



Tuesday, 4 October 2011, 1:30 pm.

## **Roundtable 5: Changing places: evolving cultural policies in Asia**

Supported by ASEF/culture360.org, an online portal of the Asia-Europe Foundation

### Speakers

**Chaitanya Sambrani**, Lecturer, Art historian and Curator, Australian National University School of Art and Social Sciences, Australia

**Shen Qilan**, Editor, Art World Magazine, China

**Kiwon Hong**, Assistant Professor of Cultural Policy, Sookmyung Women's University, Korea

**Malou Jacob**, Executive Director, National Commission for Culture and the Arts, Philippines

### Moderator

**Lesley Alway**, Arts Director, Asialink, Australia

### Rapporteur

**Ramona Laczko-David**, Project Officer, Asia-Europe Foundation

## **Description of the session**

This session focused on different types of cultural engagement projects happening at distinct levels of the arts and culture sector.

**Chaitanya Sambrani** presented a project which illustrates a “curatorial adventure” taking place at the margins of public policy making. As underlined by the speaker, *‘the project was driven by desire and not policy, by enthusiasm, informal, people to people relationship; nobody from the government’*. This experience was particularly driven from the exhibition “Place.Time.Play: Contemporary Art from the West Heavens to the Middle Kingdom”. The project also underlined a “hunger” to engage in a discussion between artists from both regions, an attempt to challenge the “marketing language” employed in describing the emergence of these two global powers.

**Kiwon Hong** on the other hand addressed cultural engagement from the perspective of the government programmes initiated in Korea in the arts and culture sector. In the last 10 years the Korean government

acknowledged more and more the importance of the arts in developing societies and aims to profile itself as the best model of dealing with cultural diversity in Asia, the HUB for cultural cooperation in Asia.

**Shen Qilan** introduced another dimension of cultural engagement, pointing out the challenges in cultural co-operations between China and other regions, in particular Europe. In the Chinese context, participation of Chinese contemporary artists in international events (e.g. 2001 Chinese Festival in Germany, Venice Biennale), have contributed to an acknowledgement of the contemporary arts scene within the country. According to Shen, in spite of challenges and misunderstandings which were identified in cultural co-operations between China and Europe, arts and culture professionals involved in cultural exchanges must expect a change of paradigm, rely on an open dialogue and tolerance and respect for the counter-part.

**Malou Jacob** on the other hand, referring to the emergence of super economies, argued in favour of ‘*a unique cultural industry that would benefit the artist, the creator*’. The “new” cultural economy should promote a ‘*cultural rapprochement which encourages equality, mutual respect and just remuneration for the work of the artist.*’

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

- The way arts and culture professionals challenge or frame cultural policy making
- Artistic exchanges taking place with no government support versus a high investment in the arts seeking to increase cultural revenue and acting as a tool for strong cultural profiling of the country (e.g. Korea)
- The examples of people, places or projects both the speakers and participants brought forward talked about the value of the artist and his/her work, the integrity of the artistic work in the context of cultural exchanges/co-operations and the role of the arts in challenging the “comfort zone” of cities, regions and their increasing role in social intervention.

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

- Dr. Chaitanya Sambrani’s presentation of the “*Place.Time.Play: Contemporary Art from the West Heavens to the Middle Kingdom*”  
[www.westheavens.net/en/exhibition](http://www.westheavens.net/en/exhibition)
- Book on “*Europe-China Cultural Compass--Orientation for Cultural Cooperation between China and Europe*”– a guide for cultural practitioners interested in cultural co-operation between China and Europe.  
[www.eunic-online.eu/sites/eunic-online.eu/files/EN\\_Europe%20China%20Cultural%20Compass\\_E-Book\\_2011.pdf](http://www.eunic-online.eu/sites/eunic-online.eu/files/EN_Europe%20China%20Cultural%20Compass_E-Book_2011.pdf)

## **Identified problems**

- Developing sustainable bilateral and multilateral platforms of cultural engagements often collide with the question of sustainability and with the question of increasing exposure given to the

artists going to one region or another. Or on the contrary, the audience pointed out the value of developing projects on a smaller scale with higher focus and impact on the artistic exchange, the collaboration process itself. (audience intervention)

- In China, the construction of imposing buildings for the Olympics and Shanghai World Expo which translate a policy of drawing attention of the whole world, but a sustainable plan for their functionality in the future is still under discussion. (Shen Qilan)
- Dr Hong pointed out the challenges met in cultural exchanges governed by governmental bodies which in some cases harm the autonomy of the artistic work
- The “Chinese Spectacle” phenomena which translates a European imagination and preference for certain Chinese contemporary art manifestations.

## **Recommendations for future actions**

- Assist artists to go abroad and present their work with non-commercial purpose
- Enhancing artistic freedom: develop a cultural industry in favour of the artist, where not the same old cultural marketing people are earning the money
- Establish a “price” for the arts, but promote their value, draw a line between cultural capital and the future of a society
- Cultural exchanges: the artists should be more involved in their social setting not only locally, in their own environment, but also internationally.