



ANCER CONFERENCE 2014

# NEW VOICES, CURRENT PERSPECTIVES: ARTS MANAGEMENT, POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA

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FRIDAY  
14TH  
NOVEMBER

After the official opening ceremony held on Thursday 13 November at LASALLE College of the Arts, which saw welcome speeches by the President of LASALLE Professor Steve Dixon and Vice-President (Academic) and Provost Venka Purushothaman in the presence of Guest of Honour Ms Kathy Lai, Chief Executive Officer of the National Arts Council, the formal proceedings of the 2nd conference of the Asia Pacific Network for Cultural Education & Research (ANCER) opened the following day at LASALLE's Creative Cube to a full house of over 100 conference delegates from Singapore, Asia, Europe and beyond.



Professor Ruth Bereson, Dean of the Faculty for the Creative Industries and arts management professor, set the tone of the conference with her opening remarks, inviting delegates and conference presenters to engage in energetic debates over the next two days. With the title of the conference being "New Voices, current perspectives: Arts Management, Policy and Development in Asia", Professor Bereson noted that the conference has made it a point to find young researchers, the "New Voices", who may contribute to the academic discourse by bringing in fresh subjects and styles, but above all, who may contribute with new questions. The right questions – said Professor Bereson – are in fact the basis for the development of research; for example, questions



about the nature of cultural policies and where they reside; she queried if other kinds of policies, for instance economic or urban, may play a role in the development of the arts more effectively than those especially designed for this purpose, and hence there is a need to deepen the study of these interactions and keep asking the right questions. She concluded with a warm welcome and looked towards the building of an organic and authentic network through the discussions and meetings here.

The two keynote speakers, Dr. Farish Noor and Mr Anmol Vellani, gave the conference an inspiring start, through their provocative, intellectually stimulating presentations that dealt with how arts and culture intersect with questions of identity, history, and social justice. Dr. Farish Noor, Associate Professor at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, began by asking the question 'What is Asia'? At the beginning of the so-called 'Asian century', Dr. Farish queried the definition – or definitions – of Asia and the 'Asian' identity. Asia

is not only the space designated by geographical maps, as the fluidity and the change of the borders of this huge continent through the centuries may demonstrate; Asia is rather an idea, a concept that assumes "different configurations" according to the context in which is read. The concept of an 'Asia' historically emerged from the dialectical relationship that Asia had with the West which is related to the history of colonialism. Today, we question the genesis of the idea of Asia and start to deconstruct this image. In the process, it is necessary to broaden our concept of Asian culture, which is not only "written culture", but comprises also oral history and arts and crafts production, such as, for instance, batik in Indonesia, which constitutes an important and precious source of knowledge. Dr. Farish reminded us that arts and cultural producers could take an active role in the questioning of what Asia is. Power structures and market forces may exploit artists and cultural producers for the creation of a certain national identity, threatening the diversity of communities and related cultural values, ending up with a flattening idea of Asian identity; therefore it is essential for other actors outside the



nation and the market to be part of the search for an authentic narrative.

Mr Anmol Vellani, the second keynote speaker, is founder and former executive director of the India Foundation for the Arts (IFA), an independent philanthropic organization. With Dr. Farish Noor having introduced the importance of arts and cultural producers in examining broader questions of cultural identity(ies), Mr Vellani brought the arts into dialogue with social justice, through presenting a case study in India of a project carried on by the IFA to connect art education and social injustice. The project, Kali Kalisu, was started by IFA in 2009 and is a training programme for governmental school teachers across the region of Karnataka, based on the awareness of the important role of the teacher as real agent of social change. The project focused on art as a tool in everyday teaching, of art as well as of other core subjects, transforming the educational routine in governmental schools. Art becomes an enjoyable means for students to learn and to express themselves and the teachers' role is more playful and more connected to the students who come from different classes in society. This in turn had some influence on the dynamics of educational provision in a socio-economic system traditionally based on hierarchy, class division and discrimination. Through the programme, involving the building of a sense of ownership of the project among the teachers so that they in turn



will become advocates, promoters and trainers, the messages of inclusiveness and equality gradually could be conveyed to students, schools, and education authorities. Empowerment is a powerful tool for social change.

