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## INTRODUCTION

**“In light of the extensive changes currently underway in the former Soviet Union and in Central and Eastern Europe, I feel the special importance at this time of increasing efforts to promote greater interaction and respect between individuals and institutions in the United States and that part of the world. I am hopeful that the Trust can help insure that at least some of the barriers which previously restricted international understanding can be replaced by new lines of communication.”**

— TMU’s Anonymous Donor, 1992

This publication celebrates the Trust for Mutual Understanding’s 30-year investment in people, places, and issues. We hope that it offers a clear understanding of how relationships made in our region of focus have influenced the evolution of the important professionals whose own projects and careers are highlighted herein. These practitioners in science and the arts serve as striking examples of how TMU grantees connect across borders and cultures to grapple with critical issues and develop works of art and research that could not otherwise come to fruition.

The year 2015 marks 30 years since the Trust for Mutual Understanding (TMU) made its first grants. TMU was established by an anonymous American philanthropist in partnership with three original trustees: Richard S. Lanier, Elizabeth J. McCormack, and Donal C. O’Brien. The donor’s aim was to create a philanthropic entity that would support direct person-to-person contact between American and Soviet professionals working in the fields of art and environmental science. Though geographic boundaries have shifted and countries have been added to the foundation’s geographic scope, TMU’s focus remains the same: to encourage the understanding and appreciation of languages, cultures, and value systems, both shared and different. It remains the donor’s deeply held belief that “mutual understanding” is the first, essential step toward achieving peaceful and lasting relationships among nations. In keeping with her original vision, TMU continues to support cultural and environmental exchanges between professionals in the United States and their counterparts in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe; the Baltic States; Central Asia; Mongolia; and Russia.

TMU was incorporated in 1984 with an endowment of \$11 million; its first grants were made in 1985. In 1991, TMU’s donor provided an additional \$25 million in endowment funds. At the end of 2014, TMU’s investment portfolio was \$40 million and its annual grant budget \$2 million. Over the course of TMU’s 30-year history, the foundation has appropriated \$71,308,169 for 3,080 exchange projects involving more than 2,500 institutions and many thousands of individuals.

To celebrate our first three decades, we set out to create a publication that would commemorate the activities and accomplishments of our grantees *in their own voices*. We took inspiration in format and structure from BOMB magazine. BOMB, which publishes conversations between artists of all disciplines, was founded in 1981 when a group of New York City-based artists and writers noticed a disparity between the way artists themselves talk about their work and the way critics describe it.

As a foundation now reflecting on our 30 years of history, we embraced the idea of having TMU grantees from throughout the decades interview one another, thus keeping our focus on the experience and importance of international exchange in the arc of each individual’s career. We deliberately paired artists and environmentalists who we knew share interest in and admiration for each other’s work; many have previously collaborated and some still do. The results are six in-depth, revealing, and thoughtful conversations, with an introductory conversation between TMU trustees Richard S. Lanier and Elizabeth J. McCormack providing context and insight about TMU’s early days.

By keeping this publication focused on our grantees, their work, and their own, very specific artistic and scientific perspectives, we hope that this anthology brings to life TMU’s incredible 30-year journey, which has indeed helped to replace “some of the barriers which previously restricted international understanding” with “new lines of communication.”

—Barbara Lanciers, Director, September 2015

**1985—**  
**MARCH 11, MIKHAIL GORBACHEV IS ELECTED GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THE PERIOD OF GLASNOST AND PERESTROIKA BEGINS.**

**JUNE 18 1995**  
**TMU AWARDS ITS FIRST GRANT TO THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS.**

October, *M/V Arctic*, a Canadian ice-breaking cargo ship, transports the first Arctic oil to market from Cameron Island in the Canadian Arctic.

**1986—**  
April 26, Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant disaster occurs in Ukraine (then officially the Ukrainian SSR).

**1987—**  
January, Gorbachev introduces the policy of *demokratizatsiya* in the Soviet Union, calling for the infusion of democratic elements into the Soviet Union's single-party government.

**SEPTEMBER 29 1987**  
**TMU'S GRANTMAKING REACHES \$1,000,000.**

**1988—**  
November 8, George H.W. Bush is elected as the 41st President of the United States.

**1989—**  
February, Soviet war in Afghanistan ends.

**MARCH 24, THE EXXON VALDEZ OIL SPILL CAUSES 38 MILLION GALLONS OF CRUDE OIL TO BE RELEASED INTO THE PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND IN ALASKA.**

August 24, Tadeusz Mazowiecki becomes the Prime Minister of

Poland forming the first non-Communist government in the Communist bloc.

**NOVEMBER 9, BERLIN WALL FALLS.**

December 29, Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia ends, marking the end of Communist rule and beginning the conversion to a parliamentary republic.

**1990—**  
March 11, Lithuania becomes the first Baltic state to declare independence.

March 15, Inauguration of Mikhail Gorbachev as the first President of the Soviet Union.

