access to culture**

In our societies, besides the struggle for a better quality of life in material terms, for economic development, for the overcoming of poverty and improvement of living conditions, for the preservation of the environment and for political renovation, we

must also struggle for the right to culture and to *cultural citizenship*. In contemporary societies, this must be the object of a permanent struggle.

The defence of cultural citizenship must be understood as the right to innovate without denying the value of ancient culture. Paraphrasing Marilena Chauí, we can state here that cultural citizenship is the right to freedom of cultural creation, the right to participate in society's processes of cultural decision-making, the right to information, the right to the expression of diversity as the basis for a true cultural democracy. Today, the struggle for just and sustainable societies must include cultural citizenship as an indispensable ingredient in the processes of change.

**Strengthening the cultural diversity of countries and regions and encouraging inter-cultural exchanges.**

Each culture has its own history; its treasure is its singularity, its specific formation. In the heart of this diversity we find solutions for mankind's great challenges. However, the defence of diversity as a factor of cultural enrichment must neither prevent inter-cultural exchanges nor permit the blind defence of traditions. It is true that some cultures, despite the wealth of their narratives and myths, violate human rights. This is unacceptable. It is possible, however, that inter-cultural exchanges could bring to these cultures parameters of rights historically unknown to them.

Without the free expression of cultural diversity, there is no quality of life or the full exercise of civil rights. The unity of a country, region or locality must never be an excuse to inhibit the rich plurality of cultures that embellish both the concrete life and the imagery of these societies.

**Strengthening cultural identity in the face of the globalisation process.**

The process of globalisation has expanded worldwide, de-characterising rich cultures and commercialising relations previously based on community life, on gratuitousness and on affective and symbolic exchanges. The world economy has also encouraged the appearance of a world culture, that is, the globalisation of objects and of imagery. However, the social movements and the strong local identities have created a field of cultural re-appropriation and re-elaboration; or even movements of resistance to this *world-isation* that destroys and de-characterises cultures. We agree with Professor Milton Santos when he says that the essence is at the local level and the appearance at the global one. The defence of identity does not imply a denial of the globalisation process, if by globalisation we mean the coming together of various cultures in the world. What it does require is a strengthening of traditions and also ruptures that still maintain the face and the colours of the locality's most generous impulses. It is through this that human beings can create sustainable ways of living, on the basis of their cultural heritage. The defence of a cooperative, cosmopolitan and multicultural globalisation must be part of our horizon.

Starting with the protection of the various cultural and artistic heritages, we must then go on to seek the unity and complementation of cultures through an intercultural dialogue. This will help to avoid ethnocentrism and will encourage the opening of each culture to other cultural matrices. Processes of identity affirmation must structure themselves around a greater appreciation of roots, ethnicities and races, religions, cultural manifestations, artistic expressions and shared history.

**Encouraging actions of cultural occupation of public spaces by the population.**

Art must leave the institutional 'temples' of cultural production and go to environments accessible to the ordinary citizen: the community, the square, the street, the viaduct, the

tube station, all must be places for the diffusion of creativity, of art and of culture. The artists must leave their pedestal in order to meet the ordinary citizen, involving themselves in the realities of ordinary living and expanding the uses of culture and of art. To publicize art, to de-sacrament it is a precondition for the expansion of its role in society and for the re-enchantment of the world through the artistic language.

### **Building a peace culture**

Our societies, torn by military, civil and market wars that are fought daily - silent wars, the fruit of competition and disaggregation - have hardly known any lasting peace. A culture of peace must become one of our most important banners; not so that some empire will then reign over the consensus and the silence of those under it, but in order to build a society that is happier in all areas of activity and of human coexistence.

As a developer of communities of feeling, and a celebrator of the collective, art may come to play a huge and essential role in bringing people together and in building peace. In this sense, we could organize campaigns for peace, movements for disarmament, movements of art and peace in schools, meetings of art and peace among young people and symbolic actions for peace, such as the Drums for Peace.

