

culture IS> development

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Network of Spanish Cooperation
Cultural Centres

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For the Spanish Cooperation, culture IS development

Directorate of Cultural and Scientific Relations

Institutions evolve over time, as humans do, and inevitably develop a unique personality that arises from what they once were and wanted to become - and indeed, what reality allowed for. This has been the case for the Cultural Centres of the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID, for its acronym in Spanish). Their evolution has also endowed them with a unique personality. Time has left them with lines of tell-tale wrinkles; and now, just as with people upon reaching maturity, the Centres may step back and observe themselves in the mirror and see just who they are, and what they have become.

A different model. A new model. The Network of Cultural Centres of the AECID has, over time, brought on a new model of cultural centre with inherent characteristics. The centres not only serve the purpose of promoting Spanish culture but are intended to help creators and the cultural industry on a local level, forming part of the very fabric of the country where they are located, and becoming a hub for development. They are also centres dedicated to promoting cultural cooperation among the countries in which they are present, bringing cultures and creators closer together. Within these origins is the seed that provoked all that came to be, resulting from that evolution. The fact that the AECID incorporated the Directorate of Cultural and Scientific Relations, to which the Network of Centres belongs, made Spain one of the first countries to consider culture as a key element for development - and to elaborate a strategy of culture and development - understanding these cultural centres as a core instrument to enable the implementation of its programmes. They were therefore able to serve as vehicles for other policies that are not strictly related to cultural development, widening their objectives and activities through incorporating matters of gender, environment, LGBTI, or indigenous peoples into their programming, often surpassing the boundaries of what one may understand to be a cultural centre. This perspective of culture has proven useful in the implementation of the core policies of the Spanish Cooperation, from another angle, with a different look. The Network of Centres has lived up to its name, networking with the other centres, connecting the cultural sectors of the countries where it works, weaving, throughout these years, a dense network of contacts between Spanish professionals and of the places where the centres are, creating fabric.

The book in the hands of the reader is intended to show this model to the Spanish society, to spread a transformation that has turned into a paradigm - while its English version is also a

business card for international organizations and institutions with which we work. To this effect, the starting point is a recent reflection on what we would like to build from here on in, so that the matter at hand is well understood. Afterwards, each one of those centres is to be presented, as in a yearbook, so as to know exactly who and where each one is. And then, rather than us speaking of wonders, which always seems *apologia pro vita sua*, because it is, we have asked others to talk about the centres, for others to be the ones to describe them. First, those who have been users of those centres, local counterparts who have collaborated, who have appropriated their spaces and have nourished them with content and were the ones to live their evolution first-hand. And, lastly, personalities of the Spanish culture who have been there, who have taken their art and their knowledge to other countries and have taught - as much as they have learnt. We are also showcasing two concrete examples that have emerged from these laboratories of experimentation that our centres embody, two entities that have come to life on their own, and that are an excellent example of what we do: *La Casa Tomada* in El Salvador and the *Laboratorio de Ciudadanía Digital* in Mexico.

As a final remark, we would like to thank all of those who, over these long years, have somehow contributed to the making of this model, each person sharing in some of the responsibility of the unique personality that came to be. Starting, of course, with the persons who have contributed from different positions with different responsibilities at the headquarters of the AECID, and indeed to the staff, Spanish and local, of each and every one of the Centres. But, above all, to the users, to the counterparts, as they are the ones who have appropriated these facilities, who have shown us and have ensured that the Centres have lived to their full potential. And that, dare we forget, was the original goal, the reason for being, and without that appropriation the Centres would literally have no purpose. Long live this Network, which must continue in its evolution, as has been the case to date. The future will hopefully preserve something that has always been a defining element, - an indispensable part of this model -something intangible and therefore somewhat difficult to describe, but contagious - whoever works with or approaches the Centres becomes hooked. Paraphrasing Lope, we can safely say that whoever has tried it - knows. Anyone who has had some sort of interaction with a centre throughout their professional career could say that the work is rarely defined merely by the task at hand, but almost always has more to do with commitment and enthusiasm. May it never falter.

Network of Cultural Centres of the Spanish Cooperation. Culture as a crucial element in the framework for sustainable development

Network of Cultural Centres, Spanish Cooperation

The origins of the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID) lie within the Institute of Hispanic Culture, created in 1946 with the purpose of fostering relations between Latin American countries and Spain.

The AECID is part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, and is responsible for carrying out the Spanish policies of international cooperation for development. Created in 1988, with the purpose of fighting against poverty through the promotion, management and execution of public policies aimed at achieving sustainable human development in developing countries, particularly those included in the Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation.

To take on the projects and activities, AECID has a wide-ranging structure overseas, formed by Technical Cooperation Offices (TCOs), Training Centres (TCs) and Cultural Centres (CCs), located in the countries where it carries out activities.

The Network of Spanish Overseas Cultural Centres is one of the main instruments of the Spanish Cooperation (CE – for its Spanish acronym) to implement cultural cooperation policies for development. It is currently present in 15 countries and is composed of 18 Cultural Centres (16 in Latin America and 2 in Equatorial Guinea). The geographic distribution of the Network in itself demonstrates the relevance of the historic, cultural and idiomatic ties between Spain and the regions where it is present.

The Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID) considers culture as a key factor in working towards sustainable human development; the eradication of poverty; active peace building; and the ability to fully exercise the rights of global citizenship. Within this framework, the Network of Cultural Centres, under the Directorate of Cultural and Scientific Relations (DRCC - from its Spanish acronym), works to strengthen the potential of culture in achieving a sustainable world for all.

I. The network of Cultural Centres in the framework of the 2030 Agenda

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN General Assembly, 2015), as a frame of reference of the Government of Spain - and, especially, of the Spanish Cooperation - invites a deep reflection on the role played by the network of Cultural Centres in the context of cooperation policies of our country.



Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda

For over three decades, the Spanish Cooperation has advocated for using culture as a crucial element when implementing the international agenda, and even more so, since the publication of the Culture and Development Strategy Paper of 2007. It upholds the conviction that culture is fundamental to build global citizenship that takes on development from an integral perspective.

While culture is not explicitly mentioned in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this vision is shared by the 2030 Agenda, since the concept of culture implicitly underlies the whole text, in many of the goals and in the inaugural declaration itself.

In the case of Spain, once the mandate to implement the 2030 Agenda was in motion, in 2018 the Government submitted an Action Plan, aimed at carrying out the Sustainable Development Strategy, and in so doing, consolidated the commitment of Spain with the global agenda. Out of the ten transformative measures proposed, two are of special relevance for the actions of the CCs (the first and the fifth). The First Measure turns the 2030 Agenda into a fundamental pillar of Spanish foreign action. The Fifth ensures the use of cultural action as a key element in the transformation, dissemination and appropriation of the Agenda.

This is the current context of the framework of the Cultural Centres. In the years to come, the actions of the Network shall be focused on converting the mandate into key actions that foster the Agenda, understanding culture in a broad sense, as an exercise in solidarity to reach greater equality on a global stage. This must be approached through respect, and encouragement of cultural diversity, which should be understood as the great heritage of humanity. The support of participation in cultural life should be seen as a good practice towards sustainable human development. Likewise, it is necessary that the Network of Cultural Centres contributes to generating a comprehensive discourse that allows for an open-door policy to other approaches, such as inclusion, gender diversity, environment, a culture of peace or innovation, both for citizens as well as for the Cooperation itself.

II. The Network of Cultural Centres. Equipment in the local ecosystems

The proliferation of cultural equipment that has been taking place in our country over the past decades is reflected by the Cultural Centres of the Spanish Cooperation overseas. The Public Administration has thus tried to showcase our society as dynamic, innovative and creative.

The regional and local Administrations were the main leaders in this institutional and social commitment favouring the promotion of culture through the multiplicity of cultural equipment. This process confirmed the centres as places open to citizenship, participation and exchange, for citizen organization and, therefore, important spaces for democratic legitimacy. Many of these centres demonstrated the importance of working closely with international artists and institutions and thus promoting innovation through their practices.

Within this context, the model of the Spanish Cultural Centre took shape through an inverse process. Institutions originally aimed at promotion and international cooperation, evolved into spaces known for cultural policies of proximity. Owing to their own nature, or to the lack of equipment with similar characteristics in the surrounding areas, the centres enabled relations with the civil society, providing tools for action and promoting local creative experiences. The CC Network has hence become the main platform on a state level, - large cultural infrastructures such as museums and libraries aside - for developing policies of cultural cooperation and promotion.

The CCs were progressively moving towards a model in which culture was considered as a means for development, and subsequently formed part of the policies of the AECID. The Spanish Cooperation paved the road to this approach, which was gradually ascribed to by most parties involved. The main focus of foreign cultural policies gradually leaned from strategies of dissemination and internationalization of their own cultural productions, towards enriching, new perspectives. Consequently, the CC Network currently has goals to develop policies of cultural and scientific cooperation, to strengthen cultural action as a means for development and to support cultural action and promotion abroad. The Cultural Centres grow within this broad scope of action, in the affirmation that cultural dimension accompanies and drives economic and social development in any territory. It also contributes to social cohesion and sustainable development.

The countries in which CCs are present share a number of features that have a special impact on the development of their societies. Within the field of culture, the CCs work on the eradication of poverty and inequality, the promotion and defence of human rights and cultural diversity, the protection and safeguarding of cultural heritage, the fight against climate change, gender equality, the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies and the exercise of full global citizenship rights - through culture.

One of the elements that significantly characterizes the work of the Cultural Centres is the interaction with the local cultural sector; the role they play within the cultural fabric of the territory where they are present. It is noteworthy that, generally speaking, the more central the CC is in the local cultural ecosystem, the more relevant its role. The examples vary, but one could affirm that, simplifying, there is an inverse correlation between the cultural power of the territory and the role that each Centre plays. That is, in cultural ecosystems that are more fruitful, the Cultural Centre tends to play a more secondary role, and vice versa. In brief, depending on how central they are to the local cultural ecosystem, the CCs could

be grouped into different types. Some play a significant role in so far as cultural promotion but are less effective as agents for cooperation. Others: - in a capital with a very condensed culture - are located in a less relevant space within the local environment and it is more difficult to occupy central spaces. And lastly, there are some with the capacity for taking significant action in cultural promotion as well as having the potential of promoting cultural development within their immediate environment.

In short, being in harmony with local life and creation is of core importance to the work of the CCs and may thereby ensure greater success in the promotion of Spanish culture, favouring the image of the country at a local level. Beyond offering quality cultural programming, CCs have established themselves as open, inclusive and unifying spaces of citizen participation, facilitating access to culture, strengthening the Ibero-American Cultural Space and the creation of cultural networks of work and exchange.

III. Areas of action

The CCs, as places of citizen participation, collaborate with local counterparts (both institutions and organizations of civil society); they follow a combined strategy, mixing in their programming contents linked to development, cooperation and cultural promotion. The action is focused in three broad areas:

1. Culture and development: promotion of culture as a tool for development

Taking the Culture and Development Strategy Paper, of the Spanish Cooperation (2007) as a reference, the CCs' seven strategic lines are: training human capital for cultural management through the ACERCA Programme; the political and economic dimension of culture in its contribution to development; the relationship and complementarity between education and culture; sustainable management of cultural heritage for development; the relation between communication and culture which affect development; and the promotion of processes for the recognition of cultural rights.

2. Cultural cooperation: fostering culture among equals

In this area, the promotion of bi- and multilateral relations among countries, institutions and cultural actors is pursued. For this, the exchange of creative, intellectual and scientific communities and the implementation of joint projects are promoted; relations and exchange among Spanish cultural institutions with similar institutions of the partner countries are encouraged; multilateral cultural cooperation is promoted, mainly in the sphere of the European Union and UNESCO; they contribute to the strengthening of the Ibero-American Cultural Space and encourage the creation of new networks, while supporting the consolidation of those already in existence, throughout the different sectors of culture.

3. Cultural promotion: encouraging culture as an element of external projection

in order to promote and disseminate Spanish culture in its different forms and languages, the CCs aim towards internationalization, advocating the inclusion of both the artistic and creative community and the Spanish cultural industries

Book Fair, with the support of the CC of Honduras, in the Redondel de los Artesanos in Tegucigalpa



in international networks; facilitating the presence of the sector in international events; spreading the cultural heritage of our country and encouraging the use of the Spanish language as well as the co-official languages of the State.

Inter-institutional coordination is especially relevant in setting the limits of this last field of action; and it is also essential, since there are different organizations in our country with mandates related to foreign cultural action. The CCs, therefore, follow the guidelines set out by the Directorate of Cultural and Scientific Relations of the AECID, under which – following the principle of unity of foreign action overseas - they promote the coordination with other institutions and the General Administration of the State with due responsibilities (Instituto Cervantes, Ministry of Culture, AC / E, ICEX, etc.), as well as with the autonomous communities and local entities.

The boundaries of the three areas of action referred to are almost always unclear. A promotion-oriented activity may be as positive in cultural development for the issuing country as for the receiving territory; besides, it may also include a component of cooperation and dialogue. A well-known example of this is that of a game of mirrors, in which the role of the beneficiary permanently shifts. In the exhibition *El Prado en las calles*, organized by the CC Bata (Equatorial Guinea) in collaboration with the Prado Museum, on the waterfront of the city, it is worth asking who the beneficiary is: The people of Equatorial Guinea who visited the exhibition? The students of the National University of Equatorial Guinea who attended the workshop prior to the exhibition and later guided the school visits? The Spanish and the Museum for the dissemination of their heritage? There is probably no other answer than that - which distributes benefits among the different subjects.



Students visiting the exhibition *El Museo del Prado* in Equatorial Guinea, on the waterfront of Bata, 2016

Mul'ier, A show of the Spanish company Maduixa organized by the CCE in the historic city centre of San Salvador

This seeming paradox is one of the most interesting potentialities of the cultural cooperation and action of a CC.

IV. The CCs as agents of cooperation

Cultural Centres have established themselves as one of the most dynamic and diverse agents of cooperation for development. Beyond the work concerning the defence and promotion of cultural diversity, they have had a special impact in such areas as varied as the promotion of citizen participation, the recovery of public space, violence prevention, regional integration or the strengthening of both public and private cultural institutions.

The CCs are currently recognized by their counterparts as active, flexible and innovative partners who, when addressing ever-changing needs, follow both the strategic paper of the Spanish Cooperation, as well as the 2030 Agenda as a baseline, while also aligning themselves with their local contexts.

It is also noteworthy the importance that the Centres have acquired as spaces of communication for development, being elements for dissemination, as well as a meeting point for agents of cooperation, the beneficiaries and the general public. In addition to showing the projects of the Spanish Cooperation, they promote the visibility of the work of both NGOs and supranational entities - to present initiatives, launch campaigns or simply inform citizens on the work of the cooperation.

There are therefore two essential qualities of the CCs that should be highlighted: on the one hand, their multifarious profile as hybrid agents of the Cooperation, that allow them to establish privileged relationships with the most diverse actors, fruit of experience and intricate knowledge within local contexts. On the other hand, a multi sectoral capacity of involvement, allowing, through cultural cooperation, to reach other sectors through programmatic actions with other actors, both locally and regionally.

CCs as hybrid agents of cooperation

One of the potential advantages of the Spanish Cooperation over other benefactors – and one that has been internationally acknowledged – is the existence of different types of units of cooperation in some of the countries involved: Technical Cooperation Offices, Training Centres of the Spanish Cooperation and Cultural Centres of Spain. Through such a wealth of actors, consolidated over time – especially when considering the Cultural Centres -, it is possible to create diverse networks of varied structures and establish many different types of relationships with a wide array of actors in the partner countries.

On the one hand, as the CCs are identified as agents of the AECID and therefore recognized by local institutions as governmental entities of cooperation, they are able to take on and develop important endeavours with the corresponding ministries. On the other hand, they are also perceived by other partners as agents with a non-institutional profile, closer to the work carried out in the private sector. One of the characteristics of the Network of Centres, when working on a day-to-day basis with associations, creative groups and other social entities, is that the CCs assume a role that is usually recognized as one of an NGO, such as the proximity to the civil society of the partner countries. This peculiarity has allowed

them to become mediators in numerous actions of cooperation and facilitates the direct support they may provide to local organizations.

This confluence of stakeholders in the facilities of the CCs has meant that in many countries the spaces have become those for the legitimization of civil society, where a supportive commitment for development is shown and debates may be initiated, without fear of confrontation or critical thought with the donor countries, showing a capacity for political influence through actions of accompaniment of civil entities.

These characteristics as well as the proximity to the civil society, have not gone unnoticed by other international organizations of cooperation. For direct and visible actions, the CCs are regular partners of the different multilateral organizations and other agencies of cooperation, embassies and the NGOs themselves, which usually ally with the CCs as entities with whom to work or where to present their actions. This hybrid functionality is most likely brought about by the advantages of the vocation of cultural cooperation, of the exchange between equals, that establish ties of complicity with both public institutions and the civil society.

Lastly, as the cultural space is open to the public on an ongoing basis, giving access to citizen participation, there is a unique window as to what is done and why, with transparency, not only for the Spanish, but for our partner countries.

The CCs as multi sectoral agents of cooperation

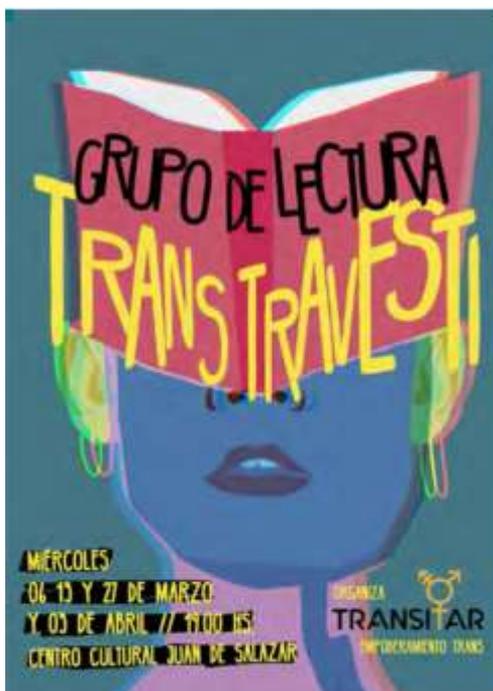
The CCs have a great track record and are well recognised in the area of culture and development, including work in heritage, respect for cultural diversity, as well as decisive efforts in gender main streaming, human rights and environment. However, and always from the perspective of culture, in recent years their work has begun to extend to collaboration with other sectors (education, gender, governance, and environment, among others), and in so doing, increasing integration with the rest of the agents of cooperation within local contexts.

Through their cultural programmes and projects, the CCs have contributed to processes of violence prevention or to supporting the development of economic fabric. These collaborations through various synergies have taken place, above all, over the last decade. The CCs have been able to mature and acquire experience as agents of Cooperation mainly through the creation of alliances with other actors (institutional, private, from the Spanish Cooperation, local and multilateral) to carry out specific strategies or programmes, improving upon appropriation and alignment with partner countries.

It should also be noted that the current Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation 2018-2021, by evolving and being strategically oriented around the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda, has helped focus efforts, allowing for an improved dialogue with partner countries and facilitating a strategic framework in which CCs may carry out their efforts, counting on a wider scope of action.

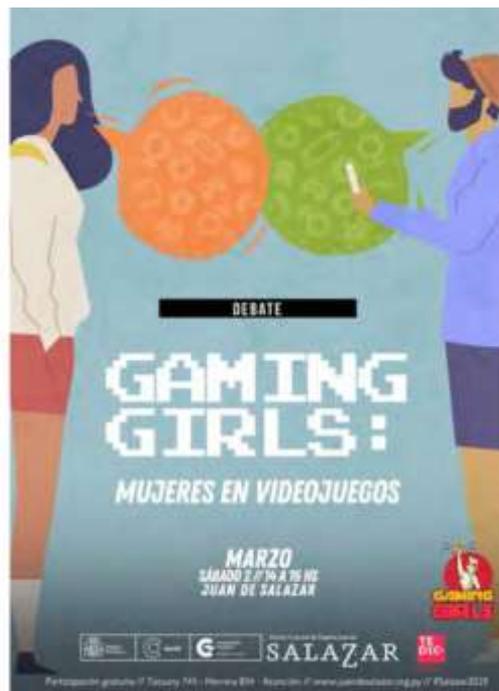
V. Culture is development

Delving deeper into the work of the CCs from the perspective of development, the lines of action could be classified in the following main areas (each linked to lines of the C+D Strategy): culture and citizenship; cultural and creative entrepreneurship; institutional strengthening and the defence and promotion of cultural diversity.



Advertising poster of the reading Group Transtravesti in the Cultural Centre Juan de Salazar in Asunción

Advertising poster of the cycle of activities Gaming Girls Paraguay, celebrated in the Cultural Centre Juan de Salazar, in Asunción



Culture and citizenship

The Cultural Centres have been carrying out a line of work of the Spanish Cooperation for years, consolidating democratic processes through the promotion, participation and accompaniment of civil society. Through carrying out joint projects, training local actors, presenting and giving visibility to their actions, and above all, through proposing a transparent model of institutional intervention, the CCs have contributed to strengthening the existence of an organized and participative citizenship. The cultural and social agents live processes that are equitable and carried out with ongoing dialogue and, in some cases, new forms are proposed of sustainable and replicable collective cultural management.

In this area, actions in defence of the most vulnerable groups have played an essential role, with special attention put on the respect for cultural identity and individual rights, indigenous and African-descendant communities or social groups at risk of exclusion.

Regarding the defence of women's rights and the promotion of gender equality, the CCs have acted as spokespersons and provided spaces for the recognition of formal and real equality, with campaigns regarding political, economic, social, cultural, or sexual and reproductive rights. Likewise, a special proximity and collaboration with feminist and women's organizations has been fostered.

Some of the countries where the CCs are located have experienced an increment in citizen insecurity, which has, in turn, directly affected development and hence, bolstered efforts to do with violence prevention and education for



Laboratorio de ciudadanía digital, Project of the Spanish Cultural Centre in Mexico, together with the Fundación Telefónica and the Ateneo Español de México

a culture of peace. The CCs give support or take action together with local associations and groups, committing to public strategies. In this sense, a very active policy of the recovery of public space for citizenship has been developed, promoting its appropriation and generating spaces for encounter and socialization.

Cultural and creative entrepreneurship

The CCs have spent years training, supporting creation and dissemination of local artistic communities and they, in turn, as a core part of the CCs, have put forward different forms of cultural promotion and creative initiatives.

Culture is now an intrinsic part of complex production chains and processes, mostly thanks to technological advancement, changes in the media and general access to cultural products. Cultural content can therefore be included on different levels of the market, giving the cultural and creative industries new and potential ways to devise, create, produce, distribute and enjoy cultural products.

The CCs have hosted many training programmes, oriented towards cultural management and the technical training of the sector. A good example of this is the Media-labs, focused on digital cultural creation. This confluence has generated new laboratories and incubators of endeavours that enhance this creative economy which, beyond culture, establishes ties with other fields such as technology, innovation or tourism, focusing on the importance of services and creative content. They offer training according to the needs of the project, ideas of future business are generated, and their formulation, implementation and feasibility are studied. In short, the CCs accompany initiatives from their birth to their implementation.

Being the cultural sector a space with a great potential for intervention and development of CSR actions, entrepreneurship has sometimes gone hand in hand with the business sector and with public initiatives of corporate social responsibility (CSR), since such practice favours the emergence of a solid framework for negotiation in economic and social matters.

Institutional strengthening

A traditional hallmark of the Spanish Cooperation has been developing the skills of the personnel of public administrations in the given regions. Within this context, the CCs have participated with an important deployment of training with and for the institutions of our partner countries, and not only in the area of public cultural management. The CE has also contributed with resources from cultural content to other areas with impact on social inclusion as well as public policies that promote, among other issues, gender equality or the protection and inclusion of the most vulnerable groups.

On the one hand, some CCs have participated in the accompaniment and implementation of policies in the area of culture. On the other, citizen participation has been strengthened, especially in local areas, municipalities where such action is incipient, thus contributing to decentralization processes. Lastly, work has been done in most of the countries in the strengthening of civil society.

In this line of work, the importance of the role played by the CCs in the operation of regional networks across the cultural spectrum, both public and private, must be noted.

Cultural diversity

Respect for cultural freedom and the promotion of its diversity is a transversal principle of the Spanish Cooperation, included in the different Master Plans that have guided its work in recent years. Likewise, the introductory part of the 2030 Agenda Declaration has underscored the relevance of recognition and respect for cultural diversity, as well as the potential contribution of all cultures and civilizations to sustainable development.

In this framework, the promotion and defence of cultural expressions is probably the most recognized line of work of the CC. The actions carried out in this regard are coordinated with the rest of the Spanish Cooperation and international institutions (UNESCO, OEI - Organisation of Ibero-American States, SICA – Central American System of Integration), given that they involve strategic actions that must be addressed, in many cases, beyond the borders of countries.

In this sense, the Spanish Cooperation is the one who marks the path for the CCs to follow and to implement their actions concerning free access to culture, heritage and cultural diversity that, understood as global public goods, are part of sustainable human development. Along these same lines, the CCs endorse the proposals of the main international framework documents that in recent decades have addressed the area of culture. It is essential to build culturally inclusive and diverse societies in order to progress in the general challenges of the global agenda.

The Cultural Centres are highly consolidated with their environments and have a deeply rooted understanding of those local and national contexts. In their facilities, they promote respect to cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and freedom of expression and creation, as well as effective participation of the citizens in cultural life.

VI. The Cultural Centres of Spain: a look towards the future

The main strength of the Cultural Centres of the Spanish Cooperation lies in the singularity of its model. This model, of flexible spirit, allows for various fields of action to be covered, with the capacity to accommodate different contexts. It can generate conventional cultural content, parallel to that of a more innovative and transversal essence. This polyhedral nature allows the CCs to develop projects of international relevance, as they maintain basic cultural services, consolidating themselves as institutions of reference, without giving up eccentricity in their freedom of approach. The Network of Cultural Centres is hence, by the very nature of its governance, endowed with an ever-changing character, proven to be very close to the environment where each centre is located.

As agents of the Spanish Cooperation - once consolidated as key actors in their contexts - , the CCs must continue with a relevant role in safeguarding the intrinsic relationship between sustainable and cultural development. Essentially, this can be done through taking advantage of the instrumental role that culture plays concerning the environment - as well as of the grand potential the creative community has in generating dialogue regarding climate change, and in inspiring the will to take action.

The CCs should be more ambitious concerning the full incorporation of the groups hosted in the inclusive spaces of the facilities and activities. Beyond promoting gender equality, participation and recognition of the LGBTIQ community, access to people with different capacities, these groups should participate in the planning and programming in itself.

In the coming years, cultural models will continue to undergo important changes, in their forms of creation and dissemination, in the ways of access and



Patio of the Cultural Centre of Spain in Malabo

participation or in their way of relating to other sectors. In order to react and adapt to new situations, the CCs must deepen the characteristics that have made them a successful agent in so far as their ability to insert themselves into diverse communities and environments, with situations of different levels of development or social complexity. The challenge of the model is - without renouncing the diversity of its actions, representatives or approaches - in knowing just how to identify the exact balance required in each context and, within the framework of the new global agenda, to continue with a commitment to sustainability, inclusion and the potential of networking.

In the forthcoming years, the cultural models shall inevitably undergo important changes – in processes of creation and dissemination, in accessibility and participation, or the methods of relating to other sectors. If the CCs are to react and adapt accordingly, they should delve deeper into exactly what has made them into such successful agents – the capacity to introduce themselves into such diverse communities and environments that have different levels of development or complexity in their social situations. Therein lies the challenge of the model - without renouncing the diversity of the scope of action, spokespersons or focus – in knowing how to find an adequate balance in each context, within the framework of the new global agenda, to continue with the commitment to sustainability, inclusion and the potential of working as a Network.

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The map shows the locations of Spanish Cultural Centres for Overseas Cooperation (marked with a white circle) and Centres Associated to the Spanish Cooperation (marked with a white square). The white circles are located in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Santiago de Chile, Asunción, La Paz, Lima, Santo Domingo, San José, Tegucigalpa, San Salvador, Ciudad de México, Bata, and Malabo. The white squares are located in Rosario, Córdoba, Panamá, Managua, and Guatemala.

Network of Cultural Centres, Spanish Cooperation

Overseas Cooperation Units

1. Cultural Centre of Spain in Buenos Aires
2. Cultural Centre of Spain in Montevideo
3. Cultural Centre of Spain in Santiago de Chile
4. Cultural Centre of Spain in Asunción
5. Cultural Centre of Spain in La Paz
6. Cultural Centre of Spain in Lima
7. Cultural Centre of Spain in Santo Domingo
8. Cultural Centre of Spain in San José
9. Cultural Centre of Spain in Tegucigalpa
10. Cultural Centre of Spain in San Salvador
11. Cultural Centre of Spain in Ciudad de México
12. Cultural Centre of Spain in Bata
13. Cultural Centre of Spain in Malabo

Centres Associated to the Spanish Cooperation

14. Cultural Centre of Spain in Rosario
15. Cultural Centre of Spain in Córdoba
16. Cultural Centre of Spain in Panamá
17. Cultural Centre of Spain in Managua
18. Cultural Centre of Spain in Guatemala



ARGENTINA
Cultural Centre of Spain
in Buenos Aires

Address
Paraná 1159, CP 1018,
Buenos Aires

Opening Year
1988

Web
<http://www.cceba.org.ar/>



Cultural Centre of Spain in Buenos Aires

For most people in Argentina, to talk of Spain is to talk of their own country, that of their parents, or of their grandparents. The average Argentine is familiar with the names of most of the relevant Spanish writers, actors, screenwriters and creators, and it is not uncommon to overhear people talking about the latest cultural events in Spain.

While, after its independence, Argentina sought its political and cultural role models distant from Spain, the end of the 19th century saw the inception of a network of cultural relations and dialogue among intellectuals of both countries, which increased in the years following the Spanish civil war. The relations between Spain and Argentina were bound to go beyond economy or politics. It was meant to be – and it is - a long lasting relation of shared values; a historic relationship built around a common culture and a common language. Both countries crossed their paths, and in so doing, strengthened the ties between artists and intellectuals. There has always been a cultural interaction between Spain and Argentina in which, not only prominent names of individual creation have excelled, but the spirits continue to shine on either side of the Atlantic in the aftermath of many generations of intellects and artists.

This cultural interaction was reflected in the literary translations made in Argentina for Spain, as well as in the cultural magazines from either shore that included both Spanish and Argentinian authors. In the main Argentinian cities, but more particularly in Buenos Aires, Spanish immigrants founded publishing houses and held chairs at universities. Bookshops were opened. García Lorca would walk along Avenida de Mayo just as Jorge Luis Borges would pass through the Puerta del Sol. Spanish voices would sing alongside bandoneon players. Today, as yesterday, Spanish and Argentinian cultures are inseparable.

The Spain of 1985, that of great changes, gave a singular and persistent stimulus to the Argentina, under the Government of Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1989) by means of a cooperation policy, aimed at the consolidation of the institutions and the cultural and artistic nexus between Spain and Argentina.

In Buenos Aires, on the foundations of the Spanish Book Shop on Florida street, in 1988, the Institute of Ibero-American Cooperation (ICI – for its Spanish acronym) was founded, the future Cultural Centre of Spain in Buenos Aires (CCEBA), of which the complete renovations were commissioned to the architect and plastic artist Clorindo Testa, designer of the National Library of Argentina, amongst other large buildings. That was no coincidence, as this artist represented the tradition that the Instituto Di Tella in the sixties had started, bringing together the best of the Buenos Aires avant-garde creators.

Initially as the ICI, the Cultural Centre deployed a thriving offer of activity and was at the forefront of the process of cultural creation in Argentina. In the period of consolidation, between 1997 and 2007, the most prominent intellectuals and artists of the Spanish and Argentinian cultures visited the facilities of Florida Street, a unique scenario of mythical encounter, of a Spain that had gone from black and white to colour.

In parallel to a generous budget allocation, the Centre had a multi-purpose exhibition hall that allowed displays of up to 95 linear metres, with the possibility of being turned into a conference, theatre or video room, and with the capacity to accommodate 150 people seated and even more standing. It also had a spectacular reference library, also designed by Testa, with more than 12,000 books and magazines covering all fields, but specialized in contemporary literature, philosophy, essays, art and video. The various Spanish writers, intellectuals and



1.
Natural Science Exhibition of
 Juan Gatti. CCEBA, 2012

2.
 First presentation in Argentina
 of the music group Fuel
 Fandango, in the framework
 of the celebration of the 30-
 anniversary of the CCEBA

managers who led the Centre over the years left their singular mark on quite a dynamic and innovative cultural agenda.

New cultural services were offered to researchers and users in general, with the conversion of the library and video library into media library, by incorporating two new resources: the new music library and the ultra-fast cable and modem internet terminal. The space designed for the music library had two CD players, a cassette player, two sets of headphones and a computer with internet access. This terminal allowed one to visit the web of ICI in the section dedicated to the music library, with periodically updated audio archives, and links to web sites of artists, festivals and centres of dissemination of contemporary music in Argentina, Spain and other countries. The first live vent included an on-line connection with Sónar, the most important electronic music and multimedia art festival in Europe.

There were some seasons devoted to contemporary Spanish cinema, in collaboration with the Cinemateca (San Martín General Theatre) and the Filmoteca (Cine Maxi) of Buenos Aires. The traditional Buenos Aires Video, which gave the ICI Video Award, was consolidated, and eventually included the categories of Experimental Digital Art and Multimedia. A web site was created that included the entire production of the ICI as well as the possibility of consultation and links with other sources of cultural production, with the Spanish libraries, with the central organisms of the AECEI, and the Hispanic Library of this institution. Tango and poetry Mondays were established. *Barbaria*, a magazine published by the Cultural Centre, announced and promoted their cultural events, and served as a forum for discussion and introduction of new ideas. Through round tables and conferences, the AECEI Forum opened a framework for common reflection on a wide range of topics and issues.

It is not possible to encapsulate in a few words an activity as varied and extensive as that carried out by the Cultural Centre of Spain in its 30 years of cultural life, nor its impact on Argentinian society. The Spanish culture — which was flourishing in its various aspects — came into contact with the creations of an agile, curious, generous Argentina aware of that space of cultural creation that it could occupy in the near future.



Today, as yesterday, the Spanish culture encouraged by the CCEBA continues to host shows on Corrientes Street, exhibitions in the most important museums of the city of Buenos Aires, and concerts in the different auditoriums. The demand for Spanish speakers and cultural managers to teach courses and seminars in Argentinian universities and cultural institutions never ceases to grow.

The activity of the Cultural Centre is renewed with projects and itineraries that, thanks to the sponsorship of the AECID, occupy the agenda of the National Museum of Fine Arts, the Spanish Museum Enrique Larreta or the Museum of Decorative Arts, to name a few. Performing arts are present in the Cervantes National Theatre, in the emblematic Avenue, in San Martín or in Maipo. The policy of promoting books and reading is introduced in collaboration with the Argentinian National Library Mariano Moreno. Spanish cinema is present in major festivals such as Mar del Plata or BAFICI (Buenos Aires International Independent Film Festival). Music cycles captivate the audiences in the *Usina del*

Arte. Spanish artists are represented in the design biennials — or video art — of the different Argentinian institutions. This institution has seen some of the most notable creations of music, art, literature and theatre from Spanish, Argentine, and Latin American culture pass through its doors, as part of its efforts in cultural cooperation. The Cultural Centre has also gone to great lengths in its role as a generator of projects, factory of ideas, and communicating vessel among painters and artists, writers and poets, musicians and video artists. If cultural life flowed in the basement of Florida Street, it continues to run on Paraná Street, something discernible by all.

The presence of Spanish architects, curators, historians, artists who teach in different Argentinian institutions, or writers who fill assembly halls at the Buenos Aires Book Fair, is always received with devotion.

To speak of the Cultural Centre of Spain in Buenos Aires is to speak of trust, programmes, strong work ethics, “a pulmón” (with all ones might, as the Argentinian idiom goes); it has thus placed



3. Meeting in the framework of the *Laboratorio de Maratón de Producción*, a CCEBA MediaLab Programme

4. *Espanoramas* is the *must* event of every year, that presents a selection out of the best Spanish films

5. Photography workshop for boys and girls, undertaken by the architect and artist Jorge Yeregui

itself as a reference for other existing cultural centres, not only in Ibero America. The fact that a cultural institution of these characteristics has completed 30 years of creativity is, in itself, great news. Especially because the CCEBA, by vocation and by command, has come to occupy this place thanks to the support and cooperation of a large part of the cultural society of Buenos Aires. Publishers, art galleries, cultural institutions, universities, magazines, artists, writers, actors, musicians, other intellectuals and, above all, the public, who have, with their suggestions and encouragement, allowed this cultural centre to become what it is today.

In 2018 the CCEBA celebrated three decades of participation in the cultural world of a city and of a country in which it has felt dearly loved and where it has won over new public. In 2016, with the creation of a space for children and young people, new fields of action have been opened — particularly in science —, where Spanish resident scientists have collaborated. After its fifth edition, the Spanish film cycle *Espanoramas* is the established cultural event that closes the summer of Buenos Aires. The Centre remains a place for encounters and for cultural and scientific exchange, where prominent Latin American creators share the explicit mission of cooperating for the development of culture; as well as the goal of establishing themselves in a privileged environment of new trends in any discipline and, in particular, the performing and visual arts that characterize the new scenario of globalization. The Spanish culture is pervasive in the local media, and cultural, interpersonal relations are deep and close, with large communities of artists and intellectuals in both countries. The cultural cooperation carried out by the CCEBA has learned to embrace change, to present innovative proposals and to open the doors to other cultural manifestations.

Looking back and observing the road travelled, allows us to assess what we have done, and face the following steps to be taken with greater conviction. It's a pleasant feeling to be able to look back and validate the efforts of so many friends, the support of so many institutions, foundations and companies that have made the Cultural Centre into an essential showcase of Argentinian and Spanish cultures. As the lyrics of the tango *Mi Buenos Aires Querido* say, "memories parade by, with a sweet trail of emotion".



The past few years have been fruitful, but we will not stop in complacency. We aim for continuity and expansion into new areas. We also wish to incorporate new audiences and deepen the ties with our already loyal public.

On its 30th anniversary, through these pages, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Buenos Aires would like to thank the support of the public who continues to encourage and renew us; we thank the writers, artists, teachers, intellectuals, scientists and friends who accompany us in our work, but also the media that recreate us and the managers and staff of the AECID who nourish and support us, as our reason for being is closely tied to them.

An unfettered red carpet

Ezequiel Martínez

Director of Culture of the National Library of Argentina

What does Rafael Alberti have in common with Marta Minujín; Ernesto Sabato with Pedro Almodóvar; Manuel Vázquez Montalbán with The Black Organization, or Adolfo Bioy Casares with Charly García? That all of them, in one way or another, have left their mark at the beginnings of the Ibero-American Cooperation Institute (ICI).

In those early years of what is currently known as the Cultural Centre of Spain in Buenos Aires (CCEBA), everything took place in a large and modern basement lodged deep in the heart of Florida Street in Buenos Aires, especially designed for that purpose by the architect Clorindo Testa. Within no time, the three initials ICI, became a synonym for the most intense cultural movement in the Argentine capital city. The initials may have changed, but the essence and spirit remain intact.

We should go back to the hustle and bustle generated by the Di Tella Institute in the mid-sixties to find a phenomenon that resembled what the ICI was generating in Buenos Aires. The already legendary hand programme — a foldable handout where dozens of monthly activities were crammed together— amounted to an unfettered red carpet upon which the protagonists of this *raison d'être* paraded: Spaniards, Argentines and Latin Americans — in a fusion of ideas, exchanges, debates and quality cultural proposals.

From the first day of its formal inauguration on —three decades ago now— the ICI arrived to wake up the consecrated and invite them to mix with the avant-garde in all possible disciplines: music, literature, dance, theatre, cinema, design, fashion, plastic arts, and so forth. Because that was what it was all about: to give freedom to emerging creators so that they could develop innovative and creative projects, right in the same venue where Fernando Savater had given a conference the day before, or where the following day a prestigious jury would

debate on the best proposals for a new edition of the ICI Buenos Aires Video Award; or to mix them all together, in the best sense of that exchange between teachers and apprentices, between the classic and modern.

Personally, I have a fond memory of the ICI as the first institution that summoned me to participate in a public debate. Under the slogan “De tal palo, tal astilla” (The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree), the ICI gathered us — sons and daughters of journalists — at a table to talk about that inherited and shared vocation. And there I was, in my twenties, feeling an intruder in that place that welcomed so many maestros. A space that, since its beginnings and until today is acknowledged as mythical and inevitable.

The need to dream

Samuel Bossini

*Director of the Poetry Festival of the Book Fair
of Buenos Aires*

For me, as for many other artists in Argentina, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Buenos Aires is reduced to only a few initials: ICI (Ibero-American Cooperation Institute) in one's memory. A basement on Florida Street where, under the direction of the poet José Tono Martínez, those belonging to the creative world began to come by, with the greatest freedom and with that, freedom, a basis of experimentation of new perspectives.

Thanks to the ICI, poetry had a grand home. I had the pleasure of inviting poets who have since become legendary, such as Gonzalo Rojas, Marosa di Giorgio, Eugenio Montejo, Antonio Cisneros, Antonio Gamoneda or Carlos Edmundo de Ory, to read and speak with the public. Poets who crowded the basement with poetry lovers. But also, with tango, philosophy, visual arts, book presentations, magazines, and with whatever conceivable event, that is where it all unfolded, before a loyal, eager audience. An audience that, once the encounter had concluded, went to the restaurant *El Navegante* for dinner — a Galician restaurant to the core —, where long nights caught us discussing poetry and issues that life threw at us.

Then the move to Paraná Street came. But many of us remained locked up in the basement with the key inside. There is no need to leave. To conserve that moment; those dreams gathered in a space, to linger on, navigating through fog and light.

Other managers arrived, leaving other prints, ensuing the departure of the poet José Tono Martínez, who had been obliged to discontinue his management position owing to the harsh attitude of some Catholic extremists following the exhibition of the great artist León Ferrari.

Today, it is the Cultural Centre of Spain in Buenos Aires and continues to hold highly appreciated events and support culture, always in need. A culture that gives away its voice, asking nothing in return. She, culture, progressively losing

her tulle over the water. And rebuilds herself from the water to remain screaming in a basement. The place where true culture grows and points out paths.

Basements are rarely wrong.



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Cultural Centre of Spain
in Montevideo

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Opening year

2003

Web

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Cultural Centre of Spain in Montevideo

This year, in the celebration of its 16th anniversary, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Montevideo reaffirms its commitment to the culture of the country; through its support to local cultural initiatives and a varied programme of free and open access activities, covering all areas of thought and art — including exhibitions, seminars, training workshops, debates, conferences, concerts, film screenings, theatre cycles, artistic residencies and creative laboratories, among others.

The CC in Montevideo occupies the grand historic *Casa Mojana*, previously a commercial establishment, dating back to 1921, part of the cultural heritage of the country. The Spanish Cooperation rehabilitated and saved the building from total destruction with an intervention that highlights its antiquity and history, adapting it in such a way as to be respectful towards a cultural use. From the outset, the CC has been characterized for making the avant-garde its flagship, wagering on experimentation, contemporary creation and new languages, making the work of Spanish and Ibero-American artists visible — both in the capital city and in the rest of the country.

The CC has a modern media library equipped with a growing collection of books, magazines, films and records, with special attention to Spanish and Latin American bibliographic content. This space has been adapted and organized for different age groups. The CC media library is an open space for consult and has daily newspapers and devices with internet connection. It has 20,553 copies in different formats and by May 2019 there were 2,722 registered members. There have been 156,326 loans of material since the doors opened in 2012. In 2018 alone, 15,572 items were lent out, including those for library home use.

On the other hand, the media library accompanies the lines of action of the CC

with programmes and projects to support the strengthening of archives and library systems, as well as the creation of a bibliography to support workshops. The media library undertakes an essential cultural, educational and social position. There is a specialized and professional service for vulnerable social groups, which find in the library not only a space for cultural integration, but also for advice, accompaniment and empowerment.

The area for children and youth, which is integrated into all the lines of action of the CC, aims to strengthen the relationship between education and culture, and increase knowledge in art, culture, and scientific culture — with special attention to the environment — among younger girls, boys and teenagers, but also their families and teachers. This area offers guided tours for educational centres upon request; it also offers weekly activities for this public, from preschool to pre-university level, and develops long-term projects such as seasons of children's theatre with Spanish-language playwright, performance residencies, the Chess Space and the Reading Club. Boys and girls have also been the driving force behind the creation of the urban organic garden of the CC, the first to be implemented in a cultural space in Montevideo — which is a participatory research platform, a versatile pedagogical device and a learning space for a sustainable society.

The programme for the elderly also seeks to develop an inclusive cultural programme, focusing its attention on groups at risk of exclusion, and contributes to making access to culture feasible for all people, regardless of their age and condition, thus fulfilling their cultural rights. This programme includes on-going courses of literature, creative writing, memory and cognitive stimulation, handicrafts and chess; all courses take place throughout all seasons of the year, to avoid situations

of loneliness and isolation in critical periods, such as holidays.

