2006-04-25

The Borderland Foundation: a living experiment in cross-cultural relations

Czyzewski, Krzysztof
Boston University Institute for Human Sciences

http://hdl.handle.net/2144/20088
Boston University
The Borderland Foundation is the avant-garde cultural foundation established in 1990 in Sejny, Poland, right at the border between Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and Russia. The mission of the Borderland Foundation is the reinvention of the agora in the contemporary world. Much of its work involves an artistic rediscovering of the European borderlands' rich multicultural heritage destroyed by two world wars. The Foundation has built bridges between cultures and made possible the communication between various and, at times, conflicting identities, memories, and religions. One of the first achievements of the Borderland Foundation was to reclaim Sejny's Jewish heritage, to restore the Jewish buildings and cemetery and to set up a publishing house. No Jews live in Sejny now; in one day, an entire community, culture and society were eradicated. But by transforming perceptions and roles in a community scarred by historical divides, the Borderland Foundation has created in Sejny a new vision for the future and a model of peaceful coexistence in other regions coming to terms with the past.

KRZYSZTOF CZYZEWSKI is Chairman of the Borderland Foundation and editor-in-chief of the "Krasnogruda" magazine, devoted to Central and Eastern European cultures, art and literature. He is a well-known poet and essayist and the recipient of numerous international awards. About Czyzewski, Gail Kimberling of the New York Times has written that he "has based his life's work on pushing the limits of borders, whether it involves going beyond the acceptable, bringing the past to the present, or bridging one country or culture with another."

Czyzewski will talk about the intercultural activities of the Foundation and its many artistic and educational programs. The presentation will include footage from documentary work generated by the program.