

CIAN Forum 3: Re-framing Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Facilitators – CIAN Fellows Dr Jean Penny & Dr Andrew Blackburn



This forum explored interdisciplinarity and interculturalism in diverse artistic contexts.

Participants from composition, visual art, digital arts, anthropology, sociology, dance, education, music performance and more joined our community to create a space for the genesis of new knowledges through dialogical exchange. The three main sections to the forum explored a progression of perspectives; four artists contributed their viewpoints through their individual practices – visual art, installation art, music composition, and live coding; and four main questions were posed for consideration and discussion by participants.

Part 1. Multiple selves - multiple lenses - multiple voices. How we might interrogate interdisciplinary interculturality through multiplicities in work, relationships, or contexts.

Part 2. Interactive ensembles. How we collaborate between and within different cultures and disciplines; what is the space between disciplines and how can this reveal new knowledge of interculturality; what elements become dominant or privileged; and, are we aware of generating marginalisation.

Part 3. Constructing the future. Re-framing the discussions - how we might construct a future through new knowledge and developing practices and ideas; creating different perspectives and stories.

Practitioner presentations revealed key insights into intercultural emphases and reflections present in diverse interdisciplinary artistic practices.

Abdul Abdullah (Perth, Australia) – Visual Artist (and virtual contributor)

Abdul Abdullah was born in 1986. He is a seventh generation Australian with a direct paternal link to a convict who arrived in NSW in 1815. His awards include being selected as a finalist in the 2011 Archibald prize and winning the Blake Prize for Human Justice. In 2013 he was selected as a finalist in the Archibald Prize. In his video Abdul spoke of being an Australian artist who is marginalised by stereo-typing of his religion.

Elena Cologni (Cambridge, UK) – Installation Artist.

Dr Elena Cologni is an artist/researcher/educator who works with site specific installations and performance grounded in conceptual art. She is interested in the collaborative and participatory nature of activities, including interdisciplinary research (using psychology, philosophy and art) and discussed her work to illustrate the recurring format of play in the physical space.

Valerie Ross (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) – Composer

Valerie is a composer of cross cultural compositions, an ethnomusicologist, and interdisciplinary researcher. She works at the University of Technology MARA in Malaysia and is Director of the Centre of Intercultural Musicology at Churchill College, in Cambridge. She discussed her compositional practice in relation to two works incorporating Malaysian and Western elements: one for flute and electronics, and one for flute and organ.

Sam Aaron (Cambridge, UK) – Computer Programming Performer.

Sam is a researcher, software architect and computational thinker with a deep fascination surrounding the notion of communicative programming. He sees programming as one of the many communication channels for descriptions of formalised process of any kind, be it a business process, a compiler strategy or even a musical composition. His current research is an effort to combine programming languages with tactile and linguistic user interfaces to build new forms of musical device with a high capacity for improvisation.

Responses to the questions, revealed a multiplicity of perspectives and priorities.

Question 1: What is it about the arts that offer a starting point to discuss intercultural interdisciplinarity?

- If interdisciplinary is everyday life, then intercultural interdisciplinary requires negotiating across partnerships making visible agreements.
- Keywords: permission, provocation of cultural norms.
- The way arts are received reflect the politics of each audience member.
- The arts CAN – MUST – BE be a broader language.

Question 2: In an ‘open and respectful’ intercultural interdisciplinary context, what are the dominant epistemologies and how do we recognise those that are marginalised?

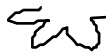
- Art = new questions, those questions challenge dominance.
- Don't write/right/rite this. Slippages in meaning lost in translation between cultural meanings like concepts of time, place and space - PROBLEMATISED!
- We marginalise through language.
- If we can mobilise a co-constructed epistemology, 'discipline and the marginalised' disappear.

Question 3: How can technology unravel and entangle interdisciplinary intercultural knowledges?

- Programming as a form of technology has the power to unravel and entangle as an essential dialogue for creating the new!!?!
- Technology breaks down, opens up. Technology reproduces bounded frames
- Bits are universal but also disembodied.
- Social networking as a form of technology has the potential for greater connection (entanglements PAN-INDIGENOUS networks) but these create risks which can lead to simplifications and marginalisation.

Question 4: What intercultural and interdisciplinary perspectives do we engage with in our day-to-day life and work that open possibilities or pose challenges?

- Challenge is to define ourselves, put ourselves in a defined box and barriers of language; interdisciplinary makes space for intercultural and forward/between/backward movement.
- In our day-to-day life and work we find ourselves confused and conflicted. This is a possibility and a challenge.
- S/he loves art that leads to thinking about unknown possibilities for social justice (indigenous knowing/being/doing) - trying to reach places we are not yet.
- Art produces new questions which challenge “dominance”.
- Mind, body experience, embodied spirit, soul all mixed up. Possibility of art for other possibilities.



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