

## NETWORKED:

Dialogue & Exchange in the Global Art Ecology

Triangle Network Conference

26 & 27 November 2011

### A Summary:

*It is amazing what collection of fantastic people you managed to bring together, that in itself was already historical and proof of the great work you have been doing in the past 30 years.* Gertrude Flentge, Programme Manager of the International Culture Programme at DOEN Foundation

*It was a real pleasure to get the chance to 'think out loud' in such a forum. It was particularly pleasurable to be part of such a genuinely international event.* Sonya Dyer, Artist and Writer

*I am still bubbling with the excitement of feeling part of a global family and have arrived home with renewed passion and determination to keep us going and connected.* Barbara Bohlke – Tulipamwe, Namibia

Networked: Dialogue and Exchange in the Global Art Ecology brought together 262 artists, art managers, curators, policy makers, funders, researchers and writers from over 40 countries.

Over the two days, leading art professionals debated the role of networks in supporting artists' development, facilitating the global dissemination of contemporary art practices and discussing the role of networks in the support of artists, art projects and grass-roots organisations.

The Triangle Network blog was used to provide an online platform for discussion and debate around the questions and issues that formed the basis of the Networked conference, and allowed a dialogue to take place between speakers, Triangle Partners, artists and the public. The activity on the blog and forums also played a key role in shaping some of the panel discussions and workshops at the conference, so the event could address the most urgent to artists and cultural organisers at this time.

The conference was a unique opportunity to take stock of Triangle Network's achievements over the last 30 years, in the company of a broad group of speakers, partners and friends from all over the world. The event has renewed our enthusiasm for the future of Triangle through new connections and ideas.

Throughout the discussions, what emerged was a realisation of the potential of networks due to their fundamentally flexible structure; whilst some networks may become bureaucratic and rigid, or even a closed 'Mafia', flexibility is the underlying commonality of the network form. The network brings connectedness to others outside of their immediate context and access to previously unavailable resources, but without a concurrent loss of independence or the ability to address a local context. There was also a sense that a network is able to disseminate its identity, without overshadowing the identities of the individual nodes.

Questions were raised about the lifespan and evolution of networks, and the responsibilities and roles those in the network play. There was a sense that networks have a limited duration, and must be willing to adapt or make a shift to avoid becoming static and irrelevant. This brought out the importance of recognising this constant need for re-evaluation and the renewal of commitment from members in order for a network to continue to function effectively.

Rather than being academic or policy-led, the conference was an opportunity to bring together the diversity of approaches to networks, for us to learn from and contribute to the 'art ecology', through sharing experiences. Recognising that 'Network' means different things to different people, the conference did not aim to deliver papers or to articulate the meaning and implications of the term 'Network'. Instead, the focus was on a common understanding of a network as something that enables communication and to a certain extent action.

The challenges facing a truly "global" art ecology of dialogue and exchange were sharply felt also, especially as Triangle partners frequently face difficulties with obtaining funding for their activities and clearing travel Visas. Needless to say, we hope that the conference and its afterlife instigates discussions and new initiatives, contributing towards creating a better understanding of the needs of artists and cultural organisers working across national, political and economic boundaries.