

## SPEAKERS: MAKING CREATIVE CITIES: THE VALUE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE ARTS

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER** Keith Khan (UK), Head of Culture for the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games

Andrew Jakubowicz, Coordinating Director, Centre for Cosmopolitan Civil Societies, University of Technology, Sydney

Claudia Chidiac, Artistic Director, Powerhouse Youth Theatre

Christopher Wade, Director, British Council

Darcy Nicholas (NZ), Contemporary Maori painter, sculptor, arts commentator and writer

David Borger MP, State Member for Granville and Chair, Public Works Committee

Fotis Kapetopoulos, Director, Kape Communications

Kathy Keele, Chief Executive Officer, the Australia Council for the Arts

Kristy Edmunds, Artistic Director of the Melbourne International Arts Festival

Lloyd Newson (UK), Director of DV8 Physical Theatre

Marcia Langton AM, Foundation Professor of Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne

Morris Bellamy, Head of Arts and Culture, City of Melbourne

Nikos Papastergiadis, Associate Professor at the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne

Ola Animashawun (UK), Associate Director, Royal Court Theatre and the Head of the Royal Court Young Writers' Programme

Ruth Rentschler, Foundation Chair and Professor in Arts and Entertainment Management, Deakin University

Tanika Gupta (UK), Writer

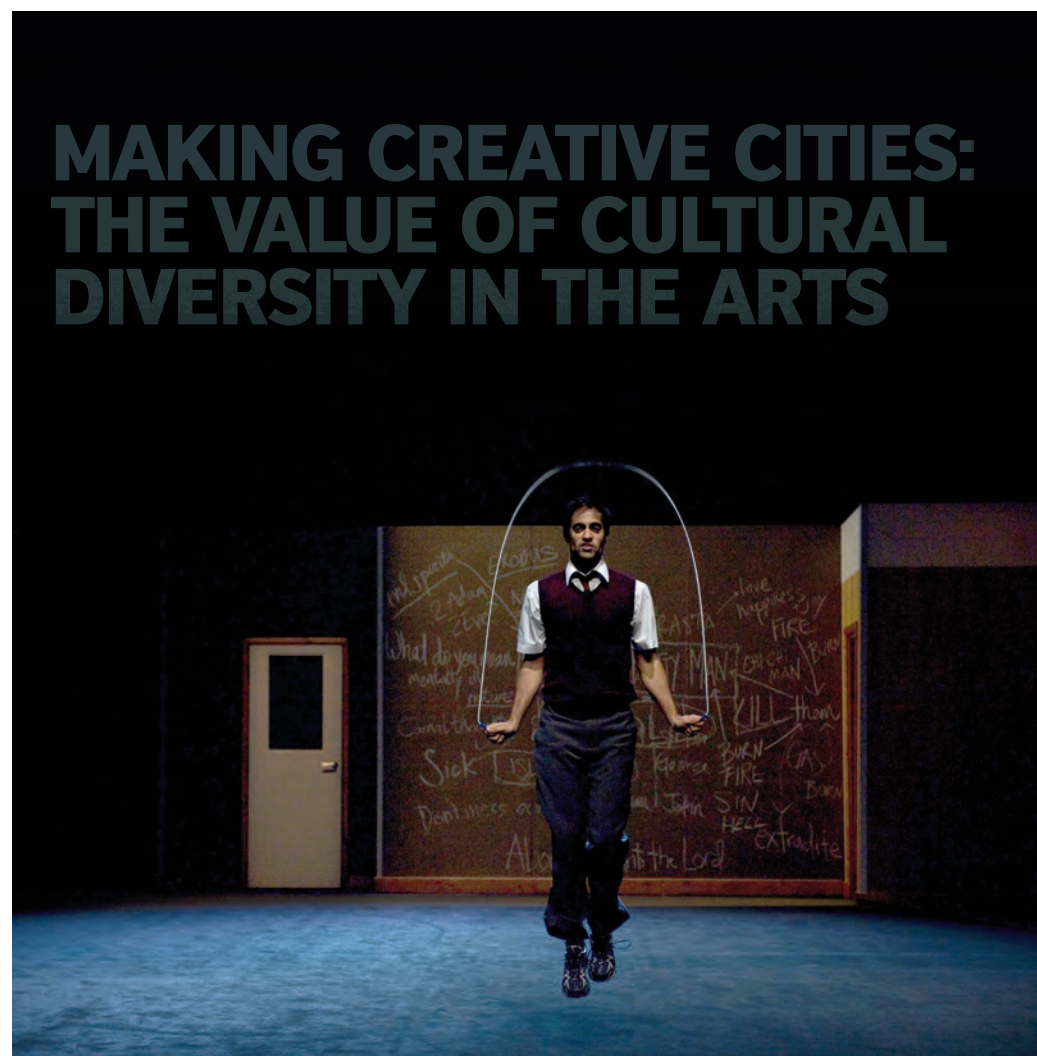
Tim Supple (UK), Director, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Tony Ayres, Film Maker

