

PRESENTATION

“One day someone found Oswaldo Cruz gazing at his palace and could not help asking him, ‘Why did you choose the Moorish architectural style?’ ‘Because it’s the most beautiful’, he replied, and went back to lovingly admiring his work” (Ezequiel Dias).

Such was a simple yet profound explanation, which would certainly not satisfy any historian trying to decipher this documentary monument, considering that the Manguinhos Castle, with the appeal of its imagery and grandeur, has contributed so greatly to consolidating biomedical sciences and public health practices in Brazil. Yet as Michel Serres commented so appropriately on the well-known image of the butterfly effect, where the flutter of a butterfly’s wings has a possible impact on a distant, temporal future, “All of the history of sciences consists of making things constant, controlling and dominating this highly improbable chain of butterfly thinking with a hurricane effect,” and that “precisely in the passage from light causes to heavy consequences, contemporary globalization is defined”.

A sense of globalization has always been present in the Manguinhos Institute, now the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, where a field of interactions was built in which health, the frontier object, has been the meeting place for hard sciences and social sciences, laboratory and policy, science and society.

Nearly a decade ago, this totalizing matrix inspired the founding of Casa de Oswaldo Cruz by incorporating another dimension of this legacy: the aesthetic pleasure present in so many of the pioneering manifestations of the Manguinhos Institute, harmoniously coexisting with such values as strict discipline and austerity in dealing with science — reason and fantasy, dreams, science and culture.

Historia, Ciências, Saúde — Manguinhos is an open space to be shared by various points of view. In many ways, the journal’s shape expresses the matrix that inspired the birth of Casa de Oswaldo Cruz, a place with a view towards history and the mark of culture, capable of reflecting the plurality and unity in the field of scientific and health practice.

The local underpinnings of this project in turn interweave with a universal demand and our virtual lack of publications in this field of knowledge, on a level with the rigor of ethical questioning and new academic perspectives in the history, sociology, and philosophy of science.

Lightness, speed, precision, visibility, multiplicity, and consistency are Italo Calvino’s Six Proposals for the Coming Millennium. The results of a reflection on literature, they are universal values whose synthetic expression bring a breath of fresh, revigorating air and a challenge to any and all forms of communication. We hope that Historia, Ciências, Saúde — Manguinhos will contribute towards this ideal.

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