May 4, Latvia announces its independence from the Soviet Union.

March 8, TMU awards its 100th grant to Global Education Associates.

July 29, Mongolia's first free, multi-party elections for a bicameral parliament are held, following a peaceful Democratic Revolution.

August 23, Armenia declares independence, becoming the first non-Baltic republic to secede from the Soviet Union.

**OCTOBER 3, OFFICIAL REUNIFICATION OF GERMANY.**  
November 19, NATO and Warsaw Pact sign the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

**1991—**  
April 29, Republic of Albania is formed.

June 14, The Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy is signed by all Arctic states in an effort to monitor, assess, conserve, protect, and properly respond to emergencies in the Arctic zone. The Strategy leads to the formation of the Arctic Council.

June 25, Croatia and Slovenia declare independence from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

June 27, Beginning of the Yugoslav Wars in Slovenia.

**JULY 1, THE WARSAW PACT OFFICIALLY DISSOLVES AFTER 36 YEARS OF MILITARY ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS EASTERN EUROPEAN SATELLITES.**

July 10, Boris Yeltsin becomes President of the Russian Federation.

August 19, Beginning of the Soviet Union coup d'état attempt.

August 20, Estonia declares formal independence during the Soviet coup d'état attempt in Moscow.

August 21, End of the Soviet Union coup d'état attempt.

August 21, The Republic of Latvia declares full independence from the Soviet Union.

August 24, The Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine is adopted by the Ukrainian parliament, establishing Ukraine as an independent state.

August 25, The Republic of Belarus is established, marking the end of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic.

**SEPTEMBER 6, THE SOVIET UNION RECOGNIZES THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE BALTIC STATES.**

September 8, Macedonia declares independence from Yugoslavia.

October 18, The Supreme Council of Azerbaijan declares its independence from the Soviet Union.

November 6, End of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet KGB.

December 8, Presidents of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus sign the Belavezha Accords declaring the Soviet Union dissolved and establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States.

**DECEMBER 26, THE SUPREME SOVIET VOTES ITSELF AND THE SOVIET UNION OUT OF EXISTENCE. FOLLOWING THIS DISSOLUTION, RUSSIA IS INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED AS ITS SUCCESSOR ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE.**

**1992—**  
March 3–5, The parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina declares independence from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.  
March 19, TMU's grantmaking reaches \$5,000,000.

April 6, The Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina is granted membership in the United Nations on the same day the Bosnian War begins.

November 3, Bill Clinton is elected as the 42nd President of the United States.

**1993—**  
January 1, Czechoslovakia formally separates into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

**NOVEMBER 1, THE MAASTRICHT TREATY IS BROUGHT INTO FORCE DURING THE DELORS COMMISSION. THE TREATY FORMALLY ESTABLISHES THE EUROPEAN UNION AND LEADS TO THE CREATION OF THE SINGLE CURRENCY, THE EURO.**

**1994—**  
November 29, TMU's grantmaking reaches \$10,000,000.

**DECEMBER 14, THE PRESIDENTS OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA, CROATIA, AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA SIGN THE FINAL VERSION OF THE DAYTON PEACE AGREEMENT IN PARIS, ENDING THE BOSNIAN WAR.**

**NOVEMBER 28 1995**  
**TMU AWARDS ITS 500TH GRANT TO THE JANE VORHEES ZIMMERLI ART MUSEUM.**

**1996—**  
September 19, The Arctic Council is established by Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States.

November 5, Bill Clinton is reelected as the President of the United States.

**1998—**  
February 28, The Kosovo War begins between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Kosovo Liberation Army.  
September 18, The United States becomes the second chair of the Arctic Council for a two-year term.

**1999—**  
March 30, TMU's grantmaking reaches \$20,000,000.  
**JUNE 3, SLOBODAN MILOŠEVIĆ, PRESIDENT OF THE FR YUGOSLAVIA, ACCEPTS THE TERMS OF AN INTERNATIONAL PEACE**

**PLAN BRINGING AN END TO THE KOSOVO WAR.**

November 16, TMU awards its 1000th grant to Yara Arts Group.

**2000—**  
November 7, George W. Bush is elected as the 43rd President of the United States.

**2002—**  
January 1, Physical euro coins and banknotes enter into circulation. The euro will eventually be used in 19 of the 28 member states of the European Union, including Slovenia (2007), Slovakia (2009), Estonia (2011), Latvia (2014), and Lithuania (2015).

**2003—**  
February 4, The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia becomes the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro.

**2004—**  
May 1, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia join the European Union.

November 2, George W. Bush is reelected as President of the United States.

November 24, Russia takes over the chairmanship of the Arctic Council for a two-year term, becoming the fifth chair of the Council.

**2006—**  
April 26, TMU awards its 2000th grant to CEC ArtsLink.  
May 26, Montenegro declares its independence from Serbia.

**2007—**  
January 1, Bulgaria and Romania join the European Union.

January 29, Mongolia joins the World Trade Organization.

