

**Hong Kong Arts Development Council
International Arts Leadership Roundtable 2016**

Plenary 3: New Thinking for International Exchange

Adapting to the Global Arts landscape

Speech by Dr Richard Grant, Chairman of Creative New Zealand

New Zealand has a population of 4.3 million people. While we are a creative nation, we do not have the scale that larger markets enjoy. Our current market for theatre audiences alone is 2.8 million compared with China's which is 250 million¹. On top of that, we are a long way away. A circle of 2000 kilometre radius centred on Wellington contains 4.3 million people, all New Zealanders. A similar circle based on Hong Kong contains over 1 billion people, and many nationalities and cultures. The global arts community has greater connectivity than ever before; greater diversity; and greater interest in what others are doing nationally and globally. Artists and audiences have greater access to international content and ideas than ever before.

So, for us, the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa, there are two challenges: How do we take New Zealand arts and culture to the world? And how do we help New Zealand arts and culture integrate with the global scene? Thinking *globally* is our answer.

- Thinking *globally* allows us to learn from others, and to show others our unique perspectives.
- Thinking globally helps us build deeper, more sustainable relationships.
- Thinking globally lays the foundations for the next generation of practitioners and leaders to develop skills, knowledge, and global networks.

So, what are we doing? Our key policy response is 'International Exchange'.

- International exchange builds long-lasting partnerships with international artists and organisations.
- International exchange increases cross-cultural and artistic knowledge and expertise.
- International exchange develops new models and platforms for creative collaborations.
- International exchange develops new audiences and provides diversity in programming.

What does this mean? Previously, our international strategy focused on overseas presentations of New Zealand artists and culture. Whilst this is still important to us, we have learned that artistic exchanges and collaborations are a more sustainable and enriching model for artists and international audiences.

¹ Source: *Audience Atlas China 2014* and *Audience Atlas New Zealand 2014*. Both prepared by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre Consultancy.

What is the New Zealand Arts Council doing to enhance international exchange? We undertook a number of initiatives, but I want to focus on this part of the world, Asia. At the end of 2014, Creative New Zealand introduced a new *Focus on Asia* initiative to build stronger artistic and cultural connections with targeted territories in Asia over a five year period, from 2014 to 2019. We took a more strategic view of our artistic activity in Asia by expanding on existing successful initiatives and introducing new ones under one integrated approach. *Focus on Asia* offers a variety of funding opportunities across art forms, with the emphasis being artistic and cultural exchange between artists and arts organisations in New Zealand and Asia. Under our *Focus on Asia* initiative we support artists to develop their practice through observing and collaborating with international counterparts.

We are also committed to reciprocity and support of both the New Zealand artists and the collaborating artists in Asia under our *Focus on Asia* initiative, which is unique for Creative New Zealand funding programmes. Let me give you some examples of what we've been doing under this initiative. We are supporting an independent senior producer to participate in the Asian Producers' Platform Camp. This camp was created by a small group of producers from Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Australia. The objective is to bring together independent producers from throughout Asia every year over four years to:

- learn more about each other's culture, including developing an appreciation of each other's language and cultural perspectives around producing;
- learn more about the host country's context, i.e. the funding climate, key players in the arts, key venues, the kind of work being produced, and audience demand;
- extend themselves through exploring their approach to creative producing within an Asian framework.

This is an innovative initiative which will create a strong network of independent producers who can work effectively across the Asia Pacific region. A recent project was a residential exchange between six graphic novelists, three from New Zealand and three from Taiwan. The aim of the exchange was to collaborate on the creation of a new graphic novel. The artists spent four weeks together – two in New Zealand and two in Taiwan – sharing ideas and mapping out how to collaborate to create a publication. A common remark from the participants was the value of spending time together, getting to know each other - often over a meal - and building a relationship from which they could develop a creative partnership. The artwork is finished and the novel is being published in Taiwan for distribution in both New Zealand and Taiwan this month.

