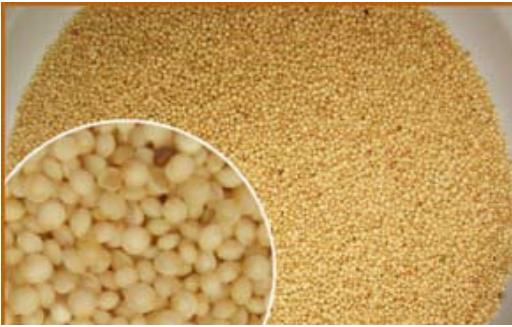




**ALICIA MARVÁN**  
2010 PROJECT PROPOSAL



## conceptual framework



***Alegría*** is a multimedia work incorporating art, history and nourishment through a visual-poetic synthesis of two anthropologic texts related to the Spanish conquest in Mexico: *The Mexican Dream* by J.-M. G. Le Clezio, and *Amaranth, Modern Prospects for an Ancient Crop* by the National Research Council. In these two extraordinary books we learn that both gold and amaranth (quinoa) were rich goods used in pre-Hispanic ritual that suffered from Spanish greed and prejudice, causing a dramatic loss in the Americas. The project draws physical and conceptual parallels between the two through sculpture, food and performance.



Winner of the 2008 Nobel Prize for Literature, Le Clézio presents with beautifully poetic imagery, the rich and complex symbolism associated with gold: “gold was, for the natives, the divine metal by excellence—Mayans called it *takin*, which means ‘excrement of the sun’...it’s the symbol of divine power.” The appalling, rapist behaviour of the Spaniards shattered the indigenous identity when they usurped their gold idols merely for their material value, literally melting their spiritual significance and shipping the gold bricks to Spain.



Amaranth, a little-known crop of the Americas, is grown either as a grain crop or as a leafy vegetable. Despite its obscurity, it offers important promise for feeding the world’s hungry. Amaranth was interwoven with legend and ritual. On various days of the religious calendar, Aztec women ground the seed, mixed it with honey or with human blood, and shaped it into forms of snakes, birds, mountain, deer, and gods that were eaten either during ceremonies at the great temples or in little family gatherings. Apparently, this issue of amaranth in pagan rituals and human sacrifice shocked the Spanish conquistadors, and with the collapse of Indian cultures following the conquest, amaranth fell into disuse.

## project specifics



**Alegría** means happiness and is also the name of the honey confections still prepared in Mexico. The project incorporates amaranth sculptures resembling Aztec idols and gold bricks, which will be prepared live by the artist/performer, arranged into multiple spatial configurations (walls, pyramids, roads) then offered as nourishment to the public, disappearing into their stomachs by the end of the exhibition. Further research and development of the piece prior to the exhibition will take place at the *Mina Dos Estrellas* in El Oro, Michoacán, Mexico, the first industrial gold mine of the world, where I have been invited to work.

