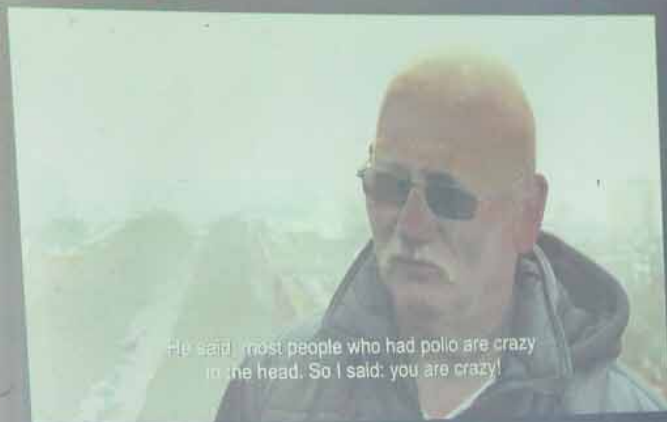


ICAF *in the picture*

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ARTS FESTIVAL







ICAF IN THE PICTURE

[INTRODUCTION P 05](#)

[PARTICIPATING GROUPS ICAF-6 P 22](#)

[THE AMERICAS P 27](#)

[EUROPE P 43](#)

[ASIA & THE MIDDLE EAST P 57](#)

[AFRICA P 67](#)

[AUSTRALIA P 73](#)

[ENCOUNTERS P 79](#)

Introduction

The book that lies before you has several aims. It is first and foremost intended to introduce those who are unfamiliar with the International Community Arts Festival to this extraordinary triennial cultural event and to the fascinating world of community art at large. But it is also meant for all those who have visited us once or twice in the past or, more recently, in March 2014 when we held our last spectacular edition. For all those who are already familiar with ICAF we hope this book is a welcome reacquaintance or a pleasant visual souvenir. For those who encounter our festival for the first time through this medium, we hope you become intrigued enough to come to the next ICAF, which will be held from 27 March through 2 April, 2017. The text, the photographs and the film documentary that comprise this publication are intended to serve as a teaser of what you may expect if you do decide to come.

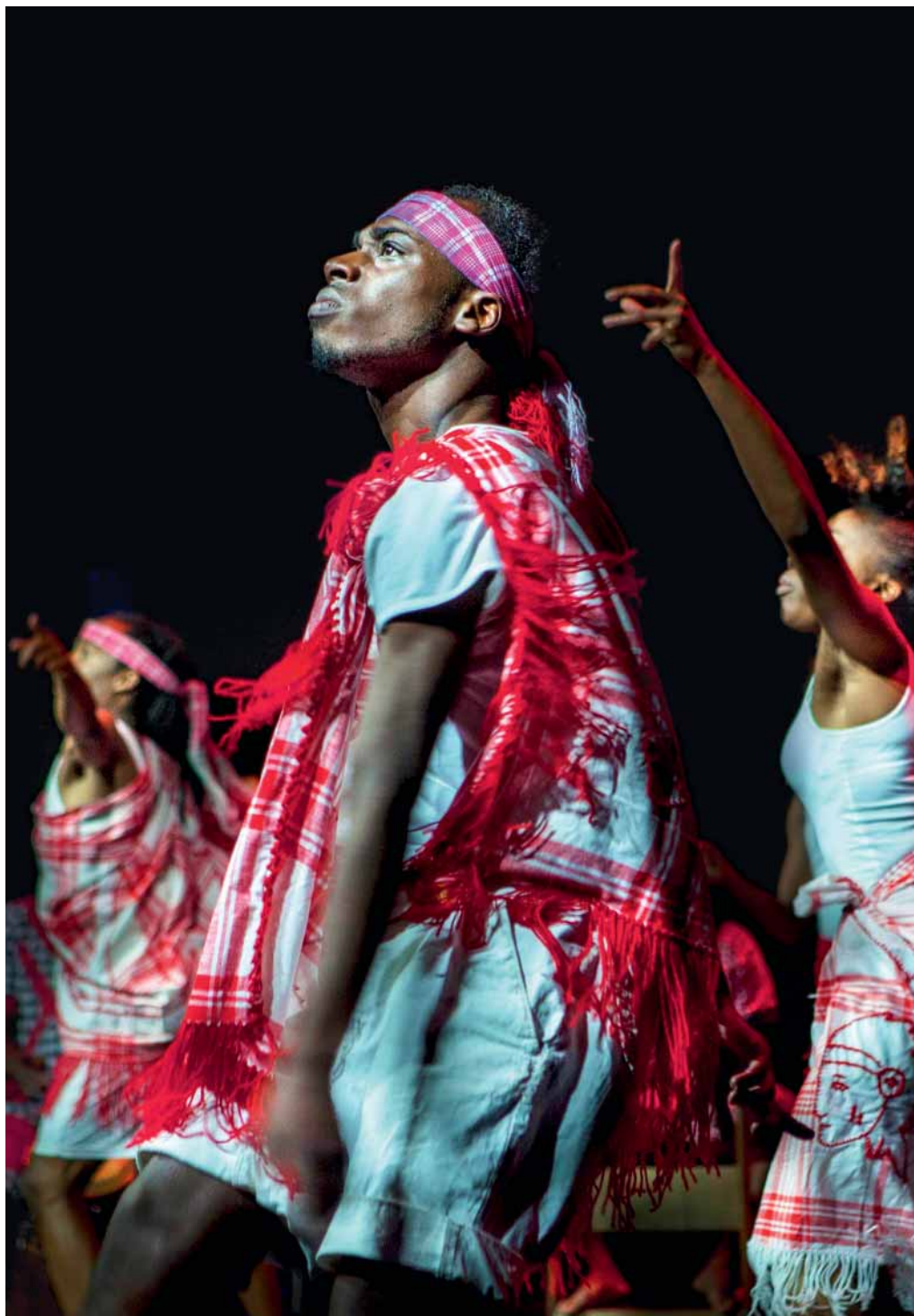
The words in this book play second fiddle to the photographs and the film. Further down in this introduction, we provide a bit of history for the festival and a brief background to our most recent edition. In the six chapters that follow we invite you on a journey around the world to present our many partners in all those places. In the same breath, we hope to demonstrate that community art has a long and fascinating history, that it manifests itself in many different ways (including all imaginable art disciplines), and that it generates aesthetically powerful and socially relevant participatory art in all corners of the globe. Once every three years, artists, participants, students, teachers, and other professionals connected to this broad field come together in Rotterdam to get inspired by each other's work and ideas. With this publication we want to give you a sense of what happens on these occasions.

Those of you who have been following us in the past know that we have always published book reports after our previous festivals. They started out as quite literal descriptions or personal responses to what happened, but gradually they began to include more in-depth reflection as well. This evolution culminated

with an essay collection entitled *Community, Art, Power*, which we published along with a DVD in 2013. After our sixth festival, in 2014, we opted for a different approach.

Through our main sponsor, the Netherlands Fund for Cultural Participation, a few months before the opening of the latest ICAF we met an unusual Dutch photographer named **Peter van Beek**. He had just published an amazing book on Roma communities in eastern Europe: *The Good, the Bad, and the Roma* (KOMMA/d'jonge Hond Publishers 2013). It ended up on the *Volkskrant* shortlist of best Dutch photobooks of the year. His work was the result of many years of passionate dedication to try and capture the dignity of these often invisible, excluded people in stunning images. To Peter, this project was more than an aesthetic endeavor; it was political and personal as well because he has Roma roots himself. When we met, we discovered that the spirit with which Peter does his photographic work and we curate and produce ICAF are quite similar. Needless to say we were more than delighted when, after the second cup of coffee, he spontaneously offered to become our festival photographer. The quality of the pictures he produced left no doubt that they, rather than text, should become the highlight of our new publication. And hence the title: *ICAF in the Picture*. Please note, however, that we also had a number of other photographs to help us out. Their names and the pages on which their work appears are indicated in the colophon at the end of the book.