**FEBRUARY 1 2007**  
**TMU'S GRANTMAKING REACHES \$50,000,000.**

**2008—**  
February 17, The Assembly of Kosovo declares independence from Serbia, establishing the Republic of Kosovo.

November 4, Barack Obama is elected as the 44th President of the United States.

**2011—**  
May 12, The Arctic Council signs the Arctic Search and Rescue Agreement, an international treaty that coordinates search and rescue coverage and response in the Arctic between the responsible parties.

**2012—**  
November 6, Barack Obama is reelected as President of the United States.

**2013—**  
July 1, Croatia joins the European Union.

**NOVEMBER 22 2013**  
**TMU AWARDS ITS 3000TH GRANT TO Z SPACE.**

**2014—**  
February 22, Ukrainian parliament votes to remove Viktor Yanukovich from his post as President of Ukraine.

March 16, The Crimean parliament holds a referendum on the declaration of independence from Ukraine.

April 11, The Prirazlomnoye, a Russian offshore drilling platform, ships the world's first market-size shipment of Arctic offshore oil.

May 13–18, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia are victims of severe flooding caused by a low-pressure cyclone that results in the heaviest rain in 120 years of recorded measurements.

**2015—**  
April 12–16, A series of wildfires spreads across Southern Siberia, Russia. Widespread damage to homes, livestock, land, and people is reported across the regions of Khakassia and Zabaykalsky Krai and Inner Mongolia.

April 24, The United States takes over chairmanship of the Arctic Council, beginning its second two-year term since the Council's creation in 1996.

INTERVIEW

Elizabeth J. McCormack  
&  
Richard S. Lanier  
with  
Barbara Lanciers

Elizabeth J. McCormack and Richard S. Lanier are two of the three founding trustees of the Trust for Mutual Understanding. Here, they speak with Director Barbara Lanciers about the original mission of TMU, the foundation's approach to global grant-making, and its continued relevance despite a changing social and political landscape.

**BL**

Elizabeth and Richard, I want to talk to both of you about the early days of the Trust for Mutual Understanding. In the beginning, TMU had three trustees, you as well as Donal C. O'Brien, who served as the Rockefeller family's attorney for five decades and passed away in September 2013. The three of you worked closely with TMU's donor on the creation of the foundation. She was very interested, from the internal literature that I have read, in antinuclear proliferation; she was concerned about lack of communication between the United States and the Soviet Union. I'd like to start by painting a picture of how the three of you came into focus as advisers. When did you start working with the donor, and what were your goals in the beginning?

**RSL**

Elizabeth, you are the one who really got me involved with TMU. And I know that the idea for the foundation grew out of your relationship and conversations with her over many years. How was it that this idea percolated with her, and then, finally, with you?

**EJM**

Well, she was very afraid of the possibility of nuclear war. Supporting initiatives to encourage peace was always a top priority in her personal philanthropy. I had already been advising her and other members of her family for some time, so there was established trust. I used to speak to her every Sunday at noon wherever I was. During one of those conversations, she said to me, "Instead of simply

thinking about stopping a holocaust, what about bringing people together and making the arts what unites them?" And, so, in our conversations, we continued to talk in depth about how important the arts are during times of political strife and about how supporting the arts in Soviet Union could be an excellent focus for her philanthropy moving forward.

**BL**

Was she focused solely on the Soviet Union and the arts?

**RSL**

Yes, her focus, and therefore that of TMU, was originally on the Soviet Union itself, but not on Central or Eastern Europe at that point. As far as possible programmatic categories were concerned, the arts were primary, but the environment, education, and language training were also considered as potential fields of activity. But when we actually set up TMU to start making grants, we felt that given the limited resources, trying to do a little bit in every one of those areas would not make sense. So we focused on the arts and the environment. One reason we focused more on the arts than the environment was both because of the donor's deep interest in the arts and because of my own background in the arts.

The programmatic structure of TMU came out of my work at the JDR 3rd Fund and reflected the organization that Porter McCray had created at the Fund, a foundation that after the death of John D. Rockefeller 3rd became known as the Asian Cultural Council (ACC).

This is where the idea of helping to bring people together as a main point of focus was solidified for me. In the early days, our Soviet counterparts really wanted reciprocity. It was a nice arrangement in the beginning because the Soviets would pick up the in-country costs of exchanges. This meant that our grants were almost like matching grants because all you had to do was get people there and then they were hosted locally—and very nicely at

that. The disadvantage of that, of course, was that they were officially guests of the Soviet Union and whatever they did and saw was what the government wanted them to do and see. But that was OK. It was more than citizen diplomacy and it was a little bit more than cultural tourism, but it was nearly as interactive and as substantive as the exchanges ultimately became. When things started to really open up with the dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, we had already established a number of solid professional connections and ties, which, in turn, led to more effective and significant exchanges.

**BL**  
TMU's continued presence led to the creation of trust itself, which is important to note as far as the early success of the foundation and what continues to drive the work of the grantees we support.