Cover: DV8 Physical Theatre, *To Be Straight With You*. Photographer: Matt Nettheim

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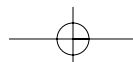


SUMMARY AND OUTCOMES

MELBOURNE  
TUESDAY  
18 MARCH  
2008

[www.creativecities.org.uk](http://www.creativecities.org.uk)

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## A TRANSFORMATIONAL DAY

In March 2008, the British Council joined with the Australia Council for the Arts to present a one-day forum in Melbourne, *Making Creative Cities: The value of cultural diversity in the arts*. The forum was envisaged as a platform in which arts practitioners, policy makers and commentators from around the East Asia region could interface with their UK counterparts to address key issues around interculturalism in creative and urban contexts.

Combining panel discussions with facilitated roundtable workshops amongst small groups of participants, the forum stimulated debate around three core areas: the intersection of interculturalism with creative leadership and with creative expression, and the role of interculturalism in the production of creative cities.

A series of broad questions formed the framework through which these themes were elaborated and challenged, which included: How relevant are mainstream arts organisations to new forms of cultural expression? How can international cultural organisations support the development of new audiences for artists from minority communities? And, how can the exploration of identity and migration through the arts support the development of creative cities? For the British Council, the forum formed part of a three year initiative to explore ways of developing creative cities where global citizens can thrive. More details of the initiative can be found online at [www.creativecities.org.uk](http://www.creativecities.org.uk)

Over the course of the day's debate, key ideas emerged that will now help shape the way forward in our thinking and activities around building the creative, intercultural cities of the future. The main section of this paper attempts to summarise the day's wide-ranging discussions. The final outcomes page maps a number of areas that both the Australia Council for the Arts and the British Council are interested in investigating further.

## THE IDEAS

### MULTICULTURALISM/INTERCULTURALISM

The limitations of 'multiculturalism' as a model for cultural interaction have made way for the emergence of 'interculturalism' as a different way of thinking through these processes. The key point of distinction is that interculturalism proposes exchange beyond the appropriation of cultural conventions so that they exist side by side while retaining an essential 'otherness'. Instead, interculturalism proposes that cross-cultural dialogue might take commonality (rather than difference) as the point of departure for generating understanding and hybridity. To what extent this theoretical shift is fostered in practice by the groups that policy makers and cultural organisations work with needs to be investigated.

### DIVERSITY

It emerged from the forum that the terms of cultural identification are not always clear, and that even the concept of 'cultural identity' is unstable and permeable. The standard indicators of colour, nation, race, and faith need to be expanded to incorporate a richer spectrum of potential points of convergence. On this note, it's important to realise that people don't always want to be defined by – or have their work evaluated in relation to – their cultural identity as such. This is an assumed relationship where marginalisation and cultural identification are presupposed.

We need to have the courage to acknowledge the role racism plays in stifling interculturalism. And further, as Keith Khan, Head of Culture for the London 2012 Olympic Games proposed, we need policy that can grapple with the true extent to which diversity exists, for example, in terms of disability.