There was an additional reason to emphasize images rather than words in our publication. In our previous book, we had included a DVD. It contained edited footage from different ICAF events and was intended to provide audiovisual support for the essays. Many of us felt, however, that our video material left something to be desired. For the 2014 edition of the festival we therefore challenged a young Catalan film maker, **Angie Hernández Izquierdo**, to try and capture the spirit of ICAF on film. We already knew her work from the



documentary *Guerras Escondidas/Hidden Wars*, which tells the moving story of a community art exchange between Dutch and Guatemalan youngsters in 2012 and 2013. (Just google ‘guerras escondidas’ and you will find the full length version on youtube.) Despite the extremely small budget we were able to provide, Angie decided to pull out all the stops. She brought five young colleagues from Barcelona to Rotterdam to help her with the camera work, she borrowed high end equipment from people she knew in the Spanish film scene, and managed to beg and steal all kinds of other technical support virtually for free during post-production. The result, we believe, effectively catches the essence of ICAF-6 in moving pictures. We are proud to include it neatly tucked away in the back cover. Understandably, it does not contain everyone and everything, so we will make a longer version of the film available online via www.icafrogterdam.com.

SO WHAT IS COMMUNITY ART?

If you expect the definitive answer to this question, you might as well immediately skip to the pictures. Countless articles and books have already tried to do so and we don’t pretend to be able to do a better job theoretically dissecting the term. For now it may be sufficient to say that the meaning of community art – as are the two words that constitute it – is highly contested. In some places they have even suggested alternative words to replace the equally slippery concept of ‘community’. They have replaced it, for instance, with ‘applied’, ‘social’, ‘engaged’, ‘new genre public’, ‘dialogical’, ‘relational’, ‘people’s’ or ‘participatory’. At ICAF we have decided to stick to ‘community art’ for purely practical reasons, because also outside the English-speaking world it is quite widely used and understood. And even those who prefer other terms





recognize themselves as relatives in this large global family that ICAF aims to bring together.

International community art is a constellation of very diverse practices that are characterized by more or less intense, reciprocal collaborations between trained artists and people who normally speaking are excluded from active involvement in the arts. It's the evolving relationship between 'artists' and 'non-artists' in the course of a creative process that is often considered central to this work. Which is not to say that the art that comes out of these relationships does not matter. On the contrary, it matters a great deal, both to the trained artists and the people they co-create with, because it is directly concerned with their lives and the world they live in. It frequently leads to life-changing experiences for everyone involved, as well as to extraordinary aesthetically shaped expressions. Over the years it has also led to a different kind of artist: someone who combines the highest technical skills with the ability to organize, collaborate, and constantly adapt to continuously changing circumstances. The world and all the human and non-human variables therein constitute the *atelier* and the disciplinary challenges of the *métier*.

This brief excursion into the complexities of the term already indicates that we are dealing not with some second-rate ephemeral phenomenon, but with a sophisticated cultural practice that is literally spread across the globe. Once every three years, ICAF brings together the most innovative, the most controversial, the most inspiring work and those involved in it. We enjoy, we criticize, we learn from each other's methods, we eat, drink, and dance together, and sometimes we even decide to embark on adventurous international co-productions.

A SHORT HISTORY OF ICAF

ICAF began in 2001, when Rotterdam was European Capital of Culture. The organizers of this high-profile event had offered some funds to the **Rotterdams Wijktheater** [‘Rotterdam Neighborhood Theatre’, RWT for short] to organize an international community theatre festival. It was a time when, in the Netherlands, terms like cultural diversity and participation in the arts had begun to appear in arts policy papers and in cultural debates. For RWT, however, these issues were far from new. After all, the company had been co-creating original theatre productions for, with and by residents of popular neighborhoods in Rotterdam since 1992. And long before that, its co-founders, **Peter van den Hurk** and **Annelies Spliethof**, had already been doing similar work in the east and south of the Netherlands. Just like their colleagues of **Stut Theatre** in Utrecht, the other Dutch community arts pioneer, they had their roots in radicalized theatre academies and the message-driven political arts scene of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The first festival in 2001 introduced the English term ‘community theatre’ to the Netherlands. It also provided a relatively broad audience the opportunity to become familiar with what that possibly could be through debates, lectures and live performances on the stages of Zuidplein Theatre. Participating groups included community-based companies from Brussels, Antwerp, Berlin, London and Los Angeles.

The second festival in 2003 focused on methodologies of how to create and how to produce community theatre. This time, the event was a mix of discussions, workshops in which guests demonstrated (or talked about) their methods, followed by performances in the evenings. These included shows by companies from Lima, Soweto, the Bronx, and Europe.

The third festival in 2005 was the last one to exclusively concentrate on theatre. By this time, the term ‘community art’ had well and truly landed in the Netherlands and the practice was quickly diversifying all over the country. It was a trend we could no longer ignore. The 2005 edition of our event also contained embryonic versions of elements we would continue to develop in later festivals: informal talk shows, extended and much more interactive workshops, and our very first artist-in-residency. We were no longer satisfied only to showcase or verbally present work; we wanted to leave something behind that would last. Creating work together within the confines of the festival seemed a productive way to do just that.

Besides including other art forms, after 2005 we also let go of the two-year rhythm. The biennial frequency was putting too great a strain on our staff at the Rotterdams Wijktheater. They were already making three original participatory productions each year and anyone familiar with our field knows how intensive and unpredictable that work can be.

I will now shift this narrative to the first-person singular. After serving as an advisor to Peter van den Hurk for the three first festivals, in 2008 I came on board as programmer. Rather than reducing the pressure on RWT, however, I am afraid I may have increased it even more. To complicate things, the company itself had decided to produce a large-scale performance that involved close to one hundred participants to celebrate the 100th anniversary of soccer club Feyenoord. This show premiered on the opening night of the festival, which for the very first time was now renamed ICAF. It was a





resounding success. The main auditorium of Zuidplein was filled to capacity with soccer supporters mixed with festival visitors from around the world and television crews in the aisles. The remainder of the 2008 festival was an equally exhilarating experience.

For the first time, we managed to present community arts from almost all the continents. We had guests from Asia, Africa, South America, North America and Europe. We also succeeded in including other art forms like film, music, circus, visual arts, and dance, but we were admittedly struggling with effective formats to present it all. In addition, we had not made our lives any easier by placing the artistic quality debate high on our agenda. Artistic quality in community art is a complex matter that we could not do sufficient justice in our morning talk shows and our final debate. We compensated for these limitations by incorporating specially commissioned essays written by internationally recognized scholars like **Grant Kester** and **Petra Kupperts** in our 2008 book report.



In each festival we live and learn, also from the feedback of our guests. 2008 was particularly rich in that respect. It was also the last festival directed by Peter van den Hurk, who retired in 2010. And it was the first festival in which I had the good fortune to work with **Anamaria Cruz** as a producer. Since then we have formed an inseparable team. In many ways she embodies the spirit of ICAF: the smile, the warmth, the intercultural communication, the improvisational and organizational skills, the ability to stretch one Euro into a hundred, and a sheer limitless determination to do whatever it takes to realize whatever crazy ideas we dream up.

In 2011, we took our interdisciplinary and global ambitions to another level. For example, two weeks before the festival proper we organized five artist-in-residencies in different neighborhoods. These featured art disciplines that were still relatively underdeveloped in the Dutch community art sector. **Dance United** from England thus went to work with a group of troubled youngsters in the Moerwijk neighborhood of The Hague. They came up with a spectacular contemporary dance performance. Textile designers of **Imbali** from South

Africa worked with a group of culturally diverse women from Rotterdam on producing material for a fashion show. Media designers from **Soft Touch Arts** in Nottingham came with a mobile studio to work with young people on street corners of Rotterdam. Swedish choreographer **Paloma Madrid** from **Bottkyrka Community Theatre** collaborated with local participants to create a site-specific dance performance in someone's apartment. And **Favela Força** from Rio de Janeiro came with performers, a theatre director and a video artist to work with Capeverdian and Caribbean youth on a musical multimedia performance. Art exhibits, concerts (with the **Allstar Refjudzji Band** from Prague), workshops, seminars (with Professor **Jan Cohen-Cruz** from the USA), an interactive choral recital (with **Merlijn Twaalfhoven**), and all manner of performances (including truly impressive Aboriginal shows from Australia and Canada) completed the picture.