Throughout these years, the CC in Montevideo has developed and consolidated its line of cultural cooperation, giving visibility and space to the different international networks and festivals — some of which have their origin in the CC itself —, ensuring a first rate Spanish participation, creating dialogue with the actors, agents and — or — local referents. Platforms such as the International Festival of Contemporary Dance of Uruguay (FIDCU), the International Festival of Performing Arts (FIDAE), the World Poetry Encounter, Montevideo Comics, Doc Montevideo, International Film Festival and the Black Week of Uruguay, among others, have been part of the programming, which has also featured leading international artistic references such as Miguel del Arco, Isabel Ordaz, Carmen Machi, Aimar Pérez Galí, La Ribot, Pablo Esbert, Fernando Trueba, Ray Loriga, Miguelanxo Prado, Ángela Segovia, Marta Sanz and an endless number of household names.

Furthermore, it is worth highlighting the support that the CC has given to artistic creation through open calls or the design of programmes with the goal of creating, bringing to stage and highlighting avant-garde creation, as well as the new scenic languages, forms of production and contemporary aesthetics or artistic processes. In many cases, it was the first time that the artist had visited the Southern Cone or that their work had been exhibited in Latin America — as was the case of the artistic clinic of the versatile Eduardo Casanova or the first individual exhibition of Filip Cusic.

The Cultural Centre of Spain is a reference space for the plastic arts and has wanted not only to cover the recent periods of the history of art in Spain, Uruguay and Latin America, but also to dare to present the current, angry times. To look deeply into and research forgotten aspects of history, such as the conceptualism during Ibero-American dictatorships; rescuing the key role of women in the arts, relegated by an essentially male chauvinist historiography; reinstating essential figures of the evolution of Uruguayan art of the twentieth century in history; giving space to marginalized artistic groups; and promoting an international Ibero-American dialogue that addresses the problems of the region from an artistic point of view. The act of filling these gaps in history in a professional, multidisciplinary and

in-depth manner has led the CC to be acknowledged as the true bastion of research in the artistic and academic field.

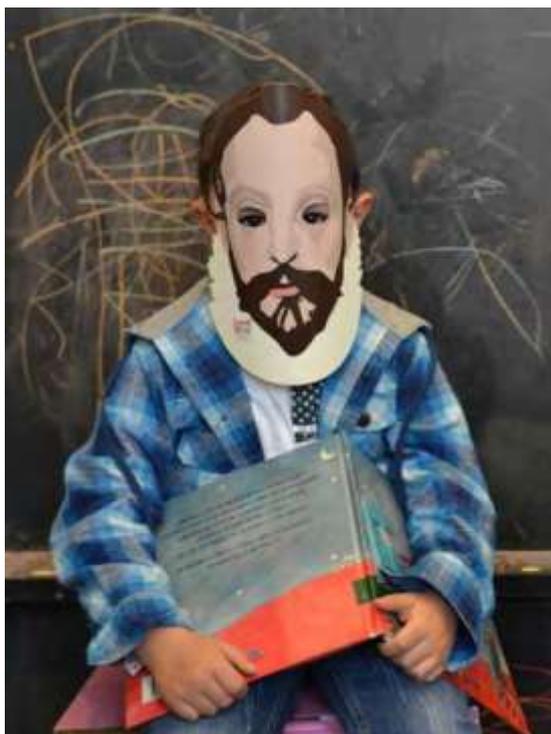
Although the CC is a space mostly intended for production, it also hosts itinerating exhibitions, especially those that address issues prioritized by the Spanish Cooperation in the guidelines of its Master Plan; some examples are those presenting new views on feminism, those denouncing discrimination based on sex, religion or ideas; those that favour integration and also those that include, through artistic expression, the application of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Much of the current Spanish art has been seen in the Cultural Centre through individual exhibitions by Antoni Muntadas, Alberto García Alix, Ouka Lele, José Manuel Broto, Isidoro Valcárcel Medina, Chema Madoz, Isabel Muñoz and a long so forth. For Uruguayan artists, exhibiting at the CC has always been a milestone in their careers, Teresa Pupo, Magela Ferrero, Juan Lugo, Luis Camnitzer, Yamandú Canosa, Marco Maggi, Manuel Rodríguez, Yudi Yudoyoko, and others. The collective exhibitions have also shown the work of first rate Ibero American contemporary artists. Parallel to the exhibitions, another strong point of the programming of the CC is the activities that enrich from different angles, diving into theoretical, cultural and social concepts. The exhibition is a platform for content that generates debate, dialogue and, sometimes, positive confrontations. Museology is another remarkable element; the careful presentation of the exhibitions makes the CC a great promoter of the new museology concepts; innovation, professionalism, the element of surprise, didactics and the following of environmental protocols in the use of materials and lighting make the CC a notable reference.

The CC has thus become one of the most important recipients — and benchmarks — of culture in the country for its commitment to the professionalization of the cultural industries. It is worth mentioning the different opportunities in performing arts created by the CC through projects that make known the best and most recent Spanish drama works, experimentation projects — such as *Microescena* (Microstage) — or the permanent line devoted to creative artistic residencies and publications. Examples of this are the presentation of the work of Josep Maria Miró, Guillem Clua, Paco



1.
SAT 2019 Exhibition /
Arte Trans Week, CC in
Montevideo.



2.
Participant in a children's
activity at the Cervantino
Festival of Montevideo, 2016

Bezerra, Laila Ripoll, José Padilla and Lluïsa Cunillé, to name a few, in the Uruguayan artistic field.

On the other hand, the quick installation and consolidation, by various Uruguayan audiences, of projects of Spanish production such as *Las Noches Bárbaras* (Barbarian Nights - Círculo de Bellas Artes de Madrid) or *Días Nórdicos* (Nordic Days - Zona de Obras) should be mentioned, as they illustrate not only the content and programming that is going on in our country, but the use of different methods and ways of production of award winning and renowned projects of Spain, an opportunity given by this travelling programme in Latin America.

The CC has been able to complement its content and adapt to the new times dictated by the way in which the history of Uruguay is evolving, its governmental changes and the improvement of its cultural policies, working side by side with this new institutional strength in cultural and social matters. This has allowed for leading the way and initiating annual dates of great success from the CC — such as the Night of the Libraries in Uruguay, unknown until three years ago in the country — or to host and design relevant requests for debate, reflection and discussion of ideas regarding the publishing industry and writing, as is the case of the Uruguayan subsidiary of the International Literature Festival (FILBA), an event that has enabled the visit of well-known figures such as Enrique Vila-Matas, Irvine Welsh, Catherine Millet, Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, José Luís Peixoto or Ida Vitale, among other world renowned authors.

Besides, the institution has launched new artistic and curatorial spaces through the public opening of programmes —such as the CC Rooftop or the Organic Vegetable Garden — that serve as a setting for the most diverse proposals; such proposals are always organized with the CC programme in mind, dictated by its vision-mission — namely the environmental struggle, gender equity or the LGBTI+ movement, among other causes.

There is also a line of action outside the physical space of the CC that is built around the different Uruguayan cultural and artistic centres (public or private) that make up the local cultural network. The CC also promotes activities outside the capital city (travelling exhibitions, theatre or cinema) collaborating with initiatives of different institutions and municipalities throughout the country with the



3.
Second edition of the Festival
Días Nórdicos on the rooftop
terrace of the CC, 2018

4.
Exhibition *Intersticios* in the
main show room of the CC
Montevideo, 2019



objective of decentralizing cultural action, while also encouraging the presence and visibility of the Spanish cultural offer in Uruguay.

On the other hand, complying with the development of its cooperation policy with local institutions, the CC provides the physical space and logistics for the realization of training activities and for knowledge dissemination, becoming a reference in the city for the implementation of this type of activities by cultural groups and NGOs, international organizations and local government departments. Continuing with this collaboration and openness to other institutions, we are working with the Consulate General of Spain and the Labour Department of the Embassy of Spain, in the modernization and reform of the regional centres of the Spanish emigrant communities and their descendants in Uruguay. With the implementation of workshops, training courses in cultural management, communication, economic management, and with on-going advisory services, we intend to update and prevent the degradation of

5.
Ephemeral Chronicles was a selected performance for the call Azotea (Rooftop) CC, 2019

6.
Festival *Noches Bárbaras* of Montevideo



important Spanish cultural infrastructures that are at a true risk of disappearance.

Cultural relations between Spain and Uruguay must have a consolidated frame of reference, to avoid inconsistencies and improvisations. In that regard, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Montevideo took the initiative to ensure the appointment of Montevideo as the fourth Cervantine City, a distinction unanimously obtained, in the plenary of the 9th International Congress of the Association of Cervantists of São Paulo in 2015. This nomination was followed by the creation of the Montevideo Cervantine City Commission, chaired by the Municipality of Montevideo, and formed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the University of the Republic, the University of Montevideo and the Catholic University, the National Academy of Language, the National Library, the Cervantes School and La Blanqueada and Jacinto Vera Neighbourhood Commission. The nomination entails a commitment to carry out permanent cultural and academic activities related to

Spanish culture, for this reason, the CC created the Cervantine International Festival, uniting for the first time all the members of the Cervantine commission with important Uruguayans — public and private —, institutions, and all the theatres and exhibition rooms of the city, around the figure of Cervantes and the legacy of Spanish culture and its contemporaneity.

Memory, avant-garde, culture, inclusion, ecology, revolution, depth, fun, education, equity, feminism, tolerance, solidarity, philosophy, community, research, companionship, experimentation, dialogue, diversity, science, quality, alternatives, dissemination, management, technology, networks, cooperation, integration, training, governance, knowledge, debate, broadcasting... All these notions are part of the DNA of the Cultural Centre of Spain in Montevideo.

Support and contribution to our urban heritage

William Rey Ashfield

Architect, PhD in Art History and Cultural Heritage Management. He was president of the National Cultural Heritage Commission.

As we all know, urban heritage is a complex unit of components of which the most outstanding architecture, the most valuable spaces — with a strong sense of citizens' identity —, or even the big public monuments, are but only part of that heritage. To such an ensemble, we should add a thick layer of stories and tales, of written and oral texts, of music and sounds, of cultural productions and institutions — that is, of human experiences and organizations that are an integral part of the city.

Today, the Cultural Centre of Spain is indeed a fundamental reference of our main historical centre; therefore, it is also a reference for Montevideo, given the importance and identity of that historical site.

In recent years, the CC has played a key role in the assessment of urban cultural heritage, and has been a prominent actor in the renewal of the Old City, promoting cultural activities — artistic, humanistic, technical-scientific —, a phenomenon that resulted in various exhibitions, performances, conferences, congresses and seminars of the highest social and academic value.

And yet, behind that constant cultural mobilization, there is also the vocation of many of its directors. In this regard, I would like to give special mention to one of them —Ricardo Ramón Jarne — for the support he provided to all cultural actors, whether they be public institutions, non-governmental organizations or individuals. The setting in motion of a true hub within its headquarters has, in turn, enabled the appropriate development of organizations promoting the defence of cultural heritage that, not long ago, lacked any space to implement their research and dissemination tasks.

Finally, it would be impossible to forget two essential aspects that constitute some of the contributions of high significance to the urban heritage of Montevideo, made by the CC. On the

one hand, the excellent on-going conservation and maintenance plan for its headquarters, a unique example of building rehabilitation within our list of National Historic Monuments. On the other, the valuable position that Montevideo has achieved as Ciudad Cervantina (Cervantes City), based on a significant bibliographic heritage and a strong tradition of reading and urban recognition of the work of the author of *Don Quijote de La Mancha*. This achievement was reached owing much to the support of the Cultural Centre of Spain and has enabled our capital city to become part of a small and prestigious list of Ibero-American cities that hold that award, among which Alcalá de Henares, Miguel de Cervantes' hometown, particularly stands out.

In our imaginary, the temporary journey of this institution would seem very extensive, in historical terms. However, it is not. It is its great achievements, in a relatively short time, that invite us to think differently and suppose a longer trajectory. Perhaps the future will entail an ample stay of the Cultural Centre of Spain in our city and its effects on urban heritage will be, without a doubt, as relevant as they have been so far. We Uruguayans are grateful today and, perhaps, tomorrow, even more.

Intelligence and sagacity

José Miguel Onandia

Lawyer and manager specialized in cultural rights. Director Postgraduate Programme in Art Law and Cultural Legislation at the University of Buenos Aires.

The Cultural Centre of Spain in Montevideo occupies a prominent place within the intense artistic activity of the city. The splendid heritage building that serves as its headquarters, equipped with all the technological and comfort elements for the reception of people and works, is the ideal recipient for the contents that — with intelligence and sagacity — are continuously programmed. It is a space in Uruguay for the dissemination of Spanish and Ibero-American culture and a centre of external projection for Uruguayan creation. A place of dialogue, exchange and debate between people of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds.

The commitment of those responsible for the CC to the public and non-governmental institutions of Uruguay is noteworthy, as there are constantly activities going on jointly organised between the Centre and the local entities. Likewise, the Cultural Centre of Spain is a solicited space for festivals, fairs and encounters, given its open nature towards the community and the main role it occupies in the culture of Uruguay.

Memory has a future

Marianella Morena

Actress, playwright, stage director and teacher. In 2003 she was given the Molière Award by the Embassy of France in Uruguay.

It was 2003; the CC opened its doors in Montevideo. I went to a Marco Maggi installation that consisted of several stacks of A4 white sheets arranged through space, at different heights, with music, and where people were invited to take part on the “stacked white”. I went with my 5-year-old son Lautaro; he began to walk among the stacks, and to run, then the unwritten became a bird and territory, presentpastfuture, the paper changed range, the word or the drawing — done or to be done — also. That moment is engraved in my memory. Today my son is a musician, and he also plays with the previous and what is yet to be created, with his notes and renditions. I write my fictions, and each one builds their story.

It is memory of the future. It is the CC in Uruguay — its landing in the old recycled commercial area — which gives an air of possible to a city with a strong independent artistic life, but with a scarcely institutionalised state upon arrival in the country. The CC adds thought and practice on synthesis and with an expansive view of the arts, with diverse integration towards the contemporary and with great emphasis on strengthening the regional. This is how we receive it, with joy and hope. Within a few years things changed and the National Directorate of Culture of the Ministry of Education and Culture emerged, which incorporated several of the existing lines. A way of thinking, feeling and creating culture with care, and sensitivity was born, with professional methods attending diverse resources and disciplines at the same time. It would be impossible to give a detailed account of all the footprints — ranging from curatorial projects, the different directors and their teams, the original initiatives that give a sense of belonging, which nourish the conceptual and reflective landscape.

So, upon writing, the prevailing image within me is of my son “moving through the white”, acting on us, and others.

Grateful, sincerely.



CHILE
Cultural Centre of Spain
in Santiago

Address

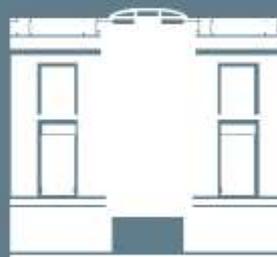
Avenida Providencia 927
Providencia, Santiago

Opening Year

1993

Web

<http://www.ccesantiago.cl>



Cultural Centre of Spain in Santiago

In the month of April of the year 2018, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Santiago de Chile (CCESantiago) celebrated its 25th anniversary, with thousands of experiences related with culture to tell.

The CCESantiago originated in the autumn (of the southern hemisphere) of 1993 and has accompanied the citizens during their transit to democracy and the irrevocable commencement towards a global world. Located at 927 Providencia Avenue, the centre has witnessed the political, social and cultural changes that have been transforming Chile into what it is today. As a team, we have committed ourselves to put culture — which we understand as an inarguable factor of human development — at the centre of the debate, as well as to accompany and promote creation and artistic production without filters.

Our intention is to become a place of encounter where Spanish, Chilean, European and Ibero American cultures may converge in harmony. Such a great challenge can only be achieved through the daily work of a team with extensive experience, but also through an on-going review of the role we are to play in the lively, ever changing Chilean cultural scene.

Our connection with the area

The alliances we have established on both public and private levels, and the work we have done — together with the cultural, social, local institutions and the community — constitute one of the great strengths of the CCESantiago, which contribute to the promotion and cohesion of the sector, both in the Metropolitan Region and in the other regions — and thus encouraging a necessary cultural decentralization and democratization.

Today, the CCESantiago stands as a respected and valued institution by all its counterparts; such

reputation has enabled us to weave a solid network of associations within the country and throughout the other Latin American regions — which, in turn, has proven to be one of our most valuable resources in times of tight budgets, with international cooperation for development as a basis and being the most appropriate way to work inter institutionally.

The space

The CCESantiago is one of the cross border cultural institutes in Chile with the longest tradition, as its direct predecessor — the Chilean Institute of Hispanic Culture — was created in 1948. The current refurbished headquarters, located in the popular Santiago community of Providencia, is a space open to everyone, which plays a fundamental role in the development and promotion of art and culture, as well as in the processes of artistic creation and transfer of knowledge.

The building has a usable space of 1,500 square metres; there are three exhibition spaces with well-defined curatorial criteria (Room 927, Salas Emilio Ellena and La Curva) and a theatre that seats 150 people, where different projects in performing arts, music, cinema are developed and various types of conferences or seminars take place. In addition, there is an enticing service of a media library, a games library, a room for workshops and small format encounters (The Cloud), a laboratory for interdisciplinary creation and exchange (MateSurLab) and an amphitheatre-shaped patio with gardens (Island Green), which is ideal for all kinds of outdoor activities.

The programming

At present, the CCESantiago features an outstanding, wide-ranging cultural agenda in visual



1.
Workshop of Audiovisual
Creation (ACERCA
Programme) given by the
Spanish director Rodrigo
Sorogoyen. CCESantiago,
April 2017

2.
Encounter of children's and
youth orchestras

arts, performing arts, music, literature and thought, cinema and mediation-education, which travels beyond our architectural boundaries.

Year after year, we intend to continue being a reference in the area of culture, a place where the latest avant-garde movements are mingled with the more traditional formats; a place where dormant creation, debate of current issues, and memory as heritage flourish. So, fostering the elaboration of our own content and motivated to create proposals with vision, we generate a diverse, plural, inclusive and free cultural offer of quality.

In order for that to happen, we work with a short- and medium-term management plan, designing an integral, coherent plan to be carried out over time, guided by the strategic objectives that define our line of action and programming.

Our impact

What kind of Spanish culture do we wish to export? What cultural image do we wish to project abroad? Although the cultural and social realities of each country — and therefore, of each Cultural Centre — are rather diverse, sharing the main lines of action and having a unified response to these matters is essential. As a Network of Cultural Centres, this is an end to which we aspire — always in coordination with the Central Services of the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID) and under its leadership. Indeed, one of the greatest added values concerning the Spanish foreign cultural lines of action lies in the Network of Centres. With proper coordination we are a local cultural partner with an impact throughout Latin America.

Although our three fields of action — promotion of the Spanish culture, cultural cooperation, and culture for development — are the fundamental pillars of our work abroad, it is true that the role of the CCESantiago has changed over the past few years. Over the last decade, it has gone from being practically the only leading European benchmark in the Chilean cultural scene, to sharing that space with a huge number of actors and institutions — public and private — that have sewn colours in a previously dull — artistic and cultural — landscape.

This constant need for adjustment creates the necessity for periods of reflection that involve the whole team and make us pay close attention







4.
Cine a la Fresca (Outdoor
Cinema), January 2018

5.
Exhibition *La Bestia* (The
Beast), photographs by Isabel
Muñoz, May 2015

6.
Collective exhibition, *Donde se
curva el horizonte* (Where the
horizon curves), 2016

to the contexts and the unstoppable changes that emerge, as well as to the new demands that arise from artists and creators. This might be one of the most important challenges we face as a team: being always expectant, having the ability to develop responses to these new needs and to generate strategies, while always being consistent with the objectives we set as an institution and as a Network.

New challenges

We now live in a new universe that is beginning to take shape, forcing us to leave our comfort zone; it is a call for us to go along with the dance between art and science; to promote the processes of creation and connection with the community through artistic residencies; to remember the importance of research processes — with their necessary stops along the way (stages, formats and materials) —, as well as to plunge into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, to give them content and visibility. All this infused with our transversal guidelines, especially inclusion, gender equity, audience formation, the environment, the defence and promotion of cultural rights and minority groups, as well as the proper knowledge management.

We believe that the transfer of knowledge always transits on a two-way road and our ultimate goal is to be acknowledged by the community as a place open to people, from where we promote cross-border, cosmopolitan dialogue.

Let us not forget that one of the most valuable elements of the CCESantiago is the staff who provides it with a soul. Having a committed and empowered human capital has been key to effective coordination of the opportunities and resources offered by the environment, as well as to coping with many storms, resulting in the constant exercise of a cultural project consistent in time, which continues to grow – attentive to every new challenge.

Spain in the Heart of the Mapocho Station Cultural Centre

Arturo Navarro

Executive Director Mapocho Station Cultural Centre

From the ambassador's desk to that of our directorate, many common waters have run in the time that culture has brought us together.

The first symbol, when we were just a project, was the presence of Ambassador Pedro Bermejo in our founding Directorate.

Rather close in time, the visit of the King and Queen of Spain, Sofia and Juan Carlos, and the royal commission to take care of the two palm trees they planted — between lush trees — with a plaque commemorating the occasion.

In the vicinity of those palm trees flourished the Workshop Training Centre where stonemasons, welders and gardeners were trained in what would become the Parque de los Reyes (Park of Kings). That house, which belonged to the head of the Mapocho Station, is today the headquarters of the Foundation for Youth and Children Orchestras of Chile (FOJI).

However, the greatest debut came to be in 1993 with the *Letras de España* cycle, dedicated to Spanish literature. Thousands of books, dozens of distinguished writers and visitors such as the former Minister of Culture of Spain Jordi Solé Tura, or the bailaora (dancer) Cristina Hoyos, marked that reading festival with which the democratic Spain celebrated the inauguration of democracy in Chile.

In 2009, as if that were not enough, we received the Reina Sofía Cultural Heritage Award, from the Queen herself.

After that, there have been so many visits to the Cultural Centre of Spain, so many readings of *El Quijote* for the Day of the Book, so many police novels and mystery writers who participated on exchanges for the Black Novel Festival.

Male and female directors of the CC arrived in Chile with us as the first on their agenda. We received them, enjoyed them and developed many ideas that emerged from the willingness we both had to cross our cultures.

And now — as well as many other institutions —, we are preparing, once again, to disembark the passengers of the Winnipeg who were, somehow, the first cultural embassy of Spain in our lands.

Fruitful collaboration

Adriana Valdés

Director of the Chilean Academy of Language and of the Institute of Chile

There is much to say about the Cultural Centre of Spain in Santiago de Chile. Different times come to mind. I think of its remarkable current activity, but also in the amazing memories of intellectual life from past years. Let me begin with these two memories that stand out in my mind and that are at the same time very personal.

One: At the height of dictatorship, in 1981, the Department of Humanistic Studies of the University of Chile was giving its summer courses in its hospitable rooms. At the end of a conference on Juan Emar, someone I didn't know, nor had I ever heard of, approached me to introduce himself and asked me for a written piece. It was the young artist Alfredo Jaar, who nowadays is worldly famous, and a National Plastic Arts of Chile award holder. That was the beginning of a friendship and collaboration that has lasted to date.

Two: The Imaginary Academy, which has benevolently considered me as part of the expanded group of its founders, gave several cycles of conferences at the Cultural Centre of Spain and remained there until it needed larger auditoriums — in 1995, “The 20th century sensitivity” was an issue that was not yet approached comfortably in universities. Later on, there would be many similar cycles in less imaginary areas, but the CC helped us in being pioneer and in gathering the most interesting intellectuals of the moment in the rooms of the Centre.

That, on a personal level. On an institutional level, the CC has maintained a fruitful collaboration with the Chilean Academy of Language for a number of years. We expressed our gratitude in 2016 at the Alonso de Ercilla Award ceremony, where the Academy awards the people or institutions that have contributed — and contribute — to the dissemination of our literary, artistic and cultural values. Open to the people, the CC has established alliances with the

most significant institutions and people of our cultural world. The Academy appreciates its efforts to do with the Fourth Centenary of the death of Cervantes, for example, the activities highlighted apropos of the Award.

We are currently fully engaged with the CC in the activities of the 80th anniversary of the arrival of the Winnipeg, as well as the commemoration of the 500 years since the journey of Hernando de Magallanes. It is an enjoyable collaboration, full of vitality and drive, with ideas that emerge through unforgettable conversations.

Let these words serve as a celebration of the Cultural Centre of Spain, an institution that not only spreads cultural values, but also creates them. The centre generates opportunities for knowledge, contacts in thought, and unique experiences in our intellectual life.



PARAGUAY
Cultural Centre of Spain
Juan de Salazar, Asunción

Address
Calle Luis Alberto de Herrera 834,
casi Tacuary, CP 1506, Asunción

Opening year
1976

Web
<http://www.juandesalazar.org.py/>



Cultural Centre of Spain

Juan de Salazar, Asunción

The Cultural Centre of Spain Juan de Salazar (CCEJS), also known as “el Salazar” or “el Juande”, is the dean of the Network of Cultural Centres of the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID). Since its inauguration in 1976, as a transformation of the disappeared Institute of Hispanic Culture, the Cultural Centre occupies an important place in the cultural life of Asunción. From its beginnings it stands out as an avant-garde institution, with qualified training, debate and dialogue, creation and freedom, expression for emerging groups and artists; a space open to the dissemination of new aesthetic trends, as a driving agent of the country’s cultural production.

The central axis of activity of the Centre is culture, understood as an unavoidable component of development, in its different aspects, human, political, social as well as economic.

History

The Salazar, with more than 40 years of operation, is an exceptional witness to the recent history of Paraguay, from its origin of dependence on the Institute of Hispanic Culture to the current times in democracy. According to Francisco Corral, its first director, the creation of the Cultural Centre Juan de Salazar became an almost personal endeavour of the then ambassador of Spain, Carlos Manuel Fernández-Shaw. From that beginning Corral notes the following: “with very little means, there was cultural activity almost daily, thanks to the dynamic participation of Paraguayan intellectuals and artists. This particularity of Salazar had never been theorized or planned; we simply adapted to our special situation of being the only one of the cultural centres of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a Spanish-speaking country, and we let ourselves go with the dynamics of society and the demands of the Paraguayan cultural movements”.

In that foundational context, Spain was beginning with democracy and Paraguay was still immersed in a dictatorial regime. In times of stronism, the Salazar became a space of resistance and freedom, where artists and intellectuals could create and reflect within their walls, despite the censorship and persecution characteristic of the regime. In this regard, the role played by the Centre in so far as the custody and exhibition of cultural heritage and in the preservation of unique collections, which the State was not been able to guarantee, such as the collection of the Julián de la Herrería and Josefina Plá, and the libraries of Raúl Amaral and Miguel Chase-Sardi, among others.

In the collective memory of Paraguayans, the work of Salazar and its directors has left a deep impression. Francisco Corral, in those difficult times, made the Centre, as Nilo Fernández states “a light of resistance in the face of the dictatorship and a house of protection for the persecuted”, in addition to leaving it with hallmark signatures that were kept up and still survive. Among them, this character of the Centre stands out as a refuge for intellectuality and a reference for critical thinking, as a flag to defend human rights or to be a beacon of modernity. At the end of the eighties, with the arrival of democracy in Paraguay, the Salazar sought to continue with a cultural perspective that encompassed all citizens, promoting diversity and cultural rights, accessible to all sectors of society.

According to Ticio Escobar, the figure of Nilo Fernández as director of the CCEJS is worth mentioning, as he “bequeathed the renovation of the new Salazar infrastructure, continued by his successors. Under his direction, the Salazar building was subjected to daring renovations of expansion, remodelling, restoration and reform that resulted in rooms newly equipped and adapted to the demands of more complex and numerous cultural

activities. This contribution is especially noteworthy in Asunción, lacking in logistics regarding rooms or halls sufficiently prepared for theatre plays, exhibitions, debates and workshops”.

Its day to day

During its four decades of operation, the Centre has progressively consolidated its core position in the Paraguayan cultural scene. The Juande has been a leading actor in the training of cultural specialists and artists, in the education of the public, in the changes suffered from the conceptions of cooperation for development as a lever of transformation, in providing modern perspectives, in giving support to the changes of cultural institutions in training, promotion and cultural management. The activities that have gone on over these years are innumerable, as the publication of the *Memory of the 40 years of the Cultural Centre of Spain Juan de Salazar*, published in 2016, from which the aforementioned testimonies have been taken.

Among the most recent activities, the Chaco Ra'anga, a cross-border project stands out, the director being Eloisa Vaello, who, through a trip through the Great American Chaco, managed to make the cultural and environmental wealth of the region visible, as well as the existing conflicts in building global citizenship. The project resulted in an exhibition and a symposium, which took place in the Cultural Centres of Spain in Paraguay, Bolivia, Argentina and in the Casa de América in Madrid.

At present, the Centre attaches capital importance to the participation of citizens in cultural processes, not only for access to information but for the consumption of cultural goods and services, and beyond, in their involvement in processes of production and creation. It is about strengthening the work with groups and communities, independent cultural centres and organizations of professionals in various areas of culture and in compliance with the 2030 Agenda. In this way, it emphasises the support of the growth of cultural industries, the development and internationalization of local creation and the accompaniment of groups.

This translates into its cultural action, in a programme that includes the different artistic and cultural expressions of Spain and Paraguay, from popular art to the latest technologies, in the

performing arts, music, film, visual arts, and spaces for training and reflection.

Projects and alliances

Among the main projects that are currently being developed in the CCEJS, we should mention *Invernadero* (Greenhouse). Art, politics and experiment, a training space for artists and activists with the objective of developing projects that contemplate art and politics. Okápe music (*okápe*, a Guaraní word that means “out”, “for outside”), a platform aimed at strengthening and making local emerging musical creation visible, programming monthly concerts of new bands, as well as different training workshops. The Paraguayan Hispanic Theatre Month, a cycle of theatre shows of Spanish, local and regional creation, which also gives importance to training. The Onv Ayvu radio (Guaraní word meaning “noise, racket”), an *on-line* radio which aims to be a space for expression for various groups, generating training for this sector in radio production.

In partnership with TEDIC, an organization that works with digital rights, there is a programme, Communities and Technologies that develops workshops, talks and encounters related to training in technological tools, digital security, as well as coordinating with communities that work around these pillars.

Among the functions of the CCEJS, the support and presence in international encounters is crucial. Encounters such as the International Film Festival of Asunción; the Contemporary Dance and Arts Create in Freedom Encounter; the Asujazz International Festival and the International Jazz Festival of Ciudad del Este; the LesBiGayTrans Film Festival (which had its origin in Salazar); El Ojo Salvaje (The Wild Eye - Photography Month in Paraguay); the International Biennial of Art of Asunción; Temporal, art festival; Crear Circuitos, regional encounter of programmers and cultural managers; National Theatre Week; the Curitiba Biennial, etc.

Salazar works permanently in coordination with and giving support to various institutions and organizations such as the National Secretariat of Culture, the Directorate of Culture of the Municipality, the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Art of the National University of Asunción, the Higher Institute of Fine Arts, the Cinemateca Foundation of Paraguay,



1.
Ninho Casa(H)era, a show of Gisamara Moura in the framework of the International Encounter of Contemporary Dance and Arts, *Crear en Libertad* (Create in Freedom). CCE Asunción, 2018



2. Poster of the exhibition *Josefina: al oído del tiempo* (to the ear of time), 2015

3. Patio and library of the Cultural Centre Juan de Salazar

the Museo del Barro (Museum of Clay), the Cultural Centre of the El Cabildo Republic, the Delegation of the European Union of Paraguay, the Coordinator of Human Rights of Paraguay (CODEHUPY), the Federation for the Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples (FAPI), as well as with other cultural and social, national and international organizations.

The Building

The Juan de Salazar Cultural Centre is located in an Italian-style building of 1,300 square metres located in the historic centre of Asunción, consisting of two heritage manors that converge in an inner courtyard. The current building unites the two buildings; the first, acquired in August 1975 by the Spanish Government and conditioned by the Spanish artist and architect Francisco Torné Gavaldá; the second, acquired at the end of the nineties, which allowed for a significant extension of the Herrera street façade and was rehabilitated with the construction of the Manuel de Falla Auditorium, with features that have given it much versatility, such as the opening of the stage to the patio. These renovations, directed by the Paraguayan architect and artist Carlos Colombino, were complemented by a space that was initially dedicated to housing the Julián de la Herrería Museum.

Subsequently, in 2003, renovations were undertaken that gave the Centre great architectural personality by reformulating the exhibition halls and the Cervantes Library, as well as the spaces destined for offices and a workshop (Sala Taller). This intervention was carried out by the architects Luis Alberto Boh and Javier Corvalán and has been key in the new image of Salazar, as a space that integrates heritage and modernity, tradition while being avant-garde. The growth and evolution of Salazar's facilities reflects, not only the expansion of its artistic and historical heritage, but also the inclusion of new ways of thinking and communicating art and culture.

Services and facilities

Over the years, the Juan de Salazar Centre has become one of the most complete spaces for the cultural offer of Asunción. Its facilities include the Goya Halls, with a privileged space for visual arts with



almost 500 square metres, in which innumerable exhibitions and curatorial projects have taken place, it has also held multiple activities in disciplines such as history, anthropology, politics or the environment, among others. The exhibitions promote and encourage the creation of artists and contribute to the dissemination of their work, showing the plurality and richness of Paraguayan, Spanish and Ibero-American creators. The programme tries to balance minority proposals with more popular exhibitions, as well as exhibitions of young artists with retrospective of emblematic artists, thus providing a plural offer. Guided tours, seminars and talks are organized around the exhibitions, raising awareness of the work of the creators and emerging trends, fostering new audiences.

The Manuel de Falla Auditorium was inaugurated by the Queen Sofia in 1996. It occupies an area of 180 square metres with capacity for 180 seats, in addition to the stage and dressing rooms, and offers a unique versatility when presented as a space that allows the public to be located both in the

courtyard and inside the auditorium. The auditorium is used for all kinds of activities: concerts, dance, theatre, film screenings, literary presentations, round tables, debates and reflection, seminars, conferences, courses and workshops. With constant activity, an ample offer entailing a broad range of tastes has gone through their door; from Spanish music groups to local alternative rock bands, from the most renowned classical ballet figures to the most contemporary dance companies.

The current Cervantes Library was built in 2003 and has a bibliographic collection of approximately 20,000 volumes ranging from reference works, newspaper publications, literary works and audiovisual material. In addition to fulfilling the traditional functions of reading, lending material and research, open to the public, it is also a multidisciplinary space where book presentations, exhibitions, talks and conferences are continuously held.

The Workshop Room has a capacity for 45 people and a useful area of 78 square metres, where courses, workshops and seminars are directed daily

for training and specialized training in various areas of arts and culture, both for projects originating in the centre itself or for external proposals that are in line with the institution.

The formal name of the patio at the Salazar is Jardín Félix de Azara, in homage to the Spanish naturalist and geographer, who carried out important studies in geography and natural history of the Río de la Plata and Paraguay. It is an outdoor space where theatre activities, concerts, summer film screenings, performances and exhibitions are held.

The Ayvu Waves radio, inaugurated in 2012, is the Salazar radio station, which promotes a digital platform for alternative and experimental communication of a cultural, artistic and social nature, dedicated to promoting local productions and to the use of technology as a tool for disseminating critical thinking. It is part of a network formed by the radio stations of the Cultural Centres of Spain, an organization created with the objective of establishing ties and spaces for the exchange of experiences and programming between said centres. The programming of Ayvu Waves is varied and includes artistic, cultural and social issues unrelated to the commercial spectrum.

Recently, in 2019, the Sala de las Vitrinas (Hall of Display Cases) was inaugurated, a multi-purpose space that will display smaller sized exhibits of emerging artists.

The collections

The political situation of the stronism era conditioned local artists to donate their legacy to the Centre to safeguard the heritage and ensure their conservation.

The works of Julián de la Herrería's collection are part of a permanent exhibition that the Centre offers today on the second floor. The collection was donated by Josefina Plá in 1989 to the Spanish Government through the Cultural Centre of Spain. The collection gathered by Plá includes works of small and medium format, made in the twentieth century by Latin American artists, mainly Paraguayans. But the main weight of this collection consists of the production of Julián de la Herrería and Josefina Plá herself, with paintings, drawings, ceramics and engravings.

On the other hand, the anthropologist Miguel Chase-Sardi left his collections of books, magazines,

as well as his annotations and personal investigations as a donation to the Cultural Centre. The collection consists of 4,500 titles and is a reference for anthropological and sociological research.

Another important collection was donated to the Cultural Centre by the anthropologist Raúl Amaral, which includes at least 3,464 documents, including books, annotations and magazines.

A future with space for everyone

Predicting the future is always an uncertain task, but if something remains of these 40 years of the Juan de Salazar Cultural Centre, it is the conviction that working in the field of culture translates into work in favour of the human being, of the full recognition of rights, modes of expression, multiple identities and, above all, the ability to shape the desired future.

We believe that the desired world for the future is one with space for everyone, a world where development is equitable and sustainable, where the welfare of the human being is a priority. From Salazar we shall continue to working towards just that, from culture, being a house open to artists, researchers and the public, with a diverse, inclusive and reflective programme.

A living space

Sebastian Peña Escobar

Producer and film-maker

Salazar has been a vital space not only as a promoter of the arts, research, production and the dissemination of thought, but also as a cultural refuge at critical moments in our history. In the years of dictatorship, it was a meeting place of the cultural community that found solace in a context where artistic expressions gave the possibility to think differently and to address issues that outside those walls were in danger of censorship. Since the beginning of the democratic transition, the Centre has expanded both its function as a space for cultural exchange and the diversity of content it addresses. Its validity and continuous reinvention make it a factor that has greatly influenced the cultural activities of the city of Asunción.

Salazar's main contribution is to have remained in force and active in the field of cultural promotion. And this, in a country with the history of Paraguay, means a lot. A free cultural offer was not common in this country, in fact, it was almost nil. And even today, Asunción does not yet have a wide range of cultural activities open to the public, as in other cities. Salazar, along with other centres, began to nurture an urban cultural calendar accessible to all, and this certainly helped with the transformation of our society.

My first contacts occur in the 1990s, when I attended plays, art exhibitions and film screenings with family and friends. During the first decade of the 2000s, my contact with the Centre intensified with my attendance to the seminars of critique and cultural theory conducted by Ticio Escobar. Every Thursday for many years, a group of people and I gathered around a table in order to reflect upon philosophy and theory, to exhibit our research work and to debate about the junctures of theoretical thought, arts and the process of historic cultural thinking. Within the framework of those seminars, I had the opportunity to meet writers, theoreticians

and contemporary philosophers with whom I learnt, debated and also disagreed. Thinkers of art such as José Luis Brea and Fernando Castro, theoreticians like Benjamín Ardití, artists such as Nury González and curators like Justo Pastor Mellado.

An anecdote I vividly remember was the film screening *Birdwatchers* about the fight between the Guaraní and the Kaiowa in Brazil. In addition to it being a hard film to watch, while showing the infuriating marginal life of these indigenous groups, it had the quality of telling short stories inside the general plot; simple human stories, of love, sadness and different views of the world. Towards the end of the screening, the main character appeared on the stage and, as he had done in the film, he let out a moan-like scream, a mixture of helplessness but also invigorating, which left us all with a lump in our throats.

A resonating box

Esteban Bedoya

Writer and director of Cultural and Tourist Relations of the Ministry of External Affairs of Paraguay

Let's think of a reference point in the neighbourhood of San Roque... For decades it was the school María Auxiliadora, until an old mansion- crossing the street of Tacuary- started to suffer "intestinal transformations" due to the development of "a project of the Spaniards". It was about the creation of a centre for the defence of cultural freedom and the rights for diversity -quite the challenge in times of an autocracy-. This ambitious project, later on, started to take shape with a respectful architectural intervention for the construction of its installations. In this construction, the façade of the original building was left intact, favouring the preservation of the urban landscape; while in the inside, museum-like architectural spaces were created, fed by the air and light of a garden that works as the lung of the architectural complex.

From that urban and social intervention on, the name Juan de Salazar was to be directly associated with culture, in the eyes of any neighbour; but for whom ever stepped into that space, apart from art in its most diverse forms, they would feel a comforting sense of "relief", which would be nothing more but a reflection of the positive energy of the people towards a place where, for years, they would experience joy of being able to act with freedom.

The people of Paraguay have reasons to value that institution which has always been open to debate ideas; as much in the harsh years of censorship, as nowadays; always guaranteeing the human right of being able to access art in its multiple expressions.

Those socio-political-cultural circumstances have made the Centre Juan de Salazar into a resonance box of the new artistic tendencies, and into a leading actor in the promotion of the cultural vanguard of Paraguay, always in complicity with great artists, intellectuals and Spanish thinkers, of theatre, cinema, literature, dance, and with its musicians, who

have left their mark through the shared growth with our compatriots. As the official gazette of the Centre says: "...with mutual knowledge, cooperation and exchange friendships are woven, common projects are dreamt up and the villages and the citizens come together".

Today we can enjoy a first-class cultural centre, thanks to a careful strategy planned by the Spanish Government, which, in so doing attained its main tool of cultural cooperation with Paraguay, by providing an excellent team of professionals of great capacity and with an infrastructure which has efficiently been satisfying the emerging necessities. And as if culture knew no limits, the Cultural Centre Juan de Salazar continues to grow, expanding its surface with the inauguration of the exhibition hall, adjacent to the access of the auditorium, in which the large bricks from the construction of the beginnings of the 20th Century are now visible, dressed with the limpid panels for the best possible effect for the art works to be showcased. To sum things up, this high-level undertaking, reached the objective of making the citizenry interact with national institutions through culture, understanding culture as an unavoidable component of human, political and social development. How will this story continue?

A riverbed for the truth and beauty of the indigenous people

Bartomeu Meliá

Jesuit Priest, linguist, and Spanish anthropologist

I know this Centre, in its new form, recent from 1989, from when I came back to Paraguay after an exile of 13 years. Those were times of transition, but the fear hadn't yet been banished; I still don't think it is. The Cultural Centre of Spain is a place of communication, of words in freedom. I found friends, I made friends. The aesthetic dimension of the exhibitions makes it a space where something new may always happen; one never comes out with impunity. It is a space in which I have felt that I may say whatever seems true for me and even dare to criticize. What truth is not criticism? I was able to be a bit of a protagonist at the centre, but also an apprentice. There is always the presence of youth that teaches a lot.

Of course, out of the most important is the commitment of the Centre with the indigenous cause, and riverbeds of truth and beauty have been opened for those villages. We have been educated there to see in another way, in other colours, other smells. And we have grown to love them. It's an experience which cannot enter crisis; Spain is still in need of it as a presence in Paraguay. If it didn't have it, it would have to be made up. Without it, much would be lost.

*Text published in the book *Memoires of the 40 years of the Cultural Centre of Spain*, Juan de Salazar, Asunción, 2016)*



BOLIVIA
Cultural Centre of Spain
in La Paz

Address
Avenida Camacho 1484,
entre Loayza y Bueno,
La Paz

Opening year
2012

Web
<http://www.ccelp.bo/>

Cultural Centre of Spain in La Paz

History and introduction

The Cultural Centre of Spain in La Paz (CCELP) opened its doors on the 11th of May, 2012, and was officially inaugurated by the Queen Sofía of Spain on October 24th of the same year. This is one of the youngest centres of the entire Network of Cultural Centres of the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID) and, just as the other centres of the Network, before its existence the cultural activity depended on the Office of Cultural Affairs of the Embassy of Spain. The current location of the Centre grants it a personal hallmark, as it is in the agency of the la Casa de España (specifically on the ground floor, basement and the patio), a building with a neoclassical and robust façade, but in its interior it's decorated in a modern and avant-garde fashion, which is valued by the users.

To date, the Cultural Centre has had two female directors, Clara Cabrera and María Pérez, and one male director, Jerónimo Fuentes. Though each one has endeavoured to create their own hallmark during their stay at the head of the institution, the three of them have established a line of continuity: the idea to make culture a tool for the development of the country. From its beginnings, the spaces of the Centre have been used as a gallery for artists and local cultural managers, as well as for an environment for people to share life experiences with artists from Spain as well as from other Ibero-American countries. In the same way, on numerous occasions, the Centre became a space of dialogue in different seminars, gatherings and training workshops.

The Bolivian political context has also affected the life and activity of the Centre. The current Government from 2005, launched the named “process of change”, implicating new actors in the

sociocultural environment, such as indigenous villages and social movements, as well as an agenda of “national re founding” of the ideological axis of the decolonization. This principle was understood as a process of insertion in every sector (education, culture, public management, etc.) of the indigenous collectives, traditionally socially excluded. Culture is called upon to take a relevant role in this process, being the democratic and cultural revolution one of the fundamental pillars of the revolution. All this has influenced the Centre, which gathers among its main postulates, culture as a tool for development, and many of its activities are directed towards the empowerment of these collectives. As an example, in 2019 several activities for the commemoration of the International Year of the Indigenous Languages have taken place.

The Centre opened its doors in a period of economic crisis, with a considerable shrinkage of the funds destined towards culture, which has translated into the necessity of searching for reciprocal, co-participative and close relationships with the local partners, which have slowly appropriated more and more of conjoined projects.

All these ingredients were taken into account in the assessment of the five years of life of this institution, carried out in 2017, which consisted of talks and meetings with local representatives with whom we normally work. This participative effort reached the conclusion that we were carrying out a good job and that the space is identified as an institution that's committed with its environment, as a neutral space, with a flexible programme and open to possibilities of discussion and exchange of criteria. The challenge that exists is to build a centre which is even more dynamic, not just a space for artists and cultural managers. This is the line of work that we want to pose for the future: to become a centre for everyone.

