

Subject	Can Artists Really Save the World?		
Date	November 7, 2019	Location	Online
Host	Mass Culture, Ontario Trillium Foundation and North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative (NACDI)		
Participants	Lynda Jessup, Academic Vanessa Kwan, Artist & Curator Owais Lightwala, Arts Manager		
Notetaker	Erin Storus		
Facilitator	Kelly Langgard, Arts Administrator		
Invitation	<p>“First off I want to thank Mass Culture and NACDI for hosting this conversation, in partnership with Ontario Trillium Foundation. And special thanks also to Bridget McIntosh for organizing all of this.</p> <p>We’re all participating as individuals in this discussion, so our views and experiences, and what we’ll be talking about, are our own.”</p>		
What themes and ideas emerged from the meeting?	<p>The conversation focused on how arts and culture can influence Canadian-international cultural diplomacy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural diplomacy can create spaces for resistance, self-reflection, dialogue and bridge-building. • We usually think of diplomacy as belonging to nation-state systems (a formal practice of diplomats). Cultural diplomacy is when diplomatic actors use or mobilize culture to advance state interests. In Canada, diversity is presented as a core Canadian value, but the governmental notion of culture focuses on the dominant ‘national’. • With the advent of digital technology, the idea of a nation is changing. Before, cultures essentially existed within a certain geographic boundary, and now we live in communities that aren’t confined by geography, they’re defined by values or philosophies. There’s now a broad, global, civic society. • The idea of being Canadian is very enmeshed with the idea of being international. For example, more than half the population of Toronto wasn’t born in Canada, so we’ve tried to create a culture where the pluralism of all those cultures is retained and celebrated. • Cultural diplomacy as practiced by states is short term; it’s about accomplishing objectives within a pretty small timeframe. Arts-based cultural diplomacy is long-term and relational. 		
What social change needs did you come across in your research?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conventional diplomacy--formal diplomacy as practiced by diplomats--in this current global environment of cultural conflict, isn’t really as successful as it should be. Perhaps it’s time we start opening discussions as to what other potentials are there for us to facilitate better global cultural relations. • We spend time acknowledging that we’re on Indigenous land, but how does that affect how we invite people here? How does Indigenization shift our goals for diplomacy? 		

<p>Ideas and perspectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Owais: The focus for Why Not Theatre has always been on “what isn’t being done”? The focus is on engaging communities in Toronto who don’t have English or French as their first language. The goal is to make theatre in Toronto more representative of who lives here. A core value for the company is the exploration of difference to broaden perspective and diversity. ● Vanessa: We’re currently working on artist exchanges with Australia--called the Blue Cabin--and we recently welcomed an Indigenous Australian artist to Vancouver. We have to spend time thinking about what it means to bring people to a territory that isn’t ours. ● Simply being able to have conversations about international cultural diplomacy privileges people who have access to resources. Often the people who are granted resources are those who already have ample resources. Cultural diplomacy can’t come from bureaucracy, it has to come from the people who are actually making it happen. ● Cultural diplomacy isn’t necessarily international, it’s also local, and local work can have a global effect.
<p>What research would be useful?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Immigrants to Canada are starting to realize that this is unceded territory and that their presence here is another form of displacement. There’s an ongoing conversation about what it means to be an immigrant in solidarity with Indigenous communities and to map out common goals and interests about what a settler state might look like.
<p>Which voices are missing around the table?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Indigenous communities ● Recent immigrants to Canada
<p>Resources and sites mentioned during the discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● grunt gallery ● Why Not Theatre ● The Blue Cabin (artist residency with grunt gallery) ● Canadian Exports Program
<p>What next steps were mentioned?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Governmental policies would benefit from understanding the different scales and the different strategies and tactics involved in cultural diplomacy (i.e. scale of institution)--different institutions have varying capacities for building relationships--so how do we recognize those people and institutions in our communities who are excellent relationship builders? You need to invest in the people who are good at fostering relationships, not just large institutions. ● The first thing that has to be done is there has to be some definition of “culture”. Culture shouldn’t necessarily be a ‘pillar’, but rather a thread that runs through everything. It isn’t just one thing apart from all these other things--every one of the government’s policies is expressive of its cultural values.