In some of the early documents I read, one of the ideas stated was for TMU to think about establishing its own programming while striking a balance with funding programs from institutions that were already in place. I find this interesting because many of our grantees are now asking us, "Why isn't TMU doing its own programming?"

**RSL**  
And what do you say in response?

**BL**  
We say that TMU is focused on supporting the programming of those grantee institutions that have specific training, are on the ground, and are doing good work. Our job is to find that good work, not to make it.

But I am interested to know what happened to that idea? Did it disappear because creating original programming proved too challenging? Or was there already a plethora of programs that needed support at that time?

**EJM**  
I believe that when you make your own programs and it becomes known, people apply to do *those* programs because *that's*

where the money is. And it may not be the best that they can do. They will adapt—take their initiative, take their imagination, and make it fit.

**RSL**  
Yes, that's right, they will.

**BL**  
So it's a dictation of sorts.

**EJM**  
And that's why we did programming the way we did, which is to find it and fund it. The results are so much better that way.

**RSL**  
Absolutely. I think that's very true. Another simple reason is because in the beginning, there were two employees, Paulette Walther and me. With a staff that small, there was no way that even if we wanted to, which we didn't, we could have micromanaged grants. Another reason is that we insisted on reciprocity and collaboration, and we simply weren't equipped to be directly involved with programming Americans in the Soviet Union. We just didn't have the capacity. So we looked to organizations like International Theatre Institute, the American Association of Museums, and the National Audubon Society, which had developed their own professional connections, and, as Elizabeth said, did things that were, in this case, of mutual interest. If the Audubon Society was doing a trans-Bering Strait bird migration project, for example, they were collaborating with Russians or Soviets on the ground who also had a vested interest in the project. There was no way, from here, that we could step in and say, "Well this is what you ought to be doing."

**BL**  
This is a timeline question. Richard, you officially became Director in 1991, is that correct?

**RSL**  
Yes, that's right. Elizabeth, Don, and I were trustees from 1985 on, and I was also managing TMU's program.

**BL**  
Were you still at JDR 3rd Fund?

**RSL**  
It was ACC by then, and we were down at 280 Madison Avenue. I was still the director of the ACC, but I was also running TMU with Paulette.

**BL**  
That's a lot of work!

**RSL**  
It was! But the early grants were fairly simple because they were larger, \$100,000-sized grants.

**BL**  
From the outside looking in, the dynamic as far as the shaping of TMU was Don bringing to the table his legal expertise and interest in the environmental movement, Elizabeth bringing her long-time experience advising the Rockefeller family on philanthropic matters, and you bringing your understanding of grantmaking through the JDR 3rd Fund and the Asian Cultural Council.

**RSL**  
Yes, that's right. And I would stress the connection with the Rockefellers here because TMU's grantmaking really reflects that family's philanthropic legacy.

**BL**  
How did the two of you begin working together? Was it through the ACC?

**RSL**  
Elizabeth and I met briefly several times when John D. Rockefeller 3rd was still alive, but we really became close friends and colleagues after he died in 1978. That's when we began seriously working together. If it weren't for Elizabeth, I mean people often say this about people, but, truly, if it weren't for her, neither ACC nor TMU would exist today—in fact, they would never have been created in the first place.

**BL**  
Many of the early documents regarding the creation of TMU are dated 1983 and 1984.

**RSL**  
The year 1984 is when TMU was actually incorporated, and then we made our first grant in 1985. Because I had been working for the Rockefeller family for many years, I think TMU's donor felt comfortable having me involved. I hope it wasn't too hard of a sell for Elizabeth to make as far as suggesting I become one of the three original trustees.

**EJM**  
It certainly wasn't.

**BL**  
So, the connection between the two of you was made through advocating for and building the Asian Cultural Council. When the opportunity to create a new foundation presented itself with TMU's donor, you were natural allies.

**RSL**  
Yes, absolutely.

**EJM**  
We were.

**BL**  
And Don had been an attorney for the Rockefeller family for a significant portion of his career.

**EJM**  
Yes. I think the three of us together had the right skills to really make a strong base for the foundation.

**RSL**  
Also, I think Elizabeth and I have been a really interesting team: Whenever we would travel together in the region, I represented the executive face of TMU, and Elizabeth represented the philanthropic tradition of the Rockefeller family. Plus, she brought to TMU not just her relationships with members of the family but also her storied career in education. So, we were a kind of unique combination. When we first began traveling in Russia, many of the conversations we had there were informal. Sometimes our hosts would organize small panels, and we would talk about philanthropy and how it worked, and that's where Elizabeth played a major role.

**BL**

It seems that the early days between roughly 1985 and 1987 constituted a research period when you were periodically making grants but you were also conducting strategic meetings with scholars familiar with the region as well as heads of major institutes. George Kennan comes up several times in some of the early documentation.