A lively question-and-answer session followed, moderated by LASALLE Arts Management lecturer Dr. Aleksandar Brkić. The ideas from opening session certainly gave the delegates much to discuss, with shared concepts and themes that formed the basis of many tea-break chats!

The two panel sessions in the afternoon were "Cultural Policy in East Asia" and "Visions for Education in Arts and Culture", moderated by Audrey Wong, Programme Leader for the MA Arts & Cultural Management Programme at LASALLE, and Dr. Kie Watkins, Programme Leader for the MA Artist Educator Programme at LASALLE. These sessions saw researchers, academics and education practitioners sharing their thoughts and research on



current areas of interest particularly in the East Asian and Southeast Asian landscape.

In the panel on “Cultural Policy in East Asia”, the speakers were Dr. Lorraine Lim from Birkbeck College, London, Dr. Jerry Liu from National Taiwan University of the Arts, Dr. Kiwon Hong from Sookmyung Women’s University and Dr. Boyun Choe from Seoul National University of Education. Dr. Lorraine Lim discussed culture in relation to changes in East Asian countries which are reaching political and economical maturity, and raised questions about the role of the state in attempts at the creation of a national or cultural identity in a globalized cultural environment, due to the state’s powerful role in resource distribution and management of culture. Dr. Jerry Liu introduced the idea that culture in the North East Asian tradition is a continuous “self-civilizing and social cultivation” process, pointing to the various visions of culture expressed by the governing authorities throughout the history of China. He suggested that there is room to “Re-orient” modes of cultural governance in East Asia, which includes a re-articulation of Chinese values and meanings with the bureaucratic modernities of institutions and cultural administration today.



In her presentation, Dr. Boyun Choe suggested that there is a lack of coherent understanding of “creativity” in the context of arts education policy in Korea today and, noting that heavy reliance on government subsidized research might lead to a lack of criticality, stated the need for a critical role in cultural policy research. The fourth panellist, Dr. Kiwon Hong, spoke on “Nation Branding of Korea” as an implicit cultural policy in Korea, and traced the various components of Korean cultural policy related to nation branding, but noted some challenges such as bureaucratic inertia which led to issues such as lack of consistent budget support and a power struggle on who should lead.

The second panel discussion on “Visions for Education in Arts and Culture” saw presentations on creative and arts education in Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore.

Mr Sonny Rustiadi, a lecturer in the Bandung Institute of Technology, spoke about three current challenges



in the provision of arts and creative education in Indonesia: the lack of higher arts and culture institutions, the locations of those institutions (they are not spread evenly across the vast archipelago) and the quality of teaching that is more focused on technical development. Mr Jason Vitorillo from De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde in the Philippines, discussed the state of arts management education and its challenges from his perspective as chairperson of the college's arts management programme. He discussed the need to balance skills and knowledge of managing the arts with the ability to learn the real value of arts, sharing three cases of student projects and collaborations in this area.

The next panellist was Mr. T. Sasitharan, co-founder and director of Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI), spoke about the role of theatre in the formation of identity, and discussed the role of the artist as an ethical agent in society. He noted the connection between the art form and education,

and valuing the wisdom of master teachers in the preparation of artists.

The last panellist of this session was Mr Ben Rith Suon of Cambodian Living Arts, who presented a snapshot of the current situation of the arts and arts education in Cambodia, where many artists were killed during the civil war. In a situation where artistry was traditionally passed on to younger generations orally, this could have been disastrous; nevertheless, currently there are more than 3,000 non-for-profit organizations in Cambodia of which 10% are arts organizations. There is therefore promise and potential in Cambodia, and Mr Suon ended by talking about the creation of job opportunities in arts and culture through training programs and the need to cultivate arts leadership.

It was indeed a full day of information, ideas and intellectual stimulation and everyone left prepared for more debates the following day.