ICAF-6 (30 March - 3 April 2014)

In hindsight, 2011 may well have been a turning point for ICAF. More than before it caused a buzz that visitors to our event took home and passed on within their own networks. As a result, we received requests and invitations from all over the world, which in turn led to new contacts in places like Portugal, Spain, and Francophone Africa. One of the suggestions we had



received after ICAF-5 was to open up more space for different kinds of conversation in addition to the more academic seminars (for more on this, see the chapter called ‘Encounters’ below). Someone else challenged us to become more visible as a festival outside the Zuidplein Theatre building, on the streets of Rotterdam. From there, it was not a huge stretch to come up with ‘space’ as our next festival theme.

First of all we conceived of ‘space’ in the geo-physical sense: site-specific performance, community arts in public space, participatory art as a counterweight to violent, commercial or religious images that dominate cityscapes. More than ever before we therefore programmed events outside: an Aboriginal storytelling performance by **Debaj** from Canada on one of the harbor wharves, a colorful and musical streetparade co-created with many local participants under the supervision of Catalina García of **Barrio Comparsa** from Colombia, a fully functioning outdoor bread-oven built by Peter Schumann of **Bread & Puppet**, an experimental walk led by landscape designer **Esther Slegh** in which she explored (and stretched) visible and invisible boundaries in public space, and a site-specific multimedia performance by RWT inside and outside an empty shop on Dordtselaan.

We further considered ‘space’ in the representational sense: art with, for and by under-represented groups who wish to express who they are on their own terms and in their own voice, body language and cultural taste, or who delegate





representational power to professionals to do it for them. Elderly Caribbean women from Bristol, inmates from the Quatre Camins prison outside Barcelona, mentally challenged puppeteers from Poland, a Chinese migrant opera singer from the Czech Republic, and residents from the ‘far side’ on the stigmatized other side of the river in Drogheda, Ireland fall into this category.

A third way to look at ‘space’ is in terms of the current cultural debate on the social relevance of art. We wanted to explore what might be a legitimate place for community arts in society and in the cultural field. Associated with this question is ICAF’s conviction that powerful, beautiful, moving, unsettling community arts products should not be restricted to platforms in peripheral neighborhoods alone, but should also reach regular arts consumers so that peripheral perspectives and little heard voices and accents also receive a platform in the center. And the participatory processes that generate this unusual art open up creative spaces in the mind, stimulate the imagination, bring collaborators in contact with different ways of being, and explore alternatives to current realities. They are, in fact, creative laboratories for the future.

ICAF itself is also a laboratory of sorts. We experiment, we investigate, we critically reflect, we succeed, we fail and if we do we always try to fail better the next time. Our artist-in-residencies and workshops are perhaps the clearest examples of this. In 2014, we had three residencies which this time we developed together with CAL-XL, a Dutch national networking organization for community art. In one of these, we connected visual artist **Krista Burger** from Arnhem with multimedia artist **Ludmila Hornáková** from **Kosice, Slovakia**. They went to work in each other’s city and involved local residents there in visual arts for public space. In a similar fashion, we linked **Dansnest** from Breda to Belgian choreographer **Filip van Huffel** of **Retina Dance Company** (which has two bases, in Nottingham and Antwerp). Both like to work with untrained dancers in unusual settings. Finally, a mobile sound studio

driven and operated by a team from **Junction Arts** (Chesterfield, England), traveled through the Netherlands in the week prior to our festival. The van contained an exhibition of work by various community arts organizations associated with the East Midlands Participatory Arts Forum (**EMPAF**), one of the oldest community arts networks in the UK. On their trip, they created video impressions of different Dutch community arts projects in Brabant, Arnhem, Drenthe, Leeuwarden and in the West of the country. At ICAF, they presented their discoveries in an interactive installation in which they invited their visitors to explore possibilities for future international collaboration with EMPAF partners.

One last element worth mentioning about ICAF-6 was the space we created for sharing transferable methodologies. In the Netherlands and many other places, community art projects tend to be (and remain) dependent on trained artists. But if culture is a basic human right, as many believe, then ways of decreasing that dependency might also be worth looking at. For that reason, we invited **Insightshare**, the world's leader in participatory video, and the **Philippines Educational Theatre Association** to come demonstrate their methods in hands-on training sessions.

As you can see, ICAF is a temporary school, a lab, a gathering, a seminar, a meal, a dance, a moveable feast, and, yes, also very much a festival in the festive sense, both for insiders and outsiders. We clearly have a history. We are connected to a worldwide cutting edge and highly relevant arts movement, which we will unveil a bit more of in the following chapters. We hope, finally, that this book, the photos, and the film intrigue you enough to come find out more about it at our next ICAF in 2017. So don't be a stranger.

Eugène van Erven, Festival Director.



Participating Groups

ICAF – 6



EUROPE

BASKETBEAT, Spain, Catalonia www.basketbeat.org
ATALAYA-TNT, Spain, Seville <http://english.atalaya-tnt.com>
TRANSFORMAS, Spain, Catalonia, Barcelona <http://transformas.es>
MARCO FERREIRA, Portugal, Porto www.baal17.pt
A'PELE, Portugal, Porto www.apele.org
INSIGHTSHARE, United Kingdom, Oxford www.insightshare.org
EMPAF, United Kingdom www.empaf.com
KERRIE SCHAEFER, United Kingdom <http://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/drama/staff/schaefer>
ACTA, United Kingdom, Bristol www.acta-bristol.com
DANCE UNITED, United Kingdom, London www.dance-united.com
MATT JENNINGS, Ireland <http://ulster.academia.edu/MattJennings>
UPSTATE THEATRE, Ireland, Drogheda <http://upstate.ie>
THEATRE GRODZKI, Poland, Bielsko Biala www.teatrgrodzki.pl
ARCHA THEATRE, Czech Republic, Prague www.archatheatre.cz/en
LUDMILA HORŇÁKOVÁ, Slovakia, Kosice www.projektbunka.sk
ROTTERDAMS WIJKTHEATER, The Netherlands, Rotterdam www.rotterdamswijktheater.nl
ESTHER SLEGH, The Netherlands, Rotterdam www.esthersleggh.nl
ORCHESTRE PARTOUT, The Netherlands, Haarlem www.5ekwartier.nl/orchestre-partout/orchestre-partout
CARE & CULTURE, The Netherlands, Haarzuilens www.careculture.nl
STUT THEATER, The Netherlands, Utrecht www.stut.nl
CAL XL, The Netherlands, Utrecht www.cal-xl.nl
MERLIJN TWAALHOVEN, The Netherlands, Amsterdam www.twaalfhoven.net
ZID THEATRE, The Netherlands, Amsterdam www.zidtheater.nl
BIJLMER PARK THEATRE, The Netherlands, Amsterdam www.bijlmerparktheater.nl
UNTOLD, The Netherlands, Amsterdam www.untold.nl
DANSNEST, The Netherlands, Breda <http://dansnest.nl>
KRISTA BURGER, The Netherlands, Arnhem www.kristaburger.nl
TODO FILMS, The Netherlands, Lengel <http://stichtingtodo.wordpress.com/over/team>
THE PEERGROUP, The Netherlands, Donderen www.peergroup.nl
MARIABERG COMMUNITY THEATER, The Netherlands, Maastricht www.trajekt.nl
MET-X, Belgium, Brussels www.metx.be
RETINA DANCE COMPANY, Belgium, Antwerp www.retinadance.com