**RSL**

We had a seminal conversation with George Kennan in 1985, very early in the life of TMU. He had been a trustee of the JDR 3rd Fund and his son Chris had worked briefly for David Rockefeller, Sr. so there were family connections there as well. I'll never forget meeting with him to discuss what the Trust might do—he was really a grand old man, the person responsible, more than anybody, for America's Cold War strategy. We talked in general for some time, and then he said, "You're going to decide what you're going to do in terms of program—I can't advise you on that. The only thing I can tell you is: *Stay in it for the long haul*. Don't make this a five- or ten-year project. Stay in it."

**BL**

Well, you both clearly took that to heart. Something that makes TMU unique is the foundation's emphasis on long-term engagement and long-term investment. In fact, when Alina, Josh, and I speak to other foundations and go to foundation meetings, two things come up that prove controversial or even make TMU seem radical...

**RSL**

Radical?

**BL**

Yes, radical! That's a word we hear from time to time.

**RSL**

Well, if you consider the Latin origin of that word, of course, "radical" means "root." So maybe it means that we're not politically radical, we're basic!

**BL**

Exactly. Here are the two aspects of TMU's grantmaking that I think cause that word to be used: We do not pay particular mind to rubrics and measurements, and we have a long-term, strategic investment in a particular region of the world. We don't talk about impact in terms of numbers and we don't change our geographic focus every 10 years. I want to ask you both specifically about these two points. Not necessarily only related to TMU; I'm interested in your personal philanthropic philosophies on these issues because I know you both feel strongly about them.

**EJM**

Atlantic Philanthropies is now going out of business, which was always the plan. They're having Columbia University do a history, and I have been interviewed three times, the last time only a few weeks ago. During that last session, a very skilled interviewer said to me, "Now I know what you think about impact, but say it again." And I said, I just don't believe in it. I think, first of all, if I really wanted to know about TMU's impact—I don't want to, but if I did—I would get someone to check on all the things we did 50 to 100 years from now! There is no way to know where the big impact is. As for TMU, the only impact that matters is what we think happened to individuals because of our grantmaking. And TMU's impact over time, in that regard, has been great. But what we are not saying is that relations between the former Soviet Union and the United States are now perfect, and so our little foundation has had a wonderful impact.

**BL**

Geopolitically speaking.

**EJM**

Yes, that's ridiculous.

**RSL**

See, even if we had made the mistake of bragging about that, that we somehow ended the Cold War, then we would have to take the blame for where we are today!

**EJM**

Exactly. But it doesn't mean we didn't influence the lives of many individuals.

**RSL**

Absolutely.

**BL**

How about TMU's long-term focus on this specific geographic region?

**RSL**

I think that—you know, I say this half-jokingly, but it's also partly true—once TMU developed its procedures and its way of operating, not only did there not seem to be any reason to change it, but to change it would have required the kind of imaginative thinking that I'm just not capable of. We would have had to say to ourselves, "OK, we're going to pull out of here and go somewhere else and do something else." The fact that we didn't do that hasn't been a matter of, "If it's not broke don't fix it." It's not that. It's that what we do is *organic*, and it doesn't have a beginning, middle, and then an end. It's an ongoing process.

The other thing is—and in this, we always try but it's impossible to get at the truth of it—when you ask people we are involved with, and not particularly the people we make grants to, they always say, "Oh it's great. What you're doing is the best. You have to keep doing it. You're the only one." And you know such comments may be a little self-serving on their part. It's in their own interest. But you have to hope that at least some of what they say is true.

**BL**

Geopolitics is constantly shifting, and a small foundation such as ours is not going to necessarily have an impact on that shift. But, when you look at what's happening on the ground, particularly for the artists and the environmentalists that we focus on, having some kind of constant, even just for the sake of morale, is incredibly, incredibly important.

**RSL**

Susan Eisenhower, Dwight Eisenhower's granddaughter, was very involved in the early

days with the transition from the Soviet Union to Russia. She was married to Roald Sagdeev, a great Russian astrophysicist who advised all of the party chairmen and then advised Gorbachev. Susan organized a conference very early on that I attended. One of the main speakers was a Deputy Minister of Culture, a younger man who straddled the old regime and the new regime. One of the Americans at the conference asked him, "What can we do to help you?" And he said, "Whatever you do, just don't forget us and keep the exchanges going. Whatever happens, just keep supporting exchanges." And I think that's a crucially important point. Because we don't have a political agenda and we just follow that simple guideline, through thick and thin. And I hope that by doing so TMU is bound to stay relevant somehow.

As Elizabeth said earlier, to the extent that TMU has been or can be successful long-term, it's because of the impact it has on individuals. Have you ever read the credo of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. that's in front of the skating rink at Rockefeller Center?

**BL**

I haven't.

**RSL**

It reflects a notion that I think is consistent with TMU's approach to grantmaking. It reads, "I believe in the supreme power of the individual." I find that to be a pretty powerful point of view, beautifully stated. Look at it sometime.

**EJM**

That's nice.