Significant achievements of the Centre and main activities

The Cultural Centre of Spain in La Paz works with directives described in the policies of the Centre, in harmony with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda. The Policy Plan of 2019 establishes the following strategic axis: culture as an element of external dissemination, cultural cooperation and culture as a tool for development.

The main goal of the first axis is to raise awareness of Spanish Culture, supporting the presence of contemporary Spanish creators in prestigious festivals in Bolivia, festivals such as the Baroque Music Festival of the Chiquitanía or the International Theatre Festival of Santa Cruz de la Sierra (FITCRUZ). The film industry is especially relevant and is a field with a large following in Bolivia. In addition to the traditional Spanish Cinema Tuesdays, which has been screened throughout Bolivia for over 30 years, Spain was the country of honour in Bolivia Lab in 2019, the most relevant laboratory of film creation of the country. Recently the CCELP has enjoyed the presence of young directors such as Meritxel Colell or Mercedes Gaspar -gender equality is always present in the programmes of the Centre-. Likewise, more alternative festivals such as the Radical Cinema Festival where cinema research and production laboratories take place, find support from the CCELP. Regarding literature, the Centre counts on its own stand at the Book Fair of La Paz and favours the presence of Spanish writers every year: Belén Gopegui, Aroa Moreno, Alejandro Palomas, Mar Benegas, Lara Moreno, etc. are some of the guests who have accompanied us these years with great critical and public acclaim.

The second axis is cultural cooperation, traditionally the main priority of this centre, with which we look to strengthen the local cultural actors, to assist them, look for synergies and encourage innovation. Multiple workshops are in this part, covering a wide range of topics: museology, narrative, cultural management, curatorship, etc. The promotion and the recognition of local culture are also important, so, in the Space of the Centre there are exhibitions of local artists, concerts in the patio, always encouraging the mobility of the Bolivian artist in the country. A good example of the

mentioned is the *Programa de Apoyo a Artistas de Media Carrera* (Programme to Support Artists of Media Carrera), which is organized together with the National Art Museum of Bolivia, and which highlights the participative projects in which local institutions are involved and collaborate. Here, the medialab has a special role, a laboratory that helps in the creation of digital citizens.

This second section would be incomplete without speaking of the idea that culture isn't something that belongs to only a few people, to cultural managers and artists. The fact that every citizen has a right to access culture is one of the biggest postulates of the SDGs. From here, the third axis of action comes into play, which consists in making culture into a tool for development. This subject was addressed in the assessment meetings of the last five years of the CCELP, in which we saw the necessity of opening the Centre up even more to the people, ensuring their participation in activities through allowing them a sense of appropriation in the Centre. We also established that it was necessary to reach out to other sectors which, in general terms, are at a disadvantage concerning their access to culture. In this section we should make special mention to the Space Co.Working, a user-friendly environment in which everyone has access, and is encouraged to share and converse about cultural projects. The medialab has also adopted this hallmark, and in their workshops, subjects such as the access of women to science are tackled through the programme M.C/Mujeres y Ciencia; we have created literacy campaigns for young children and adolescents; and we are discussing matters such as social media security. On a different note, but on this same line of the policies of the institution, this year a second edition of an activity called "Encounters on the fringes of art" is taking place, spaces with an open character and directed by a curator in which students of Fine Arts and other artistic fields debate and reflect upon this subject matter.

Culture as a tool for development is also helpful to get closer to vulnerable sectors, habitually separated from culture. In this sense, different cultural activities are under way with the Bolivian Institute for the Blind, workshops such as sound art and radio production, and so visually impaired people are becoming new users of the Centre.



1.
Presentation of *Cabeza*
by Daniel Abreu, in the
framework of Danzénica,
Seventh International Dance
Festival, 2018



In this area, cultural mediation is equally highlighted, project born out of the necessity of creating a plural community that can take control of the Centre as its own and actively participate in its programmes and activities. This project is innovative when considering the trajectory of the institution, thus becoming one of its strategic lines of action. Based on the new research that is under way in Spain surrounding new pedagogies, we intend to create a new process of listening through spaces for encounter, which allow to share experiences and knowledge in the face of articulating a more plural, solid and critical community in the CCELP. With these objectives we have organized participative workshops with users that come to the Cultural Centre, even with their children, and the creation of an urban community garden is under way. These days an ambitious pilot project of urban intervention with its surroundings, named Experimenta Distrito is being worked on in the Centre.

CCELP as an agent of culture and cooperation. Strategic plans and mid-term work proposals

The Cultural Centre of Spain in La Paz has its own voice and a noteworthy institutional presence in the city and, increasingly, in the country. Practically every afternoon and evening the library, medialab, the exhibition halls, training rooms or patio, have visitors. According to the data of 2018, 21,193 visitors attended cultural activities of the Centre (exhibitions, cinema, workshops, concerts) and 4,338 people enjoyed the services provided by the Centre (library, co working, medialab). From this total of 25,531 people, 8.9% are children.

Generally speaking, the data shows quite the high number of visitors, which reflects that the CCELP is very much alive and dynamic. Nevertheless, it's necessary to continue emphasizing the necessity of increasing the number of users that utilize the services of the Centre



as well as giving consideration to improving on the presence of the public of children and youth.

The line of work of culture as a tool for development continues to be our main priority. We are very confident of the positive results that these cultural mediation activities initiated since 2018 will provide and which we intend to improve upon, as much in our environment as in other sectors, such as the educational units of the country.

Lastly, the Centre aims at continuing its consolidation as an institution engaged with the cultural development of the country. Besides being a space of cultural dissemination, the CCELP is also an institution that encourages critical thinking, without losing sight of our main postulate, which is what inspires our activity: culture as an instrument for development, useful in the attainment of the SDGs.

2. Co-working space of the CCELP in the framework of Continued Reading of the Quijote
3. Work of Andrés Bedoya, selected artist in the programme Apoyo a Artistas de Media Carrera (Artist Support of mid-career) of the CCELP
4. Component of MUSIca ALcheMIca together with the Orquesta San José de Chiquitos in the Twelfth American Baroque and Renaissance Music Festival, Misiones de Chiquitos, 2018

If we look inwards together...

Elizabeth Torres

*Director of the Educational and Cultural Centre
Simón I. Patiño in Cochabamba*

What is the role of culture in our society? Where and when is the public situated in our cultural proposal as centres? What is the impact of our cultural strategies? What are we doing with our management for the public? Guided more by the questions than by the answers, the educational and cultural Centre Simón I. Patiño in Cochabamba (CpcSIP) has found in the Cultural Centre of Spain in La Paz (CCELP), almost since its creation, a space of resonance. Both centres, as actors in the same scene, the scene of Bolivian culture, share a concern in the artistic sector, but above all in an objective audience, being on more than one occasion allied actors of that scene in which together they tied a knot between culture and pedagogy.

We have found an associate in the CCELP, or better yet, a partner, who embarks on projects and programmes with a serious interest and aim towards the achievement of a joint and egalitarian work with society and other cultural centres of the country. We are proud of the teamwork and, more than once, we have gathered around a table in order to define actions and reflect on our duties in the construction of the cultural day-to-day of the country.

The CCELP has been the window towards art and exterior cultural management for many of our activities and has been a partner for undertakings in the programmes in which we coincide as centres. An example of this is the support to contemporary Bolivian art with activities such as the Youth Art Competition *ExpresArte*. The complicity built between the centres has been carried out with the presence of Spanish authors upon our invitation, such as José Ovejero in 2014 and Antonio Orejudo in 2016 in the seventh and eighth edition of the Ibero-American Writer's Encounter; with our participation as speakers on the first and second Day of the Bolivian Cinema in 2017 and 2019; and with the co-production of the Talent Doc Work in Progress, carried out in the framework

of the II Latin-American Festival of Documentary Cinema *A Cielo Abierto* (Open Skies) in 2014, enabling the presence of the documentary director Marta Andrew. This same year we have collaborated in the programme of gender, main streaming within culture, with the session of the documentary film *Beatriz junto al pueblo*, made by the CpcSIP about the cinema producer of the Foundation Umakau Group, Beatriz Palacios, which was screened in the First Show of the CCELP of Political Cinema Directed by Women. And, more recently, we have collaborated with the setting of the exhibition of the Ibero-American Biennial of Design (BID) in 2018, with the National Art Museum.

The observations and analysis generated in the sessions of Cultural Diagnostic of 2011 and 2012 were important for our centre concerning the artistic and cultural sector training programme, as were the meetings in 2017 for the 5 years of the CCELP and the workshop "Cultural Mediation: from the Audience to Participation", carried out by Javier Laporta in 2018, activities which the CCELP organized and to which we were summoned.

Lastly, besides those conjoined questions and activities, we are joined by the certainty that we cannot work towards culture if we are isolated from society and from others. We cannot make culture on our own and the CCELP is to our centre the solid, open and plural institution which allows us to move forward in the construction of a more free, critical and solidary society.

An embassy called CCELP

Mabel Franco

Cultural journalist. Head of the Municipal Scenic Spaces Unit of the Mayor's Office at La Paz

The activities of an embassy often go unnoticed by the common citizen. Perhaps because the responsibilities of a diplomatic mission almost inevitably end up showing favouritism towards political, economic and military affairs; the cultural, even with representation, may end up more of an ornament and not that essential factor, that of rapprochement between people, recognition and mutual learning that justifies, in short, the existence of an embassy.

That the cultural requires an exceptional, specific treatment, to work on human ties from sensitivity, from thought, with some hope for barriers to come down, is something that Spain seems to have understood, as it demonstrates day in and day out in the Cultural Centre of Spain in La Paz.

The CCELP, more than a space - which will always seem small if the physical dimensions are judged only by how much work there is to do-, is an opportunity of transcendence. An opportunity that is possible as there is a place and a time to share ideas, to discuss them, an always necessary exercise on the road to building better societies.

Workshops, talks, seminars, contemporary art exhibitions, concerts, the library with easy access. It is all part of the big picture, as I see now as I am writing these lines, and I realize the many times that I have gone through the doors of the house of Camacho Avenue, to find someone similar, or different who has moved me and even deeply affected me.

The seminar on cultural criticism by the journalist José Andrés Rojo, the photo exhibition of Isabel Muñoz on the train *The Beast*, which runs between Guatemala and Mexico, the drawings of the migrant Martín Elfman and the encounter of this illustrator with school students, the cartoons of the grand Carlos Giménez, the meetings with the Bookseller of the Month, the talks on sexual diversity, the coffee served in mugs ... They are my

personal flights, mine, taking off from the platform called CCELP and I am now discovering that they have left me a concept, an image, an attitude that I usually resort to when it comes to journalism, in the appreciation of art work or upon thinking of myself in relation to others.

The imagination of a city

Juan Fabbri

Anthropologist, curator and artist

What would become of artists if there was a lack of imagination? Cultural managers and researchers frequently pursue ideas that are in the depths of our dreams; desires, which are nothing more than fantasies until they are materialized in the form of songs, dances, words, discussions or any other manifestation that allows us to share our ideas, feelings, thoughts and subjectivities. In this space between the intangible and the tangible, I consider that the Cultural Centre of Spain in La Paz (CCELP), in its short life-span, became a main actor for the imagination, but also for making things possible and turning the imagination of the city into a reality for its inhabitants who, with the city, are always in search of one another. In order to better explain myself, I shall speak of three projects that marked my experience with the CCELP, I was directly involved, so I may therefore refer to them from an inside angle; although this may put my objectivity in question, I ask the reader to give more value to the *on-site* perspective, without being part, *per se*, of the CCELP team.

The first project is the approximation to Spanish artists, curators and intellectuals who brought us closer to contemporary Spanish thought, but in so doing, demystified it. The historical reality between Spain and Bolivia, as a fundamental part of the colonial scene; Spain as an agent of colonial power over these territories, which could have served as grounds for rejection towards the CCELP, but on the contrary, the Centre became a space for discussion and generation of new imaginations. In this sense, people like Rogelio López Cuenca, Julia Morandera, Diego del Pozo, Juan Naranjo, among many others, showed us how Spain's historical role as a colonizing agent is being rethought from a contemporary perspective, and how there are clear examples of intention to generate other types of relations between Spain and Latin America, at least, to do with the arts. This scenario was perhaps one of the most

interesting nuclei proposed, where the institution not only became a space to reflect on the arts and culture, but also on colonialism and neo-colonialism, enabling the construction of another scenario that allows us to rethink the relations between countries, studying and debating the colony and collaborating in the construction of an imaginary future; less macho, sexist and racist.

The second project that I wish to highlight, having lived it close up is the *ExpresArte* training programme, previously a contest, for young artists from Bolivia. I think that this programme is capable of providing input, of asking the proper questions and of enabling imagination, in the scenario of artistic education where contemporary art currently has no place. In this context, the *ExpresArte* programme empowers young artists who are dissident or dissatisfied with the traditional schools of art in La Paz. In this sense, young people can find a different way to think and allow themselves to start a professional career outside the limitations of classical art (from the schools of Fine Arts) and in which many young creators do not fit. In this scenario, the *ExpresArte* is built as a space so that people with other creative orientations who are looking for experimentation, artistic research and various ways of making art have a place. The *ExpresArte* for many has been, and hopefully continues to be, that first experience that has allowed them to understand art as a space for materializing their imagination in a professional manner.

I also directly benefited from the third project that I wish to highlight, to do with supporting local cultural management initiatives, not only through ensuring that they took place, but also helping them broaden their scope. These types of projects enable the imagination to quickly turn into something more specific, such is the case of the support for the international colloquium "Emerging Utopias:

Spaces of belonging

Cergio Prudencio

President of the Cultural Foundation of the Central Bank of Bolivia (FCBCB)

dialogues within art, anthropology and curatorship”, which was carried out in the framework of the X Biennial of Art SIART in 2018. This project, which we dreamt up with Gabriela Zamorano, and later with Denisse Aguilar, had participants who were artists, cultural managers, anthropologists and other actors who sought to open dialogue from La Paz on the aforementioned topics. Undoubtedly, the support came from an inter-institutional framework, and, had it not been for the participation of different exhibitors who arrived from the interior of the country and from abroad, it would not have been feasible, and that was something that CCELP made possible. This space for interdisciplinary discussion was *sui generis* in the country and allowed for the creation of new imagination.

Owing to this series of initiatives of the CCELP and its conceptual perspective briefly mentioned in this text, I would like to extend my wish of long life to the Centre and reiterate my support to continue imagining projects that we believe enrich the local dynamics and cultural exchange between two countries sharing history.

Since its creation, the Cultural Centre of Spain in La Paz (CCELP) is a reference for the culture sector. Worth mentioning is its commitment to Bolivian production and to young people. Being an institution with official representativeness of the Kingdom of Spain, its work does not focus on promoting the culture of that country, on the contrary, its programmes, services, activities and exhibitions, are aimed at the development of local contemporary expressions in a variety of artistic languages , and for the youth to find spaces of belonging and exchange. Product of this has been the consolidation of ventures such as ExpresArte, a curatorial platform in which, mid-career artists may find resonance.

Likewise, the CCELP has become an always open and proactive representative in its relations with other Bolivian institutions, both state and private, enabling it to become part of the cultural framework, especially in La Paz.

The infrastructure that it has enabled in the heart of Chuquiago Marka is no less important, with well adapted spaces adequate for the realization of diverse artistic activities, and for the provision of services such as library and cinema, where the public will always feel warmly welcomed.

We celebrate the existence of CCELP and we wish it a long life.



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Cultural Centre of Spain
in Lima

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Opening year
1991

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Cultural Centre of Spain in Lima

History

In 1991, the Peruvian and Spanish Governments agreed on the decision to create a cultural centre, similar to others already running in Ibero America, which would allow “to boost the development of new activities of cultural exchange”, as reflected in the report of the Fifth Meeting of the Mixed Commission of Hispanic-Peruvian Cooperation. This is how the new Cultural Centre of Spain in Lima came to be, even without a defined location as of then, it managed in a short period of time to give a clearly defined purpose of cultural cooperation in the imaginary of artists, agents and institutions.

Five years later, on the 22nd of January 1996, the new headquarters were inaugurated in the unique republican mansion from the 20s that had been a home for the Spanish Centre of Peru for many years, which went from being a place of meetings and recreation of the Spanish community in Lima, to becoming a new public space, inclusive, and for the two countries to strengthen their culture, under the framework of the then AECI.

Being located in that neo-colonial building, across from a park of national heritage and very close to the historic centre of Lima, the CC was situated in a traditional neighbourhood in one of the first residential areas of Lima, which is characterized by its easy access from various points of the city, including the current emerging peripheral areas. This ideal location positioned the CC as an important axis of integration between different cultural circuits, having lacked until that moment any functional association.

Apart from this unique location, is the relevance in itself of the architectural ensemble, dating from 1927, declared as a National Heritage Site in 2006. The building was designed by Ryszard Jaxa Małachowski (1887-1972), an architect of

Polish origin whose work in Peru is considered one of the emblematic sites of the first half of the 20th century, alongside such significant buildings as the Government Palace and the Archbishop’s Palace, in the Plaza de Armas of Lima.

The main part of the historic mansion, which was remodelled by the Workshop School of Lima between 1993 and 1996, has been inhabited and used by the artistic community of Peru for more than twenty years and has welcomed many Spanish creators. With only a multi-purpose auditorium with a capacity for 172 people, a library, two exhibition halls and a patio, the CC has hosted numerous activities of very different artistic languages, managing to overcome the limitations imposed by space, similar to that experienced in a family home, to create an inclusive place of encounter, close to the community, which has always looked towards new audiences.

Currently the building attached to the mansion, with which it originally formed one single unit, is in the phase of architectural renovations. This shall culminate in a global intervention from both edifications that will help, on the one hand, to substitute the lack of space and transition that the Cultural Centre has today, and on the other, will enhance the heritage value of the patrimony by restoring part of its historical architecture and add versatile environments for the new challenges that the CC has prepared for the upcoming years.

Main lines of work

The outline of the work is taken from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation 2018-2021, establishing the CC as a place of encounter, participation and management of cultural projects creating an impact on development. In line with the politics and demands of the Peruvian cultural sector, it



1.
Espacio tiempo (Space time),
from the collective Boa
Mistura, wall mural of the CC
Lima, 2016



develops programmes, projects and activities that, from contemporary language, address issues such as gender equality, cultural diversity, heritage, defence of human rights and support for vulnerable populations.

Peru has always been a privileged country in bilateral relations with Spain, in addition to the obvious historical nexus and friendship between both countries, which has marked the direction of the strong dynamism of cultural cooperation and, therefore, of the Cultural Centre of Spain in Lima itself.

The first line of work is linked to all those actions established in the different areas of the Culture and Development Strategy Paper of the Spanish Development Cooperation (2007) which, together with the interventions of the bilateral and multilateral programmes supported by the Technical Cooperation Office (OTC), have contributed

significantly to position the Spanish Cooperation as a key partner for Peru when facing the main challenges of progress in cultural matters. The CC is an institution closely linked to the associative fabric of Peru, a regular representative to other international partners that work on approaches towards development, and its cultural agenda serves as a medium for raising awareness of issues that affect the reality of both countries, such as violence against women and gender inequality, to name a few.

In addition, the CC has been characterized by its commitment to the training of human capital in cultural management through the ACERCA Programme, supporting numerous courses, workshops and seminars and through being an acting ally in the formulation of public policies. Examples of this are the contribution to the foundation of the Ministry of Culture in July 2010, through a grant for specialized technical assistance; the creation of the Fab Lab at the National University of Engineering, EscueLAB and later the international network of Fab Labs with Lima as the main hub, which has driven the increment of cultural industries related with new technologies.

The second line, which makes up for a large part of the institution's daily work, is to help with a free flowing cultural and scientific exchange between both countries, which permeates all artistic disciplines and areas of cultural management, involves cultural institutions and actors and generates the implementation of joint programmes. The CC agenda reflects the concerns of both countries, while incorporating European cultural references and other Ibero American nations, which nurture social dialogue and mutual growth.

This exchange also expands to many other cultural institutions and organizations of Peru and favours an ecosystem for creation and cultural consumption on both sides of the ocean. In addition, it is complemented by other contributions of the Spanish Government such as the Scholarship programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, the Carolina Foundation and the Mobility Aids for Spanish Cultural Action (AC/E).

Lastly, the CC works on the internationalization of Spanish culture promoting the distribution of artists, creators and cultural industries in the most relevant international events in Peru and in the CC's programming (International Book Fair, Lima



International Film Festival, Performing Arts Festival, Independent Lima Film Festival, and others). All of this while managing ties with local cultural networks and establishing correspondence with the other two lines of work.

Positioning

Becoming part of the Peruvian cultural universe, hand in hand with a strategy based on the idea that culture is an essential factor for the improvement of quality of life and using it as a pivotal point for daily activities, was an important novelty in the city. This managed to build trust in citizens and in the cultural community and progressively consolidated the CC as a key agitator of the cultural movement.

The determining factors in this process have been, on the one hand, a coherent and ongoing programming, the hallmark being diversity; and on the other, a policy of effective support for Peruvian creators. The Centre has become a space of opportunities on urgent issues for Lima that have taken form. For example, in determining exhibitions for the now solid careers of local curators and artists, such as Miguel López and José Carlos Martinat; as well as the invitation of important Spanish artists such as Sixe Paredes, Okuda San Miguel and the group of urban artists Boa Mistura, who have spread their creative vision on the walls of the institution in recent years.

Through interpreting the centre's limitations of space as a challenging advantage, it has become an experimental stage, leaning towards minimalist and intimate staging, used to induce a direct and closer interaction between artist and audience, and focused on shaping new society (some examples include testimonial theatre plays such as Desde

2. Dance of the association D1, undertaken by the dancer and choreographer Vania Masias, 2016

3. The *cajoneada* is the core activity of the International Festival of the Peruvian Box-drum, where many box-drummers congregate.

4. Enrique Vila-Matas in the Week of the Author, a literary exchange cycle of Spanish and Peruvian writers

5. *Migratory States. Cultures of Mobility in the Colección Fundación ARCO*, an exhibition of works -of Spanish and Peruvian artists- on migration, 2018

afuera, *AntígonaS* or programmes focused on the creative process such as *A Solas Danza*, among others). This same auditorium has seen film festivals (OutfestPerú, International Trans Lesbian Gay Film Festival; Transcinema, International Film Festival; Cinema Forum Territory and Indigenous Audiovisual Autonomy) come to be imperative and well known in the city; it has undertaken the practice of dialogue, debate and the exchange of knowledge among intellectuals, authors and editors from Spain, Peru and Ibero America in general (Fernando Savater, Mario Vargas Llosa, Rosa Montero, Laura Freixas, Vicente Molina Foix, Sergio del Molino, María Rostrowski, Blanca Varela, Carmen Ollé, Giovanna Pollarolo, Oswaldo Reynoso), as well as unforgettable book presentations and forums for reflection; and it has presented numerous emerging music groups - to name some of its main actions. And all of this with a constant, ample schedule and free access to all its activities.

In its process of maturity and growth, the search for artistic excellence together with risk,

innovation and reflection, and the challenge of the status quo as a goal to carry out a vast spectrum of projects of cultural promotion, the centre has been recognised as an attractive and trustworthy place for artists and cultural managers, who in turn, attract a diverse and large crowd.

Reflection as an agent of culture and cooperation

From the beginning, the Cultural Centre of Spain has been a case of success, parallel to the development of other CCs of the Network that Spain has abroad. Despite this, the institution has not been without difficulties. The budgetary adjustments that resulted from the financial crisis of 2008 spiralled into a huge challenge: the substantial reduction of the funds assigned to the cooperation obliged us to face cultural action in a different manner than what the Centre had been doing, and avoiding emptying the programming content and maintaining its quality.

In any case, these troubles coincided in a time of one of the most prosperous economic





stages of Peru, which began with the entry of the new century and continues to date. Thanks to the emergence of a young middle class that calls for culture, the city has diversified its offer and new public and private institutions have multiplied in numbers, which have continued nurturing the cultural sector to good health and have allowed the CC to weather the storm, broadening networks of alliances and opening new lines of collaboration. Even so, the Spanish Cooperation has always maintained a comparative advantage in the country, due to the ample supportive tools and the important historical, cultural and idiomatic ties that unite us.

The CC must go one step further, in so far as the commitment and support to the cultural sector, and in light of the shared responsibility of the global problems - and how to address them. The articulations and alliances are key factors that the institution should properly manage to achieve favourable results and, in this sense, the acquired maturity and

experience that allow it to contribute to the new challenges set by the 2030 Agenda.

Mid-term strategic approaches

2021 will be a key year in the history of the CC for several reasons: the celebration of the Bicentennial of the Independence of Peru (1821-2021), the 25th anniversary of the institution and the inauguration of the renovations of the adjacent building, which will be linked to a project to strengthen cultural and creative industries, aligned with the new Country Partnership Framework between Peru and Spain, and the SDGs. With this expansion, the Cultural Centre will be equipped with new, open, flexible spaces for co-working and cultural production, with the aim of promoting a collaborative ecosystem for creators, which allows the development of ideas and projects in the context of a social and creative economy; adding to the generation of youth employment in Peru and catalysing ties with the Spanish cultural



industry. With all this, the iconic mansion in the neighbourhood of Santa Beatriz is able to support more projects related to social innovation, citizen involvement and the use of new technologies. The two parts of the same building shall concurrently be different and complementary: the existing - for exhibition and the consumption of cultural products, and the new - oriented towards production, process and experimentation.

The renovations, what more, shall facilitate the general access throughout the building that will have open spaces for workshops and training courses, and will completely remove the limitations of the current auditorium, converting it into an experimental space for different theatre and musical performances. On top of that, the total integration of the house shall accommodate a renovated library and resource centre, a coffee shop and the use of the rooftop terraces for cultural events, which will favour a better cohabitation of users and the space usage.

6.
Wall mural of the Peruvian artista Ale Torres in *Emancipadas y Emancipadoras* (Emancipated and Emancipators), exhibition of 2019 on women who actively participated in the independence movement of Peru

7.
As part of the exhibition *Antes, después, ahora* (Before, after, now), the artist Sixe Paredes intervened the side Wall and the exterior gallery of the CC in 2017.

In the nostalgic neighbourhood of Santa Beatriz

Sergio Llusera

Director, theatre actor and cultural manager. Head of the Cultural Centre of the Universidad del Pacífico

The Cultural Centre of Spain in Lima, located in a beautiful neo-colonial mansion restored in the historic neighbourhood of Santa Beatriz, has been, since its foundation in the 1990s, a reference space for critical and creative thinking rising from arts and culture in our city. Some of the most interesting and provocative curators, thinkers and local creators of various disciplines, many of whom took their first steps in this space, together with other artists with a renowned career, have agglomerated around the centre. The broad range of the outreach has allowed the consolidation within the industry of a highly acknowledged platform of creation and exhibition - owing to its plurality, challenging spirit, ability to detect and propose the emerging, wide ranging public, visual speeches and, of course, artistic excellence.

My initial approximation to the Centre was as part of the public in the years when I too was beginning my artistic practice. Having previously trained as a manager, cultural management, for me, was a natural next step that I wanted to take in parallel to anything related to stage, my chosen area to develop my voice as creator. That is why, in the lowly populated cultural panorama of Lima at that moment, the arrival of a new space of this type was quite the achievement and challenge as, unlike other spaces already existing or that were beginning to slowly emerge, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Lima had a mixed programmatic scarcely heard of in our environment until then. Not only was it a multidisciplinary exhibition space (which in itself already constituted a rather refreshing look at the discursive offers of how cultural management was understood at the time), but it also offered a constant reflection and debate about social, political, economic events from a trans-disciplinary, aesthetic and cultural perspective. Used to understanding, as I was, curatorial work in similar spaces as a logic of stagnant compartments without space for

contamination or allowing new disciplines or thoughts alien to one's conception of the "complete artwork", I couldn't fully comprehend the identity that was being proposed. Was it an exhibition centre for the arts, a space for Spanish dissemination, a place for academic dialogue? Nor did I understand if the focal point for conversation that was going on then and there, in Peru as in the rest of the world, or if it was more to do with history.

The multiplicity of forms and backgrounds was fascinating and slightly disconcerting; I felt challenged to investigate, to take on a less passive approach to proposed processes, to discover artists and authors, often referential in other projects, in Lima, somewhat isolated from the world's mainstream artistic thoughts and in the times when internet was just at its beginning. Little by little I was captivated by that way of constructing meaning, understanding the work of programming and management as a discourse in itself, as an artistic work whose dramaturgy is shaped over time, in an ongoing effort of introspection, intentional, positive sabotage, unfinished and continuous, in constant dialect within. The very numerous and diverse offers that made up – and continue to do so – the annual programme are but part of a larger picture, a larger vision that is entirely coherent in its apparent "incompleteness", as could be no other way.

With an average of an annual three hundred free activities, and owing to its strategic location in a neighbourhood of the city centre, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Lima has also had the valuable effect of the decentralization of the users, allowing access to art and culture from institutional platforms, gathering a diverse public that can find a space and above all, meaning in the varied offers. It is a common phrase "get there early as to avoid a long wait" when referring to activities of the facilities. It's always fascinating to see how the people - waiting for the opening of any

More active than 25 years ago

Jorge Villacorta Chávez

Contemporary art critic and independent curator

given exhibition or for an activity to begin in the centre - vary from one event to another. I have been able to observe groups of the retired and neighbours of Santa Beatriz, and on other occasions groups of a younger generation - and not so young - belonging to the *underground* music scene, and rebellious in their ways; and on other occasions very young boys and girls - *emos-*, and feminist groups, LGBTIQ groups; as well as writers guilds, stage representatives, cinephiles, athletes, graphic designers, and a very long etcetera.

Over the years, that convening power has been a constant; renewing audiences and preserving those already loyal. The current team of the Cultural Centre of Spain in Lima has not only continued with the inherited legacy, but has become more complete in the collaboration with various festivals, forums and fairs, such as the International Book Fair, Hay Festival in Arequipa, Performing Arts Festival of Lima, High Season Festival of Lima, Lima Film Festival, to name just a few; focusing on the city, its problems and initiatives, with a vision that wagers on the construction of a local and global citizenship, with the desire to rethink the past to project a more genuine future with real dialogue.

The importance of The Cultural Centre of Spain in Lima is such that it would be impossible to imagine that it has not always been so. But there was a time when Spain only existed in the Peruvian imaginary as “the Motherland”, a sort of parental figure, a symbolic headmaster, who kept at an incommensurable distance from the majority of the local population. The last significant wave of hispanophilia in Peru took place in 1935, with the celebration of the Fourth Centenary of the Spanish Foundation of Lima, but it had practically vanished by 1955, twenty years later. Perhaps it can be said that trade, economic cooperation and educational aid sustained the entire relationship between both countries with advantages and administrative efficiency, but it is clear that Spain did not let its human side show in the field of culture, understood as a dynamic network of connections around shared experiences, through exchanges between people with different visions. Peru had to live through the 80s as a violent decade in which subversive groups sowed terror in urban centres, especially Lima, and decapitated accessible organizations throughout the country: a cruel time in which it became bloody clear that Peruvians did not understand each other as persons, and we were unable to respect individual human rights.

Surely it was the proximity of the Fifth Centenary of the Meeting of Two Worlds that made the Spanish Embassy in Peru suddenly arise in the middle of the panorama of Lima. The country was in dire need of an agent who had certain manoeuvrability amongst all of the circles that were then part of a city with a fractured cultural framework, and it was Milagros Hernando, the cultural advisor of the moment, who was devoted to building the necessary nexus— point by point, group by group – to make some sort of sense out of the year 1992. The ties became effective just in time and new tangible knowledge emerged on behalf of both parties, as the basis of a

cultural exchange that both parties had to build. A new era was also beginning for Peru, as the revolt had been defeated.

The Cultural Centre of Spain in Lima initiated activities for the local community in an exceptionally well-located space, in Plaza Washington, which is where it remains, unimaginably more active than 25 years ago. As far as my memory goes, until 1996 I hadn't much contact with the Centre. Among the exhibitions I visited there, I remember one in particular, which, in facsimile edition, made all the volumes - that the Bishop Martínez de Compañón made on a trip he had undertaken, between 1780 and 1790 for his diocese of Trujillo in Peru, for the king of Spain - available in an illustrated story. And then, one fine day, upon being invited to do a curatorship of Peruvian contemporary art in the halls of the Centre, I suddenly met Virginia Careaga, its director, and the rest of the staff as well. From then on, I think of the institution as the place where I have dear friends. Without false modesty, I can safely say that that particular exhibition, jointly curated with Ana María Rodrigo, made the exhibition *Lo sagrado de lo profano* (The Sacred of the Profane) a milestone on the road to a new vision of art made by visual creators of Lima from the generations of the 80s and the 90s. With this experience it became very clear to me that the Spanish Cultural Centre was looking for local spokespersons and, moreover, was all for the participation of the construction of a new cultural scene in Lima. And Peru.

With the arrival of Teresa Velázquez Cortés in Peru to undertake the management of the Centre at the end of 1997, a programme of consistent and intensive cultural work began in Lima, which noticeably raised the level of creative exchange in contemporary culture and raised new forms for future collaborations in the area. A programme based on continuous dialogue in all directions, in which, for every participant that comes

from Spain there is a significant number of Peruvians; in such a way that an offset of balance never becomes evident in deference to the Spanish human element. What is important is the possibility of contact, the follow up, the future consequences, with Peruvians. In the Centre we began to get to know each other and to see how much we had in common and what our differences were, and we did it on the same level - from equal to equal -, in what could be described as "the big house". On the other hand, the innovation was very clear and had as a milestone a First National Video and Electronic Arts Contest in 2001. The Centre in those years gave invaluable support to the Ibero-American Biennial of Lima in its three editions (1997, 1999 and 2002).

With Ricardo Ramón Jarne as the director from 2003, the Centre took another step in the dynamics of cultural exchange: it was he who led and enabled the generation of itinerant exhibitions in the field of visual arts, productions of projects designed and carried out by Peruvian curators, who were taken to other areas of the AECID Network in Latin America. It was the case, in 2003-2005, of the exhibition of *Vía Satélite. Panorama de la fotografía y el video en el Perú contemporáneo* (Photography and video panorama in contemporary Peru curated by José-Carlos Mariátegui and Miguel Zegarra), that travelled through five Latin American countries; and *Poder Verde. Visiones psicotropicales* (Psycho-tropical visions, curated by Christian Bendayán), presented in Buenos Aires and for the first time, outside of Peru, a contemporary visual, radical interpretation from the Amazon was made known.

The conferences and seminars in the auditorium were complemented with workshops in other spaces of the Centre. The theatre or dance shows, with larger casts, were presented in other venues of the city. The screenings of Spanish films became increasingly frequent, which allowed for a closer observation of

the international consolidation of a powerful cinema in appearance and its ways of narrating and gave light to the development of Peruvian cinema. There was no shortage of shows by the most powerful local independent rock bands, who alternated the use of the auditorium with Peruvian contemporary music festivals, as well as electro acoustic and electronic music, over several years.

Beyond the celebration of sharing the common language, suddenly a renewed contact took place between Spanish and Peruvian poets, novelists and journalists; and they were able to meet editors invited to come to Lima from Spain to participate in encounters with local professionals in writing. The young independent Peruvian editors were suddenly summoned and were able to share with their Spanish friends, while becoming aware of themselves as an emerging group. Opportunities without gender distinction became apparent in a very eloquent manner, and this contributed to halting male supremacy and helped to pay due attention to the woman authorship and writing. In this sense, the different LGBTQI representatives were also strongly supported by the Spanish Cultural Centre through cultural manifestations of all kinds, from visual arts shows to dance and theatre performances.

Always at the forefront, the Centre has undergone a series of changes. In the last decade, the directors, first Juan Sánchez, and then David Ruiz López-Prisuelos had the responsibility to design cultural policies appropriate for a resizing of the activity as a whole. Without losing leadership, the Centre has maintained its high profile thanks to the creativity displayed concerning the lines of work associated with the performing arts and dance, participative cultural events that have often taken place using the Plaza Washington itself as a stage. At the end of 2018, the Centre welcomed the kings of Spain, during the official visit to Peru as a part of the

invitation that the Contemporary Art Fair of Madrid (ARCO) had extended to our country for the edition of 2019. The Centre summoned representatives of the local culture to participate in the celebration and learn about the scope and implications of Peru as a special guest at ARCO.

In light of the current situation in the country, where at the very moment, those accused of corruption are being judged, various who acted unlawfully against the maximum authority, the cultural action that arose from the Centre in recent times, and has affected the civil society, is a reminder of how culture is part of the base from what democracy is constructed, here and anywhere.

A house that has become home

Fabiola Figueroa

Cultural Manager. MAEC-AECID scholar, underwent internship with the ACERCA programme. She was the director of Arts in the Ministry of Culture of Peru and is the current manager of Culture in the Municipality of Metropolitana of Lima

There are many times in life when one must take decisions, and, depending on the choices made, our path may go one way or another. On the threshold of the new millennium, the year 2000, I decided to abandon my studies in Communications to study Arts. And so I entered the National School of Fine Arts, a public institution located in the historic centre of Lima, a place that, throughout those years, gave rise to and had the capacity to congregate young students and civil society in need of a place of reunion and questioned the authoritarian order and total corruption that prevailed in our government.

Deciding upon studying art in this world is difficult; in Peru and in that context, a challenge. If I remember anything from life as an art student it would be the long walks that my classmates and I took towards that pink mansion that housed the Cultural Centre of Spain in Lima and the hours spent in its library or waiting for the last edition of *Exit* magazine to discover the current news of the world of art. It was around that time and place that I discovered many Spanish directors, and my passion for cinema was beginning to take form. But the Centre not only gave us a glimpse of Spanish art, but opened its doors to the dissemination different Peruvian narratives by propelling a series of curatorial projects, a collective exhibition curated by Christian Bendayán, one that I remember the most: *Poder Verde. Visiones psicótropicales* (Green power. Psycho-tropical visions); but also, many projects of performing arts, music and literature. The possibility that the Cultural Centre of Spain gave us to access, free of charge, local and international contemporary artistic content, and to a library focused on art and culture, at a time marked by repression, was for my generation as students in a public Arts school, an opportunity that allowed us to widen our horizons.

Despite not being aware of the consequences of my decision and how that would link me to Spain thanks to its Cultural Centre in Lima, today I find myself writing this text as an autobiography, as that historic pink mansion stopped being a physical space and changed into a sort of home, a reference point, a place that took me in and over time let me see how it would change into a cultural reference point for our city, not only for the promotion of the arts, but as a place of encounter and reflection, where diversity converges and generates spaces for inter cultural dialogue.

But a home is made up by the human component, and over the past 10 years I have been able to learn more about the work of its directors: Ricardo Ramón Jarne, Juan Sánchez Gutiérrez and David Ruiz López-Prisuelos; and together with them, the great team that makes up the Centre and Spanish grant holders who have passed that way. My relationship with the Centre, as a professional, began in 2008, when together with a group of self-managed cultural associations from different neighbourhoods, from “the other centres” of the city, it was decided to promote the Network of Emerging Cultural Associations (RACE), and the installations of the Centre, and Ricardo Ramón welcomed us for extensive debates on self-management and autonomy in production and cultural creation, articulation, collaborative and rethinking the naming of the peripheral and emergent. Space that has been important in the construction of various initiatives of citizen participation to encourage public politics, for community living culture in our city, and that particularly marked an orientation in my professional career.

During that period, the Centre also became a benchmark for the design of cultural projects

and cultural management for development. The opportunity to apply for the Permanent Open Calls (CAP) and the MAEC-AECID grants, was fundamental for the promotion of many cultural and artistic initiatives and, likewise, important for the professionalization of cultural management. The Cultural Centre of Spain began to irradiate beyond the physical space, giving real meaning to cultural exchange and cooperation. Personally, I had the opportunity to access one of the MAEC-AECID grants and I went to Spain to undergo the Master in Cultural Management at the Carlos III University of Madrid, which also gave me the possibility of doing my internship in the ACERCA Programme of Training for Development in the Cultural Sector, where I was able to learn about the work of AECID and the people that complemented that human group of the Network of Cultural Centres from Spain.

From 2011, and already back in Peru, I was in charge of the Directorate of the Cultural Centre of the National School of Fine Arts, from where we coordinated several common projects with Juan Sánchez; and later, from my position of director of Arts in the Ministry of Culture, with David Ruiz López-Prisuelos. They, over these years and with the foundation of the Ministry of Culture of Peru and the strengthening of the Culture Management of the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima, have managed to strengthen the policies of culture and cooperation of the Centre, and articulate them with cultural policies on a local and national level, actively participating in institutional activities strengthening the creative sectors of arts and spaces of reflection of the impact of culture in development.

This entire autobiographical path allows me to fully appreciate that, in relation to exchange and cultural cooperation, there are no longer only

roundtrips, but trips that are begun together, on the same path. In that sense, it is essential to recognize the role that the Spanish Cultural Centre has been fulfilling in the current sociocultural context, within which it is clearly a place where we feel welcomed, a home that allows us to meet, where we can discover ourselves, that presses us to innovate, that opens its doors to public space and its use, so urgent in our city of barred-in, enclosed parks. A centre that promotes active citizen participation, that acknowledges the cultural manager as an ally and that is firmly committed to promoting contents that suggest reflection on our memories and identities, in a country that still suffers difficulties of being open about its recent history, and that has a long path ahead in recognizing feminist struggles and gender approach. A path that, apparently, we shall go down together.



REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA
Cultural Centre of Spain in
Santo Domingo

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Santo Domingo

Opening year

1990

Web

<https://www.ccesd.org/>



Cultural Centre of Spain in Santo Domingo in Santo Domingo

The Cultural Centre of Spain in Santo Domingo (CCESD) is located on the historic street of Plateros (it now goes by Arzobispo Meriño street) of the Colonial City, where European urbanism in America originated. The institution was created in 1990 by the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID) to enhance cultural cooperation between Spain and the Dominican Republic, two nations that share deep historical ties. Currently, the CCESD is an artistic and cultural reference space of this Caribbean metropolis, since it offers a wide cultural programme every year that includes more than 150 activities and events, around 20 exhibitions of Dominican and international artists, outdoor concerts, conferences of well-known experts, film festivals and free courses.

To understand the importance of this centre and, above all, its unquestionable impact on the local scene, it is necessary to mention its privileged location. The historic centre of Santo Domingo, the first city to be built in the American continent and main headquarters of the Spanish Government during the first half of the 16th century, gathers the largest number of museums, galleries, theatre halls and exhibition centres of the entire the Dominican Republic. Amidst so many options, the CCESD has positioned itself as a driving force of artistic creation, owing to its role as an agent of cooperation for development and permanent support for the emerging talents of the country.

Over its almost 30 years of existence, the Centre has effected outstanding work in favour of the Dominican society, promoting access to culture among the population at risk of exclusion, encouraging all artistic manifestations, defending the cultural legacy of African-descendants, supporting the activities of the LGBTIQ community, fostering cultural diversity, stimulating creative exchange and collaborating on initiatives of other public institutions,

associations, groups, cultural managers and NGOs. All the while, maintaining alliances with private organizations to contribute to the strengthening and union of the cultural sector.

A colonial school that became a cultural centre

The history of the CCESD has a fascinating connection with the early days of Santo Domingo. In fact, to trace the origins of the beautiful building where the headquarters is, it is necessary to go back to 1502, the year Frey Nicolás de Ovando founded the city, and a young man from Huelva by the name Hernando Gorjón arrived on the island. Before long, this ambitious man from Huelva made fortune through the exploitation of a sugar mill. As he had no descendants, Gorjón decided to bequeath his belongings to the foundation of a school. In 1540, this institution received the legal authorization for the teaching of two free professorships and, shortly after, in 1558, it was promoted to the category of university with the name of Santiago de la Paz. Within its facilities, Don Cristóbal de Llerena, author of the *Entremés*, considered the first dramatic play written in America, obtained his professorship.

Between the 17th and 18th centuries, the Gorjón College was transformed into a seminary, convent and military quarters. It eventually reappeared as a university by the hand of the order of the Jesuits. However, this rebirth was abruptly interrupted in 1767, when King Carlos III expelled the religious order from all his domains. As time passed, the building, located very close to the Caribbean Sea and the Ozama River estuary, ended up in ruins. In the mid-1970s, during a visit of the then president of the Institute of Hispanic Culture (ICH), don Alfonso de Borbón, the Dominican State considered the timing to be right to restore the previous school



1.
Route through the Colonial City of Santo Domingo guided by the members of the Club Cultura

2.
View from the semi-circular arches that give access to the patio of the CC. In the background, the ogee arch of the Prats Ventós room



3.
The CC library has an offer including one of the most complete collections to do with art in the country

4.
Xiomara Fortuna, known as "the queen of fusion", in one of her concerts in the patio of the CC



In order for it to become the headquarters of the Dominican Institute of Hispanic Culture (IDCH).

In 1987, during the handover process to the AECID, the neighbouring building was attained, a building of the early 20th century that made it possible to expand the administrative offices of IDCH and, resulted in the freeing up of space of the Gorjón College, where halls and other exhibition areas were newly located. The union of these two buildings was designed in such a way that it could be perceived as a single cultural unit. At that time, the Dominican press characterized IDCH as an entity whose main vocation was to “welcome, protect, promote and broadcast the various manifestations of Spanish and Dominican cultures”. Three years later, the Agency decided to change the name Dominican Institute of Hispanic Culture, first into Hispanic Cultural Centre (CCH) and, eventually, into its current name: Cultural Centre of Spain in Santo Domingo.