## SATURDAY 15TH NOVEMBER

The third day of the 2nd ANCEP Conference opened with presentations from young researchers from the Asia Pacific. Not all the researchers were affiliated with an academic institution, but this is characteristic of the Southeast Asian region as many practitioners in the field – arts managers, curators and artists – are often engaged in independent research investigating problems and pressing issues emerging from the rapidly developing arts and cultural sectors in the region. Other presenters were students at BA, MA and PhD level. The original plan was to have a panel of 5 presenters, but as there were so many interesting submissions received through the Open Call to Young Researchers, the Conference organisers had decided to programme two parallel sessions instead – moderated by LASALLE lecturers Kathy Rowland and Michelle Loh.

Topics covered in the Young Researchers sessions included:

- visual archives in Indonesia and the re-appropriation of the archive through citizen and artist initiatives (Umi Lestari);
- an alternative artist residency programme arising from questions about the real value of cultural exchanges through residencies (Grace Samboh);
- English-language theatre in Singapore and the idea of a national cultural identity (Sherilyn Ng);
- an investigation into the Indian art market (Nimisha Kesarwani);
- museum agency in the context of local cultural governance – a case study of a ceramic museum in Taiwan (Yu-Liang Liu);
- creative placemaking and an arts space, Aliwal Centre, in Singapore (Wendy Mack);
- creative strategies of developing infrastructure, networks and resources among arts managers in Cambodia (Meta Moeng);
- a comparison of two 'book towns' in Japan and Taiwan (Lin Wanting);
- the agency of craftspersons in Swamimalai, Tamilnadu, negotiating tradition and commerce (Sowparnika Balaswaminathan).





After journeying through the region via the young researchers' presentations, a meeting of ANCER members and those interested in being an active part of the network, was held. This was an ideas-sharing and networking session, in order to surface potential ideas for the future development of the ANCER network, which is envisaged as a fluid and flexible entity, with members able to propose platforms and activities that best suit the needs of their locality or region. There was an eagerness to share connections, resources and knowledge. The meeting participants wrote ideas and suggestions down, which would be collated by the conference organisers and disseminated to all in a few months' time.

The Conference in general, was successful in promoting networking and conversations among the participants, who included representatives from academic and educational institutions as well as arts managers with different

levels of experience in the field. The diversity of participants coming together with a shared purpose gave the event a distinctive energy, which could be seen in the fact that the majority of the delegates stayed on at the conference until the very last activity of the farewell tea.

The formal Conference proceedings ended in the afternoon of 14th November with the Asia-Europe Cultural Dialogue Workshop, which was organised in partnership with ENCATC and the Creative Networks initiative of the Asia Europe Foundation. Conducted in 'World Café' format with participants divided into small groups, the change of presentational format gave the possibility of deepening the dialogue among conference delegates. It was moderated by Gerald Lidstone, the founder and the director, Postgraduate Arts Administration and Cultural Policy, Goldsmiths, University of London, and Dr. Carla Figueira, the director, MA Cultural Policy, Relations and Diplomacy, Goldsmiths, University of London, and with table facilitators drawn from different countries in Asia, Europe and the US. Before the discussion, three key questions were opened as follows; 1) What are you most concerned about in Asia-Europe Cultural Dialogue? 2) What will it take to develop further the Asia-Europe Cultural Dialogue? 3) What are you doing or might to do cultivate the Asian-Europe Dialogue?

For each question, a variety of responses was garnered, which hopefully will lead to more fruitful Asia-Europe dialogues and partnerships. For example, for the first question, some of the views expressed were “imbalance between Europe and Asia (positioning is not equal)”, “different political and legal structure”, “stereotypes”, “lack of interests” and “practical problems such as visa applications and languages”. In terms of developing a further Asia-Europe dialogue, there was a consensus that all stakeholders should be collaborative. Among the ideas that were generated were: “more platforms for meeting and talking”, “analysing of common issues”, “need for information”, “education programs such as student exchanges or residency”. In addition, there were also views expressed that, in addition to Asia-Europe cultural dialogues, we should also develop regional Asia-to-Asia dialogue and exchange.



After a two-hour lively discussion, the official events of ANCER 2014 finally came to a satisfying conclusion, and delegates adjourned to the Lowercase café at LASALLE for a final round of networking over tea.