

Report on the 11th International Expressive Arts Therapy Association Conference in Hong Kong, China: The Flowing Tao of Expressive Arts Therapy

國際表達藝術治療協會「表達藝術·順道流形」國際會議報告

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Abstract

The Flowing Tao of Expressive Arts Therapy, the theme of the 11th International Expressive Arts Therapy Association (IEATA) created “the way” to bridge the wisdom of the East to that of the West. This conference birthed a global village at the Wu Kwai Sha Youth Village, Hong Kong where over 400 people gathered to honor the Eastern and Western practitioners, artists, educators and their acumen in expressive arts. As the first IEATA conference in Asia, two thirds of the participants were from Asian countries, demonstrating the vibrancy of expressive arts in Asia as well as coupling with the West, with 26 countries represented!

The intention of the conference was to create a community that invited formal and informal dialog, as well as making the conference affordable to many who live in developing countries through the numerous scholarships offered. The choice of the Youth Village provided a setting in which we all lived, ate, played and studied together with a taste of nature in urban Hong Kong. The feedback we received reflected our intention that the conference enhance dialog and bonding among our many international participants.

摘要

首次在亞洲舉辦的第十一屆國際表達藝術治療協會國際會議順利於二零一五年十月八日至十日在中國香港烏溪沙青年新村舉行，四百名來自二十七個國家的參加者難得聚首一堂，匯集東西方智慧，交流各地文化與表達藝術應用心得，從不同派別的理论分析、研究、臨床實踐和社區充權計劃中深入學習，擴闊視野，反思殖民化和國際化帶來的影響，在充滿挑戰和掙扎的世界裡，希望大家能夠順應善用表達藝術之道，用和平、創新和有意義的方法，建立和諧共融的地球村。

1. Asian Presence

In designing the conference, the accent was on Asian presenters, with several panels highlighting more than thirty years of contributions in and from Asia. The second plenary panel introduced the participants to the ongoing contributions of some of these

pioneers hailing from Japan, Malaysia, Korea, Cambodia, Singapore and Hong Kong. These were followed by regional panels and presentation sessions that explored the particular emphasis each country contributed in greater depth, this time including India, Nepal, Philippines and Taiwan.

2. Welcoming in 26 Languages

The conference started with a rich, warm welcome to our global village with an array of cascading welcomes in 26 languages, allowing all to have their voices and mother tongue heard. Daria Halprin, founder of the Tamalpa Institute in Kentfield, California, inaugurated the first plenary with her dynamic keynote address on the power of the flow of the organic internal body and the expressive arts. Her presentation was warm, alive and interactive, which set the tone for dialog through aesthetic responses from the audience, and challenging our paradigms and ideas to expand to the larger connected embodied world-view of expressive arts.

Each major approach was presented to participants offering a rich, well-rounded learning opportunity. Some of the different approaches offered included Person Centered Expressive Arts with a blend of East and West practitioners, including Terri Goslin-Jones, Anin Utigaard, Christine Evans, Kyoko Ono, Mukti Khanna and Maria Gonzalez-Blue; the European Graduate School model with Paolo Knill, Margo Fuchs, Ellen and Steve Levine; Collaborative Creative Process by Sally Atkins and the Appalachian State University team, Jungian-oriented Expressive Arts Therapy with Kate Donohue; The Focusing-Oriented Expressive Arts by Laury Rappaport, and Attunement in Expressive Arts by Mitchell Kossak. Other presenters highlighted their work in various Asian countries as well as the West on a variety of clinical, research, social justice and contemporary trends. The selection offered participants the depth and breadth of the ways expressive arts is being used with individuals and communities globally.

3. Highlighting Global Issues

Another emphasis of this conference was the empowerment work in Cambodia for orphans with AIDS; the Nepal project in which seven Nepalese trainers were sponsored so they could attend and share their profound work in fighting against human trafficking to save women and children. These are just two examples of the incredible work that is alive and thriving in Asia. Additional global issues focused on Palestinian concerns, as well as gender, sexual identity and issues of aging. These fifty juried workshops reflected the splendid work the expressive arts community is providing the public at large.