Spaces for art, diversity and knowledge

The architectural style of the colonial building of the headquarters of the CCESD is very similar to the Castilian houses, especially to the houses of the region of Extremadura. A fantastic stone portal stands out in its exterior, the most valuable historic element and one of the most remarkable buildings of the Elizabethan period in America. The rectangular framework boasted the following coat of arms that had been presumed destroyed during the Haitian occupation (1822-1844): the imperial coat of arms of Carlos I, the heraldic shield of Santo Domingo, the arms of the Gorjón family, the insignia of the House of Burgundy, the columns of Hercules and a pendant with the Order of Santiago symbolism.

Inside, the CCESD has a series of bright and spacious installations. There are exhibition halls on the ground floor. The first, called Prats Ventós in honour of the Spanish artist nationalized as



Dominican, was the former chapel of the Gorjón College and has a capacity for 150 people. The second pays tribute to Doña María Ugarte, an important Dominican historian of Spanish origin. The space is the result of the union of two rooms of the original building with a maximum capacity for 100 people. From both rooms you can access the yard with gardens where there is the terrace with free Wi-Fi access and a stage for outdoor activities (concerts, plays, dance shows, etc.). This yard can accommodate 180 people seated and 500 standing.

On the first floor you can find the game library, an area designed for children, with a variety of children's books and educational toys. This small recreational centre develops its own programme which includes art workshops, film screenings and storytelling presentations, among other activities. Then there is La Ventana, a newly created space thought as a reading room, which also has computers for internet searches. Finally, on this floor, people can use the services of a multimedia library that has a large book collection as well as Latin American magazines and films.

The CCESD has a multi-purpose room for 50 people and two educational classrooms for 10 and 15 people, accordingly, which are equipped with projectors, LED screens and computers, among other technological resources for conferences, workshops and courses. A studio for the radio and spaces for administrative services complete the floor of 750 square metres.

A highly valued institution

In Santo Domingo, the CCESD plays the main part in the field of dissemination of Spanish culture, cultural cooperation and cooperation for development. The institution is very well positioned among its different

target groups: artists, cultural managers, youth and university students. The Centre is a space close to these groups that encourages participation and generates knowledge. This positive perception also goes on between the authorities and the main economic, social and cultural agents of the Dominican capital, due, in large part, to the Centre maintaining a healthy relationship with these sectors.

Since its foundation, the CCESD has propelled local artistic creation along with the diversification of cultural offers of all kinds, and, at the same time, as an agent of the Spanish Cooperation, supporting and participating in the main cultural events of the country. For example, The Centre has organized the Dominican Carnival of its own and during the International Book Fair it has coordinated various activities related to literature. The Centre has also helped in other major events, including the International Theatre Festival, the Photoimagen photography biennial, the Long Night of the Museums, the Design Biennial dRD, the Music Festival organized by the French Alliance, the Music Festival of the Villa of Santo Domingo, the International Festival of Contemporary Dance (EDANCO), the International Children and Youth Theatre Festival (FITIJ) and the Women in Theatre Festival.

Today, the lines of work of the CCESD take into account aspects such as training for the human resources in the field of culture; political and economic aspects of contribution towards development (for example, the empowerment of cultural industries); synergy between education and culture; sustainable management of cultural heritage; the relations between communication and culture; and boosting the recognition of cultural rights. The Centre also continues to develop important initiatives with groups at risk of social exclusion and on such

5. Activity of one of the inclusive workshops for art, organized by the CCESD

6. Dancers in one of the activities to do with the exhibition on the folklore artist Nereyda Rodríguez



priority issues as environment, gender and African descent. Concerning this last point, the CCESD has stood out with a wide range of projects, including the Festival Afrodescendientes Hoy (Festival of African descendants today), the seminar “Cultural expressions of Afro-Dominicans” and numerous concerts of indigenous rhythms of African origin.

One of the projects with the greatest social impact has been Club Cultura, a training programme that promotes the participation of the elderly living in the Colonial City. Every month, these locals become cultural promoters and offer a tourist and cultural route of the historic centre of Santo Domingo. The idea is to integrate the elderly into cultural practices by bringing them to action. At the same time, the CCESD facilities have been serving the Dominican LGBTIQ community in some of the most important events of the organization such as the International LGBT Film Festival OutFest in Santo Domingo. It should also be noted that the members of this community make use of the classrooms and lounges of the Centre for their meetings and training workshops.

In order to continue strengthening its position as a cultural agent, the CCESD established the promotion of the culture-related goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a medium-term plan. In the same way, another of the priorities set for the coming years is to promote cultural rights among the Dominican population with the support of the Ministry of Culture.

Following the guidelines of the Directorate for Cultural and Scientific Affairs, and the agreements established in the Country Partnership Frameworks (MAP), the CCESD will continue to consolidate the cultural field as a key factor in the sustainable human development of the country.

Professionalism and humanity

Jorge Pineda

Visual artist. His works are part of important collections, such as the Museum of Contemporary Art of Castilla y León (MUSAC), the Collection of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros or the Valencian Institute of Modern Art (IVAM).

The Spanish Cultural Centre in Santo Domingo is home for the Dominican artistic world. First, because it is the place where any agent of art may find partial or total support to develop their projects and second, its programmes facilitate knowledge and tools that strengthen the discourse and further their implementation in the country as well as abroad. If anything defines the Centre, it is its professional approach with a personal touch.

Multiple dialogues

Darío Solano

Secretary General of the Dominican Committee of the Slave Route-UNESCO and president of the Dominican Platform of African-descendants.

In the Cultural Centre of Spain in Santo Domingo, African descendancy becomes a space to encourage multiple dialogues, from cultural diversity to interculturality, where its institutional agenda is constructed from a horizontal perspective that allows for rethinking an invisible Dominican, the African descendant. This is how its action contributes to the decolonization of a reduced view of Dominican cultural legacy and opens doors to the strengthening of a plural and universal vision, which is built on the diversity of its cultural and ethnic manifestations. The Centre promotes dialogues towards an ethnic-racial democracy where African descendants are not subordinated to colonial wagers, but still endure in the structure of traditional thinking that pervades Dominican society.



COSTA RICA
Cultural Centre of Spain
in San José

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Opening year

1992

Web

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Cultural Centre of Spain in San José

The Cultural Centre of Spain was inaugurated in Costa Rica in 1992, with the goal of strengthening and promoting the culture of Costa Rica, Central America and Spain, while boosting the joint efforts of the different actors that make up the sector. The Cultural Centre of Spain in Costa Rica (CCECR) is a member of the Network of Cultural Centres of the AECID, through which the circulation of knowledge and cultural practices in Ibero-America is encouraged.

With a trajectory of over 25 years, the Centre has been through several cycles and yet, it has always worked from an approach based on human and cultural rights, as this is the supporting base of its strategic lines, projects and activities.

Today, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Costa Rica has no doubts towards the importance of contributing to the 2030 Agenda concerning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this sense, one of the main aims of the CCECR is to encourage inclusion based on solidarity and the creation of alliances with vulnerable populations that could be supported through culture.

There are three spaces within the Cultural Centre: the historic, known as “El Farolito”, is an inclusive space that by means of collaboration with counterparts, supports the cultural sector and generates audiences that are more critical within the local environment. The activities that take part there are collaborative and generate projects that have a positive impact on the development of the country.

A second space, la Plaza Skawak, was inaugurated in 2017, and from its very inception, both architectural and in relation to its name (skawak meaning “owners of our space” in the Bribri-Cabécar language), counted on citizenship participation. The name was chosen after consulting with neighbours and indigenous communities through their community organizations. The various

connotations of the denomination Skawak include the appropriation of space, the idiosyncrasy of an indigenous people and their view of the world, which has been in danger for centuries. The design of the space and the concept behind its initiation differ from those of the other public spaces, as it is a hybrid and mutable space midway between the public and the private, which allows for the coexistence of different institutions and groups, while providing a space for spontaneous interaction and collective encounter. A place that wills the intuitive, fun and direct interpretation of the potential space, as opposed to one meddled by conventions, a place to expect a narrative of the unexpected. The goal of the Cultural Centre of being open for all has therefore led to a re-imagining and rethinking of its work as an institution in the new place, creating a structured creative base, which is committed to inclusion and equality. There is an outdoor area which suggests the incorporation of art and culture into the daily panorama of the city; a space for community and citizen participation where everybody can share, exchange, propose and cooperate with everyone in the building of cultural and social connections.

The third place, La Casa Caníbal, is a space for experimentation, where the freedom of thought and creation prevails. A place where the intended outcome is not so much in getting results, but in the experience of the process itself. La Casa Caníbal hosts the Artistic Residencies Programme, a focus of coexistence, creation and exchange for international, regional and local creators and researchers. La Casa Caníbal expands the offer of residencies and workplaces in the city of San José, offering economic resources, tools and institutional support, thus becoming an infrastructure at the service of the fabric of local artists.

Three spaces intended for the participation of a critical citizenry, focused on the empowerment



1. Plaza Skawak is a community space of citizen participation, inaugurated in 2017

2. The group Saturno Devorando in a cycle of concerts, in the Farolito, 2016



of communities, taking part in public issues and opening new possibilities, wagering on the search of a different institutionalism. Through them, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Costa Rica defends experimentation and mediation, and seeks to favour creativity, inclusion and the plurality of ideas and critical thinking, generating the necessary opportunities for citizens to become agents of change. The CCECR works to make the most out of the potential of each space and to verify how the spaces relate to the people who use them, in so doing, enabling the process of reinterpretation that effectively influences the collective imagination.

The mission of the Cultural Centre is developed in three priority areas: culture as an element of foreign projection, through the diffusion of contemporary Spanish culture in Costa Rica; cultural cooperation between Costa Rica and Spain,

as an exchange of experiences and knowledge among creators - both male and female - of the two countries, contributing to the participation of cultural agents of the Ibero-American Cultural Space (ECI); and culture as a tool for development, through the support of cultural ventures, the training of professionals in the Costa Rican cultural sector, the generation of spaces for debate and citizen participation, and enhancing the value given to local intangible heritage.

The four strategic lines that guide the management of the Cultural Centre are: the external projection and cultural cooperation - which seek to create networks and exchange, involving Spanish cultural actors in the local sector; the experimentation in creative processes - starting from the creation of spaces for research and exchange in a collaborative and multidisciplinary environment;



3.
The group Do Not in a cycle of concerts, in "...El Farolito", 2017

4.
The Canibal Movement, a project of sound experimentation in the sound studios of la Casa Canibal

the training of professionals of culture and the strengthening of the creative industries of the orange economy; and lastly, the mediation of contemporary cultural practices, which seeks closer ties between creators and the public, to encourage the critical thinking of the audiences.

The CCECR is immersed in the context of a country of advanced cooperation and has the mission of bilateral coordination through the Agreement of New Generation of the Spanish Cooperation. For three years now, under the new strategic orientation of the Action Plan of the Centre, 2016, the work of cultural process management has been based on peer cooperation, horizontal and mutual performance among parties, with on-going feedback processes; meaning the Cultural Centre has taken on a role as a facilitator of peer relations, which seeks sustainability and solidity in long-term projects.

Similarly, work with counterparts is always carried out via permanent dialogue on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs - which is integrated into the daily work on the projects -, as well through the exchange of knowledge, research and innovation in culture for development, through the Sustainable C+D programme.

In recent years, the Cultural Centre has initiated triangular cooperation processes with organizations of the United Nations such as the UNESCO Regional Office or the Delegation of the European Union in Costa Rica, as well as with the Central American Integration System (SICA). Similarly, the CC seeks to strengthen alliances between an organized civil society and public institutions, wagering on the connection of the public and private sectors.

Lastly, it is important to highlight the importance of continuing to work from cooperation with vulnerable communities. Likewise, the continuity of environmental projects based on raising awareness about the recycling and reuse of electronic waste, through art and culture, is fundamental.

To conclude, The CCECR consists of three spaces with three priority areas, four strategic lines of work, two approaches (in human and cultural rights) and one single mission: cultural cooperation.

All Roads Lead to *El Farolito*

Carlos Cortés

Writer, journalist and university professor. France awarded him with the medal of Caballero de las Artes y las Letras in 2017 and he is a member of the Costa Rican Academy of Language.

It is rather difficult to speak dispassionately of the Cultural Centre of Spain in Costa Rica. For 27 years, my intellectual life —and even that of my group of close friends and generation peers — has been influenced by the intervention of the CC in public space, as it has been for most writers, artists, specialists in social and human sciences, as well as Costa Rican advisers throughout this period. As many others do, I have considered the Cultural Centre my home; one with open doors and windows, which is illustrated by the brilliant synecdoche that in 1992, gave the CC the reference of *El Farolito* (endearing, diminutive lighthouse), due to its proximity to a vestige of the old public lighting of San José.

This symbolic christening, which shows the Costa Rican idiosyncrasy and our tendency to speak in diminutives, turned the CC into something familiar, close, tangible, into a timeless — and yet historical — moment, to which we all come back at some point, to charge ourselves with original, vital energy. A turning point of reference and of encounter. *El Farolito* — let us be perfectly clear — is not just another institution, it is a milestone in collective memory. Its existence changed the lives of thousands of people, both creators and audiences, and I am one of them. Of course, it is not the goal of this brief review to recreate an individual experience, but to reflect the lasting impact that the Centre has had in the dynamics of the artistic and cultural production of the country, in the fruitful interaction between Spanish cooperation, the independent sector and the state, and in the formulation of public policies in the area of creativity.

By 1980, Costa Rica had the most important cultural infrastructure and institutions in Central America and the Caribbean — with the exception of Cuba; but the economic crisis slowed down its development and subjected it to a vegetal growth. The country struggled to complete major projects. — such as the Plaza de la Cultura, the future Melico Salazar

Popular Theatre — and provide them with financial sustainability. The cinematographic production diminished until its disappearance in 1987 — there were no new films for around a decade and a half; the public publishing houses, which then dominated the market, reached the brink of bankruptcy and artistic collections were sustained by private investment. Thanks to decentralized institutions, modern dance became unexpectedly popular; and, not by chance, the cultural offer left the popular theatre of quality and opted for light comedy. Dance music — a famous tropical mix named “chiquichiqui” owing to its repetitive rhythm— dominated media culture and mass festivals.

We were at those times far from what we would call an “independent sector”, and it is very likely that we would continue to be there, had it not been for *El Farolito*. While *El Farolito* was not the first international cultural centre when it appeared in 1992, it was the first to innovate with a management model that mixed a constant and timely programming with a receptive attitude, attentive to the initiatives of emerging creation. The rooms available, which were very few, were subject to the requests of the cultural environment, but without strategic guidelines or criteria, allowing them to contribute more substantially to the contemporary debate on artistic-cultural practices.

The great merit of the CC — and perhaps its first director, the Valencian Clara Ballesteros —, was to listen. To listen and suggest. To exchange ideas, getting a sense of intuition, to take risks, defend intuitions, but above all, to listen to a country that was, even more so then, than now, whispering, speaking in sign and circumlocution, shouting silences and silencing shouts. That is why the first cycle of *Tertulias de El Farolito* (social gathering in *El Farolito*) in 1993 — the oldest CC programme, in which I took part in as a co-organizer —, was called “The whispers and the

voices. Costa Rican writers before the public". In that initiation gathering, the great names that had forged our literary tradition for 50 years — and those who would come after them — gathered together; in some cases, for the first and only time. Past, present and future, packed into a crowded room.

El Farolito was thought as a space for multicultural, interdisciplinary and plural dialogue, with no prejudices or preconceived responses to the greatest challenges. A call to "understand the situation" and discuss and face controversies that, for decades, had been neglected by society and were now being dealt with in an air of freedom that reached us from an equally free Spain, open to a modernity without borders. This sense of freedom was key. The implicit acceptance that we could learn from each other; that we could leave behind the imperialist image of the mother country or the sacrosanct "Hispanity", which people still used while I was a student in the ancient halls of the extinct Costa Rican Institute of Hispanic Culture.

The geographical location of the CC was significant, as it was located in a corner of the Escalante neighbourhood, at a crossroads between the University of Costa Rica — and those who frequent it — and the San José historic neighbourhoods, in a nod to urban recovery that had barely started by then. El Farolito represented the first important intervention in this neighbourhood, a residential suburb of the 1930s neo-colonial style which became the main cultural circuit in the second decade of the 21st century.

The management of the CC focused on what I consider three strategic pillars: the support for training and artistic-cultural creation, the discussion on collective imaginary — what we are in our essence, and who we are being —, and the contribution to the approach of public policies in a national, regional and global context.

The CC helped us in understanding ourselves as a society in that sort of quantum leap towards globalization that took place in the last third of the past century, coinciding with a deep crisis of the national State in Latin America. It helped give us perspective on our identity as citizens and Central Americans, in a region that went from being in one reality, dominated by the Cold War and the post war period, to one which was a much more free flowing territory; a region in which national identities opened up to other ways of understanding social coexistence and the challenges of the global agenda.

In 1997, Jesús Oyamburu — then director of El Farolito — edited the collective volume *Change of period and cultural production from Costa Rica*, which gathered the presentations of a congress with the same title organized by the CC, the Ministry of Culture, the National University (UNA) and the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO). This would be the first academic publication to suggest the articulation between the global economy, public policies, international cooperation and creative industries; one of the exhibitors, then a young film-maker, wrote: "The book of the art and film industry of Costa Rica has barely the beginning of its first line written." The solemn sentence seemed indisputable, and if it went down in history, because it was refuted in a 400-page investigation, *The impossible mirror. A century of cinema in Costa Rica by María Lourdes Cortés (2002)*, which began under the sponsorship of the CC, and showed that the first motion pictures dated back to 1914, in a long, discontinuous, fragmentary and random — but probable — story. Since the connection with the past had been lost, the historical perspective that then emerged became an indispensable platform to build the future possibility of film making. By 1997, the contribution of the CC to audio visual production — and its visibility as an emerging

sector — was already essential. Five years earlier, a group of filmmakers had attended a workshop with the Catalan screenwriter and producer Lola Salvador; the enthusiasm generated, and the generational cohesion and the Zeitgeist, led to a permanent workshop and the first Costa Rican Film and Video Exhibition in November of the same year.

The CC and the Ministry of Culture organized 18 editions of the Exhibition, which, in 2012, became what is currently known as the Costa Rica International Film Festival. *La Muestra* (The Exhibition), whose original name reveals its unpretentious origins — show what there is, what is to be done—, a set of promises, expectations and generations of film-makers who had not filmed action for decades, with others that were just beginning; it was the beginning of what was to come.

Other CC indispensable contributions came about in the late twentieth century, during the emergence of new-born sectors such as multicultural musical tradition, independent publishing, contemporary visual arts and new technologies.

When on May 7, 2019, everyone in the country threw themselves into celebrating the centenary of Calipsonian Walter “Mr. Gavitt ” Ferguson — a living legend of Afro-Caribbean music that is alive and kicking — and the international launch of the tribute album Walter Ferguson: 100 Years of Calypso, I couldn’t help remembering that the first time I heard his name was in El Farolito. In 2002, the CC released *Babylon* — one of Ferguson’s first studio albums —, almost 75 years after having started his career as an interpreter and composer.

Recovering this musical heritage, not much appreciated until recently, was one of the key objectives of the En Clave AfroCaribe project, which the Spanish Cooperation developed in Central America, the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Besides the calypso, the CC made the wager on incorporating

into our musical heritage some traditions that had so far been marginalised, such as that of the aborigines, that of Guanacaste — beyond the official folklore — as well as popular culture — for instance, bolerista Ray Tico, the only non-Cuban musician who took part in the film movement, and Creole swing—, along with contemporary forms such as rock and electro acoustics.

From 2000, the CC sponsored a score of titles in the legendary collection of poetry *Blue Dog*, the first publishing house that launched literature beyond the public and university sector; the poetic sensitivity of the 21st century surfaced from these books, along with the names that seemed essential to us now, like Osvaldo Sauma, Luis Chaves, Mauricio Molina and María Montero.

In the same decade, and under the initiative of Lidia Blanco —director of El Farolito between 2001 and 2003 —, Perro Azul and the CC launched a vast state of the art about culture. The *Miradas Subjetivas* series took stock of visual arts, literature, theatre, cinema, music and dance in eight volumes, which has, to date, not been outdone.

To celebrate its 25th anniversary, the CC opened Skawak Square — “owners of our space”, in Bribri — in 2017; thus, the space became physically and symbolically integrated into the cultural complex of the Old Customs, in an action that speaks for itself. Since its inception, El Farolito — along with the spaces that were added to it, Casa Canibal and Skawak —, originated as an open place to create what each one understands as culture, to join from one’s own voice to what the Costa Rican writer Eunice Odio called “the great universal ballad”.



HONDURAS
Cultural Centre of Spain
in Tegucigalpa

Address

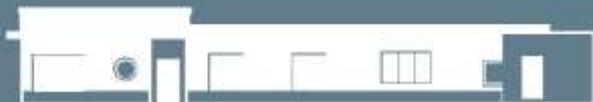
Colonia Palmira,
1ª Calle, n° 655,
Contiguo al Redondel de
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Tegucigalpa

Opening year

2007

Web

<http://www.ccetegucigalpa.org/>



Cultural Centre of Spain in Tegucigalpa

Cultural Centre of Spain in Tegucigalpa (CCET) opened its doors in 2007, it therefore already has a significant trajectory in Honduras, currently recognized in the country for its contributions in the promotion of culture, the dissemination of Spanish and Ibero-American creativity and contributing to development. The public identifies it as a modern cultural centre, that contributes to the creation and dissemination of avant-garde cultural expressions, as a meeting point for the cultural dynamics of the region just as much as it identifies it for its work on the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity, and the construction of a more inclusive and sustainable society.

The Honduran socio-political and cultural reality determines the strategic approaches and the main lines of action of the CCET. The country has some shared characteristics with other states of the Central American region, which have a special influence on the development of their society and, therefore, on cultural aspects. Matters such as ethnic diversity, with a relevant percentage of indigenous and African-descendant population and, hence, with a linguistic and cultural diversity; as well as citizen insecurity, that affects the daily life of people; the migratory phenomenon and the geographical configuration itself, halfway between the Southern Cone and North America; the existence of an unstructured cultural sector; and a lack of access and consumption of cultural products by a broad range of society – for example.

In this context, the inclusion of CCET in the Honduran cultural scene has led to putting a different approach concerning these issues into motion. Foremost, it is noticeable in being an open and pluralist space, with an ongoing and free programme, which places special emphasis on the promotion of creativity and access to culture for new generations, and encourages the local artistic process, organizing more than 400 activities each year.

Also, being an agent of the Spanish Cooperation and part of an international set of cultural centres, has helped in building an important network of cultural and social collaboration over the years. In this sense, it maintains a healthy relationship with local institutions and works with the corresponding ministries of specific areas, such as with the Executive Directorate of Culture and Arts, the Ministry of Education or the National Directorate of Indigenous Peoples and African Hondurans. Thanks to its less institutional profile and that it is closer to the work carried out from the third sector, it has a close collaboration with cultural actors on all levels, highlighting the activity in the Committee of Cultural Centres, which unites the main cultural agents of Tegucigalpa.

The CCET accompanies the implementation of various public policies in the institutional area, especially in the field of culture and citizen participation, highlighting the work which has been done in the Historic Centre of the Central District and in other Honduran municipalities, throughout the Proyecto Más Allá del Centro (Project beyond the centre).

The training of specialists in the field of cultural management of public administration and private entities in Honduras has traditionally been a signature of the Spanish Cooperation, and therefore, of the CCET. In this context, training courses are carried out with and for Honduran cultural actors, either in matters related directly to cultural management, or in those necessary to achieve greater social inclusion and create a more socially fair and environmentally sustainable society.

In the CCET, since its opening, the presence of local creativity converges with a quality artistic offer of Spanish and Ibero American origin, having trod an important path collaborating in cultural entrepreneurship, supporting the dissemination of



1. Collective Ibero-American exhibition *Ilustrando feminismos (o Feminismos ilustrados)*, 2018

2. Garifuna dance show in the cycle *Culturas Vivas (Living Cultures)* of Honduras, 2017

local artists and promoting cultural and creative companies.

More than a dozen visual arts exhibitions take place annually at the Centre, reflecting the trends of the emerging vanguard; conferences and round tables on cultural, social and economic current affairs; book presentations, concerts, performances, plays, dance and a varied billboard for all tastes in film.

Its international aspirations allow the CCET to contribute to the operation of regional networks across the cultural spectrum, both public and private. In this regard, beyond being a stage for the presence of cultural products and artists from the region, it has made a wager on cultural mobility, either by supporting international tours or, in particular, by proposing artistic residencies between countries; with clear support for Central American integration, carrying out collaborative projects and helping the exchange of best practices.

The CCET is also a point of encounter for the different actors of Tegucigalpa, where they may find a place to organize and present their shows, collaborating not only as artistic groups, but also as social entities in their field. The opening in 2017 of Babelia 3.0, as a space for creativity and a widely understood diversity, has translated into the confluence in its facilities of entities of all types, facilitating the support of the Honduran civil society and international NGOs, while being a space for encounter, collaboration, debate without fear of confrontation and, even, to think critically of the role of the CC itself.

The service of medialab has intended, from the very beginning, to mediate between the creators and the new technologies, whether through project consulting, the launching of innovative products or creative ventures; to collaborate with other entities interested in the subject and, above all, to offer training programmes oriented to the technical training of the sector and the creation of a digital culture, which helps the use of technology in the creative field, such as CreaLAB.

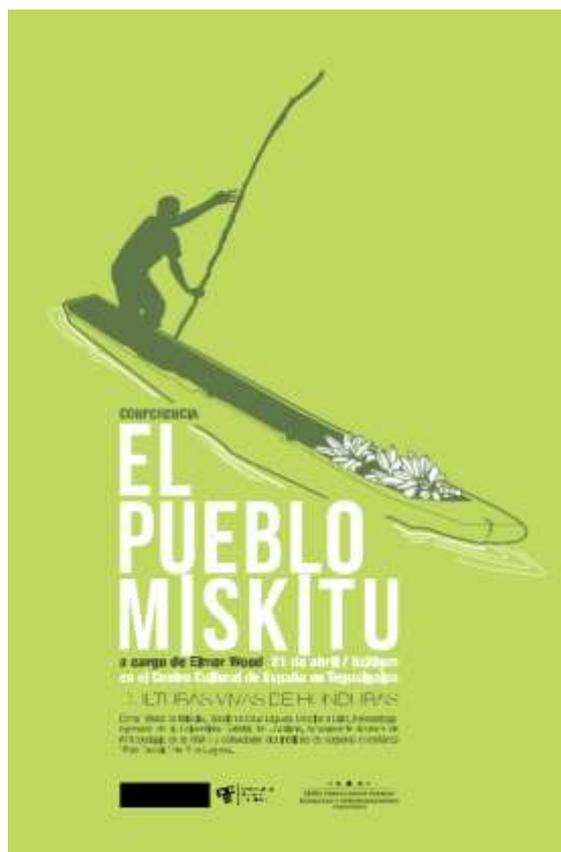
The CCET pays special attention to cultural identity and individual rights and, especially, to the preservation and protection of the most vulnerable groups. Therefore, from the closeness and collaboration with local and international organizations, the CCET is constituted as a space to promote women's rights and gender equality, or

social groups at risk of exclusion such as, among others, LGBTI groups. It has also undertaken an important transformation in its work processes and facilities to be, on one hand, a more inclusive cultural centre, especially with people with different abilities and, on the other hand, to become a more environmentally sustainable entity.

Honduras is a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual country, with indigenous and African-descendant populations that retain their own language and, therefore, has a wealth of cultural expressions, meaning that part of the work of the CCET is to promote the preservation of this cultural diversity and its dissemination throughout the country's own population. Therefore, from the close collaboration with entities of the civil society and public institutions, activities of all kinds are highly promoted, highlighting the work around the dissemination of languages, such as the publication of the *Diccionario de las Lenguas de Honduras* (*Dictionary of the Languages of Honduras*); or the approach to the general public with the cultural practices of the different indigenous peoples, on the bases of the organization of conference cycles such as Living Cultures of Honduras.

The circumstances of Tegucigalpa, where citizen insecurity directly affects the pleasure and practice of culture, have led the CCET to put emphasis on some actions to prevent and to educate against violence to create a culture of peace, such as the Create Honduras project, taking on actions with the civil society and the rest of the cultural network of the city in such activities as Recreovías por la Paz. In this sense, a very active recovery policy of the public realm for citizenship has been developed in spaces such as the Redondel de los Artesanos or the Historic Centre of Tegucigalpa, promoting their appropriation and generating places of encounter where the people may socialize.

Finally, in this decade based on work on the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity, and cross-cutting approaches to gender, human rights and the environment, the CCET has opened its advocacy work towards areas such as the recovery of public space, the strengthening of institutions, violence prevention and support for the creative fabric. In this sense, the Cultural Centre implements its essential actions around free access to culture, understood as a prerequisite that forms part of a



sustainable human development, and like the rest of the CC of the Spanish Cooperation, as well as actions to advance in the general challenges of the global agenda and the construction of inclusive and diverse societies.

The reflection made by the CCET towards the future of its action is raised around the challenges facing the cultural sector and Honduran society today. The accumulated experience and comparative advantage with other cultural agents are useful to this effect. On the one hand, as an agent of cooperation for development, that allows for a unique perspective on culture; it must reach out to the vulnerable sectors of society and pursue the goal of sustainability. And, on the other hand, having its own dimension of cooperation that no other cultural agents have, influence on the internationalization and the building of relations among Honduran, Spanish and Central American creativity.

In this context, the CCET shall take on respect for cultural diversity as a transversal focus within the strategy of association with Honduras and continue to work in this field, equally in line with the 2030 Agenda, contributing to the recuperation of public spaces, the design and implementation of cultural policies of violence prevention and to delve deeper into social innovation. Additionally, it shall continue to propose its actions based on intercultural dialogue, freedom of expression and creation, and the effective participation of citizens in cultural life, paying special attention to the population in vulnerable situations. To this effect, promoting alternative cultural activities, enhancing cooperation through continuous dialogue with Honduran creative agents and regional cultural networks, participating in the strengthening of the capacity of its actors, and addressing the protection and safeguard of cultural heritage.

3.
Poster of the conference “El pueblo Miskitu” (the people of Miskitu), in the cycle Living Cultures of Honduras

Creativity and Development

Mario Hernán Mejía

Director of Culture at The National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH)

Culture is a part of the actions for development of the Spanish Cooperation, which has emblematic programmes: Cultural Heritage, the Network of Cultural Centres in America and Africa, the Network of Ibero American Training Workshops, Training Centres in Latin America, among others. The result of these programmes in Honduras is the remarkable contribution to the revitalization of historic centres in coordination with local governments and the Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History (IAHA). The Comayagua Colonial Programme deserves a special mention as a benchmark for the management of material cultural heritage and the establishment of local cultural policies, based on the concurrence of key factors for sustainability: vision, political leadership, technical capacity and citizen participation.

The Cultural Centre of Spain in Tegucigalpa (CCET) joined the Network of Cultural Centres in mid-2007, with a clear vision that culture is development, promoting its open and free access, which greatly determines the actions of the CCET as a leading representative, which has enriched the artistic-cultural offer of the Honduran capital and other cities of the country with its project *Más Allá del Centro* (Beyond the Centre). The CCET participates in cooperation for development by strengthening individual and institutional capacities in fundamental matters such as cultural policies, heritage management, cultural management or the enhancement of linguistic and cultural diversity.

The Virtual Library of Literature of Honduras, integrated into the Miguel de Cervantes Virtual Library, is a repository of Honduran literary and intellectual production inaugurated at the time by the then Prince of Asturias and current King Felipe VI of Spain. The project is the result of strategic alliances generated from the Centre with academic, scientific and cultural institutions in the country where we find remarkable works such as *the Dictionary of the*

Languages of Honduras, edited in collaboration with the Honduran Academy of Language.

On the Garífuna language and its literature, the *En Clave AfroCaribe* project stands out, an investigation of the musical expressions of the African-descendant population on the Caribbean coast of Central America, the Dominican Republic and Haiti. The Spanish Cultural Centres in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic participated in the project and the results are captured in a book and music CD.

Multiple and diverse events take place at the CCET, such as: exhibitions, workshops, the promotion of reading, the Book Fair, concerts, film festivals, round tables concerning Spanish, Ibero American, Central American and Honduran art. As for the generation of cultural capacities, the CCET has become an active partner and strengthens the efforts in the field undertaken by the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) and its international cultural management seminars, jointly organized, from the third International Seminar on: University cultural policies and strategies 2014; the Fourth International Seminar highlighted Cultural Observatories 2016; the Fifth Seminar was about Cultural management for local development 2017; the Sixth Seminar was named Generation of cultural capacities for the SDGs 2018 and this year, 2019 the Seventh Seminar has the title: Creative economy and territorial development.

Lastly, we would like to emphasize one of the key factors on the importance of CCET in Honduran cultural life: its management model based on the recognition of cultural rights of access and citizen participation. The implementation of a criteria of proximity ensures the recognition of the Centre as a plural and open space, also for ongoing dialogue with the Spanish culture, language, and art, with contemporary artistic manifestations and cultural expressions of the identities that inhabit the Honduran territory.

Space of diverse and inclusive identities

América Mejía

Co-founder and director of Mujeres en las Artes (Women in the Arts), a non-profit organization founded in 1995. Member of the Citizen Commission of the Historic Centre and of the Committee of Cultural Centres of Tegucigalpa.

To think of our reality in local context is to express an unfavourable social and political environment in the promotion of cultural rights, understood as political participation and the freedom of the individual to express oneself on a cultural level. What is currently going on in the country? The larger the creative offer managed by the private sector, the lesser the exploration of creative content that foments cultural diversity, practices, cultural exchanges, and dialogues shared with the necessity of expression from the sectors. We could infer that we are not differentiating between what is accessory and what is necessary for the cultural and artistic development in the country.

In this panorama we would like to single out the Cultural Centre of Spain in Tegucigalpa (CCET), as a space that has revitalized, mediated and facilitated processes over the past 10 years in the cultural scenario of the country. It has greatly contributed when addressing local artistic practices from the professionalization of the sector, but very significantly from the position of - creation should come from internal changes; halt the mechanisms of the human machine in its flight forward; to make uneasy and try to think differently. This has been a wager of the CCET in its various calls to expand the practices of artistic production and through it, to question reality.

This space has been shared by many creators, but above all by women creators, artists whose proposals have had a place in the CCET for the expression and declaration of rights, often denied and silenced. Such an example is the artistic project *El tiempo que nos quedó en la carne* (*The time that was left in the flesh*) by Lía Vallejo, a visual artist, who exposes and talks about a universal problem that is transposed into shame, ignorance and power, and which constitutes one of humanity's greatest

atrocities: child abuse, perpetrated by religious characters and allowed by their policies. It was the CCET that welcomed the artist and her work.

The work undertaken with the Network of Cultural Centres of Spain is highly valuable, generating exchanges, collaborations, residencies, circulation paths; especially in the light of the reduction of funds for programmes of cultural cooperation, which in the 90s had promoted diverse artistic platforms and projects in Central America, and which have since disappeared or exist as isolated projects, which adds to the complex reality of the national cultural context. This appreciation is important in the country nowadays as it lacks the circulation and expression of languages that allow developing critical and reflective thinking from the artistic practice, where social actors are encouraged to criticize, re-create and alter the state of things.

Also on its path, mainly in the last five years, one of its commitments as a Cultural Centre has been to promote content for citizens' training, underlining the fact that the recognition of rights increases when society talks about them. In this agenda, the CCET is a reference for debates, encounters and round tables of the organized civil society and alternative groups of diverse identities. The opening of the new Babelia 3.0 space helped revitalize the CCET, with a participative and open agenda for including the promotion the rights for gender equality, environment, indigenous peoples, and sexual diversity, among others.

To bring things to a close, the CCET has facilitated institutional management in so far as the creation of shared agendas with the civil society, in association, for example, with Unicef and Women in the Arts (MUA), as an implementer of *Crearte*, a cultural programme promoting coexistence and peace in the child and youth population, in 12

municipalities of the country. Its fundamental role in the social and cultural dimension for the enjoyment of creativity is not limited to artists, and in the case of our country it should include the entire population, as an approach to culture as a right.

Ultimately, women artists, sexual diversity, groups of citizens, critical reflection of rights in Honduras would not be the same without the CCET. That is why we celebrate and accompany their presence with contributions to culture in our country.

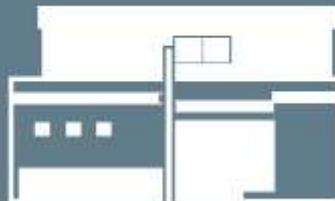


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Opening year
1998

Web
<https://www.ccesv.org/>



Cultural Centre of Spain in San Salvador

History

The Cultural Centre of Spain in El Salvador (CCESV) was officially opened in 1998. As in the majority of the Cultural Centres, the origins don't quite have a specific date, as it was inherited from the former Salvadorian Institute of Hispanic Culture. From its commencement and acquisition of its headquarters, the Cultural Centre has continued to broaden its cultural activity and to secure its position inside the socio-cultural context of the country. This all coincided with the ending of the civil war in El Salvador and the signing of the Peace Treaties in 1992, which allowed for a new socio-political scene and a period of peace and political stability, which made cultural action not only feasible, but necessary.

During its first years of existence, the Cultural Centre was under the direction of the Office of Culture of the Embassy, with the support of the directors of the former Institute of Hispanic Culture. Nevertheless, the figure of a director was incorporated in July 2005, coinciding with the expansive period of the Spanish Cooperation, thus granting more possibilities in the offer of the programme, in quality just as in quantity.

In the case of El Salvador, we can emphasize two first stages set by the first two directors:

Juan Sánchez was the first director of the Cultural Centre, who set a very modern hallmark. Firstly, renovating the space in order to give it more personality with its red and white colours and its cement floors. Thus, with a building, a priori, without many possibilities, small and anchored between the Embassy and the Technical Office of Cooperation (OCT), a project was set in motion which flowed beyond the walls of the CCESV. The cultural cooperation had a very high budget which allowed for a wide programme which encompassed

very different fields and reached many areas throughout the country. From that first stage, projects are remembered such as the *Invasión en el Parque*, the Youth Art Award or the publication of the *Colección Revuelta*. The Cultural Centre has consolidated itself as a space for encounter and a reference point in topics such as art and design - the graphical image of the Centre was pioneer and created a brand -. Similarly, the children's programming, the literary presentations and the theatre projects also have their space. From these years we should not forget the crucial support in the launching of the National Dance Company.

Fernando Fajardo arrived in 2010 with a very different proposal, partly due to the economic crisis in Spain which triggered a very sizeable reduction in funds. The management of Fernando Fajardo was centred around the new collective management processes and social participation. While the intent of gaining physical space for the Cultural Centre had been an intention for a long time, in the year 2011 they were able to rent a space adjacent to the CCESV. In this space, a new expansion project of the Cultural Centre started to take shape in a very natural and organic way: La Casa Tomada. In order to give life to this new project different collectives gradually settled in, with very diverse interests, but with a common goal in mind: the transformation of La Casa Tomada into a space of encounter, debate and freedom, with no prerequisites or entrance barriers to participate. The European Union funds were crucial for the consolidation of this space for the project of La Casa Tomada: *Cultura entre Todxs para Construir Nuevos Mundos* (Everyone for Culture to Build New Worlds), which allowed to better the resources and the facilities of La Casa Tomada and to activate it with numerous training activities, mediation and participation with the surrounding neighbourhood of Las Palmas.

Both periods have been accompanied by a small team of local workers and, while they hadn't been cultural managers when they arrived at the Cultural Centre (due greatly to the lack of training involving this area in the country), towards the last years of the nineties, they progressively strengthened their position as professionals and experts in cultural cooperation.

In 2017 Eloísa Vaello Marco took on her position as the new director. In this new period, she has looked to consolidate the work already carried out by the previous directors, establishing a programme to endure in time, generating a visible impact and synergies with different cultural and social local actors of El Salvador. In order to do so, she has looked to incorporate and integrate art and culture into what is social and political, claiming and giving value to the cultural rights of the citizens and fomenting access and the appropriation of the public spaces for collective life.

Currently, taking into account the space of La Casa Tomada, the CCESV has over 2,000 square metres dedicated to culture. A library; a multi-purpose room, that serves for exhibitions and for workshops, presentations or for talks; staging room, which can host activities dedicated to cinema, music, dance and theatre; cafeteria; spaces to meet and for encounter; spaces for the dissemination of initiatives from cultural and social entrepreneurs; a garden and a small vegetable garden; a recording studio, a dark room and a radio booth.

Main lines of work

The work of the Cultural Centre is defined within the Master Plan for the Spanish Cooperation, in the Culture and Development Strategy Paper and, nowadays, in tune with the Spanish Cooperation, in the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Always working in direct relation with the institutions and the Salvadorian cultural sector, an Annual Action Plan of the Centre is made based on the strategic objectives for development. That translates into an organized programme surrounding three main areas: the internalization of the Spanish culture, the cultural cooperation and culture as a factor for development.

The first point of action has to do with Spanish culture, its dissemination and making it visible. The

Cultural Centre works on letting Spanish creators be known, always prioritizing the young and emergent scene, but also without forgetting more classic or established proposals which could enrich festivals and international encounters. There is no commercial network of artistic circuits in El Salvador to bring a Spanish theatre or dance company, or an art exhibition, this possibility of showing our artists and professionals of the cultural world to the country is therefore of vital importance. The most important, however, is to complement this line of work with the other two, and in this sense, the work of the Cultural Centre is always global. The objective of showcasing a Spanish proposal is also to establish ties and networks with the local artists and creators. To create spaces for training, debate and friendship; spaces of exchange that strengthen the relations between these two brother countries.

For the sake of naming one example, in this sense we have just showcased the piece *Dolorosa*, by the National Dance Company of El Salvador (CND for its Spanish acronym). The show is a collective creation of the CND, directed by Luz Arcas, a Spanish dancer and choreographer, director of the company La Fármaco, who has been working for more than a month as part of the Residency Programme for artistic creation, for the launch of this show. Not only has the internationalization of Spanish Culture been tackled in this project, making the work of La Fármaco and of Luz Arcas known, but also training, exchange and collective creation has been involved. And no less important, an Inter-institutional strengthening has been generated, working together with the Ministry of Culture of El Salvador towards the consolidation of the CND.

The second point refers to cultural cooperation and is the outline of our daily programming. Activities, projects and programmes which establish an exchange and cooperation with public institutions and with diverse sectors of the civil society. The Cultural Centre has established a privileged position as an interlocutor for both on every level. Concurrently, leaning on the Network of Centres and on the multilateral institutions and international organizations, initiatives have been set into motion to strengthen the Ibero-American space and the international cultural networks.

In this field we can mention projects such as *Invernadero* or *A2Bandas*. Although the objective is the dissemination and strengthening of local artists,



1.
Premiere in 2019 of *Dolorosa*,
of the National Dance
Company of El Salvador
and Spanish Choreographer
Luz Arcas, director of the
company La Fármaco



this is complemented with training programmes with Spanish professionals, with exchanges within the Network of Centres or with debate and thinking spaces, spaces of participation and experimentation for citizens. Through art and culture, we may reflect upon the socio-political moment in which we live and the body that we are and would like to be.

The third point is completely transversal and is linked to each programme, project and activity that is programmed in the Cultural Centre. This is the Culture and Development Strategy Paper, in which there are seven lines of work, all with a common background that conceives culture as an unavoidable factor towards integral and sustainable development. Not every Centre can equally delve into every line of work, but certainly in the case of El Salvador, we can emphasize our work on training, completely overlapped with the previous points; communication, with the Radio Tomada e Impúdica as standards in this line of work: the political dimension of culture, with projects such as La Casa Tomada, Invernadero or Intersecciones; heritage and memory, with

projects for visibility and strengthening of the náhaut or the reconstruction and memory concerning the Salvadorian civil war.

Moreover, the Strategy for Culture and Development includes transversal subjects such as gender and sexual diversity, inclusion, the environment and human rights. All these subjects are key to our programme, the Cultural Centres as spaces for encounter, characterized by being open and inclusive.

Positioning in the local context and strategic planning.

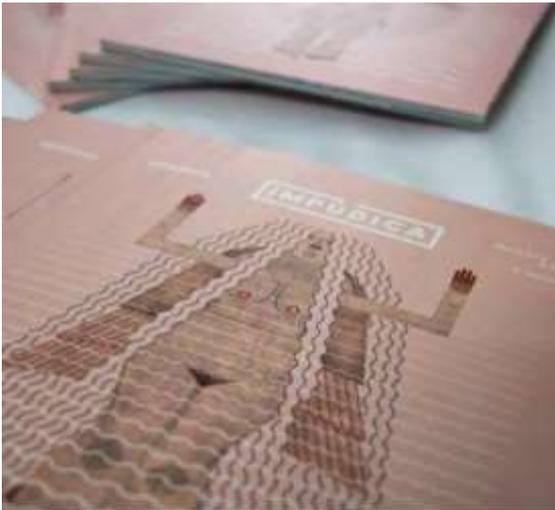
The Cultural Centre celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2018, consolidating its position in the sociocultural framework of El Salvador, strengthening and organizing its programme in alignment with the notion of heterotopia which Foucault put forward some years ago, describing certain institutional spaces for culture, and discourse, as somehow “different”: unsettling, intense, incompatible, contradictory and transforming.



