

Exhibition: "Dialogues"

"Christina Oiticica - Ways of the rising and setting sun"

"Geneviève Maquinay - Intimate Itinerary"

Place:

Exhibition Hall - General Assembly Building

United Nations Headquarters - Entrance on First Avenue (between 45th and 46th Streets)

May 23rd to June 3rd, 2011

Opening: May 23rd, 2011 – 17h30

Dialogue with nature from different points of view

Brazilian Christina Oiticica and Colombian Geneviève Maquinay exhibit at the UN in New York

By Rodrigo Accioly

In 1986, author Paulo Coelho walked the 800 kilometers that separate the French border town of Saint Jean Pied de Port from Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain. Such was the importance of this trip in his life that the St. James Pilgrim's Way became the subject of his first book, "The Pilgrimage". Something similar happened to his wife, the architect and artist Christina Oiticica, in 1990. She walked the track and when resting after completing the pilgrimage, she decided to devote herself exclusively to art.

The beginning of the last decade, when Oiticica and Coelho moved to a hotel in the French Pyrénées mountains, became a milestone in her life. With a prescheduled exhibition in Paris, Oiticica needed to create a considerable number of paintings but the hotel did not have a large enough space for her to work in. The artist began to paint outside. As the canvases were large and the ink still wet Oiticica couldn't roll them up so she left them outside overnight. When she returned the next day, leaves, seeds and insects had fallen on the paintings and had adhered to the ink. At that moment Oiticica realized that somehow nature interfered in her work. It was an insight that changed the course of her career.

It was then that she developed her unique technique, to bury her paintings in the ground, turning nature into her partner. Oiticica "plants" her paintings to track the "germination" of work through the direct action of the environment. Sometimes, she'll find the inspiration to paint at the site where the canvases are left, but not always. She'll keep track of her paintings using geographic coordinates and after a few months the works are removed and carefully framed.

Oiticica has been burying paintings all over the world since 2002. She has been in the Amazon Forest, Chile, Japan, India, the Swiss Alps and along the St. James Way to Santiago de Compostela. Her art is full of mysticism and she feels as if the "Earth, the Great Mother and Our Lady" are co-authors of her paintings.

In 2006 Oiticica started an ambitious project: to walk the St. James Pilgrim Way to Santiago de Compostela, burying 100 works of art at the main stops along the road. It was a return to the path she had walked 16 years earlier and an artistic ambition that took 2 years to realize. In May 2009 the project resulted in a major exhibition of 59 paintings, first at the Church of

the University of Santiago de Compostela and later at the Biondetta Art Gallery in Madrid.

While waiting for the time to unearth the works left along the pilgrim path, Oiticica developed a similar project in Japan, along the Road to Kumano. This road is considered sacred to Taoists and Buddhist in the same way the Road to Santiago de Compostela is sacred to Christians. The two roads are looked upon as “brothers”, similar to each other. As the monks of the Yamabushi Mountains bury their sacred objects, Oiticica’s work was welcomed and received with respect.

From 23 May to 3 June, 29 paintings and objects from the Kumano Road project and the Road to Santiago de Compostela project will be on show at the UN. The similarities between the two projects establish the connection between East and West, Japan and Spain, through the vision of a Brazilian artist, Christina Oiticica: “The Ways of the Rising and Setting Sun”.

“The Ways of the Rising and Setting Sun” series is part of the “Dialogues” exhibition, a joint effort with another notable environmental artist, Belgian-Colombian Geneviève Maquinay who lives in New York. Maquinay will present her “Intimate Itinerary” series – a collection of sculptures made from materials extracted from urban waste and natural elements (metal, wood, stone, recycled materials, etc.) and will feature 16 of the artist’s most recent works.

Trained in Fine Arts in Colombia, Maquinay completed her studies at the La Cambre Art School in Brussels, Belgium. The artist uses materials from disparate places on the planet, thousands of miles apart, from different climates and landscapes, thus promoting the “dialogue” between the urban and the natural and building a third nature of her own artistic creation.

If Oiticica goes out to the environment and creates her art there, allowing nature to give it the final touch, Maquinay does the opposite: she goes out to the environment, collects items and then completes the work in the studio.

The opening of the exhibition will also see the launch of “Dialogues in the Contemporary World”, a book by the Brazilian writer Antonio Campos. The work deals with the possibility of a paradigm shift in the contemporary world, where there may be greater tolerance between cultures taking the example of Brazil where there is harmony between different ethnic, cultural and religious origins.

The “Dialogues” exhibition is an initiative of Casa Brasil, supported by the Portuguese Spoken Society of the United Nations (SLP).