The inter-religious dialogue, that, at the moment, is becoming more intense, can also contribute significantly to a more peaceful world.

The same may happen in the case of art, given the universality of its language. It is necessary to make clear that, in the daily coexistence, the artistic language contributes to the establishment of peace.

The means of communication have been one of the great propagators of war in the planet. Will it not be possible to revert their function towards the construction of peace? We suggest pacific and artistic resistance to the cruelty of the world, generating

values of non-violence and solidarity that take into consideration the following propositions, based on the thoughts of UNESCO:

- respect and dignity in people's lives, without discrimination or prejudices;
- rejection of any type of violence: physical, sexual, psychological, economic, social and others:
- cultural diversity;
- dialogue in order to prevent fanaticism, slandering and exclusion;
- respect to life, seeking the community's peaceful coexistence;
- democracy as a form of solidarity.

#### **Strengthening the cultural exchanges between the various countries**

We advocate that one of the essential roles of both the Chantier <sup>30</sup> and the Artists' College <sup>31</sup> must be cultural exchange. We have discovered that we know very little about our own cultures and still less about other people's cultures.

We can thus conduct planned "immersions" in our own countries with the presence of allies from other countries. We can also organise inter-cultural caravans - such as the African Caravan for Peace and Solidarity, that, in order to establish an inter-cultural dialogue, seeks to identify the similarities and differences in points of view between cultures. We believe that, for a genuine inter-cultural dialogue we need more than occasional meetings and Web exchanges. For this reason we are in favour of extending the Chantier and the Artists' College to the various countries.

#### **Experiences <sup>32</sup>**

##### **Street chats**

This is one of the practices of the Alliance for a Responsible and Cooperative World in Brazil. Street Chats (Conversa de Rua) involve the temporary occupation of a public space (street, square,



underground station, viaduct, avenue, courtyard, park, etc) by the neighbourhood dwellers and/or passers-by, in order to present relevant topics - peace-building, ecology, art and culture, women's condition, political renovation, etc - and promote a debate around them. The more general theme is the city we want to have. The idea here is to have personal experiences, in direct contact with the population, and not just through the networks and the Web.

The project involves thousands of ordinary passers-by and also reaches a large part of the population through the media. In Vitória, capital of the Brazilian state of Espírito Santo, the Chats focused on racism, gender balance, culture, human rights and nutritional safety. In São Paulo, the Alliance's topic for debates in the city centre was political renovation and it organized, with other entities, a washing of the Municipal Assembly building, under the auspices of the national movement called *De Olho no Voto*. (Keeping an eye on the Vote). The concept of art is an essential component of this activity. It is art that brings people together and, permeating the debate, facilitates its development. Several artistic manifestations - popular music, classical music, puppet theatre and bands - are introduced as an integral part of the activity. The symbolic action is also essential to increase the impact of the Street Chats.

### **Ballet Stagium**

The Ballet Stagium is one of the best-known and most respected art groups in Brazil. In the 70s, the group performed in various Brazilian regions: in 1974, for instance, it travelled along the São Francisco river in the Brazilian Northeast, performing in the villages on the river bank. Besides its performances in far away places, the group of 150 artists organized dancing sessions with the local children and taught the local population a few ballet steps.

From the 90s, the Ballet Stagium began to work the relationship between dance and education inviting children and their parents to participate in the performances. In the schools, the group taught body movement and posture techniques to teachers who

had never come across any of these skills. Márika Gidalli, the ballet coordinator, said: "The teacher arrives with a bent back and leaves standing straight. In the classroom, s/he begins to carry out a series of activities that until then, s/he couldn't even dream existed. Working without the help of words for the first time, the teacher develops his/her power of concentration and becomes more creative in the work with his/her pupils".

The Ballet Stagium has also developed a series of activities with children from poor backgrounds - including boys and girls living in the street - convicts and hospital patients. Through art, these people change their view of the world, their attitude in relation to life, their values and ways of learning and teaching. Indeed, the members of the ballet group help them to recover their self-esteem and to become more aware of their own rights.