2. Hispanic Salvadorian Theatre Festival. National Theatre of San Salvador, October 2018

3. Spanish dancer Fernando Hurtado, in front of the building of the CCESV, at the launch of the 2019 programming

4. Las Musas Desconectadas in the first concert of the project A2Bandas, musical encounters of the CCESV. La Casa Tomada, March 2018



The CCESV, if it isn't already, wants to be a heterotopy in this last sense. Our objective is to be a space for encounter, where barriers come down in order to be surpassed, where theatre merges with cinema, dance taken to the streets, merging with the citizenry, and where a choir of the elderly rehearses at the same time as the children play to read and share. A space in which we think in Spanish and we sing in náhaut, a non-space where everyone has a place. A space at the vanguard of contemporary art as well as training in art, critique and curatorship. A non-space that has gone out to the squares of the cities to recuperate and reinvent public spaces, which has been and is a reference in the launching of collective management of cultural spaces, coexisting with La Casa Tomada, in order to complement and to understand one another and to build bridges between different ways of making culture. But, above all, period after period, director after director, with more or less budget, the Cultural Centre has known how to remain as a space of culture for everyone. As a space for dialogue and thought. A space of encounter and freedom, of contradiction and transformation.

In times of crisis, in fear of violence and uncertainty, the Cultural Centre would like to continue as a space of respect, democracy and culture. A place for the citizens, for the construction of critical thought and free thinkers. A space with memory, to not forget our past and to be able to construct an inclusive narrative, to take in every perspective and sensitivity. A space in the present, for the present: to play, to learn, to grow, to imagine and to dream. A space to enjoy with theatre, cinema, music, dance, photography, art... but above all to build and build ourselves for the future, for a better future.

5.
Presentation of the second
number of the magazine
Impúdica, publication of the
CCESV and *El Faro*. November
2018

6.
Performance of Andy Retana
(Costa Rica) in the inauguration
of the exhibition *Rapaces*
Generos.as. March 2019

Equis, Equis. 20 years of the CCESV

Javier Ramírez (Nadie)

Visual artist. Organizer of FEA with Elena Salamanca; of ADAPTE, with Ronald Morán; and of the exhibition Equis, Equis, on the occasion of the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Cultural Centre of Spain in El Salvador.

The faces that make up the institution

The X marks the spot where a place is located on a map, it pinpoints a site; it might be your starting point or the place you want to go to; it might be the centre of something. The territory of El Salvador is full of those spots that mark relevant places (official and not): crossroads that remind us of a dead relative, monuments to abstractions such as “reconciliation” or “transparency”; Google Maps pins that tell us where the closest ATM is, etc. Virtually, we could draw connecting lines between those spots and thus visualize a dynamic image of the living culture of the country; we would also see how one of those spots stands out among all, due to a peculiar convergence of strokes.

In the urban area of San Salvador, the Cultural Centre of Spain in El Salvador (CCESV) serves as a meeting point and a driving force for different initiatives within the broad scope of culture. Since June 1998, it has gone through different stages, changing according to the political context of the time, the global economic situation, the different visions of the directors who worked there, the changing trends, etc., and it has always found a response to the ongoing circumstances.

If you look carefully behind the CCESV logo, you may see a group portrait of people whose faces reveal different backgrounds. The history of the institution is also that of the team of workers who — from their area, and over time —, have been creating the complex, collaborative work that a cultural institution represents. What the CCESV has achieved and contributed to society reflect the human quality of its staff: it is their ideas and actions that make the projects tangible

while translating the written plans and the guidelines into concrete facts that transform reality.

Community culture for development

The X is made up of two strokes that meet in the centre. Out of the mere union of these lines, we obtain the letter and the benefits of using it. Were one of the elements missing, it would be something else, but not an X. Two small strokes, two tiny paths that meet at a shared spot.

If the maps indicated the routes we walked on a daily basis, we would find other lines drawn by persons with whom we crossed paths in our daily routine. Of these intersections we could observe the diverse effects that those encounters generate. Working within culture is precisely based on that type of human interaction: when the paths of two or more people (two or more communities) intersect, the conditions lend themselves to generate — or contribute to — the great human creation that we call culture.

Today, with the new spaces opened by La Casa Tomada, the structure of the Cultural Centre of Spain is more pluralistic and enables on-going support for initiatives on human rights, gender equality, cultural diversity, indigenous and African-descendant peoples, environmental sustainability and the fight against climate change, among many others.

From artistic creation — as a strategy to encourage different ways of thinking towards social problems — to the use of open source technologies; even in the interactions that take place in the cafeteria - El Café de La Casa Tomada, every single day, we observe the hundreds of personal paths that intersect in this space with the goal of offering a positive contribution to society, of creating diverse cultures out of the idiosyncrasies of each member of the community.

Expressions and artistic exchanges

The graphical symbol of the X is a work of art in itself, adopted and transformed by the uses of diverse cultures for thousands of years. The simple gesture of drawing two lines that are inclined and joined at the centre enables us to represent ideas and concepts as complex as the unknown quantity of an equation, a kiss in a mobile phone text message, or the chromosomal feminine characteristics (XX), to name a few.

In their search for such effective images, artists in El Salvador have started an accelerated change in the ways of production of the last 20 years. The recent history of Salvadoran art is full of footnotes with mention to the Cultural Centre of Spain (CCESV) as one of the main institutions dedicated to showcasing the concerns of creators who have faced the challenges of a new century, where borders and distances decrease thanks to new technologies, thus enabling for smoother collaborations between different disciplines and latitudes.

Contemporary dance and art are two of the fields where the impact of CCESV cooperative work is more visible. The monthly exhibitions programme and the Awards for Young Art set new trends in forms of expression — more attached to the ever-changing present —, which resulted in a series of works that now form part of the permanent collection of the Art Museum of El Salvador. The support to the National School of Dance Morena Celarié and the accompaniment in the creation of the National Dance Company of El Salvador led to an enriching exchange between dance professionals from the region and from Spain; this, in turn, generated an international repercussion never before seen.

Artists work to explain the noise within the confusing tangled mess of reality; they try to

understand the movement and describe what their eyes see, what can be heard; they explain the various ways of feeling from human experience. Within the same tangled mess, the cultural institution becomes a support — if not essential, quite valuable — for us to continue our process of knowing ourselves as persons, as creators.

Testimony of liberation (and healing) in my person

These days I am in charge of curating the X, X (Equis, equis) exhibition, on the twenty years of the Cultural Centre of Spain in El Salvador. In this process, I have had to remember the experiences that impacted me most deeply in all these years; I have also had to share my own experiences with other perspectives, closer to the internal functioning of the institution. Within the cement grid of San Salvador, I find myself reviewing the history of this centre and of the people who conform it, displaying it on the walls and talking about it to the public: showing it. After going through some boxes filled with pictures and documents, I feel like this story includes me; that the institutional archive is also a family album that goes back to the past, to memories where familiar — but younger — faces appear; faces that are no longer here — the same space so often redone, the changing fashion of the public: signs of the transformation of culture.

Without finding a suitable way to close this text; I look to the future and see that there is much to be done (I hope) in my own personal process of telling how I see the world and how it feels from me. Everything is uncertain and yet, wherever I may be, whatever I may be doing, there will always be a part of the legacy (among many others, I insist) of the Cultural Centre of Spain: of those who collectively made it into the cultural reference that now is in El Salvador. I think of the institution; I see the logo in my mind, and I

appreciate this long conversation of years in which there is space to work together as well as in disagreement. As always, there is so much left to be said that doesn't fit in this text, so I just have to say: Amen.

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Cultural Centre of Spain
in Mexico

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Opening year

2002

Web

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Cultural Centre of Spain in Mexico

The Cultural Centre of Spain in Mexico (the CCEMx) is an innovative, open and inclusive multidisciplinary platform, that exhibits the best of art, culture and science from Spain, in Mexico. Its programming is firmly committed to human development as a fundamental process, and its work is carried out in synergy with local agents.

Since its creation in 2002, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Mexico has encouraged cultural cooperation with public institutions, private organizations, non-governmental organizations, independent actors and civil society, offering an open space for collaboration. It's a cultural space that promotes diversity and creative excellence - Spanish and Ibero-American - apart from stimulating citizen values in interdisciplinary cultural practices.

Located in the heart of the historical centre of the Mexican capital, declared as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988, the CCEMx is just behind the Metropolitan Cathedral. The building was erected on a plot that belonged to Hernán Cortés who had donated it to one of his butlers. This mansion had sheltered households, a convent, a pension, a commercial area and a wine cellar, only to become abandoned after the earthquake of 1985.

In 1997 the Government of Mexico City bequeathed the territory to the government of Spain. The election of the property, far from being coincidental, corresponded to a commitment of the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID) to contribute to the recuperation of a historic monument, as well as to contribute to the rehabilitation of the centre of Mexico City. Lastly, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Mexico opened its doors on November 18th, 2002. The recovery of the building on Guatemala street number 18 was fundamental and not only recovered a building, but a cultural offer and activities. That, in turn attracted a new public, helping establish the area as one of the most attractive of the city within the cultural circuit.

In this context, and from its initial stages, "El España" -as it is known in the city-, emerged as an open space for dialogue within the diverse possibilities to interpret what an Ibero-American Cultural Space was, and as a place promoting free access to culture. It has never neglected its role as an important cultural asset of the city, always acting as an agent of cooperation and development, especially with initiatives directed towards cultural awareness and the strengthening of the professionals in the field.

Currently, more than seven centuries of shared history shape the walls of the building that hosts the Cultural Centre of Spain in Mexico, the largest cultural centre of Spain abroad. From the pre-Hispanic base, that dates from the end of the 15th century, up to the contemporary architecture of the renovations in 2011, there are over 6,000 square metres dedicated to Ibero-American culture, in the heart of the largest Spanish-speaking country in the world.

Mexico has the most important and diverse cultural infrastructure of Latin America. Powerful institutions, both public and private, cultural industries, independent agents, artists and self-managed spaces are currently coexisting within its cultural framework. Mexico is without a doubt, one of the priority countries in so far as foreign cultural policies for the Spanish government, being one of the most pivotal markets for the Spanish cultural industry and the largest Spanish-speaking country in the world.

Over these last 17 years, the CCEMx has progressively evolved together with the local cultural context as it has matured and become stronger. In these years, the CCEMx has managed to consolidate relations and dialogue with the different actors of the Mexican cultural sector. In the cultural ecosystem of the city, it is clearly acknowledged as an avant-garde institution, with open doors, willing to generate and strengthen cultural processes that directly affect sustainable human development of the cities and the citizens.

The institutional mission of the CCEMx is the result of all of the previously mentioned. Its definition as a cultural centre allows it to articulate interdisciplinary proposals where science, plastic arts, performing arts, music, literature or cinema are interconnected through references and formats. The CCEMx is committed to serving the very young and youth audiences – in accordance with the demographic reality of the country-, by paying special attention to diversity in all of its expressions. To tend to this priority sector of the population, for the action of the Spanish Cooperation in Latin America, the CCEMx has developed *el Laboratorio de Ciudadanía Digital* (Digital Citizenship Laboratory).

The Digital Citizenship Laboratory is a training platform that connects the arts, culture and science with communication technologies (ICT) aimed at influencing human development and promoting training for citizens in a critical situation. A space for building community that encourages learning and the acquisition of digital skills by means of educational innovation through workshops and socio-cultural activities.

At the beginning of 2014, the Digital Citizenship Laboratory led to the incorporation of a new methodology of the CCEMx of new instruments of cooperation, such as the AECID management Protocols, the creation and design of public and private alliances for development, where the CCEMx has been innovative with its alliance with the Fundación Telefónica México, in which the Fundación Bancaria “La Caixa” also participated, as well as the Ateneo Español de México.

The CCEMx receives more than 150,000 visitors per year. A community of users, students and participants of different activities that has a progressively more active role, collaborating in co-production and the definition of the contents and activities. That is the case of the CCEMx Radio, managed by children and youth, or the programme promoting literature, organized by people who are retired and have monthly reading encounters. In short, with more than 1,200 activities carried out per year, it constitutes a responsible programme with transversal values that inspire the policies of the AECID: – the defence of human rights, gender

equality, environmental sustainability and the respect of cultural diversity.

How are these ideas transferred to a cultural programming designed within the context of Mexico City? Through trial-and-error, knowing when to take necessary risks and consolidating what already works well. We can find such examples in the Penitentiary Theatre Programme, undertaken together with a Shakespeare Forum, for groups of persons in prison, to take on performance projects that recreated other possible worlds; in the Permanent Training Programme of Cultural Management carried out by professionals within the sector; or the sessions titled “I Want to be a Scientist”, a programme originated to stimulate female vocation in science; or the development of applications for learning indigenous languages, that brought into practice the political commitment of the Spanish Cooperation with sustainable human development through culture.

With all the audiences and their diversity in mind, the CCEMx offers spaces adapted for people with special needs; information and a Braille library, as well as monthly activities with interpretation in sign language. The training offer is also oriented to the needs of the users, designed to meet the demands of the pedagogical and intellectual challenges of a complex environment, in which creativity is the key tool in designing solutions for a future committed to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Concerning the promotion of Spanish culture, the CCEMx has consolidated programmes for the dissemination of all creative contemporary languages. Promotional actions take place at the main headquarters of the CCEMx, and are complemented by supporting the presence of Spanish talent in other states across the country, ensuring Spanish participation in the most important forums and festivals in Mexico.

Thanks to this artistic promotion, Spanish presence is a constant in events of international stature such as The International Book Fair of Guadalajara, the Cervantino Festival, the Morelia



1. *Solos (Alone)*, piece that was presented in the CCEMx in the framework of the International Day of Dance 2019



International Film Festival, or the collaborations with the Palace of Fine Arts of the City of Mexico, or the University Museum of Contemporary Art (MUAC) of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).

The Spanish language, as a shared language, is the tool that best stimulates the cultural space, common for both countries. Artistic creation is promoted through the activities as a space for production and of knowledge in which the Spanish language is the means and the message. Workshops, seminars, laboratories, concerts, presentations and other formats that count on the participation of Spanish and Mexican thinkers, writers, theorists and intellectuals. This is where the perspective of dialogue becomes patent: the promotional actions of the CCEMx seek to establish a space for conversation. The digital library of the CCEMx is a space where many of these ideas have been put into practice, a space for co-existence oriented towards favouring the access to knowledge.

2.
Pièce distinguée n°45,
inaugural performance of
the exhibition *Take a seat*
of La Ribot in 2018



3.
Exhibition *Ascensión y caída: un sacrificio* de Alberto Odériz, (Rise and fall: a sacrifice), part of the Project 1, programme of individual exhibitions of Spanish artists, residents in Mexico. 2019



4.
The CCEMx has begun, in collaboration with the INAH, a proposal that incorporates new ICTs and augmented reality to enrich the user experience.

The exhibition area of the Cultural Centre of Spain implements an on-going programme of temporary exhibitions focused on contemporary Spanish artistic production, in Spanish. On one hand, the selection aims at supporting the internationalization of Spanish creators, and on the other, it poses the exhibitions as mediation devices in which artistic expression is a strategy to detonate thought through mechanisms of representation belonging to art. What more, it has the Museo de Sitio CCEMx-INAH (Site Museum) that houses the vestiges of the pre-Hispanic Calmécac. This building, part of the sacred Tenochtitlan enclosure, had served as a school for the leading classes of the Mexican society. Today it constitutes an archaeological intervention of reference as an example of good practices in heritage protection.

The dynamism of the programming of the CCEMx and its audiences is particularly noticeable in the programming of performances and musical concerts. Theatre, dance, and performance, by companies from both sides of the Atlantic fill the

CCEMx auditorium monthly. This hall, called Espacio X, is a versatile auditorium capable of accommodating all types of live art and music proposals. Music, an art that has a unique capacity of bonding and building community, has always played a vital role in the history of this Centre. At the beginning, the Terrace of the CCEMx was a concert space essential in reviving the scenario of the Historic Centre. It currently continues to be an essential part of the programming: from Wednesday to Saturday those who come to the CCEMx have a privileged space to enjoy live music. It includes a wide range of all styles, in a cool, hospitable environment, that embodies the very nature of this institution, open for all.

Lastly, making this cultural institution a common space is the key to our efforts in the CCEMx. This ongoing introspection is a part of our mandate. One that enriches us and allows us to continue learning through our actions.



5.
DJ Set and performance of the artist Maria Forqué aka Virgen Mary, on her first visit to Mexico in 2019

6.
Programme of Gender and Human Rights of the CCEMx

What is the purpose of a cultural centre?

Eugenio Echeverría

Director of the Border Cultural Centre of Mexico City. Centre dedicated to sound art, visual arts, multimedia and design, which seeks to question various trends related to institutionalized contemporary art.

When I arrived in Mexico City from Barcelona in the year 2003 to study at the Film School of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the cultural offer in DF was going through a cultural transition, from a self-referential model into a scenario in which the creators, managers and curators could have a creative horizontal dialogue with the aesthetic and international artistic institutions.

Until the 90s, the structure of cultural and artistic spaces of Mexico City had been nurtured by the institutional circles and shopping centres which offered low risk offers. On the other extreme were the programmes of hybrid spaces, now deemed iconic, where the responsibility fell on the leadership of the local artistic offer of the time. La Panadería, Temístocles or La Quiñonera paved the way for how art was to be exhibited, understood and produced in the city.

The structure of the experimental and rule-breaking spaces that had been so relevant in the 90s was beginning to weaken towards the beginning of the decade of the year 2000, owing to either the economic crisis or the end of an artistic-cultural era. With the passage of time, that collapse was but an opportunity to restructure the stage towards identities that were contemporary, globalizing or homogenizing, depending on the political position of the beholder.

The fact was that in the early 2000s, when the Cultural Centre of Spain in Mexico (CCEMx) opened, the artistic, musical and cultural stage in DF Mexico (and therefore, Mexico) was going through a period of transition which called for a new network of institutional, commercial and self-managed spaces for development and subsequent consolidation.

Four years after the Cultural Centre of Spain in Mexico was opened, in the year 2006, we opened the Cultural Centre Border, a space that I manage to date. *Border* began as a space dedicated to graffiti and experimental sound art, moving to emergent

Art. We are currently settling into interdisciplinary processes -from trans-feminist to anti-neoliberal positions.

Even with two different models of cultural space – public in the case of the CCMEx, and private with a public vocation in the case of the CCBorder, I would venture to say that our evolution has run parallel, something quite logical considering that both centres were initiated and based on the necessity to meet the demands of the time.

For those first few years, meaning the period from 2006 to 2010, it was a common practice for both Border and “El España” to share not only artists, curators and colleagues, but even audiences and evenings. The stage for Mexican *graffiti* was taking off by the hand of urban designers and artists who found in these and other spaces the ideal forum to share their work and to further themselves professionally: Dhear, Smithe, Neuzz, Saner, Mookiena, News, all of whom passed through Border as well as “El España”.

The same may be said for emerging artists and designers such as Jorge Alderete, Dulce Chacón, Amor Muñoz, Rita Ponce de León... Much in the same way, it wasn't uncommon to hear that the line-up of the evening implied going first to one centre, and then to the other. One way or another, the creators were many who found the possibility of experiment and/ or becoming official on the platforms of both centres, despite the very different positions and ranges that we offered.

Towards the beginning of the decade of 2010, the collaboration between institutional, commercial and self-managing spaces with creators, managers, curators and the general public intensified. Within that context an artistic-cultural community that interacted through a network of new spaces that worked almost parallel to the official, began to take shape. On this list I include spaces such as: El patio de mi casa,

Vértigo, Galería Tal Cual, Fifty24mx, Yautepec, Neter Proyectos, and Bikini Wax, among many others which have since closed down or limited their activities due to the changes and transformations in the political system of art. A community that, in its day wished to identify itself as emerging, and that nowadays remains active after a process of professionalization, legitimization, economic and political resistance.

Currently, the social climate being addressed in Mexico imposes a different type of necessity and affects the agendas of the cultural spaces, somehow compelled to meet the demands of, or at least spark debate on the afflictions of society. From approximations beyond those undertaken ten years ago, many of the cultural spaces that continue nurturing this local and national network, are focused on interdisciplinary processes to approach wounds infringed by a globalized culture that progressively leaves less margin for embodied dissent, not mere words, but physical.

Promising, however, is the fact that projects and dissenting approaches from institutional, independent or private spaces are being promoted, demonstrating the capacity of self-criticism of contemporary cultural production. This position, sometimes contradictory, that Border as well as the CCEMx take on, is what allows for tackling inequality and gender-based violence, sexuality, race and training, among other things, by virtue of artistic practices.

An example of the previously mentioned is, *Lo que se ve no se pregunta (Don't ask what you see). Identidades Trans y de género no conformista* (Trans identities and non-conformist gender) which I was honoured to introduce as a co-curator together with Tania Pomar, Susana Vargas and Laos Salazar in the CCMEx in 2015. This exhibition is especially important and symbolic for me, as it was my first solid curator project which I took on, as well as being the first exhibition which addressed trans

issues in Mexico. On the other hand, this project is the direct precedent of the Cultural Centre Jauría Trans, a space managed by trans people, for trans and trans-allied persons, forming part of the Cultural Centre Border since the year 2017.

Nowadays, after two years in operation, Jauría Trans Cultural Centre is the only active cultural space in the country that defends critical trans policies. It provides services such as accompaniment and peer-support groups, in addition to an artistic and cultural offer made up of workshops, exhibitions and interventions in specific spaces. This does is not of little significance, nor does it even reach a nod to the "T" in the acronym LGBT. Out of the countries that provide statistical data, Mexico, is second in terms of trans feminicides, shedding light on another hard fact: the life expectancy of a trans person in Mexico is 35, as opposed to 77, that of the cisgender population. From such data comes urgency.

Triggered by the previously mentioned and from the experience of *Lo que se ve no se pregunta. Identidades Trans y de género no conformista* the design and implementation of the programme titled Dissident Cultures was undertaken; a call for research and interdisciplinary production that the CCEMx and CCBorder have been jointly offering since 2016.

This programme, an open call with over 400 applications in three years, is aimed at generating a collective conversation around numerous protests that make up the dissident culture, in the name of developing a seven-month research project, which should culminate with an interdisciplinary exhibition at the CCEMx.

Reviewing our trajectories, institutionally dismantled at an early stage, we might say that today, being involved with our collaborative work bound to common purposes, I have no other option but to comprehend that this is the manner in which the

institutional centres, financed by public funds, can make an impact on team-building, through self-managed spaces. Collaboration and the sum of skills, belonging to each model, serve to bridge the gaps, to implement projects and promote any type of social-artistic development within one or several specific communities.

Ultimately, the ongoing community development is the driving force for any space that defines itself as a cultural centre. In return, it allows to deal with those policies that not only exercise pressure on the cultural sector but also on those non-hegemonic identities that are required to render services to diverse institutions in search of their self-recognition, be them artistic groups, activists, sex dissidents, or the politically divergent.



GUINEA EQUATORIAL
Cultural Centre of Spain
in Bata

Address

Paseo Lumu Matindi s/n,
Bata

Opening year

2001

Web

<http://www.ccebata.org/>



Cultural Centre of Spain in Bata

The cultural cooperation of Spain with Equatorial Guinea dates back to the eighties and nineties, when, through the Hispanic-Guinean Cultural Centre of Malabo, various activities were promoted that quickly became a sociocultural reference of collaboration between both states.

In the same period, various cultural cooperation activities were implemented through the Cultural Action Programme in the Continental Region of Equatorial Guinea; such Programme was implemented in a space assigned within the facilities that the Technical Office of Cooperation had in the city of Bata.

The creation of two Spanish cultural centres in Equatorial Guinea was a direct consequence of the rise of the presence and promotion of the Spanish culture in both locations; the first one of these centres was inaugurated in 2001 in the city of Bata, with the foundational objective of projecting cultural cooperation throughout the Continental Region; the second was inaugurated in 2003 in Malabo — after the transfer of the management of the Hispanic-Guinean Cultural Centre to the local authorities —, its activities are focused on the Island of Bioko.

Thus, after sixteen months of construction work, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Bata (CCEB) opened its doors on July 9th, 2001, the ambassador of Spain in Equatorial Guinea being D. Jacobo González-Arno Campos. Ever since its inception, the CCEB has made an effort to serve as a reference point for artists, associations, institutions and other socio-cultural groups, while providing the city of Bata with a diverse cultural offer that includes library services, courses, workshops, promotion of local artists, etc. At the same time, the centre has been holding cultural and artistic conferences and positioning itself as a platform for written and audio-visual publications of various kinds.

Over time, parallel to all these activities, the CCEB has also managed to consolidate its position

as an inclusive institution, promoting diversity, and defending fundamental values within the framework of a civil society in constant progress.

The CCEB headquarters, well positioned along the board walk of Bata, near the historic centre of the city, is in one of the most suitable locations for the development of its activities. The building has more than 2,500 square metres, distributed on three floors around a central courtyard that is, in turn, a multi-purpose space for many of the various activities (exhibitions, concerts, contests, etc.) that the institution organizes. Next to this space, we find a large auditorium, the African crafts shop, the bookshop, as well as the workshop classrooms. Worth mentioning is the existence of two libraries. On one hand, there is a general library with a capacity of over 50 users, which today is a true reference of the intellectual and literary life of the Continental Region. The library has more than 5,000 volumes, including reference books and a loan service; there is a specialized area on Africa and Equatorial Guinea — with more than 480 documents on the geography, history and customs of the region —, along with a section for literary creations and specialized magazines. The library is also a venue for a number of activities to encourage reading, as well as conferences, book presentations and many other activities related to the world of culture. There is, on the other hand, a children's library with over 1,200 books, that has become one of the most outstanding educational environments for primary school children.

Apart from these headquarters, the CCEB also manages the possible use of a space called Asonga Space — former headquarters of the Spanish Cooperation —, a place destined to the temporary lodging of artists and collaborators who collaborate with the institution on a regular basis. This space features different modules made up of housing, offices, warehouses and industrial units that

contribute to the development of cultural activity. In one of the pavilions, as well as inside the facilities, activities are carried out with schools, generally focused on children, as part of the Asonga Programme.

Currently, the CCEB develops different lines of work aimed at meeting the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, which are established within the framework of the United Nations General Assembly, and whose fundamental objective is to modify the world in which we live, taking into account the parameters of sustainability in human development.

In this regard, over the last five years, there has been an increase in the number of activities aimed at promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities, equality between men and women, the fight against gender violence, or respect for diversity; these activities are carried out jointly with various organizations — whether official or non-governmental —, such as ASAMA (Association for the Support of African Women), ASSONAMI (Association for the National Solidarity of Disabled Persons), ONCIGE (National Organization of the Blind of Equatorial Guinea), as well as with

educational institutions such as “Manos Felices” or “La Fe” schools, with students with hearing difficulties.

In the field of artistic and cultural promotion, it is also worth mentioning the close collaboration with state institutions such as the AEGLE (Equatorial Guinean Academy of the Spanish Language), as well as the presence of a wide range of native artists in areas as diverse as dance, music, painting, or literature.

The outcome of all these collaborations is reflected in the celebration of several thematic weeks organized by the CCEB every year, such as Women’s Week or Functional Diversity Week, as well as in training activities such as the Sign Language Workshop, which is taught on the premises of the Centre. These activities are combined with conferences, book and publication presentations, exhibitions and courses. Inter-institutional collaborations also allow for different activities such as Book Week, or the Comic and Illustration against Gender Violence Contest, as well as the development of micro-theatre sessions for the eradication of violence against women.



1.
Christmas carol contest
at the CCEB, 2018

2.
A quarterly guitar workshop,
part of the Conservatory project
in the CCEB



3.
Day of Mother Tongues 2018.
Musical performance of
Manuel Eyama with traditional
instruments



The acknowledgement of the country's rich and diverse patrimony and heritage is also of great importance for the CCEB. We therefore worked on the rescue of the patrimony on the island of Corisco, on the identification and extraction, its subsequent stabilization, packaging and delivery to the Equatorial Guinean authorities. On the other hand, the CCEB has been continuously supporting initiatives for knowledge, preservation and dissemination of the intangible heritage of Equatorial Guinea through the Oral Resources Laboratory.

In the field of performing arts, it seems particularly worth mentioning the boost that the CCEB gives to the development of theatre performances, for which it usually counts on the collaboration of different local theatre companies such as Ceiba Bantú, Biyeyema and Millennium Actors.

And yet, the role of the Cultural Centre is not only focused on supporting talent, but also on forging it. Students' creative and expressive skills have been encouraged and promoted through workshops such as drawing, guitar, piano, drums, poetry and writing.

These students, in turn, have become cultural agents, with great repercussion in the current Equatorial-Guinean society. Some young writers are already publishing their works in Spain and have perfected their writing techniques in the workshop given since 2017 by Matías Elé, writer and co-editor of the magazine *Atanga*, which in turn is produced by the CCEB. Many of the artists coming from different cultural environments who have taken the training workshops of the Centre are now a household name within the new Guinean cultural landscape, and clearly epitomize the work and involvement of the CCEB with the local culture.

Not to be forgotten, apart from these initiatives directly of the Centre, is a wide variety of projects that the CCEB develops through other governmental organisms and institutions, from cooperation organizations, or from any other private initiative entities. Upon request, diverse activities such as seminars, courses, awareness-raising theatres, and film screenings are developed in the spaces that the CCEB usually provides them with.



It should be mentioned that the CCEB also serves as a point for information and dissemination of Spanish and foreign scholarships, competitions and announcements, both in Equatorial Guinea and in the rest of the world. Information on cultural and artistic interest is disseminated through its bulletin board and its presence in social networks.

In so far as the projection of the Centre in the rest of the Continental Region, the Cultural Extensions Programme holds special importance. The CCEB tries to relocate its activities through this programme, so that they are not only focused in its headquarters, but also in other areas of the city, and even in different inland locations within the country, from Ayamiken to Kogo and from Mbini to Nsork. Among these extensions, we may highlight activities such as the cultural tours, the support for neighbourhood festivities, the visits to schools or the itinerant programmes to encourage reading in different environments.

4.
Asonga Space, students from the Colegio Nacional (National School) in the activity of Mothers' Day, 2019

5.
Concert of feminine voices, during Womens' Week in March 2019

Women in Africa

Anastasia Nzé Ada

Chair of the NGO IDHMA

From the year 2012 to date, the NGO for Equality and for the Human Rights of Women in Africa (IDHMA) holds its collaborative relationships with the Bata Litoral Cultural Centre of Spain in high esteem. As a matter of fact, our NGO considers them exemplary.

IDHMA has worked with the CCEB on different projects to strengthen the capacities of civil society organizations in the Continental Region of Equatorial Guinea, within the area of human rights for women and girls.

Within the framework of the National Campaign “16 days of activism against gender violence” — beginning on the 25th of November with International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, through to the 10th of December, Human Rights Day — the NGO IDHMA has held seminars for seven consecutive years at the CCEB. The topics discussed in those meetings are related to violence against women and girls, early or forced pregnancies or marriages, the link between gender violence and AIDS, and so forth. The “Regional Training Seminar on Sensitivity in Gender Equality and Violence Against Women in Equatorial Guinea” was held during the 7th National Campaign.

Within the framework of the 1st National Women’s Week, in commemoration of the 8th of March, the IDHMA held a seminar at the Cultural Centre on gender equality. During the celebration of the First Pan-African Week of Women, in commemoration of July 31st, IDHMA also organized a seminar on equality and the African regional instruments for the protection of the human rights of women and girls.

Finally, in the context of the Project Ven Amiga (Come Friend) for the comprehensive care of women and girls, victims of people trafficking in Equatorial Guinea, a seminar on human rights and human trafficking was organized in our country in March

2019. At the opening ceremony of this event, we were very pleased to be joined by both the consul of Spain in Bata and the director of the Centre.

The NGO IDHMA is truly grateful for all these collaborations; for the availability of the space and the materials, and for the attention of the staff of the Cultural Centre of Spain in Bata.

As Headmistress of an Educational Institution

Maria Luna Escribano Cabrera

Headmistress of Carmen Salles School of Ebinayong

As the headmistress of an educational institution in the interior of the country — more specifically in Evinayong —, I can affirm that for us, and over the period of four academic years, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Bata has been a window that has enabled us to widen our horizon without having to move, which is unusual in this context.

Violin and piano concerts, puppet theatre performances, a number of activities for Book Day, traditional and modern dance, the exhibition The Prado Museum in Bata, comic exhibitions, book donations..., all these different activities to open our eyes to a culture that in our environment would not otherwise be easily accessible.

Being a spokesperson for what our students say upon completion of these activities, I may say that, for us, the Cultural Centre represents a desire to learn more and to better ourselves — but also allows us to discover other cultural realities that motivate us; it gives us the enthusiasm to undertake new learning paths, the motivation to do differently, and the knowledge of what other young people are doing... “And us, why not?”. Indeed, the Cultural Centre is amusement, leisure, joy, friends..., that’s why we wish to continue enjoying this “window to the world” for many years, this opportunity to live a little more open to culture.

Functional Diversity in the CCEB

Hilario Engonga Eló Oyana

*Secondary School Teacher
Vice President of ASSONAMI (Association for the National Solidarity with the Physically disabled)*

My relationship with the CCEB has been interesting from the beginning and throughout the time in which we have been collaborating.

Thanks to the Cultural Centre of Spain in Bata, I have had the opportunity to attend different training courses, apply what I have learned and share it with others.

I should not leave out the different exhibitions that I have been able to visit, the conferences and presentations — of plays and books of different authors —, as well as the various concerts that I have had the chance to attend.

Over the past few years, our bond has grown stronger due to the annual celebration of the Week of Functional Diversity —dedicated to people who have some type of disability. The CCEB, the Association, as well as myself, have all been involved in the implementation of different activities. This has brought us satisfaction — coming out of the closet as well as enjoying the capabilities that people with some disability have, and so, exchanging opinions and experiences. These types of initiatives encourage people to talk about reduced mobility or disability and make it possible for these issues to stop being taboo, or something that forces one to cringe.

Lastly, it would be very useful for our group that the Cultural Centre of Spain in Bata considered our request to eliminate or reduce the architectural barriers of the building.



GUINEA EQUATORIAL
Cultural Centre of Spain
in Malabo

Address

Carretera del Aeropuerto,
s/n, Malabo

Opening year

2003

Web

<http://www.ccemalabo.es/>



Cultural Centre of Spain in Malabo

The Cultural Centre of Spain in Malabo (CCEM) and its counterpart in Bata (CCEB) are part of a historic productive process that traces back to 1979, a year in which supporting Malabo had a massive international rapport as it was coming out of a decade in which the emerging state of Equatorial Guinea had collapsed.

The cooperation at this initial stage meant humanitarian aid in which the international response was as if a hurricane had passed through, the collaboration even reaching the point of substituting the Government itself on some occasions in so far as solving urgent situations.

Within this context of urgency, one decade before the current Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID) was set up, the Cooperation Office in Equatorial Guinea had been created. From that office many multi-sector programmes were implemented throughout the country, many converging (culture, heritage and education) in the restoration of the historical Institute of Cardenal Cisneros, and stemming from that, the posterior creation of the Hispanic-Guinean Culture Centre.

The bi-national institution would prove to be a dynamic cultural propeller for the following two decades, and constitute a net of cultural decentralized spaces across the country, training rooms oriented to different artistic disciplines, a productive publishing house, even a radio for educational purposes (Radio África 2000) associated to the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI).

It made an impression on the “generation of the Equatorial Guinean renaissance” and among the then youngest users, one could hear the saying “you aren’t from Malabo if you didn’t go to the Hispanic-Guinean cinema sessions every Sunday morning”.

This was the way with everything, and even so, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Malabo is relatively young: its re foundation in 2003 lacked the urgency

for reconstruction, and it came about in the process as a result of inclusive cultural policies in the context of a cooperative agenda.

It couldn’t have been any other way, as the Centre was shaped in the period in which Spain led the proposal of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001, in the General Conference of UNESCO, as it did in the arduous debate in which the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expression was drafted in 2005, or as in the case of the AECID, The Culture and Development Strategy Paper of 2007.

It implied the maintenance of the previous trajectory and the adaptation to the new goals set out for the new culture centres to assume.

In so far as geography, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Malabo is characterized by its insular nature. However, through working shoulder to shoulder with the Cultural Centre in Bata, there is a nationwide participation, as well as advancement with the projection within Africa and the Ibero-American Cultural Space. This has allowed for exchange programmes of creators as well as enabling the presence of local artists on the international landscape.

That double affiliation is necessary, and is reflected in the effort to incorporate local diverse creativity in the programmes and activities, but also in the generation of the conditions to enable local processes to be opened to the world, or even the promotion of exchange programmes with Spanish and Ibero-American artists. Perhaps the recent support for the Vis a Vis festival, a meeting point for Spanish cultural promoters and African musicians from Casa África is the most notable, but other initiatives are not lacking such effort. Some such examples are the itinerary of the Audio-Visual Equatorial-Guinean Show throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, or that the emblem of the campaign of AECID in 2018-2019 for the



International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women was designed by the Spanish-Guinean illustrator Lydia Mba.

In order to reach a broader public and encourage professional accomplishment in the local creative processes, the Centre organizes long-term training throughout the year, with less media impact than mass public events. Accordingly, the Centre arranges quarterly courses of piano, guitar, creative writing, text self-publishing, traditional percussion, theatre, etc., aimed at adults and children. Likewise, modules of reading and writing oriented towards persons with hearing impairment have been kept up for many years.

Despite the re adaptation of resources on behalf of the Agency a decade ago, these training courses in the Centre have been maintained and prioritized since the 80s as a long-term investment including in the last Joint Cooperation Commissions. These have precisely been among the three priority sectors, two that converge in the Cultural Centre of Malabo, CCEM, such as culture and education.

In turn, the ACERCA programme and the exchange of professionals with the Cultural Centre of Spain in Bata contribute to overcoming the compartmentalization of knowledge and creative innovation.

Complementing this line of training, the Centre — which occupies an area of over 6,000 square metres — holds a policy of follow-up and the cession of space for young creators and civil society, contributing to the effective crystallization of projects of collective production. As part of this process, the assembly hall of the Cultural Centre has been the stage for the inauguration of these projects for decades, serving as a pilot space for a first interaction with the public, prior to circulating in the limited commercial circuit.

As an expression, towards foreign territories, of unity in its actions, in addition to promoting

1. Entrance to the Cultural Centre of Spain in Malabo

2. The children's library of the CC in Malabo

3. Hispanic Song Festival

4.
Concert of the Annabonés
group Fafá Palea



creative spaces, the rooms of the Centre regularly host training courses generated within the Spanish Cooperation environment. But insofar as dealing with creation, one must recognize the identifying elements: the Guinean population possesses a great treasure of living languages, rich with expressions of intangible heritage.

In the first interventions of the Heritage Programme of Spanish Cooperation the efforts were oriented towards immovable heritage and even archaeology. However, in recent years, the Cultural Centres have prioritized the intangible heritage of the population (fang, bubi, ndowé, bisio, annobonesa and fernandina), supporting their research, systematization and dissemination through workshops or publications (dictionaries, grammar documentation and compilations of narrated tales). Cultural Centres regularly present progress reports as to their research as part of what is called Oral Resource Laboratories and the field research is facilitated to the Spanish researchers with academic

ties to the country. Recently, training to do with the management and digitalization of documentary heritage has been included in the programme. Specific care is needed for the necessary conservation owing to the climate conditions of the region.

The Cultural Centre also has two busy libraries: one being general, with a fine African section, and another specialized in young readers. Together with the library of the National University of Distance Education, with whom they share their space, they constitute one of the key nodes of the island's small network of public libraries.

In the field of book promotion, Equatorial Guinean publications are periodically presented in the Centre; and weekly visits to the library from schools are organized.

The promotion of reading is carried out following the model of the Princesa Cartonera publishing house of the AECID Library. Over the past two years different collectives of artisans have been trained, to incorporate the elaboration of cardboard

(Cartonera) publications as a strategy to diversify products, in so doing, providing the Bata and Malabo Centres with an artisanal editorial. By means of this man-made support, the new local narrative is being widely spread. Moreover, after having rescued the ISBN sequence of the editions of the Hispanic-Guinean Cultural Centre, the transcendence of borders is guaranteed to the same accord as other editions of commercial nature.

Since 1985 the editorial has published selected texts through the contest of the Literary Competition 12th of October, more recently, those of the Guinea Escribe Literary Contest aimed at attracting the most novice writers. Both publications have a privileged space for their distribution provided by the libraries of the Spanish Cooperation spread over three continents.

Recently to facilitate the custody and consultation of the publications of the Spanish Cooperation in the country, both the Technical Cooperation Office (TCO) and the Cultural Centres of the country, have been involved in the creation of a micro site specialized in the digital fund of Equatorial Guinea in the Digital Library of the AECID. 40 years of publications added to the archives of the Hispanic Library and a selection of documents from

other libraries conform a documentary heritage that registers numerous consultations from Equatorial Guineans as well as from foreigners.

In spite of it all, the digital gap continues to exist and poses a serious limitation for sustainable development, driving the Centre to combine trainings of digital literacy with others oriented towards the use of tools for digital editing and illustration within the creative world.

And as it would correspond to a specialized unit of the AECID, the programmes and projects of the Centre integrate different sectorial approaches provided by the Master Plan: sometimes a transversal element in need of interventions and other times – the approach is with the entity itself, such as thematic workshops or workshops oriented towards a specific segment of the population.

These theme weeks held in the Centre allow for special emphasis on particular subjects such as sexual diversity, children's rights, and the combat against violence towards women, or biodiversity.

In case of the environmental approach, being one of the constant actions of the Centre, the environment has even been able to count on specialized publications (for example, Áreas protegidas de la Isla de Bioko - Protected Areas of the Island of Bioko) and other awareness campaigns. Nevertheless, over the last eight years the Centre is proud of hosting its own theme week on the subject of International Day for Biological Diversity and is currently summoning Spanish universities, the civil society, the Government and the United Nations. This event has become an obligatory date on the academic agenda that concurrently mobilizes training and cultural activities. It stands for a flagship proposal in the country, oriented towards the exchange and transfer of environmental knowledge.



Combining nature and culture

Rocío Cadahía Fernández

Screenwriter and public awareness coordinator at the NGO ECOGUINEA

Back in 2001, UNESCO announced that cultural diversity is heritage common to all of humanity, being “as necessary for humankind as biological diversity is for living organisms”.

Both culture and biodiversity acquire different shapes through time and space, and both embody a source of innovation and creativity. One clearly derives from the human being, the other, seemingly, appears as a result of randomness, competition, climate...

Culture and biodiversity are firmly intertwined, but in such countries as Equatorial Guinea this relationship becomes even more intimate. So primary, so solid that the Equatorial Guinean culture or art could not be understood without passing first through a sieve of the country’s lush natural wealth.

In Guinea when nature inhales it inspires, and when it exhales, art is born. A symbiosis that has shaped a rich oral tradition, and a multitude of anchored rituals and legends, passed down, deeply rooted to the multiple ecosystems of the country.

When the jungle breathed, tales were born. Tales that told of the turtle, the gorilla or the owl who transmuted during the night into wise men, courageous warriors or into sorcerers. Tales that told of a drum made of forest, that was baptised as nkú los fang, and calls out for persons by their name.

In Guinea, women breathe the soul of the river, and ecstatically, beat the riverbed for it to sing out. It obeyed, giving rise to the most ancient instrument that exists.

And upon inspiring a bit of sea, the poetry of Raquel Ilombe was born, and from her window in Bata she wrote “What have you done, red earth, that I have you so deep within? What have you done, sea? Your waves covered me and changed me to beach”.

The Equatorial Guinean artists have always felt marvelled, surprised or frightened in the light of the grandeur of their surroundings, and have let that be

captured in their artwork. From the sinuous lines of the dead trunks that gave life to the universe of the sculptor Fernando Nguema, to the rich legends of the Bubis where there are no waterfalls, boulders or lakes without a spirit to protect them, to the constant presence, dense and humid presence of the jungle in María Nsue’s Ekomo, already considered the best work of Equatoguinean literature.

And it should not come as a surprise, given that Equatorial Guinea has one of the richest biodiversities of the world. The country is located in the Congo River basin, an area that has been considered one of the lungs of the planet.

The Central African country, composed of three islands (Corisco, Annobón and the largest, Bioko), possesses a large maritime area (almost 90% of its territory is sea), but also mountains and beaches, and of course, forest. Vast ranges of virgin jungle that still shelter elephants, chimpanzees, pangolins, antelopes, hundreds of types of birds, and thousands of unique and fascinating insects.

Without any doubt, the binomial biodiversity and culture constitute the most outstanding heritage of Guinea; two treasures that (as the international organizations do not cease to repeat) must be acknowledged and consolidated for the benefit of present and future generations.

This has been the driving force over the past eight years that has inspired the development of Biodiversity Week. An event that kicked off as a small encounter of biologists and various NGOs back in 2012, and has since been consolidated as the most prominent environmental event in the country. A path, nonetheless, not exempt of difficulties. ECOGUINEA, one of the institutions that promoted the creation of the Biodiversity Week, took its first steps almost simultaneously with the event. We were, and are, a small NGO aimed at conserving

biodiversity, but with an eye not only on research, but also on environmental awareness.