4. The Power of the Arts

The power of the arts were abundantly evident in the evening sessions, with musicians and a teenage group of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals who use the arts for healing, bonding and addressing social issues. This group of young artists won our hearts.

They danced with one of the Hong Kong officials who welcomed us to Hong Kong, celebrating their city and the fruits of their process with the expressive arts. A tender moment came with the announcement of our Shining Star award, given to a pioneer in the field who has contributed to the development of expressive arts and IEATA. There were many of the elders there who were previous “Shining Stars” - Paolo Knill, Kate Donohue, Steve and Ellen Levine, and Anin Uitgaard. Natalie Rogers, Jack Weller and Anna Halprin were not able to attend but were honored in our hearts and within the community that evening. The award this year was given to Maria Gonzalez-Blue. Trained by Natalie Rogers, Maria and Anin Uitgaard asked the group to sing happy birthday to Natalie, as it was videoed to send to her in California for her birthday morning. This was incredibly touching as we later learned Natalie Rogers died the following week. So this birthday turned out to be her last, and she left knowing we all honored her at the conference. Natalie was also our first Shining Star, and the first of this august group to pass on. IEATA is hoping to set up a scholarship in her name.

5. Arts in the Community

The second evening was co-hosted by IEATA and Arts in Hospital. The shared hosting of the conference bridged another theme, arts in action, as participants were able to visit this hospital program and observe the real application of the expressive arts in use in one place in Hong Kong. The conference also offered a forum for regional groups from around the world, which encouraged members to join globally and meet locally. The regional groups will be offering symposiums in the years in between the IEATA conferences, have local meeting for sharing and will continue to develop a community in their region of the world and work to have the expressive arts be recognized all over the world. The IEATA Membership committee was very active, having recruited more than 125 new members mainly from Asia due to this conference in Hong Kong. The Asian participants are committed in further shaping the development of expressive arts in education, community projects and clinical practice. Another wonderful aspect of this conference is how the elders of IEATA played and danced with the future leaders of IEATA. It was a wonderful sight at the closing of the conference to witness the history and the future of IEATA come alive in the flesh with our final tribal dance.

6. Pre Conference

Besides the conference itself, there were a number of pre-conference workshops in which participants could spend more time learning from the pioneers from both the East and West. Among the trainers were the Levines, Knill and Fuchs, Halprin, the East-West contingent of Person-Centered Expressive Arts, agency visits and Dance in the Walled Village. The Centre on Behavioral Health of the University of Hong Kong provided the venue for these pre-conference events and were exceptional hosts. Participants are always hungry for depth and got more than they hoped for with wonderful results.

7. Challenges and Next Steps

There were challenges that arose from the conference theme and dialog. One of the primary concerns was effects of colonization in the East and the impacts of internationalization. We are mindful of not repeating this disproven model as we find new ways to bridge the wisdom of both East and West. In a new vision instead of solely following the approaches of the West, each country can develop its capacity to sculpt their own version of expressive arts. As we become a much more international community, one question that emerges is how do we embrace a diversity of emerging models that preserve one's cultural identity while emphasizing the collective benefits of a global community? This will be a continuing dialogue for IEATA and its future international members.

The final challenge for our professional community is how to keep the energy and enthusiasm created from this first Asian conference alive and active in both the East and West. Hopefully the visioning session at the Chinese University of Hong Kong at the end of the conference developed by the executive co-chairs Lisa Herman, Mitchell Kossak, and Yousef Alajarma will help the many regional groups find ways to stay active, build our global community, and help address the international issues through peaceful, non-violent, creative and innovative approaches to expressive arts therapy. Hopefully with the Tao coming home to China, and honoring the ancient wisdom of the East, the "way" of expressive arts can evolve in a meaningful way in our struggling planet.

Our next step is to let the wind bring our conference back to the West in Winnipeg in 2017. Please visit our website for more details www.ieata.org.

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