

The Alchemist Is 20. Brazilian Paulo Coelho Celebrates Across the Web

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To celebrate the 20th anniversary of The Alchemist's first release in Brazil, Brazilian author Paulo Coelho is kicking off a yearlong celebration in Aviles, Spain and across the Internet.

Coelho, at the invitation of the Niemeyer Foundation, will host a special exhibition of his works and a live podcast taking questions both online and in person, and later posting the show on YouTube, Seesmic and MySpace.

For more information and to hear the event this Thursday, May 29, at 2 p.m. Eastern time, go to:
www.blogtalkradio.com/paulo-coelho.

The exhibition and podcast boast a complete behind-the-scenes look at Coelho's editorial work that led to The Alchemist becoming one of the world's best selling books, with more than 100 million copies sold in over 67 languages.

The two-day event will also have a human element with a photography display demonstrating the diversity of its readers, the original manuscript and other related objects to the history of book.

"Every time I hear his name, I say with great pride that I, too am Brazilian," said Oscar Niemeyer, architect, centenarian, and founder of the Niemeyer Foundation. "I feel very honored to belong to the Advisory Council of the Niemeyer Center and pleased to have the event in Spain," said Paulo Coelho.

To celebrate the 20th anniversary, Editorial Planeta, Coelho's publisher issued a commemorative edition of The Alchemist along with previously unpublished materials as a tribute to the book and the author's extraordinary ability to communicate and in honor of the readers.

Coelho is also turning towards the web to communicate the event and in recent years has shared his work through BitTorrent, Netvibes, MySpace and YouTube. Most recently he has added Seesmic, the video conversation plug-in to accept questions before the event through his blog and on Seesmic.

"When you want something, the whole universe conspires to make your desire," said Coelho. "Just learn to listen to what the heart dictates and to decipher the language that goes beyond words."

The Alchemist tells the story of a young Andalusian shepherd boy named Santiago, who leaves his native Spain to travel to Egypt after having a dream of finding treasure there.

Along the way he meets with a mysterious alchemist, learning about life, luck and fulfilling his dreams. The Weinstein Company with Laurence Fishburne, star of "The Matrix" who is set to direct, produce and star in the project, is currently adapting the story for the screen.

Paulo Coelho was born in 1947 in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Before dedicating his life completely to literature, he worked as theatre director and actor, lyricist and journalist.

In 1986, Paulo Coelho did the pilgrimage to Saint James of Compostela, an experience later to be documented in his book *The Pilgrimage*. In the following year, Coelho published *The Alchemist*.

Slow initial sales convinced his first publisher to drop the novel, but it went on to become one of the best selling Brazilian books of all time.

Other titles include *Brida* (1990), *The Valkyries* (1992), *By the River Piedra I sat Down and Wept* (1994), the collection of his best columns published in the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de Sao Paulo* entitled *Maktub* (1994), the compilation of texts, *Phrases* (1995), *The Fifth Mountain* (1996), *Manual of a Warrior of Light* (1997), *Veronika Decides to Die* (1998), *The Devil and Miss Prym* (2000), the compilation of traditional tales in *Stories for Parents, Children and Grandchildren* (2001), *Eleven Minutes* (2003), *The Zahir* (2005).

During the months of March, April, May and June 2006, Paulo Coelho traveled to celebrate the 20th anniversary of his pilgrimage to Saint James of Compostela in 1986.

He also held surprise book signings - announced one day in advance - in some cities along the way, to have a chance to meet his readers. In ninety days of pilgrimage the author traveled around the globe and took the famous Transiberian train that took him to Vladivostok.

During this experience Paulo Coelho launched his blog, *Walking the Path - The Pilgrimage* in order to share with his readers his impressions. Since this first blog Paulo Coelho has expanded his presence in the Internet with his daily blogs in Wordpress, MySpace & Facebook.

He is equally present in media sharing sites such as YouTube and Flickr, offering on a regular basis not only texts but also videos and pictures to his readers. From this intensive interest and use of the Internet sprang his bold new project: *The Experimental Witch*, where he invites his readers to adapt to the screen his book, *The Witch of Portobello*.

Coelho is a firm believer of Internet as a new media and is the first best-selling author to actively support online, free distribution of his work.