Guinea lived what we went through in Spain in the 60s. Accelerated development, rural exodus and, in a sense, abandonment of traditional ways related to the environment. It was necessary for the Equatoguinean population to fall in love with its nature once again.

Hence the arrival of activities in schools, reports and documentaries such as *The Secret of the Forest*, through which the world saw unprecedented images of the Equatorial Guinea jungle for the first time. *The secret of the forest* was supported by the Cultural Centres of Spain in Equatorial Guinea and, as it couldn't have been any other way, was released during the Biodiversity Week in 2016. Its nationwide and international success made the power of the union evident, once again, between nature and culture, a promising relationship, without a doubt, for the country.

The idea came to life, to create an encounter focused on Equatorial Guinean environmental awareness as well as the need for its protection.

From that moment, Biodiversity Week has been held annually coinciding with the International Biodiversity Day, on May 22. The fact that the designated venue has been the Cultural Centre of Spain in Malabo all these years is not a coincidence; and demonstrates not only a broad vision in terms of the strategy of the institution (with a clear commitment to sustainable development) but a deep knowledge of the idiosyncrasy of the country. This commitment has not only been preserved over the years, but it has in fact increased and has contributed to the consolidation of the Cultural Centre of Spain in Malabo as a fundamental partner, key for environmental awareness and education in Equatorial Guinea.

The data proves it. Throughout the six days of the last Biodiversity Week, there was an average of almost four hundred people per day who visited the Cultural Centre, mostly students from the National University of Equatorial Guinea, one of the organizing bodies of the event.

And undoubtedly, another great achievement of the Week was the joint organization. From the first moment the doors of the event were wide open to anyone interested in collaborating with the institution in compliance with both the motto and further activities to be carried out. In the past edition over thirty organizations supported its implementation in one way or another. Particularly worth highlighting is the implication of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry and Environment, who has made the event theirs, and has sheltered it for some editions now. Without this joint and often voluntary work, it would have been impossible to maintain the Biodiversity Week, which has never had stable funding.

Therefore, despite the uncertainty that comes with every year, the Week goes on and seems to overcome all obstacles, and to date is a place of encounter, awareness and training. With lectures centred on the condition of biodiversity in the country, with exhibitions that offer alternatives for the conservation of nature, and with workshops that provide attendees with training in disciplines related to sustainable development. It also encompasses a wide range of activities dedicated to the little ones so that they learn to appreciate and take care of their environment, counting on theatre, film, music or media, as powerful weapons of mass awareness. Tools that possess the magical ability to reach the entire country with the plea - pro conservation of nature – one of the pivotal points of the Week of Biodiversity.

Intangible heritage in Equatorial Guinea

Nánāy-Menemôl Lédjam

Former Coordinator of the Oral Resources Laboratory

An enormous collective effort so that Malabo can become a colourful palette full of scents and the strength of the Guinean nature. To continue breathing forest and ocean with which to build music, tales and poetry.

And may their echoes, like those of the *nku*, continue to resonate throughout all the jungles of the world.

Hopefully, for a long time.

This year 2019, marks 37 years since the Cultural Centres of Spain began their journey in Equatorial Guinea, in 1982, when the Hispanic-Guinean Cultural Centre (CCH-G) began operating. The CCH-G was a bi-national cultural institution with a specific mixed sponsorship between Equatorial Guinea and Spain, which initially had two directors: on the Spanish side, the linguist Germán de Granda; and the Guinean journalist and writer Donato Ndongo-Bidyogo Makina.

The creation of that bi-national institution on the soil of Equatorial Guinea was not a mere adventure, but an occasion for the two countries to walk together in so far as culture. It had basic and quite clear objectives to execute: it was imperative to develop an efficient cultural policy, including the study and knowledge of the variants and peculiarities of the Spanish spoken by the local population, as well as the revaluation of the native languages of all cultural sensibilities that make up the colourful cultural mosaic of this territory nestled in Central Africa.

Thus, in addition to disseminating creativity in the country, it redirected special effort to the promotion of the indigenous cultures of Equatorial Guinea, granting them a privileged space, with their introduction on the agenda of the Centre or with the teaching of Bubi and Fang language classes. That effort would not remain only in the teaching of these languages, but also in publications of monographs of these: *Fang language course*, by professor, philologist and poet Julián Bibang Oyee (1990); *Bubi language course*, of also the doctor in Philology, professor and poet Justo Bolekia Boleká (1991). As well as *Malabo Spanish: phonetic / phonological processes and dialectology implications* of Professor John M. Lipski (1990) and the *Anthroponymy Bubi: linguistic study* by Justo Bolekia Boleká (1994). Another deference that the CCH-G assumed regarding the local languages is the strategy used in

the Christmas carol contests convened each year, where it was inexcusable not to attend without two themes, one in Spanish and one in any one of the languages from any cultural sensitivity of the country. To date this model is still taken into consideration.

This strategy empowers the youth from Equatorial Guinea to incorporate traditional rhythms into their musical and choreographic proposals, and encourages youth to learn, speak and write in their regional language.

To effectively disseminate culture in the country and on the continent, the then CCH-G was permitted to create two cultural magazines; *The backyard*, of monthly circulation, and *Africa 2000*, which came out semi-annually. They were the only and best windows where authors and researchers from Equatorial Guinea could publish their works.

During the period of the operation of the CCH-G, there were numerous literary works, especially involving social and linguistic studies, generated and disseminated by specialists who were just as equally participative in the native languages and cultures. Apart from the underlined linguistic studies, several other works by writers from Equatorial Guinea were published: *Voices of foams* from Bokesa Napo Ciriaco, and *Poetic album* by Jerónimo Rope Bomabá, a disciple of Ciriaco; *Poems, Load, The Fainting of Judas, Awala cu sangui*, all of Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel; *Requiebros, Where are you going Guinea? or Dreams in my jungle: (poetic anthology)*, by Juan Balboa Boneke. From that time, I would also highlight the compilations of the folk tales of the different ethnicities of the country: *Fang tales from Equatorial Guinea, Bubi tales, Annobonese tales, Ndowes Tales*, etc., all compiled by Jacint Creus.

The current Cultural Centre of Spain in Malabo (CCEM) has continued with the legacy of the previous CCH-G. Since 2003, when the doors of the CCEM were opened, the publications

of authors from Equatorial Guinea have increased, partly due to the literary contests that the Cultural Centre convenes every October 12th, Hispanic Day, coinciding with the commemoration of the Independence of Equatorial Guinea, as well as other contests convened on April 23rd of each year, International Book Day. As the cultural centres (Hispano-Guinean and current CCEM) are the only institutions that have convened literary competitions throughout the country since 1985 and currently continue to do so, they have also published the winning works in their respective journals: *The backyard* and *Africa 2000*, in the discontinued CCH-G, and *The tree from the Centre* and *Atanga* in the CCEM. At present, the criterion taken is the monographic publication of the winning works of the different literary competitions, so the texts are published jointly in a collection, previously called *Seas of Guinea*, currently renamed as *Winning works of the October 12 Literary Contest*. The contest on April 23, currently called Guinea Writes Short Story Contest, is sponsored by the Martínez Hermanos Foundation; The three best winning works of Malabo, and the three best of Bata, are published in Cartoneras Editions. In this literary contest, only narrative creations are permitted.

Apart from the two literary contests that the CCEM convenes each year, the promotion of the mother tongues of the country is continued through the preservation of the format of the extinct CCH-G. From 2003 to now, the CCEM has published several works by Guinean authors, both literary products and linguistic research. Of the published linguistic works we can make special mention to: *Spanish-Bubi / Bubi-spanish dictionary*, by Justo Bolekia Boleká (2009); *Pichi grammar*, by Kofi Yakpo (2010); *Descriptive grammar of the Fa d'ambô*, by Armando Zamora Segorbe (2010) and *Spanish-Fang / Fang Spanish dictionary* by Julián Bibang Oyee (2014).

In the past, the works on the compilations of oral traditions of the country were published in the magazines *The Patio* and *Africa 2000*. Since 2006, when the Centre for International Studies of Biology and Anthropology (CEIBA) took root in Malabo, the publication of this genre multiplied considerably with the dissemination of monographs: stories, traditional poems, collections of proverbs, oral traditions in general, etc. The role of the Oral Resources Laboratory came to give formidable momentum in the publications of intangible heritage materials in Guinea.

But what was the role of the Oral Resources Laboratory? It was a programme promoted by CEIBA that was established in the CCEM a year after having been installed in Bata in 2001. This programme is responsible for training future researchers to conduct field studies on traditions and customs, as well as the recovery of orality in general from the different ethnic groups of Equatorial Guinea. Thanks to this programme, the CCEM was able to publish or sponsor much of the research, both from trained researchers and from training teachers; among these, we would highlight: *Words that have no mouth: urban stories of Equatorial Guinea*, *Why we are black and more stories and legends Bubi*, *Bubi Collection of Proverbs*, *Annobonan oral songbook*, *Traditional poetry of the island of Bioko*, *Word of mouth. Studies of oral literature of Equatorial Guinea*, etc. In short, through the Oral Resources Laboratory, the Cultural Centre published more than twenty books, and financed several conferences given by the members of the Oral Resources Laboratory.

Unfortunately, the situation in recent years meant the disappearance of the economic contributions to this programme, making it necessary to resort to other ingenious, and more economic, informative formats, but which, despite their importance, are not always comparable to the processes previously promoted.

Similarly, the disappearance of the emblematic scholarship programmes that supported research or those grants accessible in the academic environment such as the Inter university Cooperation and Scientific Research Programme (PCI) has been noted.

In any case, other opportunities arise through the spaces for exchange, regularly convened by the Cultural Centre, a careful bibliographic collection in the library of the Centre (physical and digital), the two current editorial lines (October 12 and Cartonera Editorial) and belonging to a network of centres that facilitates the transit and exchange of ideas in several continents.

It is quite an unavoidable and true challenge to guarantee the dissemination of oral and literary traditions, as well as to promote social and linguistic studies. After all, a community devoid of its own cultural identity is a society called to extinction.

The Cultural Centres have always played a leading role in that process, and it is our wish that, in the future, it will uphold that implication that was part of its founding mission four decades ago.

Centres Associated to the Spanish Cooperation

Stage piece *La Batalla del Parque España* (The Battle of the Park of Spain) on the esplanade of the Cultural Centre Parque de España en Rosario, April 2017



ARGENTINA
Cultural Centre Parque
de España in Rosario

Address
Sarmiento y el río Paraná
S2000AHQ, Rosario

Opening year
1993

Web
<https://www.ccpe.org.ar/web/>

Cultural Centre Parque de España in Rosario

The Parque de España Cultural Complex is the product of a shared history, that of those thousands of Spanish immigrants who, having crossed the Atlantic, disembarked from the ships towards the end of the 19th century at the historic docks - Puerto de Rosario, to assimilate the life of a small city that was beginning to bloom.

Heirs of that preliminary encounter, a group of people from Rosario of Spanish descent forged the idea of symbolically bringing together both nations through a space that would become an emblem of that cultural convergence. Responsible also for bringing the project to life, far from imagining a static monument, they set out to build a living memory, of intangible culture in progress. This artifice would first become a foundational tie with the Hispanic history and origins, and later into a permanent bridge of exchange with contemporary Spain and finally a link in the Ibero-American creative chain.

In an endeavour without precedence, the Municipality of Rosario and the Spanish Government joined wills and resources to finalize the building project: the complex would be a home for an educational and cultural centre, and an extensive public space.

For this purpose, the Parque Cultural de España Foundation was created, composed of the Government of Spain, the Municipality of Rosario and the local Spanish community represented by the Federation of Spanish Associations of the Province of Santa Fe.

The construction of the building was carried out based on a project by the Catalan architect Oriol Bohigas, with the project and direction of Horacio Quiroga, from Rosario. Thus, the work was inaugurated in 1992, and became not only one of the largest investments that Spain made outside its territory, but also the cornerstone of the urban transformation that the city was going through.

Anchored next to the Paraná – after the Amazons, the second longest river in South America, extending close to 5,000 km– the Parque de España Cultural Centre is an essential part of the Complex, with a unique infrastructure that stands out for the versatility in the use of its eclectic spaces.

The CCPE project handled recovering the emblematic character of a series of nineteenth-century port tunnels, preserving fundamental elements of the original architecture, transforming an abandoned building into a modern and versatile spatiality designed to help to promote the meeting of all the people of Rosario.

The CCPE theatre has a large entrance hall, the auditorium – with a capacity for 518 people – has a stage of 12 by 10 metres, dressing rooms, translation booths and central air conditioning. It also has a concert piano and an acoustic panelling system that allows adjusting the reverberation of the room. Performing arts are also presented in the outdoor amphitheatre, which has 300 seats and a magnificent stage overlooking the river.

The exhibits are shown in the Galleries, three interconnected domed tunnels, with 180 linear metres of exhibition space and a total surface of 500 square metres. The Túnel 4 room can accommodate 130 people seated and is perfect for chamber concerts, conferences and theatre plays in small format.

The CCPE also has a media library, a free access service dedicated to consultation and research, which houses a rich and unique bibliographic, cinematographic and sound archive. This space is equipped with modular furniture that allows lectures and workshops for up to 30 people.

The Centre for Historical Studies and Information Parque de España (CEHIPE), which is dedicated to the preservation of documents and the investigation of the Ibero American past, has also found a place in the Cultural Complex.



1.
Located in a privileged area,
between the river and the city,
the Complex Cultural Parque
de España stands out for its
original architecture, designed
by the Catalán Oriol Bohigas.

Last but not least, it is worth mentioning the Patio de Cipreses, an open space with capacity for about 800 people and a place of encounter for the concerts and celebrations.

Lines of work

Designed as a space for cultural exchange, as a mixed institution, the CCPE has made a difference in the cultural panorama of the city, this new management model being fundamental when planning and designing actions.

In virtue of this position, from its initial stages, it has had a clear strategy of collaboration and support with the rest of the cultural, political and social institutions of the local administration, which has led to a rich and productive synergy of cultural life in the city.

Today the Cultural Centre works from seven governing programmes: network cooperation (coordination of projects and actions that honour the CCPE tradition); the promotion of Spanish culture; training in culture and education; support and promotion of creative cultural industries; visual arts and performing arts; thought, science and humanities; inclusion and emerging rights.

Positioning in the local context

Located in a privileged enclave of the city, resembling a balcony overlooking the Paraná River, the CCPE is anchored on the coast of Rosario as a magnificent ship made of bricks; a perfect metaphor for the tribute to those thousands of Spanish incomers who arrived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to quickly assimilate the local culture, enriching it with their knowledge, arts and crafts.

When inaugurated in 1992, the Bohigas building was erected in the urban fabric as an enormous ship, anchored on the banks of the Paraná, opening the port gate that for years had denied the river to Rosario. With this milestone the municipality began a historical process of recovery of the coastal line, transforming a neglected space into a magnificent lookout to the river.

The Parque de España Cultural Centre is an integral part of this complex, and since 2002 its management is shared, the product of an agreement of mutual cooperation, signed by the Municipality

of Rosario and the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID).

Since its initial stages, the CCPE installed an innovative model of cultural management in the city, from a wide and unconventional concept of culture, always linked to training within the cultural sector, paying special attention to emerging expressions of art and encouraging local cultural industries, becoming a reference for later experiences.

Today, as in 1993, thousands of people from Rosario continue to enjoy the best of local, national and international art and culture in its spaces; to learn and enhance talent; to debate and generate critical thought to do with issues of concern; to build new and vibrant experiences.

CCPE, an agent of culture encoded as international cooperation

Weighing the role of the CCPE as an agent of culture and cooperation brings us firstly to value the unique cultural identity that the city of Rosario has – owing to its history and tradition, as a result of the founding integration of various communities – as a brand of its own.

In this context, since its beginning, this space has been a visible manifestation that cooperative work in the field of culture is, indeed, a creator of citizenship, a provider of sustainable results and experience, and has served as a model for international cooperation since 1993.

With this trajectory in mind, there is no other alternative but to remain in the steadfast understanding of culture as a collective action and as a construction of alterity, through cooperative relationships that strengthen the objectives of the development of the city, improving the quality of life and contributing to the human development of its citizens.

Argentina and Spain have a long tradition in bilateral treaties of cooperation, datum offering sufficient guarantee to be able to perpetuate conceptual and programmatic continuity to the work previously outlined for Culture and Development, which was progressively realigned by virtue of no longer being contemplated within the guidelines of the Master Plan of the Spanish Cooperation as a priority country.

The strategic position of the CCPE preserves the nodal line of managing culture as a transcendent



2.
do it, itinerant exhibition
 organized by Independent
 Curators International (ICI),
 New York, while they were in
 the CCPE in 2018

resource that strengthens and contributes to development, collaborates in social inclusion and promotes the generation of knowledge oriented towards responsible thought.

Strategic pillars

Through three fundamental pillars: innovation, inclusion and sustainability, the CCPE aims to develop strategies focused on establishing productive synergies with the various actors that shape the cultural panorama of the city.

Under the umbrella of the Sustainable Development Goals, the lines of work of the CCPE agree, on one hand, on the general approaches of the public policies of the Municipality of Rosario in cultural matters (defined in its 2030 Strategic Plan, which postulates Rosario as a Multicultural and Educating City), and on the other hand, they conform to the objectives of the foreign cultural action of the Spanish Cooperation.

With a varied agenda, intense and quite visible on the cultural map of the city, the CCPE promotes events for youth, for new languages, and new ways of understanding the world and communicating. It proposes to generate human capital for the cultural sector, mainly for the creative industries and projects of a socio-cultural nature. It forms critical mass, favouring overseas dialogue between creators, managers and the public and generates a space for dialogue around emerging rights.

Visual and performing arts, film, literature, thought and training are the main points that shape the projects of the CCPE whose vision is determined by the strategic pillars C+D (Culture for Development), from what other ties relating to the defence of the environment are by-products, gender awareness, the construction of cultural citizenship and human rights, among others.

As a pioneer institution in social and cultural innovation, the CCPE should continue furthering its vocation of service to society, wagering on cultural cooperation for development as a tool for social transformation.



3.
Aerial view from the
amphitheatre of the CCPE

4.
Concert in the Principe de
Asturias Theatre

We are already it

Matías Martínez

Actor, director and playwright. He directed the theatre companies La Piara and Tragedias Argentinas. He is the author of award-winning works such as Pelo de Grasa (Oily Hair) and Mein Karl, among others.

The Parque de España Cultural Centre is the City of the Immortals that Borges imagined; its form, its intricate architecture - vast and labyrinth like- lets us know that it will remain when we are no longer. Meanwhile, in its galleries, as much as in its theatres, esplanades and tunnels we, the artists, work as we please, as it gives itself up, surrenders so that we may mould it, according to our whims. All of us who perforate its concrete with art, in some way, form part of it, and hence, become immortal.

Unavoidable reference

Graciela Carnevale

Conceptual plastic artist, member of the Vanguard Art Group of Rosario, one of the persons responsible for the mythical artistic-political project known internationally as Tucumán Arde.

The Parque de España Cultural Centre is undoubtedly an inevitable reference for this city, not only owing to its quality programme but to the lines that guide its footprint as well. It is an institution with which Rosario's artists have maintained a fruitful and ongoing relationship of collaboration and exchange over many years. Always open to dialogue, ready for new challenges and open to diversity, its concern for issues that cross culture as another dimension is remarkable. Issues such as human rights, the matter of gender or the defence of the environment, commitments that are taken on and extended in each action pursued.

A balcony to the Paraná river

Miguel Lifschitz

Governor of the Province of Santa Fe (2015-2019) and former mayor of the city of Rosario (2003-2011).

There is no greater symbol of a fraternal nexus between Spain and Argentina than the Parque de España Complex. The history of its genesis and posterior development precisely illustrates the strength of the deep ties shared among our people, but there is something else, from what then was presented as a ground-breaking outline of collaboration: international cooperation, organizing agendas for joint work with public and private institutions on both sides of the ocean.

The Parque de España Complex is much more than its school, its park and its cultural Centre: it is an inspiration. It is the founding milestone, the basal stone of the most important urban transformation that Rosario has had in the last hundred years. Upon its presence, we ceased to turn our backs on the Paraná, and spun one hundred and eighty degrees around and began to redefine our -river-city- relationship with an undeniable premise: to recover it for the enjoyment of everyone.

At the heart of the banks, Spain helped us give Rosario a balcony on the river to face the future head on.



ARGENTINA
Cultural Centre of Spain
in Córdoba

Address
Entre Ríos 40,
CP X5000AJB, Córdoba

Opening year
1998

Web
<https://www.ccec.org.ar/>



Cultural Centre of Spain in Cordoba

Just as in what is said in tango, that twenty years is nothing, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Cordoba (CCEC) opened its doors on April 7th, 1998, fruit of an agreement between the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID) and the Municipality of Cordoba, with the aim of promoting the scene for local artists and creation, to build bridges to encourage collaborative creation among the artists and the new forms of expression of Ibero-American creation, as well as to promote the contemporary Spanish culture.

The headquarters of the CCEC is located right in the heart of the historic quarters of Cordoba, in a colonial mansion from the beginnings of the 19th century with a surface of 1000 square metres. It is made up of three exhibition rooms, the “Un perro andaluz” (an Andalusian dog) auditorium with a capacity of 90 people, the centre of media documentation “Enterate” (Find out) and the voice of the CCEC, the online radio station Eterogenia. Three indoor patios and an outdoor amphitheatre are used for the live music shows, screenings and presentations.

Since its opening, the CCEC has quickly positioned itself as a benchmark within the city in so far as innovation in its themes, the quality of its productions and the influx of visitors in the context of the new local and Ibero-American aesthetic proposals.

Disciplines such as media arts, comic or the proposal of crossing the variables of gender and environment in the conception of its management, as well as the commitment with diversity and social inclusion, have been vital in the construction of a conjoined agenda with local institutions in order to position culture as a right and, at the same time, as a tool for transformation and development in the social fabric of the city of Cordoba.

In this sense, the CCEC has been pioneer regarding accessibility for cultural spaces in

the city of Cordoba. The first measures taken were of intervention with the architectural space (construction and location of accessibility ramps, accessible restrooms) in order to later address the accessibility of contents and services. The Centre offers material in sign language, audio guides, texts in Braille and macro type for every exhibition. Along with Red Mate (Material and Educational Tiflo Support), there have been adapted guided tours and movie screenings with descriptive audio. The media library of the Centre offers the collection Vero Vanadia-Design for Everyone and the books available for people with visual disabilities through the Tiflolibros Library. The Radio Station Eterogenia, besides offering architectural accessibility to its facilities, has a console of technical operation with boards in Braille and the computer offers the JAWS software, which allows people with reduced eyesight to read the screen. The radio offers two programmes dedicated to inclusion (*Atado a un sentimiento and Distintos caminos*) (Tied to a feeling and Different paths).

Moreover, a programme for the inclusion of people with disabilities in the area of customer service was created through the agreement with the Office of Employment Intermediation of the Secretary of Equity and Promotion of Government Work of the Province of Cordoba.

The Cultural Centre has always meant being a node of communication and exchange with the different cultural agents of the city, offering a wide and varied programme that tackles all the languages of artistic creation: visual arts, audio-visuals, music, literature, performing arts and training, the final objective being the facilitation of citizen access to culture.

The CCEC forms part of a network of municipal cultural centres, participating along the lines of transversal work of the Secretary of Culture, such as: Women’s Month, Cordoba for Cordovans, Art



Market and the Book Fair. In this last one, Spain was the first guest country in the year 2014, highlighting on that occasion the participation of writers Agustín Fernández Mallo and Elvira Navarro. In the International Encounter of Crime Literature Cordoba Mata, the CCEC contributed with the participation of writers such as Alexis Ravelo, Lorenzo Silva y Ángel de la Calle.

The mixed character of the Centre allows for management with other cultural agents such as the Cordoba Culture Agency, belonging to the Government of the province of Cordoba, and for the contribution to the programming of events such as the Mercosur Festival, where works such as *El cielo de los tristes* from the Catalanian company Los Corderos, or *Penev* from the company La Teta Calva have been programmed. This collaboration with the Teatro Real (Royal Theatre) was extended to the staging of *El perro del Hortelano* (*The dog in the Manger*) on behalf of the cast from the Comedia

Cordobesa or from Guillermo Heras' work *Tsunami*, in the Theatre Seminar Jolie Libois.

The CCEC, in addition, has actively participated as part of the cluster EUNIC organizing the six editions of the International Literature Festival, with the presence of writers such as Andrés Barba, Guillermo Abril and the illustrator Javier Zabala. Moreover, the CCEC participates in the European Cinema Week and the conference *Diálogos Globales*, organized together with the Ministry of Culture of the Nation.

Since 2008, the Centre is a benchmark within the field of comic, offering a comic library, the permanent exhibition space "Suelta de Globos" and at the festival Docta Comics, the only one in the city to do with this subject and which has counted on the presence of Javier Olivares y David Rubín.

The CCEC has maintained its identity combining young art, contemporary thinking and the cultural management of disciplines for local



development. In addition to being pioneer in the field of emerging art and in cultural encounter between both shores, the strong point of the CCEC has been the crossing between art and the new technologies. Projects such as Agosto Digital, Experimentalia, Mediáfora or the International Day of Electroacoustic Music, are an example of that.

The CCEC is a node of exchange but also, a platform of proposals, a citizen laboratory upon which its current programme is based. With an eminent focus on social and development issues, conceiving culture as an exercise of social participation.

Our challenge for the future is to take on the 2030 Agenda as the core driver for our actions, understanding that the cultural and development binomial has been widened over these last years. And this widening of the battle field of culture, within a new global agenda such as the one proposed by the Sustainable Development Objectives, encourages us to continue working, and reinforce the processes

of social innovation, citizen and democratic participation, human, gender and diversity rights, as an inherent part of our daily routines as part of the Spanish Cooperation.

1. International Contemporary Art Fair *¡Afuera! Arte en Espacios Públicos* (Out! Art in Public Spaces), 2010. Globos aerosolares (Hot-air balloons), work of Tomás Saraceno

2. Docta Comics Festival that offers its programme connected to comic, since 2008

From the value of being an open node to change

Gonzalo Biffarella

Composer and electroacoustic musician. Multimedia artist. Professor of the Seminary of Composition with New Technologies at the National University of Cordoba and coordinator of the International Day of Electro acoustic Music.

Quantum physicists who are some sort of contemporaneity priests, say that we understand the world not through things, but through events, through processes that occur and transform over time.

I have been fortunate, as an observer and as a direct participant, to have accompanied the evolution of the Cultural Centre of Spain in Cordoba (CCEC), throughout these 21 years.

21 years of a space-time which was given life through dialogues, agreements and disagreements with the Spanish Cultural Agency and the successive efforts of the Municipality of Cordoba, which based its day to day on the ideas and work of hundreds of people who found at the “España Cordoba” (that’s how we call it here), an open door to project development within the area of culture.

This channel has allowed for the opportunity of projects in multiple directions, lines of work in which key and emerging artists of the whole of Ibero-America have found fertile grounds to enrich and fine tune their proposals.

One of those lines, undoubtedly the line with which I found myself most involved, is the one of dialogue and the development of the arts and new technologies. From its beginnings the “España Cordoba” opened its doors and gave ongoing support to media arts.

Cycles such as Agosto Digital, Experimentalia, Mediáfora, MediaLab or the JIME (International Day of Electroacoustic Music), only to mention a few that I have found myself involved in, have been places of encounter and exhibition of the works of Spanish and Argentinian artists, and on numerous occasions, representatives of other Latin-American countries.

This line of research and development, I should emphasize, is one of many that has been launched from the Centre. The joint projects between

the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba (UNC) and the CCEC, have been especially fertile. Numerous are the professors of the Faculty of Arts of the UNC, who have channelled some of their productions through the cycles of the CCEC and have obtained the support to invite artists and Spanish theorists, who gave seminars and workshops in our higher learning institution. One of the most potential projects within the field of Media Arts: the Anilla Cultural Latinamerica-Europe (Cultural Ring of Latin America - Europe) finds support coming from that fertile relationship between the UNC and the CCEC.

With strong initial support from the AECID, the *Anilla* was born as a decentralized network in the field of culture, which makes the most out of the potential of the great global networks of the Internet: Red Clara (Latin-America) and Giant (Europe), to put theorists and creators in contact.

In Argentina, the node of the *Anilla* was installed at the CCEC thanks the agreement with the UNC, which facilitates the access to the fibre optic network of InnovaRed.

The *Anilla* initiated in 2010 with active nodes in: Argentina, at the CCEC; in Chile, at the Contemporary Art Museum of Santiago; in Colombia, at the Modern Art Museum of Medellín; in Brazil, the Cultural Centre of São Paulo and in Spain at the Centre of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (CCCCB). Over the years, other nodes were added, in Uruguay through Infoart, in Mexico through Cenart and a new Colombian node at the Caldas University of Manizales.

The *Anilla* took the international scene by storm, enhancing dialogue and online creation. An infinity of collective creations, in real time, contributed to the generation and consolidation of a critical mass in the field of media arts, especially in Latin America.

Artists of image, musicians, designers, performers, dancers, writers, thinkers, researchers, teachers and managers were converted into “weavers” of a web that speaks for the wealth of pooled work.

The vocation of hundreds of people has made that initial project grow and transform into what we have come to know and treasure today, the “España Cordoba”. Undoubtedly, there are many who would like that energy that runs through the CCEC to continue flowing, attaining as expected, new forms of expression.

It is an unavoidable responsibility of the Argentinian and Spanish officials to respect those wishes and guarantee the continuation of the bilateral agreement which the CCEC holds. It is such a rich path of testimonies of what has already been achieved, that it can only make us think in the many years to come, filled with new achievements which defy our imagination.

I started referencing physicists and the idea that we only know the world through changes. I close this brief text, thinking about how much we have learnt of our world through observing and living through the changes in our cultural lives which were made possible to us through the Cultural Centre of Spain in Cordoba.



PANAMÁ
Cultural Centre of Spain
in Panama – Casa del Soldado

Address

Paseo Esteban Huertas,
Casco Viejo, Panamá

Opening year

2013

Web

<http://www.ccecasadelsoldado.org/>

Cultural Centre of Spain in Panama – Casa del Soldado

The Cultural Centre of Spain in Panama – Casa del Soldado (CCE|CdS) is a space for encounters, reflection and learning. A place of the transmission and exchange of knowledge, but above all, it's a space of community in Panama. In the Cultural Centre, community is understood as a place of refuge, allowing one to distance oneself from the dominant mercantile logic and to think using other perspectives, such as affection and active listening.

Associated to the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID), the institution is managed by the Panama-Spain Foundation, a non-profit entity which includes some of the main Spanish businesses in the country. The Panama-Spain Foundation channels private contributions that add to the contributions of the Spanish Cooperation. The CCE|CdS was inaugurated on the 18th of October 2013 by the Prince of Asturias, the current King Felipe VI of Spain. Since then it has been a part of the Network of Spanish Cultural Centres of the AECID.

The Casa del Soldado de la Independencia, which hosts the Cultural Centre, is an exceptional building nestled in the centre of the Casco Antiguo (historic city centre) of the city of Panama. Built to one side of the city wall which once separated the elite from the less favoured sectors, it's located beside the Esteban Huertas Avenue. Its architectural importance lies in that it is one of the few edifications located within the walls of the Casco Antiguo, which makes it an odd, charming building, that is currently a refuge to an exemplary cultural programming, just as Spanish as from Panama.

The current building, with a concrete structure and wooden floors, dates to the decade of 1910. The Archaeology and History Department of the National Museum, project of Octavio Méndez Pereira, then Secretary of Public Instruction, made this his home in June of 1925. The grand halls dedicated to History

and Ethnography contained a valuable pre-Hispanic art collection which is currently part of the collection of the Anthropological Museum Reina Torres de Araúz. The National Museum was relocated to new headquarters in the thirties of the 20th Century, and the house that had hosted the Archaeology and History section was passed over to an organization of survivors of the separation efforts of Colombia in 1903, known as "Soldiers of Independence", who installed a small exhibition there. During the nineties, the house was transformed into the headquarters of the National Directorate of Historic Patrimony and, after a period of inactivity, in 2010 the AECID restored the space with the support of the Escuela Taller (Workshop School) of Panama.

Over these last years, the Historic City Centre of Panama has been subjected to an aggressive process of gentrification which has radically changed the urban and social structure of the neighbourhood. Because of this, the relationship of the Cultural Centre with the community is a fundamental part of its conceptualization, emphasizing projects which engage it with its surroundings. Currently a mediation strategy is being developed with the purpose of elaborating a project with the community in which the Centre itself is located. The Centre tries to resonate with the dynamics and problems of the neighbourhood, as well as to foment dialogue among the neighbours through school visits, a youth programme exclusively dedicated to working with the children of the area, and through the opening of spaces for debate and reflection.

If there is something that hasn't changed in the Cultural Centre since its origins is the participation of the general public and the artistic community in the institution. The Centre has stimulated these reunions and debates, having become an authentic home for the communities of creators, counterparts, cultural researchers, the users and the team itself



1.
Panamá Aérea, International Laboratory for
the Creation, Dissemination
and Research of Aerial Dance.
Intervention in the Cultural
Centre, September, 2018



from the Centre. Citizen participation is key for its Strategic Plan. This participation is achieved through the civil society, where the Centre is positioned as a platform and catalyst for proposals, not as a producer or for holding for activities.

Several collectives and sectors of the civil society have appropriated the place, using spaces for their activities, reunions and projects developed in collaboration with the Cultural Centre, such as the Space Michita Café, linked to collectives of feminists, or the BlaBlaLab, the debate programme of the Cultural Centre. Subjects such as human rights, gender equality and current affairs are addressed in the BlaBlaLab. Spaces are opened for discussion and critique, key for inclusion, tolerance and democratic health. The problematic of a collective doesn't imply it should be a participant of a project. Participation means that the collective itself be an active part of the project, empowering itself and taking lead.

Likewise, the Cultural Centre supports strengthening of local institutions which has been one of the working pillars, especially in the area of training, in collaboration with the programme ACERCA of Training for the Development of the Cultural Sector. One such collaboration has been with the Directorate of Citizen Culture and Education of the Mayor's office of Panama, through the programme Puntos de Cultura (Points of Culture). This municipal project, in alliance with the Ministry of Education, transforms the official schools of the capital district into cultural spaces of community living over the weekends, and, with the support of the Cultural Centre, several workshops of cultural management have been developed for its workers.

Furthermore, the Cultural Centre joins the annual celebration of the Month of Black Ethnicity, through the Africa in America Festival organized by the Mayoral office of Panama. The Cultural Centre has developed several activities within the framework of this festival, orientated towards the recognition and making the African-descendant culture visible in Panama. One of these activities is the exhibition *La Travesía*, about the culture of Congo, accompanied by an outdoor mural occupying its façade of over 100 meters high, narrating the importance of Negritude in the construction of the Panamanian identity.

The Cultural Centre of Spain in Panama has established a constant and diverse programming



2.
Artist encounter, from the
programme *Trampolín*, July
2018

3.
Artists in the programme
En una Papa, in a laboratory
session in 2018

of workshops and training courses oriented, not only towards cultural management, but also to the recuperation of historic memory and heritage, and its management and conservation with local counterparts. More specific workshops are offered on dramaturgy or cinema, training or theatrical appreciation. Over these past two years, a pedagogic line of work has been initiated, orientated towards procedural and collaborative participation, towards auto-editing and the book as a tool of individual and collective transformation. La Casa del Soldado is located in an alternative space, with a small library that holds this type of independent publishing.

While these workshops and the training line may be qualified as tangible projects, other initiatives are worth mentioning, such as the prioritization on behalf of the Cultural Centre of the discussions on professionalization, recognition and the concerns of the professionals of the creative sector, the internal work processes and forms of encounter and cohabitation in the Cultural Centre.

The integration of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in the Plan of the Cultural Centre of Panama is developed through the vision of culture as a generator of capacities for development. In a world that is in a state of alarming social deterioration, it is urgent to discuss certain topics in order to try and understand the complexity involved.

Over these previous years, the CCE|CdS has worked along these lines with contemporary artistic practices. Given the broad and flexible nature contemporary art offers, it's a useful tool to debate current matters that favour research and the production of thought, more so than from within a more formal ambit. An example of this is the programme *En Una Papa* (In A Potatoe), an inclusive project of contemporary art, that includes training, professionalization as well as the dissemination of artists who, for different reasons, work outside the art circuit and, in some cases, society. This project is an opportunity to give light, through artistic practices, to the presence of the collectives to which these artists belong to, and to recognize the importance of their participation in the socio-cultural life of the city.

The contemporary artistic practices help us to discuss and reflect upon the present through powerful images, with a strong poetic and symbolic content, which successfully raise questions about the mentioned hegemonic reality. Through exhibitions, as



4.
Inauguration of the mural
La Travesía, May 2019

well as broader and more complete projects, such as the programme Trampolín, the Cultural Centre has become a space of reference for outstanding contemporary art projects.

Culture, in its most general expression, makes us human beings, apart from being a tool in the fight against dominant hegemonic speech and giving us the ability to work from empathy. Culture, through its contribution to knowledge and its capacity of generating critical thought, is key in encouraging respect towards diversity, the development of creative abilities or the promotion of true gender equality.

Lastly, worth a special mention is the effort made in the promotion and dissemination of Spanish contemporary art and culture through the main international festivals of the country, as well as the collaborative work and integration on a local and regional level to do with the creation of projects and programmes. Be it through the network of cultural centres of the region, or through its own projects, the Cultural Centre elaborates programmes on a Central American level. The incorporation of the

CCE|CdS in the project of Central American Artistic Residencies of the Network of Cultural Centres of the Agency, and the relationship with other institutions of the region, is a great challenge in so far as the integration of Panama into the Central American artistic circuits, having traditionally been isolated from the region.

After over five years running, there are still many challenges to face, especially regarding participation and mediation. Apart from giving continuance to ongoing local dialogue, internal critique is vital, as access to culture as a tool for human development isn't a term that should only remain within the scope of cooperation. The vision of culture as a citizen's right should be the challenge of any public cultural space or institution.



5.
Concert of the group Niños Mutantes in the Amador Theatre, September 2018

A house with wide open doors

Adrienne Samos

Editor, curator and art critique. She co-founded and directed the cultural magazine Talingo (1993-2007), winner of the Prince Claus of Holland Award in 2001.

I remember the high expectations that many of us had with the longed for opening of the Cultural Centre of Spain in Panama – Casa del Soldado, six years ago. “It’s about time!”, we exclaimed. Panama was one of the few capitals of the Hispanic-American region which still lacked headquarters of the Network of Cultural Centres of the AECID.

“Areas of silence” are spoken of: territories in which isolation or terrible political conditions asphyxiate the voices of culture. Just the contrary of what goes on in Panama. Nicknamed “the hub of the Americas”, the isthmus flaunts one of the most buoyant economies of the continent, a stable democratic system and an optimal geographic location. People and general cargo from all over the world transit these areas non-stop. This is why the important entities of international management have preferred to prioritize much less favoured cities. Nevertheless, a country which enjoys an intense commercial activity, and the consequent increase of revenue, doesn’t necessarily make a proportionate distribution of its wealth or its cultural climate. In Panama it isn’t the silence, but rather the excess of noise what drowns many artistic talents and cultural scenes, so much in fact that they become orphaned from any sort of institutional support.

Fortunately, Casa del Soldado has exceeded our expectations, to the point that it has become one of the few cultural spaces with a nourished alternative programme. A space frequented and loved not only by its neighbours, but by Panamanians and residents as well, inside and outside the artistic and academic environment. Over these years we have participated in endless art exhibitions, book launches, workshops of different disciplines, and for all ages (aimed mostly towards youth), talks, round tables, debates, plays and dance, film screenings, concerts..., apart from the management of scholarships and diverse residencies. It is obvious that the activities are generated or chosen

with great care in order to guarantee quality, to secure the bridges built between the communities of Spain, Panama and the region, to cross over the barriers between art (especially contemporary art), education, critical thinking and the public sphere.

With a limited budget and a small team (almost all young professional women), in Casa del Soldado the work is carried out with rigour, joy and companionship. Much of their “invisible” work consists of providing professional advice -as valuable as it is free- to creators and cultural managers. Likewise, anyone from the neighbourhood and beyond is welcome to visit its cosy library: a space to work (with internet access) and to read.

In other words, the house of Spain in this city has more than demonstrated that its metaphorical and physical doors are wide open to all of us.



NICARAGUA
Cultural Centre of Spain
in Managua

Address

Primera Entrada a las
Colinas, 7 cuadras arriba.
Managua

Opening year

2010

Web

<http://www.ccenicaragua.org/>



Cultural Centre of Spain in Nicaragua

Since its creation in 2010, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Nicaragua (CCEN) has been associated with the Spanish Cooperation through its counterpart, the Nicaraguan Institute of Hispanic Culture. There has been an ongoing effort since 2016 towards its definitive conversion into an Overseas Cooperation Unit (UCE), that is, a fully integrated unit within the structure of the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID).

Today, the CCEN is a recognised flagship of cultural space in the city of Managua; it is a unique place of encounter and exchange. There are very few similar institutions in Nicaragua that manage to combine — and offer — alternative programming with quality projects and activities.

The headquarters of the CCEN are located near the Embassy of Spain, in the residential neighbourhood of Las Colinas, far from the city centre. Such distance brings safety, peace and quiet, which makes the CCEN a unique space for the people in Managua. The building was renovated to adapt to the needs of the Centre and the local cultural sector. It is characterized by its wide and open spaces; it has a vast garden full of fruit trees and an outdoor area with a versatile scenic space that is essential for workshops, concerts, projections and other activities. It also has a multi-purpose room, particularly suitable for exhibitions and conferences. There is a radio, a library and a multimedia laboratory. Apart from this, the CCEN is one of the few cultural spaces of the city without architectural barriers.

The land where it is built was handed over to Spain in 1974 by the Municipality of Managua for cultural use. The cession agreement entailed the commitment to host the Nicaraguan Institute of Hispanic Culture (INCH) and the Nicaraguan Academy of Language within the facilities of the Centre. The headquarters are thus shared by the three institutions.

Together with its facilities, the great asset of the CCEN is the staff team that makes it what it is. The training and professional experience of the staff is rather unusual in the context of this country.

One of the characterizing elements of how the Centre is run is the on-going search for funding on behalf of the local cultural sector and the Nicaraguan society. For this reason, the selection of projects and programming is always based on external, open calls that are published on the website. This way, artists, cultural managers and programmers take part directly in the cultural agenda of the CCEN with innovative projects from different fields. Every year, a call is opened based on the established objectives and priorities and the projects for the next year that have been chosen. The authors of the chosen projects receive some guidance to adjust to the procedures and lines of action of the Centre. In addition to the annual general call, there are specific calls throughout the year to balance the programming and to be able to work all the desired areas. This method enables the CCEN to know the state of the cultural sector — its needs, its potential and its shortcomings, — as well as the cultural interests of the Nicaraguan society; it also gives rise to a constant dialogue and guarantees transparency. The main idea is to maximize the impact while using the least amount of economic resources and carry out actions that make sense within an operational context of the centre. An open policy regarding the reception of projects ensures a local connection just as it protects its economic transparency.

Apart from the projects that come through public tender, the CCEN has its own activities organized by the staff of the Centre. In this sense, Cineando el cambio (Cinemizing change) stands out as a proposal that invites dialogue and reflection of the different realities that are reflected through social cinema; or Lo Audiovisual, a training project aimed



1.
To read is to make your imagination fly, a segment of the project Children's Saturdays of performance arts and the promotion of reading, allied with Nicassitej. March 2019

2.
Creative process of *Radio Tormenta*, together with ASB, theatre play based on the inclusion of people with disabilities and of the elderly. June, 2017

at university audiences in which cinematographic creators share tools from the different areas that make up an audio-visual production. The projects connected with the library and the radio are also of relevance.

The library originated six years ago as a space for work, consult and research, open to all, with a wide repertoire of literature of different genres, magazines and specific archives on contemporary art, training and cultural management. It has more than 14,632 volumes. There is no other library like this in Managua, and that is why it continues to be a highly visited and valued space today; there are currently more than a thousand library card holders and visits remain stable and high. In addition to being a space for consultation, the library organizes weekly activities such as The Library “tales” you (also meaning tells – in Spanish), intended for children, or the Book and Coffee reading club for adults.

Since 2012, the CCEN has a fully equipped radio studio for recording, content production and specialized technical training. It is used to develop the on-line CCEN Radio project, where weekly programmes are broadcast in podcast format. The programmes cover various disciplines. In *Letras descafeinadas* (Decaffeinated writing), for instance, authors and creators discuss their literary proposals; *La Bitácora* (the Logbook) analyses Nicaraguan and Spanish cultural current affairs; Kids on the Wave provides a didactic space for students in which every month the students from a guest school produce their own podcast. Currently the strategy to reach a larger radio audience is being restructured, thanks to the video recordings of the programmes and a larger presence in the social networks.