Ola Animashawun spoke of several steps he had taken as Associate Director of the Royal Court Theatre in London to increase the diversity of young people engaging in their programs, including initiatives specifically targeted at minority groups to the exclusion of groups already well represented. The value and effectiveness of such overt measures in honouring diversity are significant.

### PARTICIPATION

The creative city is partly defined by its ability to inspire people to engage with their surroundings by participating in cultural activities. If we think of culture in an open and generous sense – beyond the arts per se – to include food, street and music festivals, and so on, then a more inclusive and democratic landscape for participation emerges. In his keynote address, Keith Khan posed that one way to effectively address issues of access and inclusion is to encourage partnerships across the three sectors of cultural provision. Cross-fertilisation between public organisations, private organisations and an increasingly robust sector of self-organised practices, will allow for new models of engagement to develop that can meet the specificities of this challenge.

The development of creative cities depends upon sound leadership, planning and investment on the part of local government, which has the ability to shape the conditions within which creative practices might flourish. However, the creative city also needs to be fostered at a grass-roots level. It is necessary to invest 'locally and

specifically' by engaging people from a range of community backgrounds at all levels of planning, development and implementation. There is an important case to focus at times on the artist and the community in singular, because it's individuals that can make a difference.

The question of 'who decides' on behalf of communities emerged as a major concern. Throughout the forum, the view was expressed that in order to go forward, we have to unsettle the engrained practice of speculating about community expectations and desires by committing to consultation, and being prepared to relinquish power. People at the top of organisational hierarchies need to step back and allow communities to speak for themselves.

## MARKETING

It is a challenge to develop new ways of marketing cultural and intercultural participation beyond what we've come to rely on. Australian film-maker Tony Ayres, for instance, made reference to the variation in the number of people who went to see his film *The Home Song Stories* compared with *Romulus, my Father*, released around the same time. *Romulus* had the obvious advantage of existing cultural identification – a script based on a book by an acclaimed Australian philosopher; a narrative of European migration; and an Australian Hollywood star in the lead role. The question this begs is how do we develop different marketing strategies to overcome the predilection people have to 'buy into' things they already know and are comfortable with?

On this note, British scriptwriter Tanika Gupta pointed to how 'producer led' the arts in the UK have become. This is clearly a trend that works in tandem with the necessity to attract audiences, but allows little space for marginalised viewpoints to stake out their own territory.

## EXCELLENCE

What is the relationship of excellence to success? And to what extent are current notions of excellence in creativity indifferent to the specific factors that shape community-based projects? While there is a strong interest in increasing the critical discussion around community projects towards fostering excellence, the question of how to identify excellence and/or success outside of an institutionalised framework requires further consideration.

The issue of reception is crucial here. British theatre director Tim Supple made the point that the logic of interculturalism translates quite easily into the broader context of cultural participation. The way that different disciplinary cultures – theatre, visual arts, music etc – intersect with the locations in which they are sited, for instance, is another incarnation of interculturalism. Location shapes the terms of production and reception, and as such the indicators of excellence and success are not set in stone. How the dynamic between a project and its audience shifts in different contexts could be given further consideration.

In a discussion of the importance of tradition, younger practitioners emphasised how important it is that those with leading roles in training and cultural organisations adopt a much less ruthless preference for the Western canon in the content of programs,

courses and technique. Tim Supple described how the Indian actors in his production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* had valued a creative dialogue between both their own dance traditions and Western performance training.

## LEADERSHIP

We need to nurture fresh perspectives and listen to people from young, emerging and minority communities in order to ensure that policy remains relevant. We also need to equip young people to engage in, and shape, this process. Professional development opportunities are one way forward. Claudia Chidiac, Artistic Director of the Powerhouse Youth Theatre, put it to the group as being 'about building capacity, not flying it in on a cultural diversity Boeing 747 for international festivals'. Chidiac also noted that a sustainable method of fostering leadership is the development of multiple models and frameworks, rather than a singular, overarching approach.