AUSTRALIA

Big hART, Sydney www.bighart.org/public



THE AMERICAS

DEBAJEHMUJIG THEATRE GROUP, Canada, Ontario www.debaj.ca
BREAD & PUPPET THEATER, USA, Vermont, Glover <http://breadandpuppet.org>
CORNERSTONE THEATRE, USA, Los Angeles <http://cornerstonetheater.org>
MICHAEL ROMANYSHYN, USA, Temple, Maine
<https://www.linkedin.com/pub/michael-romanyshyn/29/bb1/650>
BARRIO COMPARSA, Colombia, Medellin www.barriocomparsa.blogspot.nl
IMAGINATION, USA, Los Angeles <http://imagination.org>



ASIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

INTER ACT, Iran www.interacttheater.nl
EHUD AND ANAT SHAMAI, Israel, Hofit www.worldrecordacademy.com
TINY TOONES, Cambodia, Phnom-Penh www.tinytoones.org
PETA, Philippines, Manila petatheater.com



AFRICA

UMSINDO, South Africa, Durban
<http://twistinternational.org/south-africa/community-groups/umsindo-theatre-projects>
K-MU, Congo, Kinshasa
www.rnw.nl/africa/article/k-mu-a-creative-collaboration-between-holland-and-drc







The Americas

Just like in any other geographic context it is impossible to speak about community arts in the Americas in a generic way. Moreover, lumping together North, Central and South America into one single entity is tantamount to entering a linguistic and post-colonial minefield. A useful first step is then always to consider indigenous dimensions. After all, in more

ways than one that is where all our stories begin and where the roots of our work are preserved in fascinating oral traditions and visual traces. Echoes from the distant past mixed with elements from all manner of contemporary realities can be found in the work of virtually all the 'American' artists and organizations ICAF has established relations with over the years. If in our

mind's eye we travel from the South to the North, we can hear indigenous echoes in the music of **Matemurga**, the community arts organization based in the Villa Crespo neighborhood of Buenos Aires. They reverberate in the Andean inspired work of **Arena y Esteras** in Villa El Salvador, Peru. Indigenous roots are also visible in the parades of **Barrio Comparsa** in Medellín and in the public art of **Caja Lúdica** in Guatemala City. There, in that troubled part of Central America, it gathered substantial inspirations from Mayan philosophy and rituals, which were subsequently brought back to Colombia. That's how easily the aesthetics and spirit of community art flow through the Americas, as if following in the footsteps of the ancestors.

In Latin America, these connections – aided by shared traditions, common social and political concerns, and linguistic similarities – have given rise to what is arguably the most extensive community arts network on a single continent: *La Red de Arte Para la Transformación Social* [the network of art for social transformation]. '**La Red**', or 'the net' as it is usually called, extends from Chile and Argentina in the South via Bolivia, Uruguay and Brazil all the way up to the US border with Mexico. It facilitates artistic exchanges, joint training programs, festivals, and seminars. With much less government support or academic interest than is available in the West, *La Red* has succeeded in self-organizing its own mechanisms to develop the work, both in social and artistic terms.

'The net' does not catch all the fish that are out there. The separate network of Theatre of the Oppressed is only marginally

associated with it. **Favela Força**, the music theatre group from Rio de Janeiro that came to our festival in 2011 is not part of it either. Neither are the Guyanas (including Suriname), Venezuela and the Caribbean, which is not to say that there is no community art in these places. Think of El Sistema, Sistren in Jamaica, the *marron* art of Surinam, and the widespread community-based activities that nourish carnival arts and steelpan music in Trinidad.

Once we cross the Rio Grande and enter **North America**, indigenous and Latino inflections continue and become mixed with many other cultural influences. **El Teatro de la Realidad**, a community theatre group working in the Latino neighborhoods of Los Angeles, participated in two of our earliest festivals, as did **Pregoneros** from the Bronx and **Bregamos** from New Haven. More recently, **Cornerstone Theatre** and **Bread & Puppet** have also graced our festival with their presence. However, the community arts sector in the USA is much broader than that. It includes film, music, dance, new media and the visual arts. There are specialized professional training programs at colleges and there is an extensive academic discourse that advances our thinking about what community arts is, where it comes from, and what it means. And then we haven't even spoken about Canada yet, where the practice is equally diverse and the indigenous and 'other' voices insistent.

DEBAJEHMUJIG STORYTELLERS

CAF's relationship with Canada began in 2008, when we hosted Devora Neumark from **Engrenage Noir** in Montreal. Devora came our way on the advice of artist-scholar Petra Kuppers. Like Petra, Devora is a researcher and practitioner who investigates the ethical boundaries of community art through experimental participatory projects. Community arts, she knows, raises complicated questions about social change, representation, participation, power, and ownership, but very few artists actually critically explore these issues. Her workshop at our fourth festival opened the door to this more political, activist approach to community arts, but also made





us curious about other community arts practices in Canada.

Particularly in the metropolitan areas of Canada there are quite a few professional community arts organizations. Over the years, ICAF has received inquiries from many groups and individuals. These range from innovative participatory performance work in the public space of Toronto and the community dance of **Judith Marcuse**

in Vancouver to fashion design with, for and by children facilitated by **Theatre SKAM** in the city of Victoria. However, one of our most cherished relationships with a Canadian partner started in a rather serendipitous way.

In the context of our third festival (2005), a young Canadian drama student named Andrea Brassard had done an internship with us and, upon her departure,



had vowed to return one day with an indigenous project. We lost track of her until, out of the blue, early in 2010 she sent us an e-mail to ask whether we would be interested in hosting a show by a group of vulnerable young First Nations youth she was working with in an under-resourced area of Toronto. As it happened, I had just received a grant to present a paper at the Performance Studies International conference in June 2010, which was held –

you guessed it – in Toronto. I stayed on for a few extra days, visited the group Andrea was working with, and traveled with her to Manitoulin Island to meet with one of the few professional Aboriginal arts organizations in Canada, **Debajehmujig** or ‘Debaj’ for short. It is the only Canadian company of its kind that is based in a rural community and directly – and proudly – linked to the Wikwemikong Unceded Indian reserve. Debaj has a unique history

that goes back to 1984. And as its Artistic Director Joe Osawabine and its Artistic Producer Ron Berti explain in our essay collection *Community, Art, Power* (2013: 181 – 197), the group has an unusual position in the Canadian society in general and its arts scene in particular.

Debajehmujig is the Ojibway word for ‘storytellers’. Besides performing, painting, planting, making music and curating events, Debaj regards it as a crucial task to culturally fortify Aboriginal youth. They do this through a method they call the Four Directions Creation Process, which they implement workshop-style all over northern Ontario and at its home base in Manitoulin Island. Andrea Brassard brought her troubled youngsters there from Toronto to work with Debaj animators and to reconnect with Aboriginal culture and language.

Unfortunately, Andrea’s project turned out to be too fragile to take to Rotterdam, but Debaj had by now become sufficiently intrigued by ICAF to travel to Holland. As so many of our foreign partners do, they managed to raise a substantial portion of the necessary funds in Canada. They arrived in the middle of March 2011 and made a huge impact with their storytelling performance *The Global Savages*. That title, with its self-deprecating irony, well illustrates why Debaj and ICAF turned out to be such a good match. Both of us are very serious when we express our global ambitions to connect and mutually inspire like-minded artists. But at the same time, we do not take ourselves too seriously. We can laugh at our own stumbling, stammering, humbling efforts to realize our dreams.

In the film that accompanies this book, Joe says: “We’re a relationship-based company; we’re a relationship-based people. Building the relationship is always the foundation for everything. Before we even decide if we want to engage in a project, you have to have those strong ties”. As far as that is concerned, Debaj has put its money where its mouth is since ICAF first engaged with them and they with us.