#### **Project Alagoas Present!**

This project was developed by the plastic artist Marta Arruda in the city of Maceió and in other towns in the interior of the Alagoas state, in the Brazilian Northeast. Its objective is to facilitate educational processes through the introduction of artistic activities that - by introducing moments of leisure in the learning process - also help to encourage and develop new artistic values. Its intention is also to develop the population's interest in the preservation of the local craftsmanship, and of local folk dances, music, literature and other types of cultural resources. Through this the project develops the conditions for an improvement in the quality of life of the population. This non-profit-making educational project had its origins in - and, indeed, operates thanks to - the cooperation between individuals, voluntaries and private companies with the help of individual donations and eventual contributions from the region's local governments.

The project teaches plastic arts in the towns, conducting workshops on collage, papier maché, clay, painting on ceramics, drawing, and mural painting; it also involves the organization of conferences and folkloric performances. All these activities

encourage the local artists' creativity and help to publicize their work. The project has reached approximately ten thousand people of the areas it visited. It is a true cultural caravan, opening new roads, mobilizing people - particularly young ones - and seeking the local authorities' involvement. Its work makes people aware of their vocations and produces new artists, thus encouraging the development of a number of similar actions.

### **Cultural Huts of Citizenship**

Out of 970 projects implemented by the public sector and connected with the development of civil rights, the Cultural Huts of Citizenship were selected by the Ford Foundation and by the Getulio Vargas Foundation as one of the twenty most significant experiences in Brazil. It happens in Itaperecica da Serra, a town with 130 thousand inhabitants located at some 18 miles from the city of São Paulo. Itaperecica, being an extension of the São Paulo metropolis, has high rates of violence and is the arena for a battle between armed groups connected with the drug traffic. It is also a very poor town, with precarious housing and few public spaces.

The aim of the project is to create alternative spaces in all the town districts using low-cost building materials such as eucalyptus, bamboo and mud walls. These spaces are called *Barracões*. The actual building process is done with the population's help in the expectation that they will then own these spaces and use them for social activities and for discussing the serious problems faced by the districts.

The idea is to provide a stage where artistic and cultural activities take place simultaneously with other activities related to the development of citizenship. Thus art is linked to a series of social activities, from cultural events to campaigns for peace and involvement in the town's participatory budget. The artistic activities are organised in cultural workshops that use various languages: theatre, dance, orchestras, drums, violin playing, keyboard, singing, etc.

There are a number of dance groups formed by women who, through art, became more aware of their power and social role. We have also noted that the work has helped to change the behaviour of young drug-users. Some of these youngsters have said that they feel better as human beings and many seem to get more involved in their school activities and in community life.

### **Museum and special public**

This is an exhibition held at the Museum of Contemporary Art of São Paulo University (MAC-USP) developed especially for people suffering from visual disability.

All teaching materials in the exhibition are multi-sensorial: some are made with rubber and *papier maché*, so that the various textures can be discovered by touch. Art can thus, attract a target public that normally does not visit these spaces. In 1998, the Museum of Contemporary Art organized an art exhibition with a selection of eighteen works: eight oil paintings and ten bronze sculptures. For each painting there was a reproduction in *haut-relief*, one in *papier-maché* and one in rubber. By touching the various reproductions, the visually disabled visitors could familiarize themselves with the work. The project is complemented with talks on the history of art and information on the various exhibits. At the end of the visit, the visitor is given a copy of the exhibition catalogue that includes a text in Braille.

### **Ecological Awareness and Education through art**

This project has been developed by the movement Artists for Nature a non-governmental organization bringing together approximately five hundred Brazilian artists and pedagogues. The movement has existed since 1977 and has created ecological associations and parks, besides organising symbolic acts, campaigns and demonstrations. After many years of activity, it succeeded in persuading the authorities of the need to create the National Park of the Guimarães Plateau, in the Brazilian central region.

