



Tuesday, 4 October 2011, 11:00 am.

## **Panel session: My Place**

### Speakers

**Rocco Landesman**, Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts, USA

**Pooja Sood**, Director, KHOJ International Artists' in Association, India

**Lachlan McDonald**, Writer, Director, Producer, Community Cultural Development Worker, Australia

### Moderator

**Paul James**, Director, Global Cities Institute (RMIT), Australia and Director of the United Nations Global Compact, Cities Programme

### Rapporteur

**Kon Gouriotis**, Director, Visual Arts Board, Australia Council for the Arts

## **Description of the session**

This session focused on three creative interactions in three different places in the world, through creative projects. All the projects were determined by the nature of their particular place. The main themes included whether culture has been ignored by governments or if arts create a stronger economy. Other issues discussed were the role of artists in engaging communities, the recognition of local excellence, the importance of place, the relationship between business and culture and how to create vibrant engaging communities.

**Rocco Landesman** envisioned a 'real art city' in America, like he was experiencing in Melbourne. His role as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts is to increase the funding for the arts. To grow the funding to the arts Rocco has changed the conversation to reinvigoration and revitalization; and the metrics to vibrancy. For Rocco, the new contract for the arts is the engagement of community; to develop local excellence; to build stable communities; and to create stronger economies.

**Pooja Sood's** KHOJ International Artists' in Association projects are seeking new artistic engagements across borders, across spaces, and across sectors for artists to broker community engagements; to place artists 'centre stage'; and to create new employment opportunities to increase artists incomes.

Creating dialogue to engage community through questions such as '*what can we do for you*' is KHOJ's starting point. Asking young Indians about love in the Kirky Village initiative; or the Murray Goldfield communities about their stories is Pooja's vision to express what contemporary Indian art is today. KHOJ hopes to achieve the active engagement of the Indian government together with the international funding organisations to support their urban Indian artists' projects. Currently the KHOJ artists initiative survives exclusively on international private funding.

**Lachlan McDonald** creates community engagements by making a place where communities can tell their stories according to their place. Lachlan's searching's for what place is, have been realized in the Albany prison on the South West Coast of Western Australia and through the Warthaurong people in Western Australia. In the Albany prison, inmates told their stories; formed a "Silence Writers Lavish Tales, Salt Writers" group; and embraced the influence of Abdul Baha.

## **Creative intersections discussed in the session**

- The development of partnerships between the community, government, private and cultural organizations is the National Endowment for the Arts intends to achieve this vision. The 'Work Farm' initiative is a NEA partnership with private and public institutions. More recently NEA has established 'Art Place' a private philanthropic funding partnership with federal agencies to provide \$11 million grants and \$12 million as loan funds.
- KHOJ urban India village artists project creates opportunities for national and international artists to exchange and engage with local urban communities in India.
- With the Warthaurong mob Lachlan McDonald engaged an international artist to work with the community to create a sand drawing animation on the affects of diabetes in the community. He said: '*Artists helped build the communities resources in treating diabetes as art have the power to heal*'.

## **Examples of good examples and practices**

- NEA's initiative 'Art Place' a private philanthropic funding partnership with federal agencies to provide \$11 million grants and \$12 million as loan funds. NEA
- NEAs metrics for success is vibrancy i.e. people involved in the activity and people presences; 'street life' creates the economic growth; and the impact of vibrancy is evident in tax revenue levels such as- the income levels, education levels and spending levels in that particular place.

## **Identified problems**

- Culture not recognized by governments except in terms of market outcomes
- The arts sector not willing to change to develop ongoing community engagement

- Arts not funded sufficiently by national governments
- Practice and communication tend to be treated as separate functions

## **Recommendations for future actions**

- A new government contract to culture
- The arts to measure community vibrancy
- Urban cultural diversity through the provision of affordable housing for artists
- Artists equity contract in the place they helped to gentrify

## **Other additional comments**

- *'Culture has been largely ignored by governments globally'* (Paul James)
- *'A result of artists driven urban regeneration is the gentrification of place. You should avoid artists being priced out of the market through urban gentrification. Governments can provide affordable housing by controlling rent; giving artists equity in the place they helped gentrify; and through controlling house prices.'* (Rocco Landesman)
- *'Business follows culture...business is attracted to people'* (Rocco Landesman)
- *'Art helped to build the resources...and the power to heal'* (Lachlan McDonald speaking about the "animation Western Desert Kidney Project")
- *'Indian government commitment to contemporary India art today...the dialogue is looking back not forward'* (Pooja Sood)