Immediately after ICAF 2011, Debaj traveled to the northern Dutch province of Drenthe to perform outdoors in a birch forest on the premises of site-specific performance company **PeerGroupP**. That was also a gentle criticism towards us for putting their show on the mainstage of Zuidplein Theatre rather than in a much more intimate setting outside around a fire. The connection with PeerGroupP led to a friendship between them and Riet Mellink, who helped them get into the Oerol Festival in 2012. Many similar connections were made at ICAF 2011. Debaj also hooked up with **Sering** from Antwerp, **Pregones** from the Bronx and **Bregamos** from New Haven, **Arena y Esteras** from Lima and **Tswelopele** from Tembisa Township, Johannesburg. And they famously clicked with the **Citizens Theatre** from Glasgow, with whom they ended up creating a very successful co-production for the Commonwealth Games in the late summer of 2014. Preparations for it were made at ICAF 2014, at which *The Global Savages* made a spectacular return appearance. This time in the way Debaj wanted it: an outdoor show around a fire and preceded by several days of story gathering encounters with regular passers-by in the streets of Rotterdam.



BREAD & PUPPET

It's very early in the morning on Wednesday 27 March. At a student apartment on the outskirts of Utrecht, I pick up Alfred, an Austrian exchange student in my community arts class at the university. Together we drive in a rental van well ahead of the morning rush hour on the A12 to Rotterdam. At 7.30 AM we pick up Peter Schumann, his wife Elka and several other members of the **Bread & Puppet** company at the Maritime Hotel. From there we drive to the Zuidplein Theatre on the city's southside, the hub of our festival. Exactly at 8 o'clock, a small



crew that includes RWT artistic director Stefan van Hees and myself, start stacking loose bricks according to Peter's exact instructions. Under his supervision within an hour we thus build an outdoor bread oven entirely constructed from loose bricks that ingeniously taunt gravity at the top but never caves in. Then the 79-year-old founder of Bread & Puppet lights a fire and a cigar, which both continue to burn for the rest of the day. It's a delightful collective effort at the beginning of the day and a perfect ritual start to our festival. I wanted this oven, this fire, and the bread that Peter would be baking over the next few hours even more to be part of the festival than the shows he and his

company would perform that evening. Or at least equally as much. The puppets without the bread (and the baking and the communal oven building) simply wouldn't have sufficed. They symbolize the very essence of the communal spirit of this legendary company. And without the oven and the bread, Peter, Elka and the other puppeteers wouldn't have become such a joyful, integral part of the festival as they now did until the very end on Sunday evening.

Some people may wonder why Bread & Puppet was part of our festival in the first place? Wasn't this some outdated avant-garde performance group? What



was its relation to community arts? To answer these questions we must go back to the period which Claire Bishop and others have called the neo avant-garde (*Artificial Hells* 2012: 3). In this era, which roughly lasted from 1950 through 1970, many artists North and South became politically associated with a large number of emancipation projects. Others became interested in taking art out of what they regarded as conservative institutions and into the streets. They sought inspiration in the everyday lives of common folk. It was an important time for experiments with participation in the arts. One could well argue that in the work of Bread & Puppet both the political and the avant-garde

interest in the anti-institutional and in participation came together.

Peter Schumann, the co-founder of Bread & Puppet, was born in 1934 in Silesia, a region in southwest Poland that still to this day has a large German-speaking minority. In 1945, Peter and his family moved to West-Germany, just ahead of the Russian army that was then relentlessly pushing westward. Later, while studying at a German fine arts academy he met Elka, an American student with Russian roots who was traveling through Europe. In 1961, they decided to relocate to New York City, which many regarded as the center of artistic innovation. This was the time of



the Beatniks and Happeners, of finding artistic inspiration in everyday life, and of experimenting with collective art processes and alternative forms of communal living in underprivileged backstreet districts of Manhattan and Brooklyn.

In October 1963, Schumann and his friends Bruno Eckardt and Bob Ernstthal founded the Bread & Puppet Theatre at 148, Delancey Street on the Lower East Side of New York. At this address, the young artists' collective worked with local children to make thousands of masks and puppets. These came in all shapes and sizes, from small marionettes and hand-and-stick puppets, to giant ten-foot puppets based on German and Flemish Carnival traditions – which would later become Bread & Puppet's trademark. At the end of each performance, the puppeteers always handed out home-baked bread to the audience to emphasize that they saw theatre as a basic human need. This tradition of combining food and art continues to this very day and is reflected for comparable reasons in

many contemporary community arts combinations of art and food.

The United States of the early 1960s was polarized by the struggle for equal rights for all disadvantaged sections of society (women, Latinos, Native Americans, African Americans and homosexuals), and by the Vietnam War. From 1964 onwards this political tension began to permeate the work of Bread & Puppet. However, in contrast to many other radical theatre groups of this era, Schumann's collective avoided the use of spoken language and concentrated on visual design, music and choreography. During an interview I held with Peter Schumann in 1983, he had explained that while he had indeed lost faith in spoken language – partly in response to the idle promises of politicians – his decision to use non-verbal language in his work was primarily an artistic one: "I am a picture maker. In a picture you grasp something in a different way than in words. In a picture you grasp an idea in one instantaneous image. With words you grasp it through logic, through reason, and it's just a different process in the mind" (personal interview, Plainfield, Vermont, 28 December 1983).



The stunning visual language (or perhaps the relentless artistic ambition), the generosity and humility of spirit, and the 50-year-long tradition of experimenting with participation and community connections both locally in the U.S. and globally were the reasons why we at ICAF found it so important to invite Bread & Puppet to our festival. They are living proof that the current community arts movement has deep roots and undeniable links with contemporary art and society.

CATALINA GARCIA AND BARRIO COMPARSA



Over the years, Bread & Puppet has toured to many countries. In the late eighties, it inspired the work of our Polish partners **Teatr Grodzki** and of our Czech partners at **Archa Theatre** in the Czech Republic. Way before that, in the late sixties it profoundly influenced **Welfare State International** in the UK, which in turn led to the foundation of **Dogtroep** in the Netherlands. Bread & Puppet also traveled many times to Latin America. One of the places they visited was the famous festival in Manizales, Colombia, where Luis Fernandez ‘el gordo’ García became mesmerized by their work.

In 1990, García and five of his friends had founded a community arts organization called Barrio Comparsa [‘neighborhood parade’] in the Manrique Oriental district of their hometown Medellín. It was a time when large areas of that city were still heavily infested by drug-related criminal activities associated with the cartel of Pablo Escobar, his competitors and his paramilitary opponents. In a recent weblog, Barrio Comparsa recalls:

We began as an alternative for the lives of young people in Medellín, which back then was going through a period of increasing violence. Since then we have consolidated as a multiplication project for arts and culture. We do this through festive, carnivalesque forms of expressions like parades, music and street performance. In our group we involve neighborhood residents from Medellín who come together to celebrate life, joy, and fantasy.

It would be exaggerated to claim that Barrio Comparsa single-handedly turned



Medellín from one of the world's most dangerous cities into the comparatively safer place it is today. But it certainly played an important part. In 2000, the company also began a strong partnership with a group of young artists in Guatemala called **Caja Lúdica** ['the ludic box']. Doryan Bedoya and Julia Escobar, two senior members of Barrio Comparsa, moved to Guatemala City together with García's daughter Catalina. In Guatemala, Catalina García, who is a trained dancer

and choreographer, developed into an extremely effective parade maker and grassroots arts educator. We came to know her in 2012 and 2013 when she was part of an exchange project between Caja Lúdica, Dutch youth theatre company **De Rest** and Dutch community artist Anouk de Bruijn. It was there that the idea was born to invite Catalina García to come help us create the participatory ICAF parade that opened our festival, together with Peter's homemade bread and aioli spread.