In 1986, the movement gathered 145 Brazilian artists in the Central Marshland (Pantanal) and in the Guimarães Plateau region, to present an exhibition called "Artists for Nature". Between 1992 and 1993, the movement's participants made a pilgrimage on foot along the banks of the São Francisco river, and by boat on the river waters, in an attempt to spread ecological and cultural values to the local population. During the pilgrimage, demonstrations were held in support of the preservation of the river waters and the pilgrims launched a manifesto entitled "The river of dirty waters". The group was invited by UNESCO to write a book containing guidelines for environmental education in Brazil.

Art is the motivation for all their actions and the majority of participants are artists, art-teachers or other educators sensitive to this language. The movement was inspired and organised by the artist and writer Bené Fonteles, who, besides a vast artistic production, is a partner of the well-know Brazilian composer and singer Gilberto Gil.

#### **Movement Art against Barbarism**

This is a non-partisan movement founded three years ago that brings together individuals connected with the theatre and culture in general who share the view that the theatrical practice implies ethical and social commitment.

On 26<sup>th</sup> June 2000, the movement launched its third manifesto, signed by more than six hundred artists proposing the establishment of Permanent Programmes for the Scenic Arts, in the municipal, state and national ambits, with public budgetary resources administered according to public and participatory criteria.

In July 2000, the Movement inaugurated the Space of the Scene, designed to house open meetings fortnightly, in the hope of deepening the reflection on the needs of the artistic production and on ways to expand the population's access to cultural products.

#### **Drums for Peace**

Drums for Peace are an international symbolic action connected with the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and Cooperative World. The project seeks to rescue one of the functions of the drums in ancient communities: scaring away illness and evil. Instead of calling for war, they are calling for peace.

In 2001, the Drums for Peace were present in the Alliance's four continental meetings (Tanzania, India, Romania, Ecuador) and also in a regional meeting in the Lebanon.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2001, an interactive celebration of the Drums of Peace was held in São Paulo, Brazil, in the Vila Mariana SESC. The event was livened by the Bahian musician Gereba and, besides the participants in the Alliance's international meeting - "Art and Cultural Identity in the construction of a cooperative world" - it counted on the presence of various other guests. This event was the first public presentation organised by the Alliance in Brazil to divulge the Drums for Peace.

The objective of this initiative is to involve and mobilize musicians, artists, educators and the leaders of social movements so that they will commit themselves to this symbolic action, creating, every year, an Inter-cultural Symphony for Peace. In Brazil, this initiative has the lively support of the educator Isis de Palma.

### **"If this road was mine"**

The project "If this road..." began in 1991, bringing together four large NGOs: The Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analyses (IBASE), the Institute for Cultural Action (IDAC), the Institute for Studies on Religion (ISER) and the Federation of Associations in Support of Education (FASE) The efficient work with children and adolescents in the streets of Rio de Janeiro began in the following year, with ample media coverage, not only because of the relevance of the NGOs involved but also because well-known artists and football players took part in the event.

From its beginning, the "If this road..." favoured the entertainment aspect in the implementation of its work. This was

expressed in the type of work the project did and whereby it is known to date: circus, dance, theatre, and the Brazilian martial art *capoeira*. When the project first started, its approach was considered very innovative, no doubt because this type of social activity had, until then, been associated with personal sacrifices, perhaps as a legacy of the left-wing militancy of the late 60s and early 70s.

### **Free Workshop of Knowledge and School of Protagonists (=+#)**

The Free Workshop of Knowledge is a teaching methodology designed to develop creativity and human values, oriented to the young living in a situation of risk and to educators working in this social segment. Through art-education, the project contributes to developing the young person's awareness of his/her role as a protagonist in history, encouraging him/her to be an active participant in society and to spread a culture of non-violence and of human values.

The School of Protagonists is an art-education programme working with adolescents of both genders, aged between fourteen and twenty, seeking alternatives to help them to become independent and creative individuals.

The objectives of the school are, among others:

- encourage sociability;
- promote the development of self-confidence and of thrust in the other;
- help local young people to develop a critical awareness;
- direct young people in situations of risk to the job market;
- make the job market aware of the potential of young people from poor areas.