On this topic, Professor Marcia Langton highlighted the importance of identifying and building on examples of strong political leadership. Using her home city as a model example, she emphasised how 'Melbourne's leaders have created a conversation which allows people to get along with each other,' and in turn have been able to forge a consensus about strategy amongst different stakeholder groups. We need to capitalise on the momentum generated by successful leadership initiatives. The question is how do we identify the skills set that enabled this to happen and thus enable others to reproduce them?

On another note, Marcia Langton again highlighted an inter-generational divide in thinking around the concept of leadership, making the point that a more engrained focus on leadership in terms of 'management' is in conflict with an increasingly transparent emphasis by younger generations on intellectual and creative leadership.

## DIALOGUE

We need to consider further how intercultural dialogue extends more widely beyond demographic groups to the exchanges that take place between policy makers and creative practitioners. How can we make the decision making processes that define these relationships more inclusive, open and flexible?

We also need to think more about how we connect with youth, whether through advisory groups, through linking into ambassadors for local communities, through targeting non-mainstream communications platforms, or committing to working in different venues. The dialogue with young people needs to go beyond simply asking for their opinions to providing opportunities for them to be involved in the planning and delivery of activity.

## FRICTION

Many of the Forum participants felt that it is important to value and retain friction and difference – these are drivers of risk and change, and crucial aspects to fostering cross-fertilisation without encouraging homogenisation. The inherent need and curiosity for cultures to interact creates fertile moments of encounter, but it's important to note that such a space for productive exchange cannot necessarily be

manufactured. The question of what happens to the specificities of cultures when working in intercultural ways needs to be at the forefront of considerations when formulating intercultural projects. Further, the view was expressed that the notion of 'integration' is not as relevant as those of 'engagement' and 'participation'.

## CHANGE

The concept of change is central to the operation of interculturalism in practice. It is also a significant driver of progress towards nurturing creativity in an urban context beyond an understanding of creativity as simply driving material production. As Kristy Edmunds, Director of the Melbourne International Arts Festival, pointed out, 'change may not be visible or even legible'. We need to anticipate and allow for change in a multitude of ways – change as an internal rupture, a shift in perspective, in approach, in understanding. Likewise, creativity is a process, and not a product – it is a mentality, a mode of action, and can be fostered across all sectors, not just the arts. Going forward, a shift in how we conceive the impact of change and creativity will be crucial.

## OUTCOMES

We have distilled the discussions from the forum into three areas for further investigation and action by the Australia Council for the Arts and the British Council.

### PROMOTE THE IDEA THAT GOOD LEADERSHIP IS NOT ABOUT ONE MODEL

- Explore initiatives to develop the capacities of whole communities, not just individuals
- Explore ways of genuinely embedding young people/diverse groups into decision-making processes at government, policy and organisational levels beyond simply asking their opinion
- Identify intercultural innovators and explore ways of expanding support for leadership beyond managerial leadership into intercultural, intellectual, community, teaching and creative leadership

### REVIEW THE MODELS OF SUPPORT FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSION

- Move towards a holistic view of diversity that extends beyond cultural diversity to address factors including economic, geographic, disability, public versus private etc
- Look at ways of supporting the intersections between diverse groups themselves and with local, regional, central and political institutions
- Acknowledge that creativity comes in many forms and not only from within 'the arts'. Actively support cross-fertilisation between publicly funded organisations, private organisations, and an increasingly robust sector of self-organised practices
- Explore ways for funding agencies and authorities to set the conditions for creativity to flourish and then step back. Investigate ways for this organic process, and the possible ensuing friction, to be supported. Explore further moving towards envisioning and away from imposition
- Foster change within institutional contexts to honour diversity both through content and participation

### SUPPORT A CREATIVE CITY FOR ALL

- Promote a broader conception of creativity to encompass ways of working beyond the material, and be inclusive of practices outside those disciplines conventionally understood to be the drivers of creative production. Support an understanding of creativity as a mode of engagement, a process, and an approach that can be mobilised by all people
- Explore initiatives to provide equitable access across the whole of cities to cultural activities and institutions beyond the city centre. Develop regional centres and outer-suburban 'nodes'
- Foster new models of participation and engagement, and of localised, neighbourly interaction