Europe



Community arts in Europe is a very mixed bag indeed. It makes a huge difference whether you use the term in the UK, where it was arguably coined in the 1970s, in Belgium, Sweden, or in Spain. In former Communist countries in Eastern Europe the concept has understandable negative overtones, compounded by suspicion of anything that reeks of collectivity and participation

– particularly if it is imposed from above. Although some interesting European collaborations have begun to develop (some of which have actually started at ICAF), it always is a good idea to consider community arts in Europe in its own local contexts. The spirit of artists and non-artists reciprocally co-creating work to give expression to untold stories may be similar everywhere; the details of its practice,



BASKET BEAT

In Spain, community art is still a relatively new phenomenon. The term is used for neighborhood-based social-artistic work as well as for art in prison and art for, with and by people with disabilities. One of the more interesting initiatives is Bàsket Beat in Catalunya. It is a method invented by social worker Josep Maria Araguay who discovered he could lure at-risk youth aimlessly hanging around at basketball courts in Barcelona to explore music and dance. The rhythms and booming sounds of bouncing basketballs were the key to open the world of art.

TRANSFORMAS

One of the driving forces behind Spanish community art is undoubtedly Eva García. She is an energetic actor and producer, but also the organizer of an annual symposium which brings together some 200 community arts professionals from around Spain. In addition, she is artistic director of TransFORMAS, an arts organization with which she has worked in the Quatre Camins prison outside Barcelona for the past ten years. On site there, together with inmates and professionals, she co-created and produced *Frontera* (2013), the first feature-length fiction film of its kind in Spain.



its circumstances, and its origins vary substantially.

Even at less than 100 kilometers towards the south from Rotterdam, in the Flemish port city of Antwerp community arts is already considerably different from Holland. Its roots are connected to a governmental report on poverty that was first published in 1994. It identified the right to culture as fundamental for all citizens and essential to combatting poverty and social exclusion. This political position opened the door to a variety of governmental and private funding opportunities for participatory arts initiatives, as long as they could

demonstrate clear social intentions. Although in Belgium as elsewhere social and political realities have obviously changed since the mid nineties, the connection between community arts, poverty and social exclusion still remains.

In the Netherlands, by contrast, the roots of community arts lie much further back in the avant-garde arts experiments of the 1960s and the highly politicized message-driven theatre of the 1970s. Since then, Dutch community art has always placed a strong emphasis on artistic quality and has tended to downplay its social dimensions. ("We're artists; not social workers", Dutch community artists have



ATALAYA TNT

Atalaya-TNT is a professional theatre company and laboratory based in Seville, Spain. The company has developed an international reputation for its innovative productions, but is also keen on creating poetic performance projects with and for people regardless of cultural background, social status or age. A few years ago, Atalaya started working with a group of *gitana* women from the El Vacie neighborhood. This collaboration resulted in a stunning version of Lorca's famous play, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, which the women partly adapted to fit their own living conditions and in which they performed to sell-out audiences all over Spain. And at ICAF in Rotterdam.

frequently declared.) It is a complicated issue that has become even more difficult to untangle now that a number of high profile artists have recently descended from the mainstream to work in ‘problem neighborhoods’ with participatory projects of their own.

Over the years, at ICAF we have heard many stories of how community arts has evolved in other European locations. Our partners from **acta** in Bristol, from the **East Midlands Participatory Arts Forum**, from **Dance United** in Leeds and London, from the **Citizens Theatre** in Glasgow, and the various groups and individuals we collaborate with in Ireland and Northern Ireland all have their own fascinating tales to tell about how they relate to the community arts scene in these English and Gaelic-speaking parts of our continent. In Germany, representatives of **Expedition Metropolis** in Berlin and from groups in Münster and Stuttgart explained that many projects in their country are connected to intercultural youth work and unemployment schemes. In Portugal, thanks to the work of **Pele** and the Mexe festival in Porto, we detected fascinating

links with the post-dictatorial era, when participatory arts came to be seen as essential to reconstructing a fragmented society. Similar motivations, although prompted by very different political conditions, lie behind the increasing number of community arts activities in countries like Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Verbatim theatre, puppetry, animation film, photography are only some of the genres that companies like **Divadlo bez domova** [‘Theatre with no Home’] in Bratislava and **Grodzki Theatre** in Bielsko-Biala employ to draw attention to the plight of the homeless and disabled. Sometimes their artistic work even reaches beyond the aesthetic realm into actual income generation schemes for these excluded groups. And regional festivals in Slovakia and the Czech Republic are also generating emerging networks for collaboration and exchange.

Wherever you look in Europe – and ICAF still has plenty of places left to explore in Italy, France, Finland, for example – many stories can be found about how meaningful participatory art intersects with social dimensions in the most intriguing ways.



INSIGHTSHARE

ICAF is always on the lookout for new approaches and methodologies that expand the spectrum of community arts. The audiovisual field and the internet were relatively uncharted territories for us, until we discovered the impressive work of Insightshare. Based in Oxford, England, where the brothers Chris and Nick Lunch founded it in 1999, the company has become an undisputed leader in participatory video. Peer-to-peer education, grassroots tranferral of technologies, intercultural ethics, and critical reflection (through fascinating webinars) are essential to what they do.





DORDTSELAAN

Seated on an elevated tiered construction of seats in a former shop, spectators see life go by, watch projected film images, and listen to 'live' stories from locals.

Site-specific production co-directed by Stefan van Hees and Jasmina Ibrahimovic (RWT)



MARIABERG COMMUNITY THEATRE

In Maastricht we discovered this absurdist mix of dance, drama, and design. In it, people with a variety of challenges express the richness of their relationships.



ORCHESTRE PARTOUT

'The orchestra from everywhere' is a swinging world music band based in Holland. It is composed of asylum seekers who write their own songs or arrange tunes from their homelands. Ted van Leeuwen (5^e Kwartier) is its music director.

BARBA

Whenever we talk about the origins of community art, we look at prehistory (the primordial instincts of humans to express themselves), at the cultural dimensions of decolonization and emancipation, at the community development movement, and at the avant-garde. It is often overlooked that Eugenio Barba, the Italian disciple of Jerzy Grotowski and the founder of Odin Teatret has his own links to community arts. In the 1970s, he traveled extensively with an international ensemble of performers. Wherever they went they connected to local communities through ‘bartering’. Barba’s artists performed or offered free workshops and in return local folk artists demonstrated their skills. Particularly in Latin America, Barba’s tours had a lasting impact on groups like Yuyachkani from Lima, Peru. Later, Barba also left an indelible mark in former Yugoslavia on companies like Dah Theatre. Via Belgrade, the influence has now also reached Amsterdam in the work of community-based theatre company Zid.

ZID

Founded in the late ‘90s by Serbian-born artist Karolina Spaic and her Dutch partner Sebo Bakker, since 2003 Zid has been increasingly involving local residents in its work. A few years ago, they became interested in adapting classical drama texts to community contexts. ICAF connected them to Cornerstone Theatre in Santa Monica, California, which is well-known for this kind of work. In the weeks prior to our festival, three Cornerstone artists came to Holland for an initial collaboration with Zid in the context of *From the Rooftops of the World*, a community production inspired by Shakespeare’s Roman tragedies.





CARE & CULTURE

In the Netherlands, visual artists, musicians and theatre makers are increasingly collaborating with residents in retirement homes and other healthcare facilities. It leads to enriching encounters for both sides.



BIJLMERPARK THEATRE/UNTOLD

The Bijlmerpark Theatre is a community-oriented performing arts centre in the southside of Amsterdam. It is a place where many people of African and Surinamese descent reside. One of their partners is a grassroots youth group called Untold, which specializes in movement and music that explores the intersection of cultural heritage and contemporary reality.