### **Inter-municipal Forum of Culture (FIC)**

The Inter-municipal Forum of Culture (FIC) is a group formed by cultural movements, administrators and specialists from the public sector, creators of culture and of art, in the various regions of the country. The group's objective is to discuss and elaborate alternatives for local cultural policies, contributing for the creation of a public and democratic sphere in this area.

Since it was created, in 1995, the FIC has been a source of reference for the elaboration of local cultural policies, particularly through the National Meetings it organizes, and the cultural documents and publications it publicizes.

By encouraging initiatives that promote human development through culture and art, FIC helps to bring together public and private cultural agents, specialists and administrators from the public sector, academic researchers and lecturers and specialists from the cultural field and from the services oriented to culture and entertainment.

In the case of a metropolis such as São Paulo, suffering from overpopulation, violence, poverty, and pollution as well as high levels of social and cultural exclusion, FIC proposes the type of local public policies that emphasize a decentralisation of cultural initiatives.<sup>33</sup> The objective of this proposal is to guarantee that the city periphery will also have access to the production and fruition of cultural goods and, at the same time, to provide support for existing movements, such as the movement for peace and for the development of citizenship.

### **Project Porandussara**

The Project Porandussara (narrator, in tupi) is four years old. Its objective is to expand the knowledge Brazilians have of an ancient matrix of their cultural heritage, by putting together a collection of myths from the indigenous mythology.

As a side product of its activities the Project organizes theatrical presentations and story-telling workshops. For this purpose it seeks to form local groups that retrace their own roots.



At the moment, in order to expand and publicize the Project's work, those responsible for its development are seeking partnerships with various organisations from civil society.

### **Project in the Underground**

From 1993, Paris Underground has been proposing to its users the posting of poems on the station walls or of short fragments of poems inside the carriages. In the latter case - and when the poems are written in a language other than French - a translation in French is also provided.

Periodically, the Underground organizes a poetry contest. In 1998, for instance, seven thousand people participated in the initiative. The poems that have been awarded the first prizes are then published by the Le Temps des Cerises publishers and are posted - in alternation with the work of established poets - in the underground carriages.

### **First Novel Festival (Chambéry, France)**

For thirteen years a very original festival has been held in the city of Chambéry, France, an event that is now being reproduced in other French towns. Every year, some first novels by new authors are selected from the national literary production. The selected books are distributed to libraries, prisons, schools, etc and are discussed in several groups. In a second stage, by public consultation, the title of 'golden pen' is attributed to ten of these writers who are then invited to meet their readers in Chambéry. This provides the opportunity for an intense relationship between reader and writer.

### **Tarace Boulba (Montreuil, France)**

Tarace Boulba is both a funk group and also an association aiming at promoting general and free access to music. Founded in Montreuil, it became known through its presence in the social movements in France and in other European countries.

Open to all social groups, Tarace Boulba is both a band and a movement of musicians that seek personal and collective development through the social contact between its members.

#### **Open-house Ateliers (Bas-Montreuil, France)**

The objective of this movement, organised by artists in the Bas-Montreuil in September 1998, was to promote the local way of living. Today, the group has the local government's support and has expanded to various other French localities, where, once or twice a year, artists open their ateliers for visits by the local population.

#### **Itinerant theatres of Montreuil (France)**

This movement, organized by theatre people, had its origin in an old festival originally financed by the municipality of Montreuil but no longer held due to the municipality's economic problems. Leaving the theatre buildings and taking the performances onto the streets, cafés and even homes, this has proved to be an interesting experiment.

#### **Excalibur (Montreuil, France)**

Excalibur is an association involved in the training and social inclusion of unemployed young people by promoting their artistic expression in public spaces. One of its major projects is the mural painting done on the walls of the city of Montreuil.

Although there are a number of institutions working with unemployed youths, Excalibur calls attention due to originality of its project: the production and exhibition of art on the city walls.

