

The Euroaxacan Initiative of Transformative Cultures

Finding our way home

A company of artists from Europe and a company of artisans from Oaxaca set out to meet each other. Over two years of journeys and collaborations, these partners will make and grow things together, create rituals and events, street art and venerative objects, share ideas, inspiration and hospitality. At the heart of our project is the transforming power of culture: the insistence that our stories and symbols, our various senses of the sacred and the profane, are not a shallow surface over hard material and economic realities, but tectonic forces, capable of unsettling everything we know.

We set out with good intentions, but knowing enough of history to recognise how dangerous such intentions may be. Our best hope against these dangers is our own willingness to be transformed, as we seek to ground ourselves in unfamiliar physical and conceptual landscapes.

We choose as our guides a strange assortment of figures: the saints of the church of Santa Ana Zegache and the revolutionary icons stencilled on Oaxaca's street corners, the spirits of the Maguey and the Maíz, the homecoming of the artist Rodolfo Morales, the intellectual fire of Ivan Illich, and the archetypal trajectory of the Hero's Journey.

We begin and end with the Dia de Los Muertes: "the dead who," as John Berger tells it, "are less forgotten in Mexico than anywhere else in the world." And so, in all our journeyings, we renounce the modern superstition that the past is, or ever could be, left behind. We seek a way beyond the liquidation of culture, and of time itself, which has accompanied the project of modernity. Where it has striven for development, we seek comunidad; where it has sought to do good, we seek to live well.

And so, if we are willing to lose ourselves, we hope to find, in the unexpected encounters which follow, something that has the feel of a way home.

Artists in Transience

In its Humpty-Dumpty way, the professional art world talks about passing visits as 'residencies'; yet 'to reside' means 'to remain behind'. There must be a more grounded language in which we could talk about all this, but perhaps we can at least recover a little from our disorientation by speaking instead of 'artists in transience'? These transients will be our guests in Europe: glass-makers, street artists and restorers of sacred objects from Oaxaca, we invite them to join us in new collaborations in our cities and towns.

Gatherings & Conversations

Throughout the course of the two years, we will host a series of events with partners in Oaxaca and around Europe: times of reflection and festivity, seminars and symposia. These will be an opportunity to share our work with others as the project unfolds.

Collaborations & Explorations

Our core activity over the two years will be a series of collaborations with the artisans of Zegache and Xaquixe, the street artists of LaPiztola and other partners in Oaxaca. Within these, we plan to explore:

- The weaving together of modern electronics and traditional crafts techniques
- Closed-loop scenarios around the chameleonic plant of the Maguey
- The exchange of mobile gardening units between Brussels and Oaxaca
- The sacred and profane transformations of the almighty Maíz
- The social process through which venerative artefacts are brought to life
- Interconnecting places through words and poetry in glass and graffiti
- Stories of cultural migration and homecoming in Europe and Oaxaca

At the invitation of the Municipality of Zegache, the work of several of the partners will culminate in the creation of a new entrance to the pueblo, including a pair of chapels and an archway.

The Euroaxacan Initiative of Transformative Cultures (EITC) is a European-Mexican collaboration running 2011-2013. It connects art with traditional — as well as future — crafts, while bridging the gap between the digital, mediated and corporeal worlds. The overall aim is to be a catalyst of socio-economic transformations by means of transcultural production. The EITC project is initiated by Performing Pictures (Sweden) and Talleres Comunitarios de Zegache (Mexico) in collaboration with FoAM and nadine (Belgium), Space Makers Agency (Great Britain), Raketa and Cuartielles (Sweden).

Follow our project on: www.euroaxaca.org

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