**RSL**

We have to take into account the political issues that people we support live with every day, but we definitely don't have a political agenda. What we do have is an agenda to keep supporting creative people doing what they want to do regardless of what the political atmosphere is, whether it's pro or con.

**BL**

How do you feel about the term "cultural



diplomacy”? Do you feel that is what we are promoting?

**RSL**

Not at all. I don't like that term at all because diplomacy, by definition, means negotiating, relating to somebody else with your own agenda in mind in order to reach the result that you want. We are not diplomats. We are not cultural diplomats. We are supporters of creative people getting together, period. No agenda. Would you agree with that, Elizabeth?

**EJM**

I absolutely do.

**BL**

Richard, there was a memo that you wrote early on in which you stated that because of TMU's small size, strategically, we could plug our funding into the gaps left by larger foundations or larger funding pools supporting the region. The three of us have gone together to meet with various heads of other foundations to try and encourage involvement or re-involvement in the region, and we have noted an overall lack of interest.

**RSL**

There are no gaps; there are just big holes!

**BL**

When you started the Trust for Mutual Understanding, did you ever anticipate that we would be standing alone in this way?

**RSL**

I didn't really think about it. If I had, I would have thought, “Yes, we probably will be.”

**BL**

Really?

**RSL**

Yes, because, again, you know the pattern of most big foundations. The very few that from time to time do support arts and culture or that focus on a particular part of the world very, very rarely stick with that kind of commitment, and, as a result, you can't depend on them for any extended period of time. So, yes, I would have anticipated the situation we are in because we have taken George Kennan

at his word, and we have remained convinced that we should be in this for...

**EJM**

Ever.

**RSL**

Forever!

**BL**

For the long haul.

**RSL**

As long as we can.

**BL**

In thinking about the history you both have with this foundation and the level of involvement you still have, how does it feel to see history repeat itself? That we are, geopolitically speaking, in a very similar position to where you were when you were helping the donor develop the programmatic mission for TMU?

**RSL**

Is it ever any different?

**EJM**

No.

**RSL**

World War I, the war to end all wars. Then comes World War II. Then Korea. Then Vietnam. Then the Middle East...

**EJM**

But the interesting thing is, no matter what changes, what we do remains relevant.

**RSL**

As you say, Barbara, TMU is a constant.

Although TMU exists because one donor, a person of wealth, wanted to do something related to American-Soviet relations, the fact is you could choose any two parts of the world and create a worthwhile exchange program.

You could take Upstate New York and Nevada, and you could develop a program that has relevance for the people involved. The kind of program TMU supports—and whatever success it has had—is not specific to the part of the world we work in. I think that it has its own internal logic. It's good to do for its own sake. I don't think it needs a lot more justification than that.



### RICHARD S. LANIER

Trustee

Trust for Mutual Understanding  
New York, New York, United States

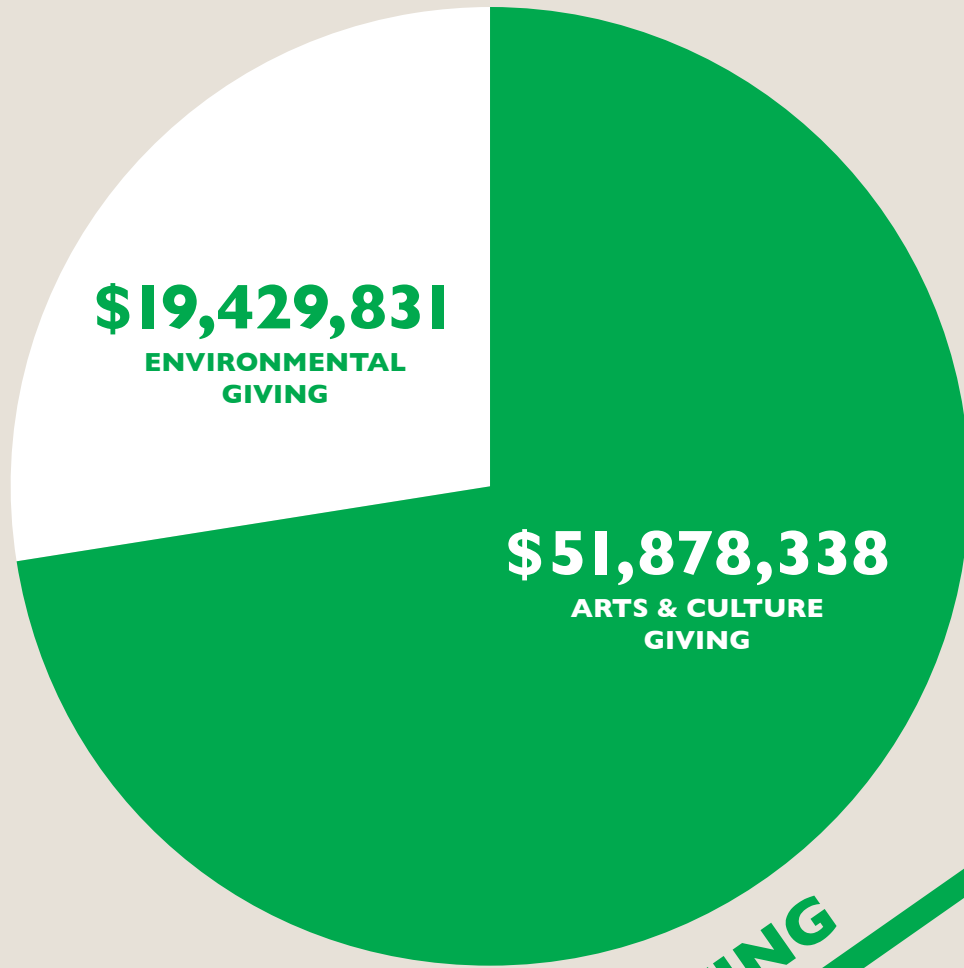
Richard S. Lanier has been President of the Asian Cultural Council since 1980. Before joining the JDR 3rd Fund, the predecessor foundation of the Asian Cultural Council, in 1972, he was an assistant professor of art history at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and was Director of the Museum Training Program at the Johns Hopkins University. He is a Trustee, and from 1985 to 2009 was Director, of the Trust for Mutual Understanding. Lanier is also a member of the Asian Art Visiting Committee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and of the board of directors of the Japan Society, the Rubin Museum of Art, and the Urasenke Tea Society, all in New York, and of the Tibetan Bibliographic Resource Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