After five years in action, the association presents an extremely positive balance: 75% of its participants have obtained some sort of qualification in this type of work.

Bernard Héloua, the project's coordinator, is always telling his mural painters that 'it is possible to achieve without destroying'. The dialogue he had with one of them is significant:

- How long does a mural last?

- Ten years or so...
- Fine, then, I will be able to show it to my son.

### **Doual'Art (Douala, Cameroons)**

Doual'Art is a centre of contemporary art, in the city of Douala, Cameroons, that promotes social and cultural development through art, seeking social integration around aesthetic issues. In its attempt to promote the appropriation of the urban space by its inhabitants, the Doual'Art develops a series of activities.

One of these is the selection of plastic artists to develop certain projects in the city's poorer areas. In the artists' ateliers, participants learn how to see the environment in which they live in a more critical manner, and become more interested in their own personal development.

Another of Doual'Art's activities is the formation of theatre groups. Here, young people are encouraged to write plays under professional guidance, and make presentations in the poorer districts. For these groups this is an opportunity to express themselves more freely and to invite adults to involve themselves in the local planning.

Still another of Doual'Art's proposals was that art works should be placed in permanent sites throughout the city. At the project's invitation, the sculptor Joseph Sumegn , using only recycled materials, made a huge, forty-feet tall sculpture he called *The New Liberty*. The work is also a way to promote the recycling process that dominates most of the Cameroonians' economic life (production and consumption).

The sculpture was placed at a crossroads where, for many years, the traffic had been extremely congested. This mobilized public opinion and the press, and led to the reorganization of the site.

### **The African Caravan for Peace and Solidarity**

The African Caravan for Peace and Solidarity, an initiative born in the context of the Alliance for a Plural, Responsible and Cooperative World, began its activities in June 2000 and, in the course of one year, went to 35 different countries. The long journey reached its summit with a meeting, in June 2001, in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania.

Along this road, the Caravan took part in a large number of social and cultural events, reflecting and debating on issues of relevance to the African continent: political renovation, problems related to governance, social movements, health, education, economics, decentralisation and regional integration, culture, values and art.

One of the Caravan's main objectives is to promote peace in the continent, giving visibility to the current peace programmes and projects in the countries in conflict. In this sense, it seeks to increase the capacity of those struggling for a similar objective, by forming networks and expanding their level of influence.

Secondly, the Caravan is also involved in the formulation of proposals for the 21<sup>st</sup> century around four wide topics: governance and citizenship, education and youth, agriculture and the economy, values and culture.

The African caravan will continue its work forming a permanent network for peace and solidarity in Africa.

### **Shalom Salam Paz**

Shalom Salam Paz (SSP) is a movement formed by citizens from the Jewish and Arab-Palestinian communities living in Brazil who seek to promote solidarity and peaceful coexistence between both peoples, through art and education. The SSP maintains permanent exhibitions of the work of 67 Palestinian and Israeli artists in very different settings, such as Legislative Assemblies, Municipal Chambers, Teaching Centres, Trade Unions, etc, encouraging the diffusion of poetry, music and dance.

One of the SSP's Project is the Nomadic Exhibition of Works of Art. This exhibition will remain errant until the Israelis and the Palestinians sign a peace treaty permitting the creation of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state next to the State of Israel. When this takes place, a so-called Museum without Frontiers, in a building sited exactly on the line that now divides Jerusalem, will be created with the United Nations' participation.

### **Feasts of Culture (Santiago, Chile)**

An initiative of the current Chilean government, these feasts gather a huge number of people in a public park in Santiago, where activities for adults and children, involving theatrical performances, music, poetry, dance and others, are organised. This is an event that combines culture and entertainment.

Similar activities are beginning to be developed in other Chilean regions as part of an effort to decentralize the Chilean cultural production. In the region of Tarapacá, for instance, videos of documentary films about Andean life were shown. The same event happened in Iquique.

In Valparaíso, on the last Saturday of each month, several artistic performances take place in the streets, bringing together a large number of people.

