

## **FOUNDATION "CASA DE LOS TRES MUNDOS"**

Antigua Casa de Los Leones  
Plaza de Los Leones  
Granada, Nicaragua

TEL: 505-552-4176  
FAX: 505-552-5497  
e-mail office: [oficina@c3mundos.org](mailto:oficina@c3mundos.org)  
web: [www.c3mundos.org](http://www.c3mundos.org)



## **METANOIA: A THINK TANK AND ART LABORATORY SPACE IN NICARAGUA**

Planning: Johannes Kranz, Dieter Stadler & Humberto Postal

In recent years, there have been successful efforts to reconnect the arts and humanities to practice. Interdisciplinary approaches in particular have proven to be highly effective in making those disciplines again a relevant contributor to current issues of general public concern. Apart from already established areas, such as Bio- and Medicine Ethics or Human Rights, it seems to be highly topical to make use of such integrated approaches in order to address particular global problems, crosscutting the traditional fields of competence: intercultural conflicts, world poverty, cultural identity, to mention only a few. The intricate nature of today's global concerns and their complex causes urgently demand for creative solutions and distinctively new perspectives.

The foundation and international cultural centre *Casa de los Tres Mundos*, based in Granada, Nicaragua is therefore initiating an interdisciplinary symposium project, "Metanoia". Designed to function as an interdisciplinary "think tank" and "creative laboratory space", it will address a particular acute problem every two years, a topical, global and future oriented issue that is directly related to the Third World in general and to Nicaragua in particular.

## 1. Content

For the first planned symposium “Metanoia 2004”, there have been proposed two alternative general themes: “The Paradox of Poverty and Bliss” and “Myths and Metaphors – On Cultural Identity”

### PROPOSAL (A) “The Paradox of Poverty and Bliss”



*“MODESTY”, Leif Elggren, As if I was my father, 2002, still from dvd, 10 min*

Comparing the “wealthy First World” nations with the “underdeveloped Third World”, we can observe a peculiar psychological phenomenon: that people from the latter seem to have more zest for life. The industrialized modern world has produced living conditions that ultimately do not comply with the initial aims of an eudemonistic lifestyle; whereas under conditions considered otherwise most detrimental to bliss, by and large, we notice an interior quality of life that many of the well-off would most desire. Recent socio-psychological research has confirmed this irritating tendency: However difficult it may be to quantify, measure or compare happiness, there seems to be a clear counter-symmetry of material wealth and happiness on the level of personal self-perception. Counter to the world wide trend to link international development to economic wealth, we want to promote incentives to alternative concepts and models of sustainable social, cultural and economic development.

On the bases of this puzzle as a starting point, there shall be developed lines of reasoning from various perspectives, philosophical, anthropological, psychological, religious, social, historic, political, economic and others.

## PROPOSAL (B) “Myths and Metaphors – On Cultural Identity”



*Nelson Díaz, and Leda Astorga, sculptures presented at the IV Muestra Arte Libre, Cartago/Costa Rica 2003*

Today, most Third World countries are in a peculiar state of cultural disorder. Their self-understanding and self-confidence typically resemble a flagrant collage, collected from the various dumps of civilization: imported elements, relatively recent, shimmering pieces of extreme, often radical ideas and adapted customs thrive on the fertile soils of extreme poverty and despair. From a large scale historical vantage point, the causes of this disorder seem obvious. Disconnected from their roots, the majority of these countries have filled the identity vacuum with ideological residuals accompanying economic disaster. Culturally speaking, the Third World countries fall between two stools – deprived of long-standing traditions, they have readily adapted whatever was offered to them promising hope. Looking at their way of life, one will notice an eerie mix of “Middle Ages” and “High Tech”, a sharp contrast not only between obscene capital and crass poverty but also between long forgotten past and an uncertain future.

This vacuum of identity together with misery have created a characteristic confusion and diffusion, among the people, as well as among political authorities and intellectuals. Under such historical and social conditions, it seems highly topical to reconsider the predominant myths and metaphors that model the self-image of Nicaraguan cultural identity<sup>1</sup>; -- not only because there is confusion, but also because this confusion, quite unexpectedly, is a

---

<sup>1</sup> neo-liberal models, diffuse national symbols, customs and ethics interspersed with vivid and sometimes extreme religious residuals, vague reminiscence of utopian political ideologies, personal traumata.

tremendous chance; because this uncertain frame makes room for the potential emergence of new models of culture and entire ways of life.

We believe that this approach contains a highly *creative potential*. The creative element comes in with a pragmatic theory of language and the importance it assigns to the function of “metaphor”. According to the pragmatic account, a metaphor has not only a rhetoric, didactic or ordealing function, but it is characterized essentially by its ability to creatively violate established rules of language games and therefore can broaden conceptual frameworks. Cultural development and interaction is thus perceived in an essentially non-linear, non-teleological process, challenged by the creative potential of open systems.

We welcome comments and further proposals for a general theme. Please send your proposal before August 2003 to: [oficina@c3mundos.org](mailto:oficina@c3mundos.org)

The criteria for the choice of topics should include the following:

- address *acute problems*
- focus on favourable, *advantageous aspects*<sup>2</sup> of Third World countries
- *regional reference* to Nicaragua, but at the same time
- *future-oriented* and
- of general, *global concern*

## 2. Organisation/Frame

### (A) Component Parts

The project shall embrace two branches, **theoretical** and **artistic**:

- The theoretical part is subdivided into two sections: a *philosophical* section (incl. anthropological/linguistic) and a *socio-cultural* section (incl. historic/political).
- The artistic part consists of two components: one component in the *fine arts* (exhibition) and one in the *performing arts* (optional concert or theatre show).

### (B) Responsibilities

The Foundation **Casa de los Tres Mundos** as an international cultural centre will provide the space for the symposium, a related exhibition and a concert. It will also coordinate the preparation and documentation with the project partners (university institutes, artists, media).

---

<sup>2</sup> such as alternative value preferences, alternative models of social living together, treatment of old people, spontaneity, happiness, and the like.

The **cooperation partners** (university institutes / artists) will be invited to develop related topics under the heading of a general theme, as in (A), (B) or other, in seminars and workshops, and to prepare papers (resp. works of art) to be presented, fused and discussed at the symposium.

This multisectoral integrated procedure shall promote unexpected results, enhances the quality of the contributions and encourage a wide range of perspectives on the general theme.

### **(C) Timetable**

The **time frame** for “Metanoia 2004” is **one year** (Dec. 2003 - Dic. 2004):

- Phase 1: Organisation (Dec.03): establishing contacts, preparation of themes
- Phase 2: Elaboration (Jan. 04 – Oct. 04): elaboration of themes in seminars/workshops
- Phase 3: Symposium (Nov. 04): 3 days in the Casa de los Tres Mundos, Granada, NIC., presentation of papers, discussion / related art- and theatre shows / concerts
- Phase 4: Documentation (Dic. 04): publication of proceedings /video

### **3. Financing**

Possible support is expected from:

- Metanoia funds (Pan y Arte): U\$ 30,000.-
- UCA: tuition fees for visiting staff / administration
- other cooperating universities: holding seminars related to the topic, funding for panel members to attend the symposium