

## Intercultural Dialogue – creative laboratories of cross-cultural practices



### Background

**Laundry** is an association of artists. Our members and affiliates both maintain their individual practices and come together under the umbrella of Laundry to develop and deliver collaborative projects. Members utilise a wide range of artistic practices and methodologies - photography and film, visual arts, oral history, performance, writing and digital media - working creatively in community contexts and with a diversity of cultures.

As an artist group our key aims are to

- explore the nature of collaborative work; and how we utilise different styles of participatory practice, engaging with audiences and communities
- provide a supportive environment to collaborate and experiment, seeking opportunities to developing artistic practice through shared knowledge and experience; through skills exchange, mentoring and practical actions
- develop international partnerships which are of benefit to our locality.

In 2007-08, artists from Laundry have been working with The Institute of Polish Culture at Warsaw University, Poland; The Art Institute at Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania; - and two arts organisations Spolek Richelieu in Prague, Czech Republic, and Stowarzyszenie Katedra Kultury in Warsaw, on an 18<sup>th</sup> month programme of local cultural animation and artist exchanges. This work is documented at [www.culturalanimation.com](http://www.culturalanimation.com)

### The wider context: Year of Intercultural Dialogue

2008 has been designated by the European Commission as the "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue", and in the UK the Department of Culture, Media and Sport is the lead Whitehall department for the year. The aim of the year is to increase people's mutual understanding and their appreciation of the many different cultures in Europe and to help them develop a sense of the values and traditions we share as part of our common European citizenship.

For the European Commission, the key goal of the year is to strengthen respect for cultural diversity and the coexistence of different cultural identities and beliefs. In addition, the year aims to highlight the contribution of different cultures to the member states' heritage and way of life and to recognise that intercultural dialogue is essential

for learning to live together in harmony. Krzysztof Czyzewski, President of The Borderland Foundation, describes it in this way: *'Intercultural dialogue means a practice of ethos of tolerance in the sphere of daily life. Arts and education constitute a vehicle that makes this practice possible.'*

Our creative laboratory will be located within the Birmingham and the Black Country. Birmingham prides itself on being a multicultural city. The 2001 census records 641,000 White British, 104000 Pakistani, 56000 Indian, 48000 African Caribbean, 31000 White Irish, 21000 Bangladeshi, 28000 from mixed backgrounds (Chinese, Black African, East Europe.) As a city, Birmingham is at the centre of the largest urban conurbation in the UK, with Coventry on its southern border, and the Black Country boroughs of Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Dudley and Walsall to the North and West, all of which have high migrant populations. In total this metropolitan area has over 2.5 million people. This project is being undertaken in the context of an increasingly backlash in the UK against the concept of multiculturalism, negative views of increasing migration to the UK, divisions brought about by both the rise of 'Islamophobia' and Islamic fundamentalism in inner city areas, and gang violence. The issues being raised about national identity, about community loyalty and the impact of globalisation and migration are extremely delicate issues in the UK at this present time.

The Intercultural Dialogue project will be led by Brendan Jackson and Beverley Harvey from Laundry.

*Activities:*

High quality creative activities with young people

Artistic exchange with West Midlands artists and Central and Eastern European practitioners

Greater shared practice through creative learning and training

Dissemination of the results of the project

**Our Partners**

This project is being realised in partnership with the Borderland Foundation and the New Culture Foundation.

The Borderland Foundation has been active since 1990 in conducting intercultural work mostly in Central and Eastern Europe, but also in Western Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia and Northern America. Originally members of the influential Polish theatre group Gardzienice, designed to bring city theatre to rural areas, the group launched the Foundation in Sejny, a small Polish town on the border with Lithuania and Belarus. They run performance, music and visual arts programmes.

The New Culture Foundation is a cultural organisation based in Bela Rechka, Bulgaria; an interdisciplinary network of journalists, artists, singers and composers, writers and new media designers.

The project partners will conduct their own creative activities, primarily with young people, in their locality and in multicultural communities - where the issues are matters of memory, destruction of cultural heritage and environment, social and

ethnic conflict, immigration and community building. Each creative laboratory will work with groups specific to their area and context, exploring with a range of artistic media the concept and reality of intercultural dialogue in their locality. During the project, partners will undertake exchange activities with each other, sharing practice. Each partner will organise specific events to promote and profile the work in progress to a broader audience.

This work will also be shared with two associate partners - in Hania, Crete (Etz Hayim Synagogue) and Baku, Azerbaijan (the Centre for National and International Studies) - with a residency in each location, with artists from each partner demonstrating and sharing their approach through practical activity.

Our intention is for the project to initiate a long-term activity for intercultural dialogue, through development of our skills as artists, those of the young people participating and other artists associated with the delivery of the programme, furthermore the dissemination of the results to a wider audience. The project will provide concrete tools which can be utilised by artists in the future; in the final stage of work, in particular laboratories we will produce a publication, audio recordings, web materials and a short film conceived as guides of good practice.

*An integral part of the project for Laundry is a training and mentoring programme which is open to other artists in the region, offering them the opportunity to participate in elements of the project in Birmingham & the Black Country and the international exchanges, thus ensuring a development of skills, knowledge and capacity building for the region.*

The project is supported by the Culture 2007-2013 programme of the European Union, Arts Council England, and the Department for Government and Local Communities (UK).

### **Recruitment of Bursary Artists**

We are looking for emerging artists of any art form who are keen on exploring the theme of the project. Artists are invited to submit a short proposal outlining the value of this bursary opportunity and what they may offer, along with samples of work.

### **Our Criteria for selection**

Artists seeking to expand their practise within a social context

Artists seeking to develop networks internationally

Artists keen to explore and experience the notion of change through art.

Artists who are looking for new and exemplar participatory projects that seeks to connect disparate communities.

Artists who demonstrate a commitment to equality and diversity issues.

Artist are expected to have current CRB check and Public Liability Insurance.

### **Benefits**

Practical involvement, in planning, delivery and evaluation

Develop an understanding of the evaluative methods used to measure and capture success within a social context.

Be an integral team player

Enhanced delivery skills

Exchange of skills through international programme

High profile project  
Heightened experience, and expansion of networks

### **Professional Development**

You will be given a mentor from our team to assist with induction to the project, and the planning, delivery and evaluation of activity. The mentor will act as a sounding board for your ideas and will work alongside you as appropriate. This will influence the delivery of the project activity, allowing you the opportunity to experience something new, collaborating with a group you may not normally be associated with as well as enhancing your skills set. Selected artists will participate in elements of the workshop programme in the West Midlands and then participate in the international exchange.

Each bursary artist will be paid a fee of up to £2500 (for up to 20 days work). For this, you will participate in the workshop programme in the West Midlands and visit one of the partners. You each will have a budget of £250 for materials for the workshop activity in UK. Your travel, accommodation and living expenses (a set amount of per diem) while visiting the international partner will also be covered.

The specific international partner you may visit will be determined in part by individual particular needs and desires. We will match you to the relevant skills to the partner exchange we will feel most beneficial. For example, it may be that the bursary artists participate in one of the two demonstration projects in Hania or Baku.

### **Timescale:**

The project is being undertaken between August 2008 and August 2009.

Deadline for submissions: first round, end of July; second round, end of August.

### **How to apply:**

Please submit a cv with a short proposal outlining the value of this bursary opportunity to you, what skills you could bring to the project, and what experience would you hope to gain that would be beneficial to your personal artistic development, along with some samples of work – jogs or pdfs.

*Send your submission to:*  
brendanjack@gmail.com

We look forward to hearing from you. Good luck!