

Address by the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, César Gaviria on the occasion of the Exhibition of the Batuz-Milosz Portfolio. (Washington, May 2, 2004)

We are gathered here to celebrate a new road, already well traveled by the *Société Imaginaire*, where the ideal of "America: Without Borders" is proclaimed. The *Société Imaginaire* is a great aspiration, we might even say a utopia, but we don't say that because it really can be achieved if we do all that we can to realize the union of our peoples through the search for supreme human values in truth, justice and mutual understanding among human beings.

Batuz, whom Octavio Paz proclaimed leader of this grouping of eminent personalities, is an artist, thinker and humanist with enormous vision, the tireless promoter of the best hope: a united world where mutual tolerance and respect for others, for the ideas of others, as by Benito Juárez would have said, would be the start of a future that gives life to this union, this utopia of a democratic living together where differences and hierarchies do not exist.

This ideal of peace, to which eminent personalities of the past two decades have lent their support, proposes to avoid ethnic and national divisions and open frontiers to people, ideas, and all manner of artistic expression.

This proposal, as well we know, runs contrary to the current of our realities where the defense of races, religions and beliefs is what prevails and what surges forth from the instincts of individuals and diverse peoples. There stands Batuz ready to place us above national flags, sects and all types of "isms." But this is not a truth that is defended in a hegemonic or intransigent fashion, rather it seeks the will of humanity to transcend, to seek brotherhood, to find in art a means for drawing ourselves closer to one another.

André Malraux's "Imaginary Museum" proposed a synthesis of the entirety of art history from all countries and all time periods, like an open document that affirms how, from the perspective of art, man selects his destiny and that destiny is not divisive, nor expansive; it is what we ourselves propose that we do with it.

The *Société Imaginaire* has produced a series of portfolios that bear witnesses to these great aspirations, that bring to us the possibilities of the distinct languages that artists use to express themselves and that converge toward the same point. It's not about accidental destinations. These portfolios are housed in some of the best museums in the world.

Perhaps this ideal spirit aimed at bringing together forces in common toward a better future has the following as starting point for the process: the conviction that the gift of life is our only great opportunity to dream about utopia. Thus we will overcome the enormous barrier imposed on us when we understand that obstacles are, in fact, part of human nature.

In this presentation the *Société Imaginaire* shows us a project that brings together that proposition: the Batuz-Milosz portfolio, a document that is a joint collaboration of individuals who from their high positions of great achievement, are joined together in a common dream. And to provide some stature to this project, let us recall the Brazilian proverb that sees individual dreams as always being individual, but dreams in common, by their collective spirit, have the possibility of superceding mere hope.

This is about one of the many documents that Batuz has published as witness to the efforts that he has carried out worldwide, with an eye toward bringing people together and bringing their efforts to bear on the life's meaning that humanity finds its destiny in building a human and universal culture.

The portfolio is housed in the National Gallery and is an excellent example of Batuz's proposal for "No more borders in the Americas." It is a joint effort that offers us a challenging road, one that obliges us to search for a common future for all.

Batuz is here to leave us with his seed idea of a universal village, where the fundamental principal is a cultural one, which with its practice, replaces other priorities and becomes a profound sense of human expression.

It is certainly not in vain that poets too reclaim this dream. Olga Orozco shows us an egotistical piece of reality "like a table adrift where the diners continue to be outfitted in their prestige of not being there. Each one with their goblet for measuring wine that ends where thirst begins. And each dish surrounds hunger that dies without ever being satisfied."

Mario Benedetti invites us into conspiracy and says, You will find yourself as always at some border playing with your pretty little broken down dream, remembering the puddles and comfort all together, as distrustful as ever but never incredulous. Never anything more than innocent, never less than that sterile border with customs that separate past and future.

It is these diverse voices that insist on the solitary confinement in which we live. They are voices and lights from that enormous complexity of personal egos, national prides, political reasoning which today justify the walls and divisions that conspire against this ideal.

Thanks to Batuz and to all of you for your presence here tonight. I want to leave you in the company of Batuz, who better than anyone can illuminate us about this marvelous project.

Many thanks.