



Commonwealth Creativities in Intercultural Arts Network

Forum 1: Mapping Intercultural Arts Practices

Facilitator: CIAN Fellow Samuel Curkpatrick

In Forum 1 we launched our four weeks of CIAN discussions around the broad theme of intercultural arts practice. Guests from across Europe and the Commonwealth gathered to participate in the formation of the CIAN network, bringing ideas from diverse experience and disciplines to the discussion.

We set out to identify the key issues of intercultural arts practices that confront researchers and academics, problematising established theoretical terminology and framing. Guest participants introduced the broad issues that impact and influence intercultural arts in their field of practice/research.

Over the session, our aim was to *map out* the field of intercultural arts based on the possibilities and challenges that it offers. What emerged was something complex, malleable and most of all interconnected. Questions arising from this forum influenced the planning of subsequent sessions.

Facilitation:

We set out with the goal that this was not to be a conference of presentation but a conference of conversations.

A number of small-group tables were set up around the room and conversations were generated at each, depending on the particular interests of guest contributors seated at each table.



After brief introductions, everyone set about discussing and *mapping* 'who we are as a network'. We literally pinned notes to a map of the world that indicated the locations of key intercultural arts practices, the global issues driving these practices, as well as important research initiatives connecting institutions and continents. As you can see in the above image, it became readily apparent that the majority of participants were involved in projects and activities in Europe, Asia and Australia. Blue notes indicated key research institutions/projects; yellow showed the location of important intercultural engagements; green noted significant issues or themes that drove intercultural practices.

Conversation is active possibility: it shifts and evolves, unfolding through provisional iterations, reaching toward something future (SC)



Breaking into six groups, we then discussed the *possibilities* and *challenges* that define intercultural arts research (see below), before coming together as a group to develop some ways forward for CIAN as a network, drawing directly on our mapping exercises, our collective sense of possibility, and the challenges that might need addressing.

Key themes: Challenges and possibilities

*What opens up **possibility**; what possibilities open up through intercultural arts practice?*

*What **challenges** are involved in intercultural arts practices? Ethics, limitations, conflicts?*

The following are some of the responses and discussion points that arose from these two themes:

- The term intercultural assumes fixed boundaries, in effect creating difference. Intercultural practices then try to get beyond these differences.
- The term 'intercultural' can be unhelpful and contribute to problems, especially in conflict zones
- Do we want a definition of the term intercultural? Do we need one?
- Ethnography is the most damaging thing to Aboriginal people
- Ethics of leaving the field and leaving behind the relationships that are central to our work in intercultural arts practices. Can we ever really leave the field?
- Terminology is often where misunderstandings occur in intercultural practice – language and translation
- How do we disseminate our ideas beyond words?



***Creativity** is central to the realisation of new possibilities, permitting individuals to engage with tradition and one another in genuinely authentic ways (SC)*

These and other issues continued to be discussed by CIAN fellows over the coming weeks, shaping the content of the other three forums.

CIAN: Networks as maps in action

Building a purposeful community that will generate relevant research

There was much interest in seeing CIAN grow as a network. Participants were keen to see future meetings or symposia bringing a diversity of researchers and practitioners together.

***Intercultural engagement** is conversation; CIAN is a conversation generating involvement and engagement (SC)*

It was noted that while there is already a large body of theoretical/critical literature that people can access and dispersed through various disciplines—we should also explore the need to focus CIAN toward the development of more theoretical frameworks or methodological critiques that specifically inform intercultural arts practices.

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