### ELIZABETH J. MCCORMACK

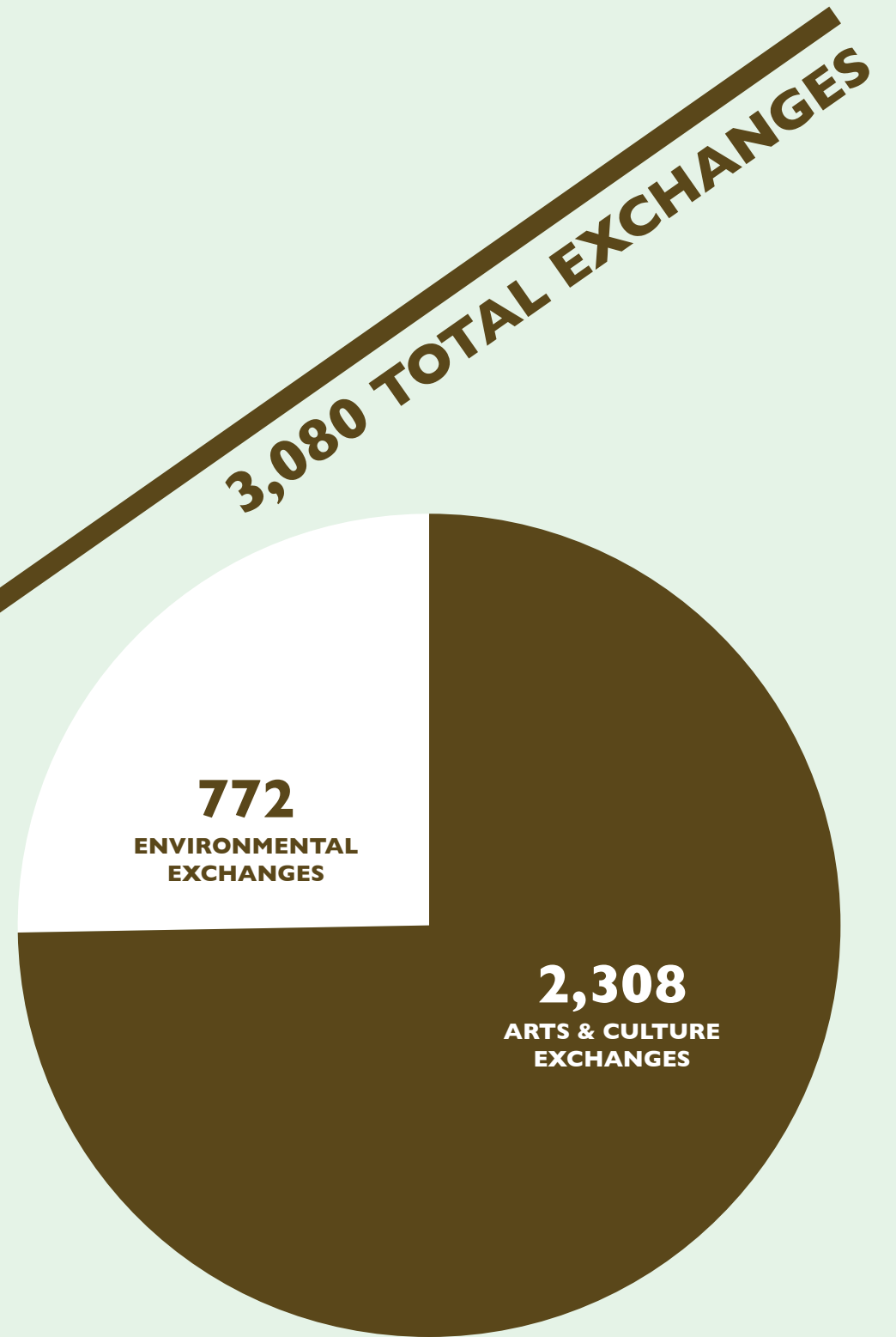
Trustee

Trust for Mutual Understanding  
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Elizabeth J. McCormack currently serves on the board of the Trust for Mutual Understanding, the Asian Cultural Council, Manhattanville College, and Hamilton College. Elizabeth is also the Founder and Chairman of the Partnership for Palliative Care. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Century Association. McCormack was President of Manhattanville College from 1966 to 1974. She directed the Rockefeller Philanthropy offices and continues as a philanthropic adviser to members of the Rockefeller Family. McCormack is a former board member of the Atlantic Philanthropies, The Julliard School, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. McCormack is a graduate of Manhattanville College and earned her Ph.D. in philosophy at Fordham University. She holds honorary degrees from American University of Paris, Brandeis University, Cambridge College, The City University of New York, Hamilton College, Manhattanville College, Marlboro College, and Princeton University.



**\$71,308,169 IN TOTAL GIVING**



**3,080 TOTAL EXCHANGES**



CONVERSATION

Tom Sellar  
&  
Dmitry Krymov

Between them, American theater critic Tom Sellar and Russian director, set-designer, and artist Dmitry Krymov have worked in the theater for more than four decades. Their conversation reveals a portrait of a dynamic and vibrant contemporary theater scene with the potential to transform the ways in which theater is experienced around the globe.

**TS**

In the spirit of the Trust for Mutual Understanding and its interest in fostering dialogue, I thought we could start by talking about the theater today and the place and the importance of theater today.

I am a critic, curator, and editor of Yale's international journal *Theater*, which has done a series of editions on new theater in Eastern Europe. Many of my most profound experiences in the theater have come from international collaborations and exchanges. Theater itself asks you to make a kind of excursion, but when it helps you to grasp another culture, or to transcend it, it acquires a special power. Since 2003 I've been a regular visitor to Eastern Europe, observing the vast changes underway and how artists have responded to them. Seeing theater in Russia and the region around it has been essential for me as an American; I get a glimpse of how theater can be a large force in the public imagination. For most of the 20th century it was such an important space for public expression—a place where you could say things in ways you couldn't anywhere else. And some incredibly sophisticated visual metaphors and sensibilities resulted, with some of the highest achievements in theater craft. For me, seeing your productions for the first time was transformative in this way. The experience confirmed the rumors I've always believed of the theater's potential, rumors that keep me going in this crazy business.

