

International Opportunities in the Arts

Edited by

Mary Sherman
MFA, New York University



Series in Art

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Foreword

The articles in this publication were originally presented at the *TransCultural Exchange's 2018 International Conference on International Opportunities in the Arts: Exploring New Horizons*. The conference was held in Canada, and over 80 papers were presented, many of which were submitted for inclusion in this book. The aim of the conference and now this book was to inspire artists to think across disciplines and cultures to suggest other career models beyond the typical studio to gallery/museum model. Much of the content is unique in that it not only addresses the practical needs of artists, but more importantly, it does so in the context of today's global reality.

Thus, the best way to describe the resulting manuscript is to see the important contribution it makes to our understanding of the global impact that both artists and the arts make in a wide, diverse, and ever-changing, technological world.

As Mary Sherman, the founder and the director of TransCultural Exchange and editor of this volume writes in the *Introduction* the authors represent a wide range of topics from across the globe. The appeal for the reader—whether a student, a working artist, arts educator, practitioner, administrator or policymaker is the exceptional range of presentations, both practical as well as theoretical. Assuredly readers will learn about best practices, new models and policies that might address and inform their specific challenges, as well as their hope and dreams for the future.

Dr. Ann M. Galligan is a recently retired associate professor in the College of Arts, Media, and Design at Northeastern University in Boston, MA.

Editor's Introduction

Mary Sherman,
MFA, New York University

In the middle of the 20th century, the United States government spent a great deal of time and money to send artists, filmmakers, musicians, scientists, and other creative individuals abroad. They became familiar with other cultures and societies and served as ambassadors for their own. Largely, supported by the State Department, these individuals arguably helped end the Cold War by winning the proverbial hearts and minds of people around the world.

That has now changed. Although American artists vastly outnumbered other nationalities in global art exhibits and biennales in the '50s through the '70s, today their presence abroad has dropped precipitously, even though history repeatedly shows that the arts provide avenues for sustained dialog when other means have failed.

As the members of the 2009 Americans for the Arts National Arts Policy Roundtable noted, "Though states and corporations and individuals are often economically and politically entwined with one another, problems erupt when we are not as culturally interconnected as [we] need to be. The need for deepening cross-cultural and transnational understanding is great. Because of the power of the arts to transcend differences and communicate across cultures, participants agreed on the need to assert a more visible and active role for the arts in improving relations between the United States and the world."¹

Yet, today the Fulbright Program is still one of only a handful of U.S. organizations that continues to support international exchange. Its

¹ Americans for the Arts, "2009 – The Role of the Arts in Strengthening and Inspiring the 21st Century Global Community," <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/national-arts-policy-roundtable/2009-the-role-of-the-arts-in-strengthening-and-inspiring-the-21st-century-global-community> (accessed May 20, 2018).

Specialist Program, though, does not list art as an eligible discipline.² And, most of the other organizations that do fund international cultural exchange, such as the Asian Cultural Council³ and CEC Artslink,⁴ have regional restrictions. Whereas, others – like The Netherland-America Foundation⁵ or the German DAAD⁶ – are private or non-American government-sponsored efforts that also have specific national targets of interest.

TransCultural Exchange is different in this respect. TransCultural Exchange originated in 1989 as an independent, grassroots organization to create and produce international exchange exhibitions. Over time, increased interest in TransCultural Exchange's services necessitated incorporation as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization (in 2002), the creation of online resources for artists and, in 2007, the first TransCultural Exchange International Conference on Opportunities in the Arts. These developments and activities support the organization's mission to "foster a greater understanding of world cultures through high quality, innovative, global art projects, artist exchanges and related educational programming," most notably with the organization's Conferences.⁷

All these activities also serve as catalysts. They provide artists with connections to their international peers, new markets and resources for their work, and the knowledge and tools to be competitive in today's global reality. These activities also have produced new revenues streams for local communities, helped create avenues for cross-cultural understanding, and provided opportunities for American artists to continue to be a positive force abroad. The texts that make up this book are some of the proceedings of TransCultural Exchange's latest conference to-date, the *2018 International Conference on International Opportunities*

² World Learning, "Fulbright Specialist Program," <https://www.worldlearning.org/program/fulbright-specialist-program/> (accessed May 2018).

³ Asian Cultural Council, "Welcome to the Home of the Asian Cultural Council," <https://www.asianculturalcouncil.org/> (accessed May 2018).

⁴ CEC Artslink, Inc, "CEC Artslink: Engaging Communities through International Arts Partnerships," <http://www.cecartslink.org/> (accessed May 2018).

⁵ "The Netherland-America Foundation, The NAF," <http://thenaf.org/> (accessed May 2018).

⁶ DAAD, "DAAD USA Home," <https://www.daad.org/en/> (accessed May 2018).

⁷ TransCultural Exchange, "Mission Statement," <http://transculturalexchange.org/about/mission.htm> (accessed May 2018).

in the Arts: Exploring New Horizons with, in some instances, additions by past conference speakers or other writers on related issues. The topics of the papers range from discussions of artists mobility in Asia, Latin America, North Africa and around the globe to the use of artist residencies to revive a rural Japanese town, the combination of Latin and American script and Eastern and Western musical notation to promote new ways of understanding, to a hypothesis of how sub-Saharan art might play a role in reducing climate change and how arctic ice can serve as both a moving aesthetic form and vivid reminder of the Anthropocene. Practical information, for instance, on how to find international residencies is also covered as well as various artists' interventions in a variety of communities, technologies, and disciplines and the results of those. Finally, the book also includes the voice of the art critic, which, as one of them writes, we should be aware might actually be a bot's.

Over time, the compilation of these papers came to feel like another TransCultural Exchange project. By nature of the book's double-blind, peer-review process, TransCultural Exchange necessarily had to act as the middleman between the reviewers and authors – shuttling back and forth the comments between the two. In many cases, a deep and appreciative dialog emerged in these anonymous negotiations – not unlike strangers on a plane, who for a brief moment share stories they might not with anyone else; and, then afterwards, return to their lives, transformed. In this way, the texts throughout the following pages and the conversations from which they were created truly embody the ideas of “transcultural” and “exchange.”

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Artists as Agents of Change

Chapter 1

**The Arts Educate:
Twenty-First Century Skills
for Literacy, Innovation, Citizenship**

Doris Sommer,
Harvard University

Political and economic uncertainty today has revived a focus on human sociability, alongside advances in technology, finances, and other fields of rational development. These advances have squeezed sociability into a corner that has re-articulated traditional skills of co-existence among human beings and with the environment. “New” twenty-first century skills include collaboration, imagination, and negotiation. Without imagination, as Carl Sagan said at the beginning of *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage* (1980),¹ we go nowhere, even if skepticism remains a trusted companion. The combination of imagination and skepticism equals science. In other words, studying science (and any other field) depends on a toggle between creative and critical thinking that also describes the process of making art. What better way to prepare new generations of world citizens than to educate through art-making and reflection on the processes! The rhythm between independent exploration and returning to consider and to communicate what one has explored is both fun and intellectually intense, an ideal combination for learning about the world and about living together in a sustainable world.

Along with the undeniable difficulties that attend to negotiating an uncertain world, we have a perhaps unbidden freedom to reinterpret structures that had seemed stable. Education can benefit from this liberty. Necessity can become an opportunity to refresh conventional practices that had not delivered optimal results in any case.

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