

## Triangle Network

Triangle is an international network of artists and arts organisations working both independently and in partnership with each other, to promote exchange of ideas, innovation and professional development for artists; as well as to disseminate international contemporary practice to audiences worldwide. The main activities of the Network are artist-led workshops, residencies, exhibitions and other public event.

Established in 1982, Triangle Network responds to the need of artists and non-institutional arts organisations to communicate with one another in order to share ideas, skills and experiences. By being part of the network, each partner is better placed to connect local and international art scenes, thereby challenging insularity, creating further opportunities for artists, placing at the forefront of the debates on arts practice internationally.

Over the last 30 years the Network has expanded, then shrunk and then expanded again. It is still changing, with new partners joining as others go off on their own or take a more or less 'extended break'. It is this flexibility that, perhaps paradoxically, has made the Network strong and most of all useful. Artists can use it as a malleable tool that they can 'appropriate' and make their own by running projects, forming collectives or simply by taking advantage of the opportunity to work alongside their peers. In many cases, the sporadic and even nomadic trend of the network has kept it spontaneous, immediately responsive to new ideas and needs.

All this flexibility however, involves a level of precariousness, which is inscribed in the Network's present and – of course – its future. How such a diverse group of people and spaces can continue to stay together and be generous with each other under the pressures of local and global political and economic difficulties is a question for which we have no answer. Instead, it seems that moving along day-by-day and finding solutions to whatever problems come up is the best the Network can do. It's in the mission of the organisation to address the need of artists to make work and find a public for it, so I guess that as long as that need is there, the job of the Network will be to find ways of staying relevant to artists by constantly adapting and changing.

What Triangle will be in 10 years from now is very hard to envisage. There is a possibility that it will become redundant, with partners developing alternative links and artists setting up different structures for exchange that make the 'traditional' mobility issues less pressing. For instance, as cultural connections between West and Non-West grow, an independent group of artists, cultural workers and activists in Asia have set up Arts Network Asia (ANA). The network addresses the need for regional artistic collaboration and support- as well as develops managerial and administrative skills - within Asia. Another example is Time Bank, created by artists Julieta Aranda and Anton Vidokle in 2010, as an economic tool for exchanging time and skills, a system that strongly relies on digital communication.

It is also possible that Triangle will continue to change and offer alternative options to artists by extending network platforms available through the web. It's an understatement to say that the web has enabled a level of closeness that could not have been imagined a couple of decades ago. Its potential for communication, but also for making and showing work without a huge and costly infrastructure is a reality for many practitioners. The work of CAMP, for instance, is a perfect example of art production that combines a long-term interest in the role of digital technologies, the web etc... Their interest in open source stretches the technology even further, exploring its potential to question mainstream lines of communication and narratives, using technologies not only for production and distribution but also for exploring the a wider – or different – way of accessing information.

The potential of web is also that it bypasses the costs of travelling and the geographical barriers one needs to cross (visa restrictions are becoming more stringent and artists based outside the wealthiest countries are amongst the witnesses of how one-sided the idea of globalisation is). However, whilst technologies and other 'alternative' platforms provide more options they don't necessarily replace what is already there. Artists involved in Triangle activities are so different from

each other and include carvers, painters, performers, video makers, web artists etc. Some can't get away from the web while others hardly use it, and the reasons for this are many. A dangerous one that comes to mind is increasing governmental censorship and other political restrictions but, more simply, it could also be that it isn't so relevant. The latter seems to be particularly felt by artistic communities who are more remote from the world of economically-viable cultural hubs, bienales, art fairs and international exhibitions. In this instance, access to the web doesn't seem to bring artists closer together, stimulating creative potentials, but it creates further distance between those that are 'in' and those that are very 'out'.

With this in mind, I would hope that in 10 years Triangle will continue to diversify the opportunities it provides artists and other arts professionals. While this presents the danger of spreading too thin, it could also become an opportunity for Triangle to link with other networks that have different specialisations so that the needs of artists are addressed without having to add layers to an already overstretched and as-ever under-resourced structure.

In the meantime, Triangle and several of its partners are trying to secure their future by consolidating their identity, roles and long-term presence both within their local art scenes and internationally. In many cases this has been a response to issues of sustainability, where the uncertainty of future funding and rising living costs are pushing organisations to either consolidate their assets or to reduce in size and scope. Recently, Triangle partners Britto Art Trust in Bangladesh have purchased a space in Dhaka, Bangladesh, opening the first non-commercial and artist-run gallery/residency space in the country. Bag Factory in Johannesburg and Greatmore studio in Cape Town are planning to do the same, securing the future of two of the earliest Triangle hubs. Khoj in Delhi and Gasworks in London are also working towards purchasing their premises ensuring that artists can continue to have a base in fast growing cities, and challenging the global trend that sees artists as the instigators but also the first victims of urban regeneration.

With these hubs solidly in place, the picture of the Network starts to look very different. It includes long-term organisations with programme-led hubs as well as other spaces that are more spontaneous, temporary or event-led. I hope that this combination will not only make the network stronger, but that it will also instigate and make room for other innovative formats and platforms that can continue to support artists in future. These might include projects similar to the examples mentioned in this text, but I also hope that the network will be flexible and porous enough to include those that I will be excited to learn about and discover in the future.

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