

Introduction and Overview

Clayton Campbell, Los Angeles, October 2012

Thank you for your interest in this panel, and we are providing this overview so you may have a productive and clearer understanding of the panel's thinking and what is behind their presentations. We have also provided more in-depth narratives from each panelist and from the moderator. These documents represent the research and scholarship, which was conducted on behalf of the Res Artis conference in Tokyo.

The mission statement articulated for this conference guided our work as we sought unique approaches and models to reflect the goals and outcomes the conference leaders are seeking. The mission is as follows:

“We are now at a point where we should reconsider the world we live in. The world after 9.11, major change in the Middle East and 3.11 in Japan, what next? As we enter the 21st century, we are faced with various agendas such as environmental crisis continuing since modernization in the 20th century, collapse of the economy system and collision between the East and West. There is no way that such agendas and art are unrelated. Is it not art that enables to question human conditions that allows us to open the next door and glimpse through new horizons? We hope to engage in discussion with those dealing with such compelling issues throughout the world. We also wish to focus on the role and approaches of collaboration.

It is a long time since a general meeting in Asia was last held. We hope to consider the role of institutions in Asian and Middle East where cultural currents are forming and the agendas on collaboration and network to arise in the future.

Artist Residencies whereby artists create work and exchange dialogues will become important sites from now on. We hope this general meeting will become an opportunity to open up such new horizons. Asia is structured from multiple values and societies. Cooperation nurtured here is not cooperation based on existing single values but rather cooperation that recognizes differences as values. Just as each star exists as an individual entity within constellations, we will aim for a constellation of culture by forming a single star sign through collaboration.”

The Innovative Strategies for Creative Platforms panel is charged with looking forward in a proactive and positive way. The question, ‘what are innovative strategies for creative platforms’ contains in the multiple answers a larger view of the artist practice as we look ahead. We discussed how residencies, grants, or fellowships are in themselves awards that may only come once for an artist. As such they do not

provide for artists a platform that sustains a long-term practice although it certainly adds to it at key moments. Artists are creative in cobbling together various means of support to move their work forward, but this is becoming increasingly difficult because of a number of factors to be discussed based on skills sets and available resources.

We are also mindful that the resources available to artists in industrialized nations are not the same as those in under resourced countries, and therefore these creative platforms conceived by artists have their own imaginative qualities with different metrics of success. Nevertheless, there is a commonality for artists world-wide who seek to develop a creative platform for themselves.

We do feel that artist practice's inform the residency field and are the continued reason and logic for the institutional health of progressive cultural centers that support research, investigation and action. The creative practice is what will imagine the innovative strategies for future creative platforms. The variety of imaginative structures that are designed to complement what artists are doing will evolve quickly, keeping pace with the speed and process of creative action.

Summarizing, the panelists were asked to look at the following four assumptions, and develop a presentation using artists or artist teams as examples of strategies reflecting the precise and skillful knowledge each panelist brings to the discussion.

1. A creative platform is the infrastructure from which artists develop ideas and find the means to produce and implement them. They come in all sizes and shapes, building upon what we have done, what we are doing, and what we can become.
2. Innovative strategies will take into account a holistic view of the artist as part of cultural, social and financial ecologies that helps them to be sustainable and effective. Artist residencies are one part of that ecology, and may be evolving into expansive creative communities with far reaching consequences for emerging generations of artists and what their practice may be.
3. The underlying logic for successful innovative strategies to establish creative platforms is the artist's practice. It is governed by their capacity to sustain it both practically, through partnerships and community engagement, and by enlarging the scope of their concerns, expanding their worldview and acquiring personal power to provoke transformative action. We live in a time of multi-disciplinary hybrid practices, which include collaborators from arts, education, science, civics, faith and community based constituencies.
4. When working with community, in all of its permutations, we will assume that artists must give back more to their communities than they take out of them. Now more than ever we need community, which is at the heart of a creative platform.

Four themes were articulated linked to the four assumptions above, one theme for each panelist to consider using an artist or artist team to demonstrate their thinking. Aligned with the themes were questions that could open up thinking about the assumptions and themes.

As a short context, the panel is moderated by Clayton Campbell, Los Angeles, US.

He has suggested the themes, context, organization and direction for the panel. He will speculate about what is behind the contemporary artist process, and how this is the logic, which informs residencies and the overall arts ecology as the environment in which artists do develop innovative strategies for creative platforms.

1. Sustainability- Melissa Franklin, Pew Arts and Heritage, Philadelphia, US

More and more artists are developing their own creative platforms for the development and distribution of their work and ideas.

To be successful they must take into account and develop their ability and capacity to sustain themselves on a very practical level as an important and essential part of an overall strategy to advance their work and ideas. They need specialized support to develop the skills necessary to be successful.

If money were no object, what would be the ideal, holistic program of support to artists and creative persons? Would it include artist housing, affordable health care, business training, income generation strategies, managerial acumen, resource sharing? Would the artists work in the local communities through the schools, with disadvantaged youth, etc. What is the “give-back of the artist” to support their community, so they in turn will be supported by the community?

2. Connectivity- Alessio Antoniolla , Gasworks, London, UK

Connectivity is creative practice unto itself in which artists connect directly with other artists and establish their own creative platforms. Often artist-centric networks are the only free flow of uncensored information between diverse communities and operate in the interstices of official channels.

How do will networks develop over the next ten year, and what will artists’ practices be like that will drive the establishment of new centers? What will be the innovative strategies artists use to communicate with each other, and what is the concrete potential of this? As visa restrictions, political strife, the cost of travel increases and perhaps no resources at all limits physical mobility of artists, what are realistic innovative strategies where artists are being a connectors and a bridge to each other?

3. Activity- Margaret Shiu, Bamboo Curtain Studio, Taipei, Taiwan

Artists have great contributions to make to civil society, and artist residencies are becoming creative communities providing platforms that will facilitate and support artists, thinkers and activists from many sectors who work for change. Creative

communities are acting as international hubs for innovative strategies towards cross sector initiatives for proactive change in local, specific situations.

Therefore, how are artists and creators in partnership with local communities? What are the strategies for public engagements that have worked in an innovative way and produced unexpected results? Do these strategies promote solution-oriented outcomes? If so, what is the role for artists as an advocacy group to obtain political and financial support for arts and culture, assuming it can be a powerful force in mediating increasing conflict and competition in all social sectors?

4. Visioning- Zoe Butt, San Art , Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam,

Artists are often initiating organizations that are THE ONLY arts infrastructure for experimental contemporary art practice in their locale. It needs to be made clear that their work stands apart from the official understanding of ‘art’ in their country and as such it is problematic to argue their work as ‘alternative’, as prescribed by popular western discourse. Also, artists who found such organizations often possess artistic practices deemed politically sensitive to local authorities and so the ability to raise public awareness of their work is very difficult.

In the context of broader Asia the dynamic is challenging the increasing politically and socially restricted landscape of a rising nationalism that seeks to nurture cultural isolationism and historical exclusion. Artist-run organizations and their programming, such as residencies, are offering new strategies for knowledge production and social engagement – but often with considerable risk to civic liberties.

Artists are demanding new histories to be written, new modes of ‘interpretation’ that better speak to the context of where they live and work and thus re-writing the presumed international mode of engagement and understanding of the role and shape of art organization as showcase, discursive agent, producer and archive