

THE 4 NOTIONS, GO FURTHER !

MYTHS AND HEROES

Myths originally aimed at explaining the origins of humanity and narrating the foundations of a given community. These narratives thus deliver a universal message about the human condition and also give elements as to the collective identity of a social group. The way each civilisation or nation deals with, reinvents, updates these myths and conveys their messages through art, shows how they interpret human experience and find an artistic expression for it. A whole range of new myths, with new heroes who can either be real or imaginary characters and somehow caught people's imaginations have also been created over

the ages. The rags-to-riches stories of famous American businessmen have thus given birth to a national myth: the American Dream. Pop culture and counter culture also keep producing their own heroes who, in turn, give birth to other mythical stories, which illustrate the aspirations (superheroes, superstars, icons...) of our communities (Door 1). And when science is faced with the unexplained, when it cannot answer some of the interrogations (the origins of the universe, extraterrestrial life...) of our times, new narratives keep being created (Door 8).

SPACES AND EXCHANGES

All societies are somehow defined by the geographical and symbolic space(s) they occupy and how they open up these spaces to what lies farther away. Through trade, conquest, emigration and communication, nations have always influenced others beyond their borders and have always been influenced, culturally, economically, politically or scientifically etc. The various waves of migration from and towards Ireland have fluctuated according to the economic ups and downs and have significantly been influenced by the country's attractiveness (Door 5).

Geographically, our world has never seemed smaller as transportation and telecommunications have accelerated the rhythm of exchanges between different areas. So new forms of influence, new spaces – such as global cities – new modes of exchange are emerging, redefining our conception of space (Door 2). Peoples and nations, thanks to this evolution, now keep on borrowing the languages and cultures of other peoples and nations at an ever increasing rate, thus deeply transforming our world.

PLACES AND FORMS OF POWER

The notion of power generally implies a basic division between those who have and exercise power and those who have none or little of it. As a consequence, the exercise of power within a community requires that its members accept or even internalise a complex system of relations, laws, rules and regulations, and respect symbols such as specific places (court, parliament, prison, castle etc.), which helps to create social cohesion on the one hand, and which reveals quite clearly the conflicts and tensions existing

within the group on the other hand. Indeed, even when authority seems absolute, there are always counter powers which question it, aim at limiting its excesses and resist it, as for instance the militants of the ANC who fought against the domination of Apartheid in South Africa (Door 3) or the African American artists who aimed at changing the balance of power and making the voice of their community heard and taken into account in the USA (Door 7).

THE IDEA OF PROGRESS

The idea of progress basically consists in believing that the world can become better in terms of art, science, technology, liberty and quality of life and has shaped most of Western civilisation's vision of history. Progress implies changes, some evolution from an old order with old traditions to a new order which is not necessarily embraced by all, as it may shake up deep-rooted, highly respected conventions and beliefs. The recent evolutions of family structures in the USA and more generally in Western societies are indeed at the heart of a heated debate between

those who approve of these changes and those who resist and criticise them in the name of tradition (Door 4). As the rhythm of progress seems to have accelerated these last few decades with an ever faster increase of major technological and scientific breakthroughs, the cult of novelty and progress is now being questioned. Indeed, a growing number of people voice their concern about the ethical, social and environmental consequences of such development and about the excesses of today's consumer society (Door 6).