Out of the activities of the Centre, it is particularly worth noting the projects that surface with the support of the CCEN and that take root in the country and have continued over time; such as the Emerge Project, currently in its sixth edition, which showcases young emerging musical talents and has been internationalized in Central America thanks to the Network of Cultural Centres; the ContentArte project, currently in its fourth edition, which has created an artistic group that integrates children with or without disabilities; or the projects such as Children Saturdays, The Story Route and The Kamanali Route promoting performing arts, reading, and universal values for children, youth and

the elderly, respectively. Furthermore, the CCEN stands out for its unconditional support for the main Nicaraguan festivals; the most relevant in this sense are the Lady Fest, which promotes women artists, the International Poetry Festival of Granada, the Jazz Festival, the Ibero-American Film Festival, the Justo Rufino Garay Experimental Theatre Festival, or the Central America Cuenta Festival, directed by Nicaraguan writer Sergio Ramírez, winner of the Cervantes award. It’s also important to mention the projects in collaboration with the European Union and the Member States such as the European Film Festival, as well as the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. Various projects have contributed to the consolidation of the Ibero-American Cultural Space, and in alliance with other Cultural Centres in the region there has been an increment of student residencies - artistic cultural exchanges in Central America.

The cultural sector in Nicaragua has not been professionalized; therefore, there is a great need for training in cultural management and promotion in all cultural sectors. Institutional support and public spaces for the development of cultural projects or for professional training are practically non-existent. In this regard, the CCEN should be highlighted for its work strengthening the professional capacities of cultural agents through specialized training; through the ACERCA programme, but also through workshops given by invited Spanish artists and creators to participate in activities and festivals of the CCEN itself. Journalists, librarians, designers, cultural managers, oral narrators, writers, producers, performing artists and musicians have been trained in these workshops. The training offer made available by the Centre is well recognized and anticipated in the Nicaraguan cultural circle.

Thanks to a great variety in programming and an on-going effort in the contextualization of activities, the CCEN is seen as an avant-garde cultural alternative. Popular culture is deeply rooted in Nicaragua, and the most common cultural manifestations are folk dances, traditional music, handmade crafts, colonial historical-artistic heritage or religious syncretism, popular theatre, and the celebration of the national festivals, it is also a country characterised by its long tradition of



3.
Florece, a mural that formed part of an illustration workshop "Ni azul ni rosado" (Nor blue nor pink), given by Andrea Fonseca in July 2017



poetry, and of having been the birthplace of many great writers. In general terms, local agents pay little attention to contemporary visual and plastic arts. There has been a slight increment in so far as exhibition spaces and exhibitions, but they are still scarce; the same situation is applicable to cultural exchanges and to initiatives to promote cultural products of Nicaraguan creators. In this regard, the CCEN has come to alleviate the insufficiencies and needs of such spaces.

The value of the CCEN proposal lies in both its contents and the variety of audience to which the proposals are addressed. The Spanish cultural cooperation has diversified its actions, reaching a diverse public, and ensuring the identity of Spain as a country that promotes equality, avant-garde culture, training in cultural management and specialized art, and that facilitates the exchange and development of Ibero-American creators and artists. There are abundant initiatives that encourage the inclusion of

some groups — mainly women, LGBT, indigenous people, Afro-descendant peoples, and people with disabilities.

The Centre has some groups that regularly attend the activities and participate in the calls, but activities and workshops are continuously organized to increase the Centre's projection by identifying new groups and audiences. In this fashion, the cultural offer has been broadened according to the needs of the public, attracting young people, the elderly, children, social groups, schools and universities.

Over the years, the CCEN has created alliances with national and international institutions and organizations to carry out its programming. Consequently, it has been possible to enhance the impact of the initiatives and bring cultural proposals outside the capital city. However, due to the political situation in the country, many of the Centre's counterparts have closed their doors or significantly reduced their activity. The withdrawal of much of the cultural cooperation has increased the importance of the role of the AECID as an actor of development. The polarity that exists in the political sphere is transferred and spread to the field of culture and therefore, it is not uncommon for a purely cultural activity to be turned into an act of political claim or propaganda or interpreted as such. The CCEN has the virtue of being regarded as a neutral actor, and its facilities are one of the few spaces where people of different ideologies may still co-exist. In this sense, in addition to being a flagship cultural space, the CCEN is also an established place of encounter, recreation, education, tolerance and neutrality. While almost all cultural centres and spaces had to close their facilities at some time during the crisis of 2018, the CCEN was able to continue with its programming. In crucial times, commutes were avoided by resorting to an online format for training, and more than 200 people participated in different workshops in that modality.

In a nutshell, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Nicaragua stands out for its achievements in its few years of existence and especially for being a flagship Centre for the diversity and quality of the training it offers and for its cultural proposals, as well as for the defence of cultural rights and for being a space of reflection and dialogue for all.

The impact of the CCEN in Nicaragua

Mario Ruiz

Nicaraguan producer, arranger and singer-songwriter. Law degree and studies in Spanish language and literature. He is currently organizing the Emerge Project, together with SaXo Productions.

Seven years ago, as an initiative of the Cultural Centre of Spain in Nicaragua (CCEN), we started working on the Emerge Project, with the main goal of backing newly created young bands to position them on the national music scene and expand the artistic offer. After seven years of intense artistic labour, it's important to emphasize how the stage stands out as the best manner in becoming professional.

The outbreak of emerging bands is not by coincidence; in 2015 alone, more than 60 bands applied to take part in our fifth edition. Throughout these years of the Project Emerge, more than 300 artists have collaborated with us in 16 concerts (13 in Nicaragua and 3 in Central America), there have been 11 round tables and training workshops and more than 2,500 people have joined us in the facilities of the Cultural Centre, equipped with the proper technical configurations, comfort and safety and is now, in the public eye, is considered as a space for both the artistic community and the general audience of Managua.

On the other hand, despite the achievements of the CCEN, there is an urgent need to create new spaces for artists in general. In that sense, we are compelled to bring art to the neighbourhoods and departments of Managua; we should prompt professional artists and cultural managers to show solidarity with new talents, and foster alternatives so that citizens may consume more art in general. As a priority, we should also encourage — and raise awareness — of women's artistic creation, while also breaking with the deeply embedded cultural Mafia which hinders the artistic evolution that we so much deserve.

Lastly, it is important to carry on with the project on a Central American level giving higher exposure to the art of Nicaragua, procuring exchanges with the other cultural centres of Central America, enriching the artistic scene as well as the artists. As a musician and a cultural manager, I vow to continue working in support of the young national talent. It goes without saying that despite such efforts, the scene is still emergent and now, more than ever, our efforts should be focused on that artistic tradition which affirms, discovers, and expresses the very characteristics of the Nicaraguan identity.

Corazón Contento y ContentARte (Happy Heart and Happy Art), art plus disability is possible

Patricia Fernández

Spanish educational psychologist specialized in early care and early childhood education. Patricia Fernández is the manager of the Corazón Contento Comprehensive Development Centre in Granada, Nicaragua, which promotes social inclusion projects through theatre and the visual arts.

Since the beginning of this project, with fear and much effort, it has been our goal to demonstrate how people with disabilities have many artistic abilities. From the very beginning, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Nicaragua (the CCEN) has shown interest and invested much effort in making this possible. Uniting the different branches of art, edition after edition, this goal has been accomplished. The CCEN and our institution have joined forces in this project to use culture as a tool for development, understanding development in this context, as a step forward towards disability in the vision and the respect of the community.

The success of the ContentArte project was evident from the first day on, upon seeing 30 young people meet for the first session. 50 per cent of the participants presented some type of disability and that in itself, was the biggest challenge: living with the disability — especially for people who came from areas where tolerance or respect were scarce.

The first group would get together from the beginning of the first edition on, until, in the sixth week they gave the first representation of *The Little Prince without barriers*, an adaptation of *The little Prince*, by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. To see the participants supporting each other in make-up and wardrobe previous to the show was exciting, but even more so was to see the artistic expressiveness they showed during the presentation.

Jasser Pérez, one of our participants, a 29-year-old who had cerebral palsy, who had never been to a celebration of turning 15 (typical event in Nicaragua when girls reach that age), was invited to a party by a

cast mate. That day, Jasser, for the first time in his life, could feel like a “regular young person” at a party with music and girls. That happening made us see how this project would give outcomes not only on an artistic level, but on emotional and social levels as well.

The CCEN has been supporting this project, contributing with ideas and innovations that facilitate its on-going improvement. In this way, CCEN has played a fundamental role in our community in the fight for the defence of the rights of persons with disabilities, using culture as a means to achieve it. The CCEN team, with its management and organization, has given our young people the opportunity to express themselves and feel part of the society in which they live, while recognising emotional expressiveness within themselves. Because art plus disability is possible.



GUATEMALA
Cultural Centre of Spain
in Guatemala

Address

6ª Ave 11-02, zona 1,
Edificio Lux, nivel 2, 01001,
Centro Histórico,
Ciudad de Guatemala

Opening year

2004

Web

<https://www.cceguatemala.org/>



Cultural Centre of Spain in Guatemala

The Guatemalan Institute of Hispanic Culture opened its doors on February 16th 1955, months after resuming diplomatic relationships between the governments of Guatemala and Spain, thanks to the initiative of two Spanish Jesuits, Carmelo Sáenz de Santa María and Isidro Iriarte, who were also very involved in the creation of the first catholic university of the country in 1961, the Rafael Landívar University.

The internal armed conflict that Guatemala suffered for thirty-six years (1960-1996) had a huge impact on the life of the institution. In the sixties and seventies, the activity of the institute in the cultural life of the country combined moments in which its cultural programme - based upon the promotion of the Hispanic world- was prominent, with other moments in which the institution entered long periods of silence, sharpened at the beginning of the eighties, when Spain and Guatemala ended their relationship and after the vile assassination of Roberto Mertins, who was the President at that time, and the institute would remain closed for five years.

From the renewal of the relationships in 1985, the Institute started to live its authentic spring in its headquarters at the Plazuela España, where it remained for nearly twenty years, standing out as a reference space inside a cultural scene that was starting to lift as the intensity of the conflict was in decline. Events of Spanish writers, discussions about the Spanish theatre, exhibitions from the Guatemalan artists Isabel Ruiz, Zipacná de León, Efraín Recinos and Rolando Ixquiác, or poetry readings from Luis Alfredo Arango, Amable Sánchez, Francisco Morales Santos, Ana María Rodas or Delia Quiñónez, are a part of some of the most relevant activities that took place.

That process that ended with the signing of the treaty between the Institute of Hispanic Culture and the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID) in November of 2004,

which allowed the transformation of the Institute into the Cultural Centre of Spain, Hispanic Culture “as a civilian association, non-lucrative, private, apolitical, non-religious, of a cultural character conformed according to the laws of Guatemala with legal personality, with its own capital and capacity to acquire rights and to take on responsibilities”. It thus became an institution of shared management, or an associated centre of the Spanish Cooperation, presenting itself to the Guatemalan society as a renewed and bold project in its proposals.

From that moment on, the institution started a path towards a deep transformation implying the professionalization of the management team and, with the implementation of programmes and projects linked to the advocacy of the Spanish and Ibero-American culture, the cultural cooperation and the nascent Culture and Development Strategy Paper (2007), it achieved a noteworthy implementation and has formed part of the Guatemalan cultural life, extending its presence from the times of the post-war until today.

Parallel to this, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Guatemala (CCEG) tightened its relationship with the Technical Office of Cooperation (OTC) and with the Spanish Cooperation Training Centre in La Antigua, conforming an outstanding presence of the Spanish Cooperation in Guatemala.

Its incorporation to the Network of Cultural Centres of the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID) gave it the opportunity to start web initiatives which had a certain impact in the Central American region. How to forget the projects *Migraciones: Mirando al Sur*, *Arquitectura de Remesas* or *En Clave Afrocaribe*, proposals in which every country of the region intervened and that helped us understand the existing potential of web-based work as an instrument favouring cultural cooperation. The



1.
Closing of the project
ZOM (Music Zone), aimed
at contributing to the
strengthening of the music
sector in Guatemala.
November 2011

collaboration has remained in force over these last years, witness to this are the diverse itineraries throughout the region, as well as the Programme of Central American Artistic Residencies which is currently on its third edition.

Over this time, the CCEG has been located in different areas of the capital. Three in the last fifteen years, each one in a different area, and has made a difference in each location, fond lasting memories to date. So many changes in such little time was not an easy task, and would represent heavy implications for any institution, but the human teams never fell short and handled the situation with ability and enthusiasm.

Nowadays, the CCEG is located in the Historical City Centre, on the most emblematic pedestrian street of the city, the Paseo de la Sexta. Its relocation to that area coincided with the recovery process initiated by the Municipality in light of the urban decay and increment of violence that had been endured by that area over the past years. The challenge of relocating there, the rent and the re adaptation of an old theatre into a modern cultural centre was tackled successfully. Nevertheless, today the CCEG is located in a fundamentally commercial area, in which other cultural initiatives have not yet flourished, in fact some that opened have already closed. Just as in other historical city centres of many capitals, the process of gentrification is slow, while a high level of violence is still latent.

The programming of the CCEG has its institutional roots in the cultural policies established by the AECID and in the annual instructions received through the Embassy. The CCEG, conceived as a cultural platform, offers a constant programming in which the most contemporary manifestations of the different Guatemalan artistic disciplines are offered. Its spaces are also used by several cultural agents for rehearsals, script readings, presentations of different studies and research, meetings of experts, neighbours. A place for citizenship building. In that sense, perhaps one of the biggest contributions may have been accompanying Las Poderosas - a women's group of victims of violence who, through theatre, find empowerment – on their way to becoming a well-established company of reference.

The exhibition halls of the CCEG have hosted some of the best pieces created in Guatemalan contemporary art, as well as critical projects aimed towards the surrounding harsh reality. Some

exhibitions are memorable, as is the case of *Outsiders*, putting forward a panorama of contemporary art created by indigenous artists; *Imaginaria, disidente*, the first complete retrospective of the group Imaginaria -essential to the understanding of Guatemalan contemporary art-; and more recently the show titled *Arte Digital*, which today is still a creative topic little known in Guatemala. The presence of Guatemalan artists has been combined with the presentation of itinerant exhibitions sent from Spain which allowed the public to become familiar with the artwork of different Spanish artists. The exhibition *El Museo del Prado in Guatemala* is still remembered, which left an impact on the Guatemalan public opinion, or *Vida* from the photojournalist Gervasio Sánchez, who accentuates life in warlike conflicts.

The latest tendencies in drama, music, dance, circus, cinematographic, etc. pass through the auditorium. Programmes such as ZOM, Aves Raras (rare birds) or the current Independiente have given voice to the musicians of the country; Escénica Poética to dramatists, actors and poets, or the programme Horizontales, that gives the opportunity to students of primary and secondary education to meet well known and novel authors. The CCEG has also been headquarters for film festivals dedicated to the recovery of the collective memory, such as *la Muestra de Cine Internacional Memoria Verdad Justicia* (International Film Festival Memory of True Justice), *el Festival Internacional de Cine y Comunicación de los Pueblos Indígenas / Originarios FICMAYAB'* (International Festival of Film and the Indigenous Peoples Communication / Original FICMAYAB'), the *Muestra de Cine Paraíso Desigual* (Desigual Film Festival) and the *Festival Internacional de Cine en Centroamérica Ícaro* (the International Icaro Festival of Film in Central America).

Along with this, a stable trajectory in its programming has favoured the existence of spaces for reflection and encounter with the aim of overcoming complex topics of our reality: "Let us recall. The evolution of the cultural sector in Guatemala from 1996 to 2016"; "Towards a reconsideration of the copyright: collectives, collaborative and open access networks"; "Memories of involuntary disappearances/ Clandestine detention centres in Guatemala". The programme of thought and literature has tried to meet the demands of this necessity.

But apart from these actions, which are the most visible part of a cultural centre, the CCEG has always had a great calling towards training. The CCEG is one of the immensely fortunate beneficiaries of the programme ACERCA, which has facilitated the Guatemalan cultural sector a varied offer of courses and workshops that have always been well received. In these last years, through the Vivero de Economía Creativa (VEC) (Incubator of Creative Economy), in a space dedicated to favouring cultural entrepreneurship and youth employability we have developed three Diplomas of Creative Entrepreneurship sponsored by the academic guarantee of the main university of the country, the University of San Carlos (USAC), through which 150 young people have been trained. Currently, the experience is being systematized in order to extract valid lessons learnt in order to continue to improve on the offer.

Moreover, the CCEG has a grand library for the attending public, made up of approximately four thousand volumes, mainly focused on art and culture.

The CCEG is firmly convinced of the positive role it plays in the city centre, hence the effort to bring several cultural manifestations to the public space which contribute to citizen activity and participation and help in the process of decreasing violence with

projects such as Outdoor Cinema, Art and fun at the Sexta, Street Poetry - Thoughts to liberate our walls, or the Fair of Independent Editorials on Book day. It is also an ally of other authorities, municipal and private, that encourage initiatives that would make public space into a space of encounter for the citizens in mutual acceptance.

To finish, we have witnessed how the institution, celebrating its 64th anniversary this year, and its 15th since the signing of the agreement with the AECI, has gone through different stages, some better than others. It is already preparing to face the new challenges set for the cultural sector through the incorporation of the goals of the 2030 Agenda into its *modus vivendi*. In this sense, on the one hand, it shall be necessary to permanently become an Overseas Cooperation Unit (UCE) of the AECID, and on the other hand, further derive necessities, such as - finding new headquarters to accommodate the economic and space necessities of the CCEG, improving on the current situation, the establishment of a work team with ideal working conditions, and an administrative situation aligned with the rest of the Centres. There are always challenges to take on, to do with cultural management geared towards reaching the development goals.





2. Itinerant exhibition *el Prado en las Calles* (the Prado on the streets), in Guatemala City, 2015

3. The actor Rubén Ávila in *Ser el tiempo* (Be time), a piece presented in the sixth cycle of Performing Poetry in October 2015

4. Exhibition *Guatemala Después* (Guatemala After), produced by the cultural centre Ciudad de la Imaginación de Quetzaltenango, September 2015

The CC and its beats

Itziar Sagone Echeverría

Cultural manager, communicator and artist, director of the Paiz Foundation for Education and Culture. She developed her career backing up initiatives in favor of community development.

Cheerfulness, vitality, conscience, respect. We can label the Cultural Centre of Spain in Guatemala with the concepts closest to human development, stemming from creation and empathy. Each of its actions, however small, has been filled with a driven intention of openness and dialogue. This, in a country in which debate and word tend to generate friction, it is something to be thankful for and deserves an ovation.

The inheritance that the CC carries is important. To migrate from the Guatemalan Institute of Hispanic Culture to the Cultural Centre of Spain in Guatemala meant more than a change in appearance. It implied looking inwards and recognition through different eyes. It demonstrated an obvious intention of the Spanish State to air out the house, strongly rooting for cultural relationships from another angle, perhaps a more familiar one.

I grew up with the glorious image of the Guatemalan Institute of Hispanic Culture, of which my father formed part of, in its first renovation, around 1980, which he recalled with great affection. I went to that same Institute in my youth. Then, it was one of the few cultural spaces which actively invested in promoting art and culture, not limited only to Spanish culture, but it did indeed give it priority. That house had open doors to intellectuals, thinkers, artists and creators. Open to all of those who had something to say. And it was, for its times, a space which clearly encouraged.

The make-over from the Institute to the Cultural Centre of Spain was dead on for these new convulsive, technological and extremely symbolic times. The early years in this new look were key. The proposed makeover was accompanied by significant political and economic support which allowed for discussions and looks that were conceived from a

global perspective, troubling the local point of view on many occasions. Today the CC converses, flows, coexists and is capable of moving between the most unlikely proposals, recognizing them and giving them value. But it is also solid enough as to stop and talk about substantive issues, giving them the importance and space they deserve, in order for us to not overlook the reflection that will make an impact on the subsequent constructions.

I've got in mind a session of analysis on the cultural sector regarding the twentieth anniversary of the Peace Agreements. Though many institutions and artists participated, the CC was the only centre to raise its voice in the sector, making us review what had gone on in these past years. The advances and setbacks were analysed by its protagonists in a double effort, as, in addition to seeing ourselves in retrospect, they were capable of uniting a sector characterized by functioning in ghettos.

One of the most important decisions that this Centre has made was to take on the creation and the empowerment of the theatre group Las Poderosas, recognising the value to life, collective reality and the main points to be healed if the future is to be placed on the construction of a complete human being, stemming from the complexity that being a human ensues. The Cultural Centre of Spain in Guatemala demonstrates through this one wager of constructing a complete human, that with very specific actions you can work and tackle ten out of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals.

As a director of a local institution, I am grateful for the team of professionals of the Cultural Centre of Spain for their incredible capacity of feeling the heartbeats of this country and for being involved. Specifically, for opening their home and welcoming

the Arte Paiz Biennial, from its eighteenth edition to the most recent one, in which they took on a very important role, giving space, what more, to an exhibition full of life, although heart-breaking just the same, to see close up what contemporary societies are made up of.

For the Paiz Foundation, the Cultural Centre of Spain is an ally with whom we are comfortable with and to whom we wish a long life. Spain may see great ambassadors of idea and thought in the team of people who work for this centre. A group of beings deeply implicated with their day to day, who work with the humbleness and clarity of those who recognize the importance of culture for human development and connection.



Featured Projects

Mural on an inside facade
of La Casa Tomada,
San Salvador



Project of the
Cultural Centre of Spain
in San Salvador

La Casa Tomada

Background

La Casa Tomada (LCT) is a project of the Cultural Centre of Spain in El Salvador that initiated in 2012, and that constitutes a combination of various influences in management models, both European and American. In Spain, the cultural centre of contemporary creation Matadero Madrid, opened in 2006, marks an innovative line where diverse groups in theatre, film or design may find an alternative space. The launch of Tabacalera in the neighbourhood of Lavapiés in Madrid in 2010, with Ángeles Albert as the general director of Fine Arts, presents a model that is closer to the inhabitants of the neighbourhoods and the protest of young people without spaces for expression. This was to be the official inauguration of a public-private collaboration model that would open possibilities for other outcomes, with shared management as an essential part of the structure, including La Casa Tomada. In 2011, stemming from the 15M citizen movement, a myriad of related initiatives would emerge as a citizen response to problems and political and social deficiencies, particularly within the cultural sector, although there were already antecedents.

Many entities came to use the term “private” and could have such varied interests ranging from corporate to citizenship movements. So, many initiatives, from foundations of large corporations, to neighbourhood associations or marginal groups, came to combine their efforts, and it was they who authentically left an original mark on town halls and less favoured areas of the cities. The reduction of economic aid to culture led to the first steps of groups and communities united by common interests. Somehow, the crisis encouraged other models of culture management, be them more philanthropic and horizontal, but somehow more

profitable and sustainable. Today, as is reflected in the Culture and Citizenship initiative of the Ministry of Culture, there are multiple associative projects and spaces of all kinds. From the rural world, to new technologies, through housing, leisure, urban gardens or any imaginable area, the community management paradigm has become part of the DNA, not only of the new generations, but of the entire society. La Casa Tomada then, is a child of her times.

In America, one of the models that inspired the most and exerted the greatest influence over La Casa Tomada was Culture Points, a project seeking to enhance community cultural activities, and on a larger scale, the philosophy of its creator, the Brazilian Celio Turino. Secretary of Culture of Brazil between 2004 and 2010 and promoter of the programme Community Living Culture, with the rationale of the Culture Points, Celio Turino visited La Casa on various occasions in order to train those involved – those who *dwelled*.

Other models such as the Network of Arts and Crafts Factories (FAROS) of Mexico, the project mARTadero of Bolivia or the Brazilian network of cultural groups Fora do Eixo, among others, were keenly observed throughout the shaping of the model of administration and management to be adopted by La Casa Tomada.

The name

The name is taken from the tale of Julio Cortázar Casa tomada (House taken over), as a way of expression between the “I” and the “we”. The text narrates the gradual occupation of a manor house by a group of reporting entities that make up an indefinite plural and that take over the house where their traditional tenants *dwelled*. With this, the force of “we” is reflected, as a nameless collective, faceless,

without recognizable subjects, in search of a utopian space, shared for the common good.

The name “casa” has been a term of endearment in the recognition of places lived and managed by the inhabitants themselves. In Latin America it was a way of recognizing the different groups of emigrants from the Spanish regions. The squatter movement became something normal; the term was set in the collective unconscious as a place where the somewhat inorganic energy of its components, gathered a group of people with shared hobbies and tastes. The reference to “taken over – tomada” refers to the possibility of practising the power of culture from a community model.

Child of the crisis

La Casa Tomada appeared in the context of the international economic crisis, which affected the Spanish economy in particular, and hence impacting the economic aid for development and for culture. This cutback, which originally seemed an obstacle to the end, was ultimately an incentive, an urgent need to resolve the matter of funds.

As a reference in the cultural going-ons in the country, the Cultural Centre of Spain in El Salvador had such an extensive offer that only one space could not simultaneously combine actions or house such diverse groups. For the mere dimension of its activities it needed a space for growth. At the time when this need for more space became apparent, the crisis had cut off such options along that line.

In addition, the Centre had a series of under-utilized equipment -such as a radio, a sound studio and audio-visual editing equipment-, which needed its own space.

The Centre used the same space for exhibitions, musical performances, stage performances and conferences, so in light of the impossibility of expanding the Centre, the search for other alternatives in times of crisis was encouraged.

The hallmark signature

La Casa Tomada is an attempt to orchestrate wishes to generate a cultural ecosystem. In the end, it is like a planetary system, where collectives gravitate around the common good. The Assembly represents the organic entity that defines, reconciles and guides

the policies of coexistence, survival, communication and social and cultural action of the communities and of “la casa - the house”.

Two levels stand out, on the first, both resident and nomadic groups are governed by a model of self-management; on a second level, the alliance of the groups -in favour of the common good, of collaboration for the operation of La Casa-, it defines a model of group cohesion and an environment of shared knowledge.

The products and services of La Casa Tomada have a high symbolic value and a quantitatively accurate validation, but it is difficult to measure the impact it generates and the value it contains in a traditional way. The complexity in identifying all agents, processes and benefits in the creative economy is sometimes diffuse, making it a challenge to establish data that facilitates the understanding of its impact. A value is generated that goes beyond the monetary, based on the economics of exchange, on a type of philosophy of barter in kind, on trust in human relationships, and on creative freedom - mainly concerning the management methods of La Casa Tomada.

Recognizing and asserting art and culture as a way of life is one of the great achievements of La Casa Tomada, especially in its incursions into territories where the cultural sector does not appear as a dynamic pole of the economy.

In its years of existence, La Casa Tomada has demonstrated the potential of creative economies, since it houses a wide range of initiatives based on the talents of artists and creators; this potential has been developed with the facilities provided by the configuration of an integrated ecosystem of connections that foster the strengthening of collaborative relationships.

La Casa Tomada has generated a proposal of cultural dynamics that can be replicated in other spaces, which can be adapted according to context, attending local identity, communities in progress, idiosyncrasy and the circumstance of temporary-space.

The community management model

Community cultural management deploys a work methodology based on the main leadership of the groups, encouraging participation, democratization, creativity and generation, circulation, consumption



1

1.
The Coffee Shop of
La Casa Tomada



2.
Coworking space of
La Casa Tomada

and access to culture. The methodologies used are rooted in the proximity and the capacity of endogenous development in the territory.

Culture, as Celio Turino argues, must be idiosyncratic, rooted in the territory, so cultural centres must support the cultural manifestations of their surroundings. The task of the community cultural manager is to, through various initiatives, report on the possibilities and potential of the area, generate ideas, raise questions to obtain answers, foster dialogue and build a sense of self-esteem and self-sufficiency in the community.

The inclusive action that LCT uses promotes networking, collaborative culture, the construction of collective knowledge, exchange of experiences, as well as peer work and intergenerational dialogue. Traditional knowledge may share space with avant-garde knowledge, an aesthetic experience may share space with a technological experience. This model allows communities that had become invisible and groups or those lacking support, to channel their work and find a new voice of their own, a new way to build and participate in public affairs and political decision making. The LCT projects establish synergies among spaces, providing new forums and opportunities that enrich themselves and favour the visibility and strengthening of those groups.

The organization

The organizational model of La Casa Tomada is a living model, which has evolved, adapting to reality and the lessons learnt. The Assembly is the governing body of the group of dwellers of La Casa, and is in charge of distributing work, establishing road maps, generating a consensus of objectives, managing management policies and guiding actions towards the LCT mission.

The Assembly, as a responsive body, allows for a participative community and is responsible for the carrying out of the actions in La Casa. The proposals are built based on experience, seeking solutions through consensus in solidary, critical and pro positive spaces.

Since 2013, La Casa Tomada has a Commission of Cultural Action, of Visual Arts, of Communications, of Coexistence, and a Commission of Management and Sustainability, each formed by



3.
Tattoo workshop

4.
Recording studio

various inhabitants and nomads of La Casa, but not necessarily by all who make up the Assembly.

The assembly model of La Casa Tomada is continuously active. The general goal is to hold a monthly assembly, in which the inhabitants and nomads participate. On the other hand, the different commissions meet according to their own needs and functions, with a frequency that varies from once a week to once a month.

One of the aspects derived from this situation was the management model. Cultural spaces, due to their sheer dimensions and work involved, require dedicated personnel, as well as for the maintenance of their equipment and facilities. Institutionally it was difficult to meet that need, so the collective management model was also essential, ensuring that those who held the spaces would provide that support. The political model of administration of La Casa Tomada, concerning its conception and transformation as a cultural space, is one of the most interesting contributions that the experience leaves.

This type of management demanded abandoning the model of dependency of the Cultural Centre, to provide the Assembly with autonomy in its decisions, as the sovereign governing body of La Casa. The relinquishment of responsibilities for the sustainability of the space, in favour of the citizens, and groups, inevitably depended on their capacity of decision-making and empowerment.

Actors

Based on the typology of the actors that comprise it, La Casa Tomada created its own taxonomy:

- The inhabitants of La Casa Tomada are all the people or groups that manage and administer it as their own shared space. They generate their own, educational, creative and / or productive activities, to carry out their own endeavours. They can share the space with other groups or people with similar activities, to contribute to the sustainability of La Casa. By holding a space, the inhabitants acquire a commitment to actively participate in the collaborative management of La Casa Tomada, through participation in the Assembly and in the work commissions.
- Nomads are all people or groups that use a common space of La Casa Tomada with more or less

frequency to develop their own activities. They can actively participate in the collaborative management of La Casa Tomada or through the Assembly and the commissions, or through cultural production in the common spaces of La Casa, and economically contribute to collective sustainability.

- The casanautas are cultural agents who believe in the collaborative philosophy of La Casa Tomada, which they have experienced or conceptualized in other areas of the world of collective management. They maintain contact with the Assembly from a distance and sometimes collaborate by sharing knowledge, promote, reviewing and evaluating processes, creating bridges between here and there, and contributing to the growth and impact of this modality of collective management.
- Friends, are individuals, institutions and groups who do not always need a physical space to develop their activities in La Casa Tomada, but who wish to contribute generously to their growth, facilitating new alliances, as ambassadors of philosophy and attracting new users and potential allies. Among the friends are social and collaborative entities, private companies, philanthropists or generators of opinion.
- The public are holders of the initiative and users of its means and facilities.

The spaces

In its beginnings, La Casa Tomada did not have assigned spaces, but they naturally and gradually became inhabited upon the arrival of groups, to currently house sixteen different groups of dwellers. Today, some of its spaces have been converted or have even disappeared, while new ones have been generated. In addition to the spaces that are managed by groups, there are common spaces such as the garden, the concert hall, exhibition spaces or the rehearsal room. Of the self-managed spaces, we would give special mention to some, such as the *hub*. In addition to offering a place to work and share with other people, it favours the creative industry upon incubating social and cultural ventures, projects that seek economic and social change. Another space, such as the digital manufacturing laboratory, with suitable technological equipment such as 3D printers, laser cutters, Arduino processors, etc., allows entrepreneurs and artists to experiment and generate prototypes.



5.
Products of the shop of
La Casa Tomada

6.
Space for creation



7.
Adult choir of La Casa Tomada

8.
Painting workshop



Irradiation to the surroundings

La Casa Tomada received substantial support from the European Union by being funded by the project *Cultura entre tod@s* (Culture among @ll), to build new worlds. This helped in the investment of not only equipment and human resources but also in the system of organization and administration of La Casa and in the extension of the cultural action towards the surrounding environment. In the period of execution of the project, not only did La Casa come out stronger internally, but it also extended its work to the Colonia de San Benito, an affluent neighbourhood, and to Colonia de Las Palmas, a conglomerated urban settlement with precarious services, allowing for access of its inhabitants to culture and the services of LCT, and also to the accompanying of expressions and cultural initiatives of groups such as Vacilarte. The extension

of the cultural action to the public space allowed to strengthen the social fabric of the actors in the area such as galleries, cultural centres, professional concert halls, etc., in line with the objective of sustainable development number 11 of the 2030 Agenda, which refers to achieving sustainable cities and communities.

Culture of peace

For many years, El Salvador has lived in a social scourge of violence and the phenomenon of the *maras*. In the future La Casa Tomada would like to continue being a neutral space for conciliation, seeking to enhance coexistence, democratization and social peace, through culture.



Project of the Cultural Centre
of Spain in the City of Mexico
in collaboration with Ateneo
Español en México and
Fundación Telefónica

Laboratorio de Ciudadanía Digital

Laboratorio de Ciudadanía Digital (The Digital Citizenship Laboratory -LCD- for its Spanish acronym) is a training platform that combines the arts, sciences and information and communication technologies (ICT), to offer a wide range of workshops designed to guarantee the exercise of cultural rights of girls, boys and young people.

Since its creation in 2014, the LCD was established within the framework of a public-private partnership, between the Cultural Centre of Spain in Mexico (CCEMx) and Fundación Telefónica México. This alliance fosters the conjunction of synergies where different actors - Government, civil society, creators, artists, scientists and cultural managers - build alternative spaces for training and participation from the cultural field.

The design of the LCD is outlined in the Culture and Development Strategy Paper for Spanish Development Cooperation (AECID), focusing on skills of the 21st century and prioritizing horizontal cooperation, giving the main role to children and youth as agents of development.

The general objective of the LCD is to guarantee the participation of these population segments in cultural processes as a fundamental component of human development, using science, culture and ICT as tools for building citizenship. It also promotes teaching and learning methodologies that foster digital skills, contributing to the professionalization of agents who use culture and technology to reduce the digital literacy gap in marginalized areas. Lastly, it aims to boost the STEAM competences (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics), in both a formal and informal learning environment.

In these five years the LCD has served around 19,500 people (14,000 children, 1,500 young people between 13 and 25 years old and 4,000 educators) and scheduled over 1,000 workshops that have been

taught in the CCEMx and in other locations located in 8 of the 16 municipalities that make up Mexico City, as well as in various regions of the Mexican Republic. On an international scope, it has been a guest project at festivals and encounters in Spain, Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile, Peru, and by 2020 it will be represented in the Northern Triangle of Central America and in Cuba. We have worked with more than 3,000 workshop monitors, managers, teachers and programme managers, specialists in working with children and young people, generating spaces for dialogue and the exchange of experiences and good practices, with the aim of transforming the workshops into real spaces of participation, solidarity, social transformation and citizenship.

General outlines

The CCEMx, as part of the AECID, understands that in order for culture to generate development, it is not enough to train audiences or spectators, it is essential to establish mechanisms of participation that favour the creation and production of cultural processes, this being the binomial from which the agents of development are formed and their sustainability guaranteed.

In this sense, for culture to be a factor that stimulates human development, it is important to work in two dimensions: favouring access to cultural expression and guaranteeing the participation of children and youth in the processes. Therefore, the CCEMx developed programmes for children that respond to this dual purpose: on the one hand, a permanent offer of activities is offered where boys and girls have access to a wide range of artistic proposals, approximately 400 activities per year, from all formats and disciplines, and attended by about 12,000 people. On the other, the Digital Citizenship Laboratory itself, uses technology as a tool for

the consolidation of critical citizens who may fully exercise their rights.

As previously mentioned, the LCD is constituted using the AECID Culture and Development Strategy as a frame of reference, specifically concerning the recognition of cultural rights, the relationship and complementarity among education, culture, communication, the training of human capital and the impact that all of these elements have on development. Gender equality, human rights and environmental sustainability are incorporated horizontally.

The design of the LCD is based on two fundamental concepts, the first being cultural diversity. This is a fundamental component of human development, and is an instrumental part, as a catalyst for sustainability. The second concept is soft skills, the capabilities of the 21st century, which allow participants to develop not only technical skills or those linked to some artistic expression, but also to generate experiences that allow them to consolidate their training, ensuring their development as critical citizens.

This melting pot of factors has ensured the recognition of the LCD workshops as collaborative, innovative and creative. Spaces where critical thinking, conflict resolution, horizontal dialogue, leadership, tolerance, solidarity and decision-making for the construction of knowledge are encouraged.

Structure

The LCD recognizes that girls, boys and young people are fundamental actors of human development and social transformation, and that only in guaranteeing the exercise of their full rights is it possible to foresee a future in which they may transform the complex social surroundings that are currently being lived in Mexico.

The contents of the workshops are conceptualized from the perpendicular crossing between the three frames of reference: culture and development (C+D), horizontal priorities of the AECID, and 21st century skills. This is done so to influence two lines of action that the LCD has defined as priority areas from which the construction of a critical citizenship may be favoured:

- The exercise of citizenship: the rights and obligations of citizens, the appropriation of public space, the construction of identity and community.

- The appropriation and rewriting of the media: the generation of actions that delve into the skills required by ICTs, the challenges in light of the paradigm shift in access to knowledge, education and new media, as well as the possibilities of the ICTs to become producers of ideas, and not just consumers.

Based on the above, the LCD generates a programme of workshops that are outlined in three programmatic lines:

1. Creativity workshops, where the generation of initiatives, practices or models that address and respond to current urban challenges are encouraged, placing participants as actors and detonators of processes that directly impact the community to which they belong. These workshops are divided according to the age range to which they are directed:
 - Children's workshops: a space for fun experimentation for girls and boys, where they explore their creative abilities in a practical way.
 - Youth workshops: a space for encounter that favours the construction of citizenship, using technology as a tool to generate processes of reflection and raise awareness about belonging to a community and to the global world.
2. STEAM Programme, whose main objective is to promote the study of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics in childhood, with the intention of developing analytical thinking and understanding the scientific method as a basis for the construction of knowledge.
3. Teacher training, as a space to reflect on methodology where workshop monitors, teachers and cultural agents, who participate in the design and implementation of programmes aimed at children and youth, acquire tools for their professionalization. This programme is structured in three parts:
 - LCD Platform: workshops for trainers who seek to strengthen their teaching processes based on the implementation of participatory methodologies and the incorporation of technology, as a tool to generate reflection and decision-making processes, to impact the community.

- *¡Anímate!* (Dare to!): aimed at trainers who work participation processes using different animation techniques and audio-visual production.
- Encounters and forums: spaces for dialogue and reflection on alternative and innovative teaching and learning methodologies, and on concepts such as digital citizenship, digital rights, innovation, sustainability, etc. Aimed at institutions, cultural agents, groups, trainers and the public interested in this discipline.

In sum, the LCD is designed to generate spaces as an alternative option to traditional training, with workshops as spaces for participation and the exercise of rights through the arts, sciences and ICT as tools for building citizenship.

Featured projects

There are four projects that are undoubtedly the most representative of the LCD, and that have had a very positive impact in terms of empowerment and visibility of the participants. It is important to note that the programmes *Vamos a Aprender* (Let's Learn) and the News Agency of Indigenous and African-descendant Women (NOTIMIA), are discontinued as part of the LCD, as they are aimed at other audiences and are not within the age range defined for the LCD, but were initially propelled within the framework of its implementation.

Radio 2.0 and Radio with Imagination

Within the offer that the LCD has for girls, boys and young people, the workshops with the title “permanent” or “lifelong learning” in its name have shown that the mid and long-term perspective generates much more profound learning processes with the participants. The duration of these workshops is ten months, and many generations have now been trained resulting from their five years of implementation.

Radio workshops stand out in this format: *Frecuencia 2.0* and *Radio con Imaginación*, designed with the objective of bringing the ICT closer to the participants, generating a radio platform that gives an outlet for the content produced according to the interests of girls, boys and young people.



1. Norma Torres, story teller, in the premiere of *¡Anímate!* (Dare!) At the International Short Film Festival, in the Library Vasconcelos. City of Mexico, 2017



2.
Second Encounter of
Indigenous Communicators in
the Arts Centre of San Agustín
Etlá. Oaxaca, 2015

3.
First edition of ¡Anímate!
(Dare to!) An International
Short Film Festival, at the
National Arts Centre, 2015

4.
Lola de Plaza Sésamo,
in an interview
with the participants of
the workshop Producción
Audiovisual para Niños in
the cabin of CCEMx Radio,
installation at the 37th
Children's and Youth Book
Fair, where Spain was the
guest country, 2017

5.
Frida and David, participants
in the workshop Frecuencia
2.0, transmitting live from the
neo patio of the CCEMx, in the
framework of June of Music
2017

These workshops are a space of encounter where the development of soft skills, technical and creative, are the basis for children and young people to express their point of view on various issues, always ingrained by the general outlines of the LCD and CCEMx.

The impact of these workshops on the training of participants has allowed some of them to be incorporated into public radio programmes aimed at children, such as: *Generación Z y Zona Aventura*, programmes that are transmitted by the Mexican Institute of Radio (IMER). Others are drivers of *Vientos TV (TV Winds)*, a children's news broadcast on Channel 22, public television, and one of them has a special mention, and is the official commentator of the UNICEF office in Mexico.

Those who are in the *Frecuencia 2.0* workshop for young people, actively participate in the radio station of the Cultural Centre of Spain in Mexico (CCEMx Radio), more than 90% of the programmes are original ideas of the participants, who investigate, write, produce, operate and edit each programme.

In addition to content production, they manage the station, organize the programmatic grid, communicate on the social networks, write notes for the web page based on their coverage, and are who, with their voice and strength, give life to the CCEMx Radio Station.

Around 50 children and an equal number of young people participate in these workshops every year, and generate content made specifically for audiences of these age ranges.

¡Anímate! A animar (Dare to dare)

The programme *¡Anímate! A animar* (Dare to dare), is a space for teacher training, where the workshops that work with different animation techniques with girls and boys, access a programme that allows them to strengthen their workshops based on access to participatory methodologies for audio visual production.

This programme is divided into three stages, which begin with the workshop aimed at trainers, who, afterwards apply the methodology they learned directly in the communities where they work (from its first edition in 2015, until 2019, more than 400 teachers were trained). This great effort culminates in the projection of the works carried out by the





girls and boys from different places in Mexico, in an encounter that brings together the participants, the teachers - workshop monitors, and families in a large screening room. The contents transport us to different scenarios by the hand of peculiar characters generated from the creativity and imagination of the girls and boys who participate.

The première of the works takes place within the International Children's and Youth Book Fair (Filij), and then they are broadcast on television in the children's show *Click-Clac!* on Channel 22. Lastly, the most representative short films are chosen to be shown on ¡Animate! International Short Film Festival. This festival has been presented in the Network of Cultural Centres of the AECID, as well as in different spaces and cultural centres of Mexico.

Some of the short films have been selected to participate in national and international children's film festivals, such as the International Film Festival for Children (... and the not so Young) of the film association for girls and boys La Matatena (Mexico

6.
Public presentation of the wall *Lazos*, developed in the workshop Graffiti & Videomapping, in CCEMx in 2017

City); the Juna Kino International Young Film Festival (Morelos, Mexico); the International Children's Film Festival ¡Ojo al Piojo! (Mar de Plata, Argentina) and the International Film Festival Educatiu (Valencia, Spain).

¡Animate! International Short Film Festival will soon complete its fifth edition, making audio visual language available to trainers, and children, thus consolidating the commitment to strengthen communication and media management skills, as tools for the construction of a critical citizenship. In 2019, the states of Jalisco and Oaxaca are expected to allow a regional encounter for the workshop ¡Animate! a animar. A children's Workshop of *stop motion* for boys and girls.

Throughout these five years we have made 200 short films, in which more than 2,300 children have participated. ¡Animate! has become the first step for the transfer of the LCD project, as, thanks to the Cultural Centre of Spain in Lima and Fundación Telefónica, we could participate in My First Festival, held in Peru, where the workshop of teacher training and *stop motion* For boys and girls was held. In 2019, for the second year, the LCD will have an important role in the Ojo de Pescado Festival in Chile.

Let's learn ... Applications for teaching indigenous languages

This programme aims to promote the use of ICT for the preservation, conservation and promotion of indigenous languages. The three developed applications of the Nahuatl, Mixtec and Purépecha languages are extremely entertaining and didactic, and through them users may access not only language learning, but also the culture of indigenous peoples.

Altogether, the applications have been downloaded by almost 130,000 people in many parts of the world. Likewise, the level of media coverage, more than 160 appearances in national and international media, made the efforts of the communities to strengthen the use of their languages visible.

Within the framework of the International Year of Indigenous Languages, efforts began to develop the fourth application, the chosen language is Zapotec, which is the sixth most spoken in the country with more than 400,000 speakers, and will

count on the participation of Oaxacan artists and musicians, in addition to the involvement of the National Institute of Indigenous Languages.

Indigenous and African-descendant communicators: NOTIMIA

The main objective of this project is to strengthen the role of indigenous and African-descendant women communicators in promoting the cultural diversity of the peoples and communities of Mexico and Central America, through the use of ICT. It is about expanding their participation in the media, through communication proposals sensitive to gender approach, interculturality and the promotion of human rights.