Residencies are a well-known way of promoting artistic exchanges. We are strengthening our offer, in collaboration with our main New Zealand partner, the Asia New Zealand Foundation, and with others. We are currently having a dance residency in Singapore with T.H.E Dance Company and three visual arts residencies in:

- Japan - Youkobo Art Space, Tokyo
- Korea – SeMA Nanji in Seoul

- Taiwan – Taipei Artists Village.

Meanwhile, we support three curators to travel to two or three countries in Asia each year. Both programmes offer the artists or curators the opportunity to immerse themselves in the contemporary art of their host countries to build their professional networks, and to explore opportunities for future collaborations, exhibitions and artist exchanges and increase their awareness of artistic and cultural practices in their host country. As a direct result of the contacts made from their 2014 tour, three New Zealand curators mounted an exhibition featuring artists from both New Zealand and Taiwan. The work was exhibited in Taipei, Auckland and Christchurch.

International exchange also develops new models and platforms for creative collaborations. Our Asia Artform Exchange fund incentivises collaborative projects between artists or arts organisations in New Zealand and Asia. The programme is offered in two stages:

- Stage 1: Seed Funding allows artists to research ideas, identify partners in Asia and to scope out potential collaboration projects.
- Stage 2: Development Funding allows for the development and creation of the project with a partner in Asia as a result of their research in stage 1.

We are supporting New Zealand dance company Black Grace and producer, the Auckland Arts Festival, to collaborate with the Singaporean company T.H.E. Dance Company. The project started off in 2014 with artist directors from Black Grace and Auckland Arts Festival travelling to Hong Kong, Beijing, Taipei, Seoul and Singapore. They met with 28 organisations to scope out potential presenting partners and artistic collaborators. Choreographer and founder of T.H.E. Dance Company in Singapore, KUIK Swee-Boon, was confirmed as their collaborating partner and they spent 2015 sharing and work- shopping ideas. They will premiere their collaborative work ‘Changes’ at the Auckland Arts Festival in a few weeks’ time.

We have partnered with the Korean Arts Management Service to deliver the Korea-New Zealand KAMS Connection programme. Under this programme, selected festival directors from New Zealand and Korea are supported to travel to each other’s countries, meet artists, view work and learn about the local arts landscape. Should a collaborative project between New Zealand and Korean artists develop, as a result of the research trips, we will help support the development of this work.

International exchange develops new audiences and provides diversity in programming. In this segment, I want to concentrate on the domestic outcomes of our programme. You may think of New Zealand as a land of sheep, mountains, a rich Māori culture, rugby players, and beautiful landscapes which you saw in the Lord of the Ring movies. But, New Zealand has undergone a demographic transformation in the last 20 years which has changed all that dramatically. Auckland is New Zealand’s largest city with 1.4 million people. It has a highly diverse population. It is home to the country’s largest Māori population. It has the

largest Polynesian population in the world, and almost one third of Auckland's population is of Asian descent. And, after Toronto, it has the most diverse population base per head of population of any city in the OECD group. In 2026, it is predicted that over a half of Auckland's population will be of Asian, Māori and Pacific descent. At Creative New Zealand we celebrate and recognise the artistic and creative opportunities this diversity offers.

International exchange is one platform that can help meet the needs of a rapidly changing demography of the city and country. It offers the opportunity to collaborate with international artists, create work which resonates with different communities, and expand and diversify audiences. So, we have developed a separate initiative, in collaboration with an important Auckland based community funding organisation, to run a programme called the Auckland Diversity Project, to increase the access to, and creation of, work that reflects the increased ethnic diversity of the city.

Creative New Zealand is excited by the artistic and creative opportunities that the global arts landscape offers. We believe that, in a world where borders do not matter for arts, the sharing of artistic and cultural practises, knowledge and ideas will lead to stronger arts and a stimulating and fulfilling future for arts practitioners and leaders. And we know that New Zealand artists and creators want that to happen.

My congratulations to our hosts here in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, for their foresight in organising this symposium.

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