Asia & the Middle East

In an indirect way, ICAF's connection to Asia dates back to January 1986. I was in Bombay to attend the *East-West Theatre Encounter*. Virtually every important theatre artist from India was there, but also European giants like Eugenio Barba and Jean-Claude Carrière. In the margins of this event, I ran into a young dramaturg named Rustom Bharucha, who had written a fascinating book on grassroots

theatre in India. I also met a few other young artists who were working in and with communities in their home states: Jos Chiramel from Kerala and Subodh Patnaik from Orissa. They opened doors to a progressive arts movement in Asia which in this period was beginning to shift from explicit political targets to more participatory work.

The Asian journey that began in Bombay, continued for another three years in the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, South Korea, and Pakistan. Many arts organizations I met during this period continue to stay in touch. Among them, one group stands out: the **Philippines Educational Theater Association (PETA)** in Manila.

I first met PETA early in February 1986, when Marcos was desperately holding on to power in the face of a massive popular uprising. Artists all over the country were actively involved in mobilizing people, through workshops and street performances. PETA, along with partner organizations in Mindanao, the Visayas and other Philippine regions, was very much at the forefront of this extraordinary political arts movement. Collectively structured, it operated different departments, including a women's program, a children's and teen division, a performing arts ensemble catering to middle-class audiences, and a so-called people's theatre school. To this day, this school continues to be a leader in developing and implementing community-based arts methodologies that generate self-sufficient grassroots arts organizations. PETA's facilitators work all around metropolitan Manila, in outlying regions of the Philippines, but also in neighboring Asian countries.

Needless to say, there is still lots left to discover in Asian community arts. We have contacts in Singapore, in Pakistan, in Thailand, in South Korea, and in China, where lecturers at the **Shanghai Theatre Academy** have now introduced it as a subject.

INTERACT

In December 2013, spectators in Tehran took part in an interactive performance about the need to be in control of one's own life and about the hope for change and freedom. At ICAF, Nasrin Ghasemzadeh and Farhad Foroutanian reconstructed this unique theatrical experience.







PLASTIC ART CENTER

Ehud and Anat Shamai are two visual artists from Israel who work on intercultural dialogues through visual arts. In 2011, they established a Guinness world record with a huge sock mosaic. In Rotterdam, they worked with residents from IJsselmonde on a similar mosaic, with remarkable aesthetic and dialogical results.

We know much less about participatory arts initiatives in the Middle East and Asia Minor, although through **El Warsha** in Cairo we heard about many spontaneous creative outbursts during the Tahrir Square occupation. Our colleagues of **Formaat** in Rotterdam have introduced us to Boal-inspired binational cultural practices of former Israeli soldiers and Palestinian fighters. And a couple of Iranian theatre artists living in the Netherlands came to our last festival to show excerpts from a site-specific show they recently co-created with inhabitants from Tehran. We wouldn't be in the least surprised, however, if all these community art-related things that we *are* aware of in Asia and the Middle-East are just the tip of a huge iceberg.



TINY TOONES

With the support of the Prince Claus Fund we managed to bring the spectacular community-based hip-hop dance group Tiny Toones from Cambodia to ICAF.



PETA

Bong Billones and Melvin Lee, two seasoned facilitators from PETA's People's Theatre School, conducted a two-day session for ICAF visitors interested in their Basic Integrated Theatre Arts (BITAW) methodology.







Community arts in Africa cannot be disconnected from its pre-colonial and post-colonial past. From a distant European vantage point, tradition, modernity, rural, urban, French, English, Portuguese, Spanish, Arabic, Berber, and myriad tribal and aesthetic languages all seem to combine into a sheer impenetrable blur of practices. In Anglo-Saxon academic

studies, these are often framed in terms of development or politics. For a while, in countries like Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa many local arts organizations – often with the financial, logistical, and methodological support of western agencies – were engaged in performance tours, radio soaps, and education projects to combat HIV/

AIDS, domestic abuse, and environmental degradation. Other arts initiatives, either participatory or more autonomous, intervened in political arenas. Ngugi wa Thiongo's legendary work in his Kenyan hometown Kamirithu or the equally well-known anti-apartheid art in South Africa are cases in point. But also the theatrical interventions to foster reconciliation after the genocides in Rwanda and Burundi.

At ICAF, we try to include all corners of the earth and all possible art forms. Because of the language barrier – we feel we already have enough trouble operating in Dutch, English, and Spanish – until 2013 we hadn't seriously considered reaching out to Francophone Africa. Previously, we had communicated with **Bouam**, a fiesty female puppetry collective from Togo and with a cross-ethnic arts organization in Congo which strangely called itself **Les Kamikazes**. But it wasn't until the Dutch Art and Development company **Theatre Embassy** made us aware of the existence of **K-Mu** in Kinshasa that a Francophone African presence at ICAF became a real possibility. It led to a workshop presentation by Guido Kleene and K-Mu founder Toto Kisaku in which they reconstructed the creation of a music theatre project about the persecution of child sorcerers. In addition, Toto, supported by bass player Toussaint Kimbembé, performed a monologue based on his personal intercultural experiences as a struggling artist in Congo and as an African in Europe.

Before 2014, many of our previous festivals had mainly featured South African community artists, thanks to our colleague Roel Twijnstra who often scouted for us





UMSINDO & STUT

Especially for ICAF-6, Goso, Hassan, Siso and Güner (Go, Ha, Si, Gu) created *Go Hasigu!*, an improvised performance piece in which they explore what connects Holland, Turkey, Morocco and South Africa and how community art can form a bridge.

K-MU

K-Mu founder Toto Kisaku performs his autobiographical solo *Rencontre au pluriel* ['meeting in the plural'] about his childhood, his training as an actor, his struggle to survive as an artist in Kinshasa, and his complicated relation with Europe.





while working there. Thus, in 2003 we hosted the **Soweto Youth Drama Society** and in 2005 **TVAAP** from Limpopo and a youth group from Diepsloot. In 2008, our program included a physical show from the **Problem Solving Theatre** in Durban. And in 2011, when we expanded even further into art disciplines other than theatre, we organized a two-week residency for the **Cleo-Patria** ['Women's Studio'] in Rotterdam with two textile design artists from **Imbali** in Johannesburg.

In October 2013, Roel Twijnstra and his South African partner Emma Durden invited me and two actors from **Stut theatre** in Utrecht to participate in the *Isigcawu* community performance festival in KwaMashu township, Durban. The two actors in question, Güner Güven and Hassan Oumhamed, befriended two brothers, Shiso and Goso Shabalala, who run a community theatre in nearby Umlazi township. With the help of director Sharon Varekamp, Stut managed to invite the two South African brothers to the Netherlands to co-create a short performance piece which they presented to great acclaim at ICAF-6. During our brief tour through South Africa, which also took us to **Tswelopele Performing Artists** in Tembisa township near Pretoria, we learned that community theatre in the post-apartheid era tackles social issues, for sure, but is even more about grassroots cultural entrepreneurship. Unlike ICAF, the *Isigcawu* festival and other events like it, offer substantial money prizes to the winners and a platform at the renowned arts festival of Grahamstown, which often leads to further paid gigs.



The origins of community arts in Australia lie somewhere in the early 1980s. Some claim it was introduced by artists who returned home from Scotland, where they had discovered UK-style community arts. Avant-garde experiments inspired by everyday life undoubtedly also played a role, as did Australian variations on popular political

theatre. Quite soon, funding opportunities began to appear through a special Community Arts Board set up by the Australian Arts Council. It provided the sector with legitimacy from very early on. This may be one reason why the divide between mainstream, avant-garde, and community art seems less pronounced in Australia than in other countries. An



under-resourced urban neighborhood of Western Sydney or an Aboriginal settlement in the outback are not considered career-damaging places to work in for an artist.

Whatever the historical causes, I have always found the collaboration between contemporary arts practitioners and community artists in Australia to be refreshing. Although I am sure some of the same prejudices exist there as anywhere

BIG HART 2014

In the week before our festival, Big hART's creative producer Cecily Hardy consulted with many potential partners for a possible Rotterdam-based edition of *Blue Angel*.



else, open-minded cooperation and a typically 'ozzie' sense of adventure have frequently led to remarkable work.