The three editions of this encounter convened more than 120 communicators representing the indigenous peoples of Mexico, Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, El Salvador, Argentina, Colombia and the United States, who decided to constitute the News Agency of Indigenous Women and African-descendants, NOTIMIA. The communication project has been underway for two years, and has received the support of €100,000 from the AECID to carry out a permanent training programme, which will culminate with two more encounters of indigenous and African-descendant communicators, to be held in Mexico and Guatemala, in 2019 and 2020 respectively.

This LCD initiative was built horizontally with the Alliance of Indigenous Women of Mexico and Central America, and had the collaboration of UN Women Mexico, the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples, the National Institute of Women and the Institute of Leadership Simone de Beauvoir.



Other perspectives

Miguel Faustino Obiang
Asumu, dancer from
Equatorial Guinea,
interpreting a dance piece
called *AboK*, directed by
Luz Arcas in 2016



Sergio Ramírez

Network of Cultural Centres, a house for literature

From the moment we were considering the idea of organizing the first edition of the Central American Festival *Cuenta* (Tell), we were able to count on a strategic ally: the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID), which through its Network of Cultural Centres has generously opened its doors to our initiative.

Both organizations have actively participated in the editions of this festival, firmly committed to literature and writers from the Central American region and strengthening ties between the creators of Europe and the Isthmus.

The alliance that we have established with the Spanish Cooperation since the Central American Festival *Cuenta*, a space for reflection and dialogue on the reality and culture of Central America, has allowed us to grow over six editions and contribute to the dissemination of literature and creative expressions of the region.

Thanks to this contribution and collaboration, established and emerging writers from Latin America, Europe and the United States have been able to meet annually to discuss topics inherent in the Central American reality, thus contributing to the construction of our identity, very diverse, of course, as even being such small countries, each Central American country carries its own specific weight.

Hence the importance of counting on the Network of Cultural Centres, which carry out numerous programmes that encourage the exchange and plurality of cultural and literary expressions in Central America and in other Spanish-speaking countries.

This is how in 2014 the doors of the Cultural Centre of Spain in Nicaragua (CCEN) were opened, so that the authors participating in our second edition, could share memorable round tables such as “God is round”, a pleasant talk about football and literature with Juan Villoro from Mexico, Manuel Vilas from Spain and sports commentator Edgard Tijerino from Nicaragua.

And that encounter continued the following years. *Performances*, photographic exhibitions, training workshops and round tables have been some of the activities that we have jointly developed in Managua and San José. José Ovejero, Berna González Harbor, Carlos Pardo, Javier Cercas, Almudena Grandes, Ángel de la Calle, José Manuel Fajardo, Luis Eduardo Aute, Juan Cruz, Carlos Zanón and Juan Bolea, are some of the Spanish authors who, from CCEN, have had talks with Latin American authors about diverse literary topics.

In our fifth edition, in 2017, we were able to make use of the special conditions offered by the CCEN auditorium to mount the exhibition *Objetivo Mordzinski. A trip to the heart of Hispanic American literature*. An anthological exhibition of over a hundred photographs of the most important faces of Spanish literature- of the photographer Daniel Mordzinski, who arrived in Managua by the hand of the Spanish Cultural Action (AC/E) and found his home in the CCEN for his stay in this city.



Fourth edition of the Central American Festival Cuenta, 2016

The 2018 edition could not be held in Managua due to the socio-political crisis that broke out in Nicaragua, marking the necessary travelling of the festival that took us to neighbouring Costa Rica, where we also found, in San José, the helping hand of the Cultural Centre of Spain.

In May 2019 we travelled, for the first time, beyond our borders to fulfill our commitment to reprogram our sixth edition. In this adventure we were accompanied by a group of Spanish writers, as Ray Loriga, Juan José Armas, Edurne Portela, Alfonso Armada, Alfonso Mateo-Sagasta and once again we could count on Berna González Harbor, who along with Luisgé Martín and José Ovejero are part of the group of repeat offenders of our festival.

Apart from the round tables there have been many free and open conversations where Central American writers have had the opportunity to mingle with authors from other parts of the world. These alliances have lasted beyond the festival and have led to multicultural exchange and creation.

In the spaces of the Cultural Centre of Spain, in the capital city of San José, we organized a special selection of our programme that included book presentations and round tables, as well as special activities for children, aimed at sharing different cultural manifestations and making visible the cultural richness of the Central American indigenous peoples, and thus fulfilling one of the objectives of the Network of Cultural Centres such as the exchange between cultural agents.

Training experience

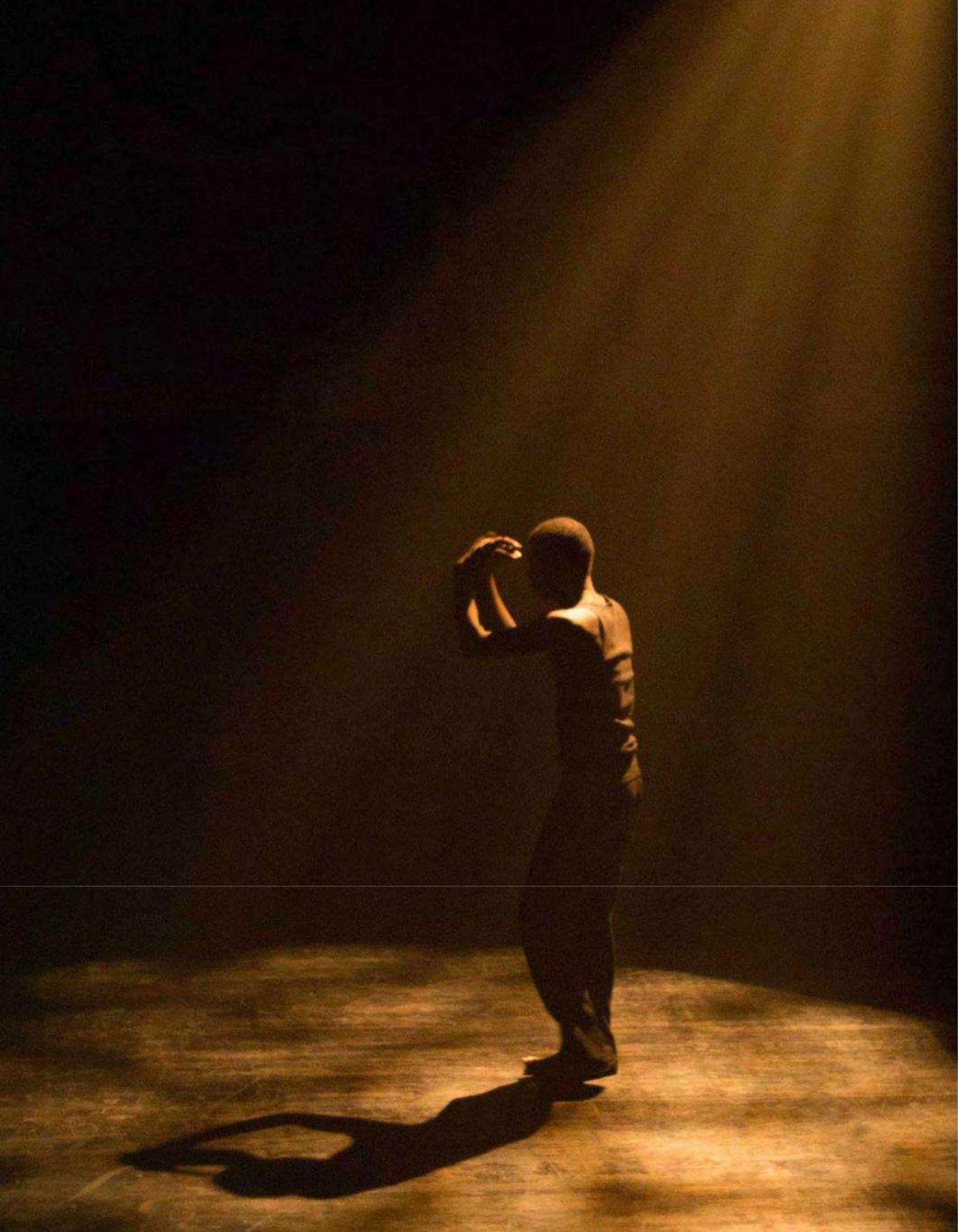
One of the main objectives of the Central American Festival *Cuenta* has been to contribute to the training of authors, journalists, editors, illustrators and students through training workshops that year after year contribute to updating knowledge and the exchange of experiences.

Throughout our six editions, we have expanded to different fields and incorporated training workshops into our programming. In this line we cross objectives with the CCEN, which has focused on training in cultural management and the cultural sector: Ángel de la Calle, Berna González and Juan Bolea have exchanged knowledge about comics, cultural journalism and the genre of crime novels.

A special mention goes to the work of training and strengthening skills through various talks, symposia, seminars and public lectures, all free of charge, for which we have had the valuable contribution of the Network of Cultural Centres of Spain.

As we have stated in different speeches and scenarios, Central America *Cuenta* is a festival that will last, with sufficient grounds to contribute to the promotion of Central American art and literature and to the reflection of our identity and reality in the Isthmus, always hand in hand with valuable allies such as the AECID that allow us to take the region to and from other latitudes.

Writer, journalist and politician from Nicaragua. President and founder of the Central American Festival *Cuenta*, that has taken place in Nicaragua since 2012. In 2017 he became the first Central American to receive the Cervantes Award.



Luz Arcas

Abok (Dance)

Malabo Equatorial Guinea. Cultural Centre of Spain

First part of the project. May and June

It is the first day of the workshop and almost no students have come. In the work plan that I have developed there are dance classes, both in technique and interpretation, dramatics, set design, lights, production, all the fundamental disciplines when it comes to tackling a choreographic creation.

“All projects fail in Guinea. -the ex-pats tell me- It is an apathetic country”. I think: “It’s not apathy, it’s that our projects bore them deeply. It is a historical weariness”.

I decide to ignore my project and observe. I meet Delmati, a recognized choreographer in the country who has many dancers under his tutelage. I talk to him, I explain my project, I ask for help.

The next day more than 30 dancers come to class. “What are you doing here?” I ask them. “Delmati has told us to come” They answer. We start to work.

Dance is, after football, what most interests young Equatorial Guineans.

The boys are much more numerous and dance better. But, if for the Equatorial Guinean lower classes, the future is not very promising, for girls it is almost non-existent. Many of them become pregnant before finishing school and that is the immediate end of their possible professional projection. Few women can take anything, except marriage or motherhood, seriously.

Students arrive when they can, one to two hours late. Sometimes they do not arrive. Sometimes because the family house has been destroyed by an equatorial storm, other times because of the death of a relative, by his or her own malaria or by not having obtained the money to get to class.

Each day fewer girls come. Their parents forbid them to come for fear of pregnancies and not wanting them to neglect their home or small siblings.

Some boys dream of being professional dancers. There is a huge talent coupled with a dangerous mythology of success, imported from neoliberal culture. The dancers are self-taught, they have created hybrid styles between the traditional dances of their ethnicities, which they probably learned from their grandparents and relatives, and the African-American (and Afro-European) culture of urban dances. That is, the coexistence of pre-colonial features along with the result of migration and the new post-colonial identity.

Every student delivers in body and soul. We create a very choral choreography, where we develop many ideas with which they feel especially identified, related to the collective body, with the cultural group. Unlike us, and although the moral influence of the West weighs on them, they remain tribal: they form part of large families and always keep their dead in mind. It is as if they were

always there with them, giving them strength, a strength that becomes even more visible when they dance.

I propose to Delmati to choreograph a fragment and the result is impeccable.

We premiered the day of the inauguration of the first Week of LGBT Cultural Expression which is done in Equatorial Guinea, an initiative of the Spanish Embassy, a true revolution in the country and throughout Africa. The acronym helps that a large part of the population does not find out what this new white extravagance is about. In Guinea, as in most of Africa, homosexuality is a taboo, in many cases illegal and with very severe punishment. It is neither named nor should it be named.

The piece is called *The night of the times* and it is a total success.

Second part of the project. July and August

Abraham Gragera, my partner and artistic collaborator in the company, comes to visit me the last month and ends up getting involved in the project. We decided to divide the group in two, according to level. The intention is to work thoroughly with those who have more talent and vocation to try to take the piece to Spain. I feel it would be a great opportunity for them and that it is my duty to try.

The division causes discomfort on both sides. They are tribal, a collective body, a cohesive cultural group, a kind of family. I explain that it is infeasible for everyone to travel, but that this is only the beginning of a long-term project and that, if everything goes well, there will be more opportunities. They don't understand and they don't feel reassured, but they have no choice in the matter, but to accept it.

For the group with the highest level I choose six dancers, four boys and two girls, but in a few days there are only five left: Pedro, Naftalí, Richie, Miguel and Iris, the only girl. It's the August holidays and many of them travel to their hometowns. Richie is the new patriarch, Delmati's second. He is, together with Miguel, an absolutely exceptional dancer, very specialized in urban dances, with a sensitivity that allows him to cover many nuances and textures without having to resort to acrobatics. His virtuosity is poetic. He is a perfectionist; he spends many hours dancing. We make a secret alliance. He wants to dance in Spain, and he needs the group to respond and for everything to go well.

Miguel is a dance genius, more influenced than others by tribal dances, but with a modern interpretation, creative and wild. In his dance the ludic nature is mixed with a tremendously dark energy. When he dances I feel that his dead accompany him. Miguel is always laughing, always teasing, cheating. When he dances his smile converts his face to mask. When he dances there is something -impossible- that, nonetheless, takes place. I think he is the best dancer I've seen in my life.

Neftalí dances very well and has a beautiful quality. He has a lot of talent and infinite abilities, but perhaps he has not taken dance so seriously.

Pedro does not have all the dance qualities of his team-mates; however, he has a lot of dramatic talent. Abraham sees that the first day and becomes fascinated by him. He is the one who best understands the piece, the one most capable of giving depth to gestures, of finding the meaning in the looks and contact. He and Iris address the most theatrical fragments, loaded with a specific meaning. Somehow, they are the protagonists of the piece. Iris has an impressive stage magnetism, strength and depth, despite having fewer resources as a dancer.

During my stay I give classes in an American school to children from rich Equatoguinean families. I ask the director if one of my dancers can keep the job

when I return to Spain. He tells me yes and I decide to leave it to luck among them. When I mention it to the group, they can't believe it. Working as a dance teacher is a miracle, and the monthly salary they offer at the school, even more. Richie and Pedro are the finalists. They are nervous, everything depends on chance. Richie wins, but Pedro is very happy, almost more than him, jumping and shouting out of euphoria, of happiness, as if the important thing was that luck were hovering above the heads of his people, no matter who was able to take advantage of the opportunity.

While we work on *Abok* ("Dance" in the Fang language), a piece of contemporary dance that is inspired by and collects part of its folklore, tribal and urban, the Cultural Centre is dedicated to seeking finance for the project and prepares for the logistics of the visas.

The day of my return to Spain I still could not assure them of their trip.

I return to Spain. September

A few days after arriving I receive an audio message from one of the students. Pedro had died drowned at sea while crossing from the island of Malabo to the mainland.

A few days later, Iris is denied a visa because, being an orphan and a minor, no family member is willing to sign her permission.

All projects do not fail in Guinea. It is not an apathetic country. It is a country with living conditions that are unimaginable to us, from our privileged position in the world, not even when we are there.

"Pedro would have liked them to come to Spain - I think - I'm sure of it". He would be happy if luck were to continue hovering over their heads.

They come to Spain and we première *Abok* in the Festival Territorio Danza, in the hall Fourth Wall. The members of the company La Phármaco (musicians, dancers, production) promise to help us adapt the piece for the three dancers who were, in the end, able to come.

The day of the première arrives. It is a total success. They dance better than ever.

What impresses them most about Madrid, in addition to the rehearsal rooms of the Canal Dance Centre, are the dogs: so clean, neat, even dressed.

From that day on, they write me WhatsApp messages, asking when they will return to Spain.

Since that day I work in *Bekristen* ("Christians" in Fang language), a trilogy that addresses the images and reflections experienced during and after the trip. The first chapter is called *Domestication*, and will première in November 2019 at the Theatres of the Canal de Madrid. Miguel, the dance genius, comes to Spain for four months to be part of the cast. Getting him a work permit has not been easy.

My intention is for this to be the beginning of a dialogue over time and that my company be a space for them to develop as artists. I hope that when Miguel returns to Guinea he will not become part of the elite accomplice, but will use his experience to stand up to a terrible and unfair reality, for which the president and his mismanagement is not the only one responsible, but our governments and businessmen, who have used the liberation of the former colony in their favour and for their economic and political interests.



Alberto Conejero

Shared bonfires

Theatre always needs the first-person plural. Without a “we” it’s impossible for theatre to happen. It’s necessary to unite bodies in one same space and time for the theatre to happen; it’s necessary to move our emotions with those of others (meaning: to make an affect) in order to consider ourselves one in another way, to ask ourselves what we are but, above all, to imagine who we could be, to feel what is coming from others, from within ourselves. It is necessary to look together in the theatre – this is the etymon in theatre, the place where one goes to look- in order to see ourselves.

I think it was Juan Mayorga who stated that theatre is a school of moral imagination. Also, of emotional imagination. Because theatre makes us feel a threatening compassion towards the Others; each representation splits who we are in order to show us other possibilities of being ourselves. Because theatre is never a servile mirror. The Hellenistic and French historian Vidal-Naquet talks about Greek tragedy as a “broken mirror” in which each fragment “remit, at the same time, a social reality and to every other remaining reality”. The scene hurls unexpected images of ourselves, reminding us of all things trembling, threatening out of the limits of the *polis*, of our supposedly tidy quotidian reality.

Thus, theatre is an exercise of wonder, of longing. As is every true journey. The invitation of the AECID to give a playwright workshop in Cultural Centres of the Spanish Cooperation – in my case: Chile, Uruguay and Peru, in that order-, within the framework of their programme DramaTOURgia, gathered this double condition: the journey and the theatre. It was a learning opportunity, of professional growth but, above all, personal. And everything thanks to the cooperation between the Agency and the National Drama Centre. It also was an enormous responsibility. Some years ago, I had been a beneficiary of the Iberesecena programme, an experience that forever changed my way of understanding theatre.

In this occasion it was I who travelled to Latin-America as a teacher (or “workshopper”). Out of the four assigned countries I had only previously visited Chile and, in general, my knowledge of their theatrical language was scarce and fragmentary.

The journey began in Colombia. The workshop was given in the amazing Teatro Colón of Bogotá; the national theatre and is considered as one of the marvels of the country. It was also the place where the peace treaty between the FARC and the Colombian Government was signed, shortly before my visit. There I lived first-hand the very much alive theatre scene of the capital. I knew of the strength of its theatre art from being in contact with colleagues such as Tania Cárdenas of Eric Layton, but being in the city allowed me to visit the spaces of collectives such as La maldita vanidad (commanded by Jorge Hugo Marín) or the legendary Teatro de la Candelaria.

I found in Bogota a splendid group of colleagues, with different experiences and paths. But from the first day I felt what was needed to be done, to do and think the writing for the scene as a group – to imagine possible worlds, possible lives – it spread bridges between us in an a continuous exercise of recognition and oddness, of identification and singularity, of the Spanish Castillian language from different geographies, with different accents, different airs, with different social backgrounds. This first workshop coincided -thanks to the management of all those responsible- with the premiere of *La Piedra oscura* in Bogota, directed by Victor Quesada. The staging attained unexpected and specific echoes in the horizon from the recently signed treaty between the FARC and the Government. Suddenly, a play that took place in a cell in Santander, in our civil War, was re-signified to talk there of forgiveness, dialogue, of trying to be a “we” again. I remember those days in Bogota in 2016 as a happy feeling of vertigo, like a sweet fear of heights.

After Bogota came Santiago de Chile and from there to Asunción. Perhaps Paraguay was the country where the experience became its fullest, deepest. It's a country with a longing for an imaginary, for presence, for permanence. It is an inland island, an ever-changing identity. The city shows open wounds, foreclosed neighbourhoods, the abysmal differences between one man and another, between one woman and another woman. The people of the theatre there fight with a calling, with fearlessness and without hesitation in incredibly difficult circumstances for the building of a national theatre. The work of the Juan de Salazar Centre in which I gave my workshop and that was then directed by Eloísa Vaello Marco, is proving to be decisive. A year later I went back due to the premiere of *La Piedra oscura* directed by Jorge Baez. In Asunción there are still dear friends like Ana Ivanova or Manu Alviso, for me, representatives of a generation- together with David Cañete, Paola Irún, etc.- such desires there for theatre, where perhaps very few would even expect it but indeed need it. The hospitality of all of them is unforgettable. I trust that my presence there, within the framework of the first edition of the Month of the Hispanic-Paraguayan Theatre, and the following year to give a workshop of Theatre and Memory, gave momentum to that beautiful battle.

The tour finished in Lima nearly one month after. Besides the workshop the Cultural Centre of Spain, directed then by David Ruiz López-Prisuelos, I gave a workshop of Theatre and Memory at the University of the Pacific, thanks to the intersection of the actor and the theatre specialist Sergio Llusera. Again, I found there a devoted and generous team, men and women sharing paths, fictions and challenges. The next year I returned to the city for the premiere of *La piedra oscura*, directed by Juan Bautista de Lavalle, having had theatre performances in the Centre itself, and previous to that at the Teatro de Lucía. I likewise gave a workshop on Lorca's “impossible theatre”, taking advantage of the different spaces of the Centre as places for performance. How beautiful the sound of the theatre of Lorca, there in the heart of Lima, in that *casona rosada* (pink manor). During that stay I assessed the director in a local staging of the figure of Lorca, called *Duende*.

I have outlined the three premieres of *La piedra oscura* -in this 2019 it also showcased in Santiago de Chile- as the performance aided the different casts to present the local audiences their two central subjects: historic memory and the rights of the LGTBI collective. But of course, it was a round trip. That intense month has reverberated in everything I have written since. When I finish writing something for the theatre and I realise I'm not the same person as who I was when I began, then I feel that it is worthwhile. The same thing happens with trips. Upon returning to Madrid,



Alberto Conejero giving a workshop in the CC Lima in Febrero 2018

I wasn't the same man. With me I always have my colleagues, accents and theatres of Bogota, Lima, Asunción and Santiago.

The memory of theatre is fragile, very fragile. The stage is like a bonfire, summoning us, uniting us and when it goes out, it disperses us. But the memory remains of that light and that shared warmth. From the workshops in Bogota, Santiago, Asunción and Lima, what accompanies me is not so much what I tried to teach and transmit, but what I have learnt from them. I trust that some of the seeds that we sowed will give fruit, sooner or later, one way or another. The bond that remains three years later with many of the pupils and colleagues is what is for me the most precious and beautiful part of my trip. I'm profoundly thankful to the AECID and the National Drama Centre for trusting me and giving me this opportunity.

I started these lines claiming that theatre always needs the first-person plural in order to take place. I conclude now with the certainty that this "We" must be a masculine and feminine "We", from South to North, from North to South, defying the frontiers which flags, and economic power make evident, making culture and theatre into universal heritage.

Playwright. Bachelor of Stage and Dramaturgy Management from the Royal School of Dramatic Arts and doctor in Religious Sciences from the Complutense University of Madrid. Ceres Award for best author 2015 and Max Award for best theatre author 2016.



Mercedes Ferrer

Two twinned countries

In Mexico City, right in the Plaza de la Constitución - better known as the *Zócalo* - and behind the historic Renaissance cathedral, there stands one of the oldest and most emblematic buildings of the historic centre: The Cultural Centre of Spain in Mexico.

One must visit the Cultural Centre upon coming to the gigantic, vibrant and captivating City of Mexico for the first time, just as it is impossible not to be taken in by the architectural charm of that 16th - century Renaissance building which, in the 18th century, was partially transformed into the popular style of Mexican Baroque. The facilities, towards the end of 2011, were expanded to new spaces in an avant-garde and contemporary building with the street entrance on Donceles 97, connected with the original building, and designed by Mexican architects Javier Sánchez, José Castillo and Saidee Springall.

I have visited the Centre on numerous occasions over the years and I will always hold the pleasant memory close to my heart, of that first time in 2004, when I was invited to participate in the Festival of the Historic Centre, offering a concert in the capital's Plaza del Zócalo. Years later, together with the Movement of Women Artists, I took part in yet another great and mass concert in that square. I later moved to Mexico City and visited the CCEMx several times, from 2007 to 2010, just before the remodelling that would expand its facilities.

An unavoidable place for encounter, photo shoots, press conferences and lively talks on the terrace with views behind the Cathedral; a meeting place, or a place simply for personal recreation; food and shelter for creative inspiration; a place to find the unexpected without having looked, a place to daydream.

But the most interesting thing about the Centre is its relentless artistic activism based on understanding, exchange, syncretism and the development of the idea of integration. For some, these may be mere words - and for others - a lot.

For artists, for professionals of culture, for example, it means a pillar on which to base our work: with no such exchange, without drinking from outside sources, without that idea of integration, the cultural and artistic phenomenon would almost cease to occur. And culture in Mexico is very important. It is part of everyday life, and throughout the entire country. Mexico is a cultural giant that drinks from ancestral and contemporary fountains alike; as, for example, the legacy left by the tens of thousands of exiled Spanish Republicans, who were welcomed by the president of Mexico at that time, Lázaro Cárdenas.

Big names such as León Felipe, José Gaos or Remedios Varo stand out among those first exiled, who boarded on ships such as the *Sinaia*, to be welcomed by the Mexican Government, in a solidary and humanitarian action that, for Mexico, would culminate in a remarkable cultural enrichment that materialized in the foundation of schools, colleges, and faculties.



Closing concert of the Week of the Author in the auditorium of the CCEMx in 2014

The Mexican people are highly empathetic by nature; who appreciate the cultural contributions of others to the extent of incorporating them into their own culture in an exercise of symbiosis - understood as a relationship that helps, or one of mutual support, that is established between people or entities, when working or doing something in common. And that is the atmosphere that is breathed in the CCEMx: that of two countries twinned by their art and culture. And perhaps out of some sort of coincidence or synchronicity that some dare to call "karma".

If there is something that characterizes the Centre and the people who work there, is that they are very much aware of the ground they step on and they respect it. A sacred soil upon which the different ancestry and cultures of the Anahuac settled, in the ancient valley of Mexico, built the great Tenochtitlan; and there, the pillar of the Mexican civilization: the magnificent Templo Mayor.

For those of us who have profoundly experienced Mexico; for those who have looked deeply into the culture, the music, the artists, the customs, the exultant markets full of colours, flavours and smells of the country, its spicy cuisine with endless varieties of chili peppers, the native Mexican language — Nahuatl; for those who have walked their streets, sang rancheras with the Mariachi in their taverns and felt the deep beat of their land; for all those people, respect for Mexican culture in all its manifestations becomes something mystical, sacred, shamanic and close to magic. It does not come as a surprise that the CCEMx Site Museum, attached to the Templo Mayor, houses archaeological pieces of the ancient Toltec, Olmec, Aztec and Mexican civilizations that inhabited the ancient Anahuac.

Over these years I have attended various conferences and encounters at the CCEMx; out of them all, I would give an extra special mention to one offered by Carlos Ann on the terrace of the Centre and his poetic talk with the award-winning Argentine poet Juan Gelman. I also recall one of the best collaborations from my period as the director of the Area of Music at the SGAE Foundation: the project

of the internationalization of the Week of the Author, which was carried out in Mexico by the foundation in 2014, with Mexican and Spanish authors, which culminated with a concert that included new pieces resulting of that collaboration between artists from both countries, in the superb framework of the CCEMx auditorium.

Lastly, I would like to take a look into the future, a future moving towards coexistence and that continues to investigate those roots from which we come and that shape us as human beings with a common identity. Mexico and Spain are countries with an age-old culture that we must preserve, continue to investigate and to admire in all its magnificent meaning. And from there on in, pass a world open to new opportunities on to the younger generation, a world they can live in with passion, respect and with love for their culture.

It is my wish that an institution such as the AECID continues to strengthen ties of cultural union through centres such as the CCEMx, open to international cooperation, research, creativity, diversity, integration, exchange and balance with the environment.

Thank you,

Artist, composer, author and singer. Graduate in Contemporary French Literature (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3). Master's Degree in Intellectual and Industrial Property Law (OBS Business School - Universitat de Barcelona).



Isabel Muñoz

Where other dialogues can not reach

Oftentimes, culture is the grand lens helping us to understand ourselves and the surrounding environment. Beyond our borders, it encourages dialogue and exchange, and so, collaborates in bringing communities closer together. Thanks to culture, bonds are created. It's that - culture may reach where other dialogues cannot.

In this regard, the work of the Cultural Centres of the AECID is outstanding. I have had the privilege of working with them in many countries. On more than one occasion, their collaboration was essential to carry out my project. I would specifically like to thank the help of the then director of the Cultural Centre of Spain in Mexico, Jesus Oyamburu, when I decided to get on "The Beast" and into the horror lived by the migrants who use it to cross the great border, the one separating Guatemala from Mexico. When I took on this project in 2008, the network of freight trains that transport the Central American emigrants towards their American dream did not have the media coverage it has today. Thanks to the mediation of Jesus, my photos and the short film that was made at the same time could be seen in the main Latin American cultural centres, helping to inform people of what was going on there. Exhibitions were organized in the main Latin American capitals; along with the opportunity to give talks on what I had seen and lived in "The Beast", and all of that had a great impact on the consciousness of many people. A family was even reunited with one of their loved ones, Donar, who had been trapped, badly injured in some town along the way. They recognized him in a photo and were able to contact him.

Everything I lived involving this project was fundamental as an experience as well as for my later development as an artist. And the same could be said of another project that I developed in 2009 in collaboration with UNICEF. It was about celebrating 20 years of the Convention on Children's rights. In this case, 20 rights were chosen and then illustrated with photos of children from 20 different countries. I was able to portray the lives of more than 100 boys and girls from the most remote regions of the planet. That was a colossal challenge that kept me busy for several months, but the result made it worthwhile. Thanks - once again - to the collaboration of the Spanish Cooperation and the Cultural Centres of our embassies, my photos were displayed in a large number of countries. Adults, but also many children from countless schools went to visit the exhibition, feeding many classes with their subsequent comments.

To give voice to people who do not have one: this has been an ambition of mine throughout my career. And where you cannot get to, the Spanish Cooperation can. The support provided by this institution when it comes to performing certain jobs is certainly valuable.

Photograph by Isabel Muñoz, part of the itinerant exhibition *La Bestia* (The Beast), inaugurated in the CCEMx in 2010

Spanish photographer, winner of two World Press Photo awards and the 2016 National Photography Award. She has also been awarded in PHotoEspaña and distinguished with the Medal of Merit of Fine Arts in 2009.



Eugenio Ampudia

Fruitful relationships

My ties with the AECID is a story of a long series of fruitful relationships across Europe and Asia, but where it has really helped me establish my career is Latin-America. In Mexico and Colombia is where, what is possibly the most ambitious cycle of exhibitions of my career was developed, curated by Blanca de la Torre, it wouldn't have been possible without the support of the Agency. The cycles took place in museums and first-class art centres such as the Parque Fundidora of Monterrey, the Contemporary Art Museum of Oaxaca (MACO), the Art Museum Carrillo Gil of Mexico D.F and NC-arte of Bogotá, Colombia. Under the title *El futuro no es de nadie todavía* (The future does not belong to anybody yet), it wasn't just a normal itinerant exhibition, but in each place, site-specific works were developed in relation to the space and the context.

During the making of this cycle, the Cultural Centre of Spain in Mexico City (CCEMx) played a great part, under the direction of Carlos Ruiz, Minister of Culture at the time. On one hand, the Centre functioned as another satellite space for the project, where we developed a specific installation for its entrance hall, and, even though it was independent to the exhibition of the Carrillo Gil Museum, it worked as an important launch, similarly after visiting the museum, those visitors would come to the CCEMx to see the exhibition.

The intervention, under the deliberately unpronounceable title *dzzzzdzzzdzz*, consisted of an installation made up of one thousand white flags with the image of a fly on each one, right next to a unit of speakers which emitted a constant buzz of flies, flying all over the Centre. The flags flooded the lobby and the entrance of the building, inviting the viewer not only to enter, but to take one of the flags with them, bestowing the artwork with a participative character.

But the role of the CCEMx was not only determining as a receptacle of the project, but as a collaborator in the preparation of an important chapter of the production of the exhibition at the Museum as well, as well as being a diffuser of the event and as a generator of connections, promoting a series of contacts in order for the complete project to reach its conclusion with an excellent finishing touch in every sense.

Apart from this occasion, there were numerous times in which I had the opportunity to participate in the Cultural Centres of Spain throughout Latin-America, and widely throughout Central America.

I would highlight the exhibition *Del texto a la imagen* at the Cultural Centre of Spain in Buenos Aires (CCEBA), which took place inside the framework of the programme Buenos Aires Capital Mundial del Libro (Buenos Aires World Capital of the Book). In that moment the Centre was under the direction of Ricardo Ramón Jarne, whose work as an agent I would also give a special mention to, not only as a

Intervention by Eugenio Ampudia titled *dzzzzdzzzdzz*, part of the exhibition *El futuro no es de nadie todavía* (The future does not belong to anybody yet), celebrated in 2016 in the CCEMx



En juego, (At stake) installation of Eugenio Ampudia in the exhibition *El poder de la palabra*, curated by PROYECTOR / Videoart Platform. CC Lima, 2016

director, but as a great manager and, above else, as a pivotal organizer of contacts and cultural promotion.

Also, surrounding the idea of the word, *El poder de la palabra* (The power of the word) in which I took part, curated by the team of the video art festival *Proyector* at the Cultural Centre of Spain in Lima.

The last time I had the chance of collaborating with one of the Cultural Centres of Spain had been roughly some months ago, in Miami, where I showcased an individual exhibition with Blanca de la Torre as curator and Ignacio Moralejo as the director of the CC. Titled *La inmovilidad del movimiento* (The immobility of movement), we took the great Spanish philosopher María Zambrano, and especially her work *Los sueños y el tiempo* (Dreams and time) as a source of inspiration, with the goal of articulating an explanatory discourse surrounding the relationship between dreams and time. Understanding the act of being asleep as a gesture to defy the order of things, and as a consequence dreams as a starting point for the aperture towards other imaginaries, the exhibition looked to offer a rereading of the history of art itself, as well as of the spaces assigned to culture.

It is precisely this duty as a mediator, platform of mediation and space for experiences, polyhedric and inclusive, what I consider that the Cultural Centres of the Agency should have, paying close attention to the past, present and future of culture.

It is therefore necessary that these Centres are led by persons who are not only noteworthy for their leadership, but also for their professionalism in cultural politics and programming, granting culture the value it deserves.

From my experience, the Centres have worked as accomplices, facilitators and generators of synergies, three qualities necessary to accomplish this mission. They must therefore continue boosting their labour as cultural and artistic ambassadors, positioning Spanish and Ibero-American creation on an international level, as well as continue being an important promoter of values abroad.

After my more than positive experience with the Network of Cultural Centres, my conclusion is that they should understand, as active agents, organic institutions, that not only must they work as a place for reunion for the local, national and international community, but also exercise as promoters, transmitters, and as such, take the lead in those communities.

Cooperation and exchange and a continuous critical and dialogue-engaging perspective, are some of the lines of work that must be given continuance with their promotion through the Cultural Centres, in on-going reconsideration, as well as exploiting, as far as possible, the successes and strengths of the institution, contributing a pro positive viewpoint and considering an innovative direction motivated by critical challenges.

Painter, sculptor, multimedia artist and curator of exhibitions. AECA Award for the best live Spanish artist represented in ARCO18 and ARCO-BEEP Electronic Art Award. His works have been exhibited internationally and are part of the main Spanish collections of contemporary art.



Icíar Bollain

Open windows

Reflecting on the task and objectives of the AECID to write this text, I recalled that often, after a film session during the question and answer part, someone from the public often asks me if I think that film has the power to change things, and if that is the reason why I do it. I always answer the same thing: changing things is too much for one humble movie, even though sometimes some stories focus on a specific problem, propose a way out and even have an ending with hope.

In *Te doy mis ojos*, one of the films that I have directed and that has travelled the most with the AECID, the two characters begin on, with help, a path that saves them - from violence, her - from suffering it, and to him - from exercising it. In the end, he abandons that path and returns to the abuse, but she continues forward, breaks the relationship and saves herself from the horror to which he had submitted her. When I wrote it, I never thought that the story of Pilar and Antonio, an individual story that spoke of a universal problem, could be an instrument to help change the situation. However, the film put a face and a voice to a problem that very little was known of, and became almost, from the very beginning, a tool with which professionals trying to eradicate sexist violence could work with, from judges or lawyers, to therapists, local and national (guardia civil) police. The film also had benefits, to my surprise, for the women themselves, who suffered this type of violence, to fully become aware of it, that the relationship they were in was a circle, a spiral that did not end every time he would ask for forgiveness, but indeed, would start again shortly after, inexorably. And that there was nothing they could do to change it, except to break the relationship off. And this story, unfortunately, had resonance in all the countries to which it travelled, especially in Latin America, but also in Europe, in China or Japan, where the lack of attention of the Administration left women completely unprotected.

También la lluvia is, together with *Te doy mis ojos*, another film that I have done that travels the most with the AECID. The story of some filmmakers who want to film the history of Columbus from a less “epic” perspective, brings to light an event that is a reference in activism against the excesses of multinationals: The Water War in Cochabamba, Bolivia. In 2000 the population challenged a multinational willing to privatize even the rainwater, a battle that is a reference because it was won, something that, unfortunately, is not so common. The film picked up on that victory and it was played again and again, and as often as it was projected, the message of struggle and hope was spread. And incidentally, the film reflected on what is now considered as gold, -water, drawing a parallel with the gold from then that Columbus had gone in search of; about the prey, abuse and injustice of that colonization of yesteryear in the name of God, and today, in the name of the Market.



Even so, a film does not have the power to change things on its own, I think it is politics that can change things. But I do believe that one of the instruments that politics has to make these changes is, without a doubt, culture. Because there is no other way but through culture in which people can develop as such, in equality. And there is no better instrument for abuse, inequality, corruption, racism or machismo, than misinformation, a lack of guides, knowledge of our basic human rights, of our past. In short, the lack of culture. Films, as part of culture, can initiate the reflection that leads to change, because they have the power to stir, to move, of reflection, to move forward, to open.

I have not had the opportunity, for reasons owing to work, to be able to travel to all Cultural Centres where I have often been invited, to share workshops with local filmmakers and artists, to live the activity of the Agency in its different venues first-hand. But I have been able to go frequently to shows or festivals supported by the AECID, places like the Saharawi camps in Algeria, where they would not have been able to see our cinema any other way. There I could see the Saharawi women debate after the screening of *Te doy mis ojos*, listen to their measures and proposals to eradicate violence against women.

After more than thirty years accompanying the films and participating in hundreds and hundreds of talks, I am still impressed by the power of communication of the cinema, of moving our culture, our experiences, of opening a window in another place so that from there, not only may they contemplate us,

Icíar Bollaín, along with the actor Luis Tosar, in the filming of *También la lluvia* in 2010.

but breathe, be moved and become excited with us. And we with them. That we recognize ourselves in the same, and discover ourselves in the different.

The AECID Centres, spread across so many countries, open thousands of windows every day that allow us to see each other, to get to know each other, to learn from one another, to give value to what is important, the values that make us people, that take us away from poverty, from violence and from abuse. I hope that the activities of the Agency continue for many years to come, driving and sharing culture, opening windows and fostering change.

Director, actress and screenwriter. Winner of two Goya Awards for best direction and best screenplay for the film *Te Doy Mis Ojos* (2003), she was nominated in the same categories for the films *Mataharis* (2007) and *También la lluvia* (2010).



Cristina Andreu

With the look from the perspective of time

I like the sensation that I sometimes get when I look closely on a totally new place for me, knowing that within a short period of time, it will become very familiar and an important part of my life.

I stop and I ask myself how my glance will be when that place is in fact part of my life, in contrast to the glance I have now, and try to store this specific memory for future comparison.

I remember perfectly the first time I entered the Cultural Centre of Spain Juan de Salazar in Asunción. Outside the heat was asphyxiating and it was extremely humid due to the proximity of the Paraguay river.

We entered and saw a first space with coloured pillows, and the access doors to an auditorium where we went and took a peek through and, though it was dark, we could see it was big. On a panel next to the wall we could see the programme of the Centre. And afterwards, going through a door, a patio with a big tree in the middle, beautiful, protecting. Two halls to the right, which looked like workshops. And a library towards the end of the hall, all glass windows, with books within sight, but that day, which fell on a weekend, closed. A bust of El Quijote at the entrance. So many stories, so many waiting adventures could be seen though its transparent walls, that I had already forgotten about the heat.

There were also stairs, which climbed up to an unknown place.

I returned to Madrid to finish the work that prevented me from remaining in that strange city for the time being, with an empty centre on the weekends and life around a shopping centre, the one called Marical Lopez. I knew that I would soon go back to that city with majestic trees full of flowers.

Upon arrival to the city of Asunción, I went to meet who was the then director of the Cultural Centre, Myriam Martínez Elcoro, in her office, at the end of those stairs I had seen on that first day. There was a wide hall in which the trainee and the secretary and administrator worked, and towards the end of the hall there was an office, all blue and wooden, where she worked. I started going to the Centre, to enjoy its numerous activities and where you could find Myriam from the early hours of the morning to the latest hour of the night.

There were painting workshops, courses on the art of the Golden Century, seminars to learn how to be a curator of exhibitions, of theatre improv, of writing. One-minute videos, in which women told their necessities and feelings through image. I participated in what I could, many people signed up and the courses filled quickly. The teachers were from Paraguay, and Spaniards who came on specific days, and also from other countries from Latin-America. I remember a premier of a Paraguayan documentary, *Cuchillo de palo* (Stick Knife), which ended up being one of my favourites and which in the end is something I show my pupils every time I give one of my workshops on documentary creation. Renate Costa, the director, her

divorced parents long since united, the LGTBIQ collective to its fullest, with transsexuals who the dictatorship had terrified and put in jail, the whole family of Renate, her neighbours from her youth, general public, a crowded space packed with an audience that cried and applauded for several minutes when the film ended.

There were also very interesting photo exhibitions from which you could always learn something. I remember one in particular which moved me very much, it spoke of the triple frontier, between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay.

And then, luck appeared, unexpectedly, as it had on many other occasions throughout my life.

From the AECID in Madrid they had asked all the Cultural Centres for videos in which marbles were to be thrown from the city of each one of the Centres, and they would all meet; an immense river of shared experiences. Myriam asked me, as there was a budget for that video and also for the Memoir from these last years, what I thought of making a bigger video, telling of everything that the Cultural Centre did. As things weren't only happening inside the Centre, but its actions extended throughout Asunción and the rest of Paraguay.

I was thrilled with the idea, as I already knew from experience that the best thing to get to know a country is to do some type of work there. I teamed up with a photographer, Santiago Suárez, and yet, once again, I was extremely fortunate, as we made a perfect team.

The main part being that the Cultural Centre is - to the Paraguayans - a space for creators, musicians, people of the theatre, photographers... and they benefit from help with the diffusion of their artwork, and financial aid. It is also the space of culture in Asunción, which offers the possibility to watch films, theatre, concerts, exhibitions... things that would be impossible to access in any other environment. To see the cues outside, waiting to enter any show there, was exciting. And moreover, these artists also commit to taking their art to other places outside the capital, to remote places of Paraguay. Young people rehearse their work and perform it. Schools attend to see the activities and they learn from them with their teachers.

Moreover, the Centre Juan de Salazar is strongly committed with the Paraguayan citizens, as during the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner it was a space of protection and refuge for many artists, who could perform, contemplate and meet in a space which granted them freedom.

One of the policies of the Centre is that the artists who were chosen to showcase their art and culture should share with disadvantaged people and places or those far from the capital. We went to villages and small cities, where, thanks to the help of the Centre, courses on varied subjects were given.

I could see the prisoners of the male jail of Tacumbú, one of the most populated and dangerous of the world, sitting down, relaxing and watching a Spanish film. I also saw the female prisoners of the penitentiary El Buen Pastor and I watched them listening and dancing with the Chamber Orchestra of Asunción, and how the first violin lent the instrument to one of the prisoners to show her how to play a few notes. I also attended a theatre play of the winners of a theatre competition of the University, in a reformatory of minors and watched them laugh and interact.

We also went to the Chacarita, the neighbourhood of shacks in front of the Paraguay river, an area where most of the kids and youth don't go to school and commit crimes in order to survive their squalid houses. The neighbourhood where no one wants to even go near, and I was able to get there and see the programme



Cristina Andreu, Spanish
film director

that the Centre Juan de Salazar develops in a modest little house towards the entrance of the district, where the little ones paint and start to spell the alphabet, where courses of digital literacy are given to older people in order to get them off the streets. This is the most palpable evidence that the money from the Cooperation is essential, and that with good professionals who really believe in what they do, many, many things can be changed.

Of course, that first sensation and glance of my first day has changed, when I went from being an outsider to belonging to this place. Each time I hear the guarani accent, I feel like I want to sing.

But now, with the experience that the years gone by have given, I want to keep on with that same last glance, moved, useful, knowing that we really can help, but to help people of those countries to enrich themselves, to grow, to know that we are only there to give them a hand when they need it.

Spanish film director. President of the Association of Women Film makers and Audio-visual Media (CIMA).