### **Proposals**

#### **Meetings**

Continue the international, national, regional and local meetings of the Alliance's artists, seeking to:

- Create spaces for reflection and exchange between artists in the hope of contributing to the implementation of their social commitments.
- Promote events and discussions about art for the excluded populations.

- Create artistic alternatives for children and young people, particularly in the poor urban areas.
- Using art, deconstruct prejudices related to ethnicity, sexual choices, social classes, gender relations etc.
- Introduce the integration art-education.
- Map, in each country, the social practices that use art as a language.
- Present the proposals of the World Network of Artists in Alliance in schools, trade unions, NGOs, universities, etc.
- Encourage the creation of networks of cooperation in the countries where the Alliance is present, bringing together painters, writers, filmmakers and other artists.
- Promote intercultural musical presentations. For example: presentation of Indian rhythms to a Black community and vice-versa.

#### **Communication**

- Debate on topics relevant to the World Network of Artists through the Electronic Forum. An example of this is that took place from February to March 2001 on the topic: "Art and cultural identity in the construction of a cooperative world".
- Create a magazine that can encourage the debate on topics related to art and to culture; the magazine should contain poems, short stories, articles, photos etc by the Alliance's artists.
- Enrichment of the Alliance's website with texts on art and culture, in order to strengthen the artists' network.
- Create new forms of communication between the artists and society, without the direct interference of the word, through sensitisation by sounds (as in the case of the Drums of Peace).
- Make efficient use of the means of communication to give greater visibility to relevant topics that are normally not contemplated by the media.
- Promote the creation of alternative means of communication.

- Publicize the Alliance's proposals through alternative means of communication and the media.
- Form an electronic support group to make easier the communication between artists.

### **Exchange**

- Promote exchanges between countries and regions.
- Organise cultural caravans with representatives from various countries to promote inter-cultural exchanges, with artistic activities and research of local history, images, etc.
- Encourage the creation of networks to trace and publicize local popular traditions.
- Exchange practices between art-educators working with excluded populations.
- Organize meetings and seminars of cultural agents from the public sector working with the communities.
- Encourage the formation of artists' networks and meetings with specific forms of artistic expression (dance, music, etc).

### **Training**

- Create spaces for training, debates and experiences on aesthetic practices.
- Make use of institutional spaces (schools, cultural centres, community associations etc.) for artistic-cultural discussions and practices.
- Make our work available to the greatest number of people through intercultural exhibitions, readings, debates, individual and institutional exchanges, journeys and practices.
- Develop collective actions shared by artists who are trying to find alternative spaces to exhibit their works of art.
- Encourage the creation of funds in support of artistic production.
- Develop teaching techniques to encourage creative expression in adults and children.

- Conduct researches to identify alternative ways for the circulation, affirmation and recognition of art, in an attempt to free the artistic and cultural production from market exploration.
- Elaborate cultural policies that help to democratise the artistic creation and to expand the access to artistic products of good quality.
- Encourage the creation of public spaces for artistic expression and fruition.
- Create spaces, channels, and means of world communication to guarantee the communication and circulation of whatever is produced in the world of culture.
- Identify forms of socialisation associating artistic production and human freedom.

#### **Peace Culture**

- Organisation of meetings on the topic "Art and Peace Culture".
- Encourage and propagate the Drums for Peace experiment, encouraging the formation of a permanent Inter-cultural Symphonic Orchestra for Peace.
- Preparation of public meetings and Street Chats (as the ones occurring in Brazil) about the "peace culture".
- Readings of texts and poems making reference to peace, in public places and schools.
- Marches for Peace.

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- <sup>30</sup> Chantier – Chantier is a network of people sharing common interests: art, ecology, gender relations, education, etc. The organization promotes activities related to the Alliance’s project with the common objective of building a plural, cooperative and responsible world.

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<sup>31</sup> Artists' College – The *Colégio dos Artistas* brings together groups of professionals of a specific category interested in putting forward common proposals in their area of activity.

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