Lack of funds had prevented ICAF from presenting Australian community arts until Sydney Mayor Clover Moore gave us a hand in December 2010. Long story short, I personally knew her Chief Executive Officer, Monica Barone, from way back in 1987. She used to be a performer with

a Canberra-based company called **People Next Door** but moved on to become a community arts officer in Sydney and from there became the highest ranking civil servant in City Hall. In April 2010, when she was passing through Holland on her way to visit relatives in Italy, I asked her for advice on which Australian community arts organizations might be suitable for our festival. She recommended Big hART and with substantial financial support



from Sydney we managed to bring this extraordinary company to Rotterdam in March 2011.

ICAF-5 opened with Big hART's production *Ngapartji Ngapartji*, which they had adapted for European audiences (see *Community, Art, Power*, 198 - 213). Many of us were impressed with the enormous scope of Big hART's work, which extends far beyond the regular length and reach

of community arts projects as we knew them. When *Ngapartji Ngapartji* reached Rotterdam it had already been developing for more than six years. It was also much more than a theatre show. At the heart of it is the personal story of Aboriginal performer Trevor Jamieson and his extended family, but it also involves many other elements. It began as a very small community-based collaboration in the Central Desert between Trevor, Big hART's artistic director Scott Rankin and a lone creative producer, Alex Kelly. Over the years it mushroomed into a local Aboriginal women's choir, a television documentary, online Aboriginal language courses, a political campaign, and the show that came to Rotterdam after first mesmerizing thousands of regular theatre goers in all major Australian cities.

BIG HART 2011

Trevor Jamieson won the Sydney Theatre Award as best lead actor for his powerful physical performance in *Ngapartji Ngapartji* which tells the story of his own family.

Big hART's ambition, its commitment to thinking long term, its dream to make the best art possible on the basis of reciprocal community collaborations, and its conviction that art can have social and political impact, make the company unique in the international world of community art. It's why at ICAF-6 we gladly created a platform to explore the possibilities for a new international co-production on the plight of invisible seafarers on giant container ships that transport goods around the world to satisfy consumer needs. Entitled *Blue Angel* it has already manifested itself as a site-specific event in Hobart, Tasmania in March 2015. We hope that it will continue to re-invent itself with local input in other port cities before it will hopefully moor in the port of Rotterdam for our next festival in March 2017.





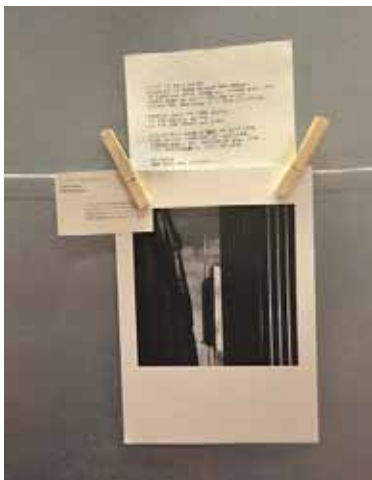
Encounters

At ICAF we see it as a crucial task to facilitate connections and conversations. At our first three festivals, we organized symposiums and debates to explore themes like audience and creative processes. Later, we added talk shows and late night parties. Starting in 2011, on the request of some of our British visitors we introduced the scholar-

in-residence. We invited a well-known academic in our field to conduct seminars in the morning for those interested in reflecting on community arts issues in more depth. Our first guest was Professor Jan Cohen-Cruz of Syracuse University in the USA. While her sessions on the power of community art were absolutely stimulating (See *Community, Art, Power*,

ICAF PLAYGROUND

“The Serendipity Project”,
a take-away art gallery
that was part of the ICAF
Playground in the lobby of
Zuidplein Theatre.



140 - 180), we also realized they left out the less-academically inclined who preferred conversing about their work more informally. To accommodate them, we invented a range of other ways to meet and communicate.

Besides continuing our morning seminars, which in 2014 were led by Dr. Kerrie Schaefer of Exeter University in the UK and dealt with 'space', our interns Roos

Muis and Olivia Ainsworth designed a so-called ICAF playground. This was a ludic interactive installation where strangers could sit down and, prompted by a variety of artistic stimuli, could connect. It included a take-away gallery called "the Serendipity Project". It contained art donated by artists from around the world, which ICAF visitors could take home in exchange for writing a personal message on an old typewriter.



SEMINAR ON SPACE

Dr. Kerrie Schaefer from the University of Exeter (UK) led three interactive seminar sessions in which she explored the concepts of place and space as they relate to community art.

Another new dialogical component of our festival was the Round Table, a huge wooden construction designed by PeerGrouP artist Henry Alles. We placed it in the open air in an orchard of a care farm in Rhoon, just beyond the city limits of Rotterdam. Henry and his crew served a home-cooked meal prepared from local products, performed stories about the food items, and generally invited their guests to contribute food-related tales of their own. Finally, two Icelandic artists, Isabella Lövenholt and Arnar Fells, designed

two special dining rooms in the attic of Zuidplein Theatre. These “Captain’s Tables” provided a select group of people with the opportunity to have an intimate evening meal with a featured artist from the festival in exchange for a home-made gift for their host. On Friday night the “Captain’s Table” thus turned into a surprise birthday party for our Colombian friend Hector Aristizábal. It’s that spirit of convivial sharing and serious and playful exchange, that we believe make our festival so special.

CAPTAIN’S TABLE

Friday 28 March 2014: Hector Aristizabal hosts a “Captain’s Table” on his own birthday.



ROUND TABLE

During three afternoons, Henry Alles and PeerGrouP offered a special ICAF 'slow' lunch performance at a care farm in Rhoon.







Colophon

BOOK

Text Eugène van Erven

Photography

Peter van Beek:

Cover, page 2-3, 7, 9, 10, 18, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31, 35, 36, 37, 38 (up), 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50 (down), 52, 53, 55, 59, 60, 62-63, 64, 65, 68-69, 70, 83 (up), 85

Kees Deenik:

page 17, 33, 34, 39, 50 (up), 54, 74, 75, 80, 81, 83 (down), 84 (down)

Arno Brouwer:

page 21, 38 (down), 40-41, 78-79, 84 (up), 89, 90-91

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CREDITS DVD

Directed & written by

Angie Hernández Izquierdo

Producers Anamaría Cruz, Eugène van Erven

Executive producer Heleen Hameete

Edited by

Angie Hernández Izquierdo, Héctor Prió Sánchez

Sound engineer Antonio Prió Rivacoba

First assistant director Héctor Prió Sánchez

Production designers

Angie Hernández Izquierdo, Héctor Prió Sánchez

Camera operators

Mercedes Collado Bazo, Eugène van Erven, Caterina Ferrer Hernandez, Angie Hernandez Izquierdo, Hector Prio Sanchez, Bram van Veldhuisen

Graphics PrioStudio

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Eugène van Erven, Angie Hernández Izquierdo

Interviewer Angie Hernández Izquierdo

Assistant Interviewers

Mercedes Collado Bazo, Caterina Ferrer Hernández,
Héctor Prió Sánchez, Bram van Veldhuisen

Interviews translations

Jasmina Ibrahimovic, Mairéa Seguí Buenaventura

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Alba Borràs Colado, Mercedes Collado Bazo, Caterina
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ICAF

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ICAF

International Community Arts Festival

info@icafrotterdam.com

www.icafrotterdam.com

Icaf staff

Eugène van Erven *Festival director*

Anamaria Cruz *Production manager*

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Stichting Rotterdams Wijktheater

Herenwaard 17

3078 AK Rotterdam

Tel: 0031 10 423 01 92

info@rotterdamswijktheater.nl

www.rotterdamswijktheater.nl





ROTTERDAMS WIJKTHEATRE

ICA 6e

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