

## THE ISEA2014 EDUCATIONAL FORUM

Nina Czegledy

The ISEA2014 Education Forum was held at the American University in Dubai (AUD).

Welcome by Janet Bellotto, Artistic Director, ISEA2014 and Peter Anders, Chair, ISEA International.

In the context of the ISEA2014 Education Forum the theme of *Location* referenced sites of pedagogical variance including cultural similarities/differences as well as diverse socio-political issues. The presentations confirmed that global education systems remain under a considerable amount of pressure partly due to administrative complexities, partly to technological developments and to a certain extent the emerging trend of monetization. Current tactical tendencies point towards convergence, however while cross-disciplinary studies are valued in theory, this is not necessarily translated into practice, said Deborah Lawler-Dormer, PhD Candidate, University of Auckland, New Zealand. She outlined the complications and necessary strategies to pursue interdisciplinary cross-departmental studies. Deborah also noted that some useful thoroughly integrated interdisciplinary workshops and program models exist, where students have access to experts for their chosen topics.

We heard about the growth of interdisciplinary labs within Art and Design faculties at various universities from Lynn Hughes, Research Chair in Interaction Design and Games Innovation at Concordia University, Montreal. The Techno Culture Art and Games TAG. Lab where she is Associate Director, presents a radically interdisciplinary model for such an open, non-hierarchical, bottoms-up lab.

It was noted that students today have a preferred mode of activity and interaction that is frequently not in synchronization with traditional educational systems. "We need to have a closer more flexible engagement with students, their needs and concerns. Administrators have to be convinced of these requirements. While some people (including academics) are still scared to use technology – it should be noted that it is an amazing experience to facilitate new technologies in teaching" – affirmed Brad Moody, Associate Professor of Digital Media, from our host, the American University in Dubai.

Caroline Langill, Associate Dean, Ontario College of Art and Design University, Toronto, discussed modes of learning and delivery. She noted that there is a growing pressure to create entrepreneurs. Now that American artists have businesses – she said – the same pressure exists in Canada. Commercialization is a problematic issue, however several profound concerns and questions also remain open. What kind of art do we really want, what is our task in relation to the ubiquity of technology? "What

is going on?" asked Cornelia Sollfrank, Lecturer in Art & Media, University of Dundee. She is concerned that at Dundee various faculties, including Design, Media Art and Fine Arts were combined until Fine Arts gradually disappeared.

On an entirely other topic Ian Clothier, Senior Academic, Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki, New Zealand (presented by Deborah Lawler-Dormer) commented on culture and frameworks, on adaptability and the recognition of cultural constructs. He compared Western attitudes to a Maori approach, noting that great care is needed when critiquing work particularly work that straddles cultural boundaries. The theme of inter-cultural constructs and informal knowledge transfer also informed Tracey Bentson, Adjunct Fellow, Australian National University School of Music's contribution. She quoted her personal experience with the Yorta Nation Aboriginal community collaborating with academic researchers. In this context, the defined role of student and teacher become blurred. Her most valuable lesson was that relationships come first when working with indigenous peoples.

Socio-political issues inspired Shady El Noshokaty's (Associate Professor, American University in Cairo, Egypt) comments: Education is just another weapon! Education means a better life – claimed Shady. When social media started to surface in Egypt (2002-2003) a new generation quickly gained a global sense. This is a mostly self-educated generation gaining information from the Internet and forming small social media groups. In the last 10 years their anger grew. New media was a powerful part of worldwide knowledge, excluded by the regime. Students loved the virtual world. A good education – he concluded – is to produce people who have the power to change the future.

Maryam Ibrahim Mohammad Humaidan Bin Humaidan, of Zayed University, Dubai provided very interesting comments from a student's point of view. Maryam as a graphic designer, looks for resources for her studies. However, she finds that the library is not very useful – so she searches on-line. While she loves books, but she can't find easily the books she needs on Graphic Design. Maryam thinks that instructions should include technology! Maryam wants to know how to program and how to do everything herself. She also recalled how last year Janet Bellotto brought a sound artist to class. This was a very surprising experience!

Due to shortage of time and the impending journey to Abu Dhabi there was not enough time for a broad discussion. Nevertheless we had a few comments including Peter Hasell, Instructor, Zayed University, Dubai, who remarked that what individuals do is very important and becomes relevant through art. Travelling and learning around the world, students gain confidence in what they do, thus they don't have to rely only on gallery or other systems.

The presenters and the audience at this Forum gathered from locations around the globe providing wide-ranging viewpoints on educational and cultural environments based on their personal experience. Due to these highly interesting, but eclectic contributions one can report on the event, however it is difficult if not impossible to draw conclusions.

Sincere thanks are due to the all the presenters organizers and most of all the audience for their devoted participation in the ISEA2014 Education Forum.