**DK**

I don't know. There are many people who go

to the theater and they expect something. That's my impression, although it's hard to understand anything that is happening in Russia right now and in this particular case as well. But I think that just through genetic memory, when people go to the theater they expect some sort of revelation, some sort of explanation of life. It's just a tradition that is passed on, not even so much verbally; it's just through the air, through the atmosphere. In any case, this is something that I half see and half would like to see.

**TS**

As a critic I see a lot of work by theater artists who have become very fascinated with cameras and with digital tools, photographs, video. I worry that theater is becoming too literal as it integrates these elements, that it's losing its capacity for metaphor. But when I see your work, my faith is renewed in the power of the theater to express metaphor.

**DK**

Yes, I agree. I think that all of these technological, trendy, fashionable means can create an illusion of conversation but not an actual conversation. A real conversation only takes place when one person actually has something to say to another person.

Theater performance exchanges between different cities and countries are incredibly important, incredibly, because they allow you to size yourself up against the broader spectrum of values that exist in the world, and this leads to eye-opening revelations about both yourself and the world. And, generally speaking, if you approach these exchanges as work and not tourism, your plays should become better as a result. Otherwise, it's as if an artist couldn't visit any museums. You need to visit museums not only in the city where you live, even if it's a city like Moscow—you also need to know what's happening in Italy, in the US, in France, in the Netherlands. Otherwise, you become a street soccer player, comparing yourself only to the other players

in your neighborhood. When you have the opportunity to participate in an exchange, you can compare yourself to, and aspire to, higher and more varied pinnacles of achievement.

So those who facilitate such cultural exchanges between countries... I take my hat off to them. Because when you don't have this opportunity, it's like having your oxygen supply restricted. It's not cut off completely, of course, but your lungs still can't work at full capacity. Obviously, even when people stay put in one place, they can still be sincerely committed to their work and dedicate all their time and energy to it. But the migration of art from country to country is completely natural and expected, and it's something that takes art to a whole new level.

**TS**

So much of your own theater communicates through imagery rather than speech. I wonder if it has a greater power for that reason. You've said that maybe you don't like spoken words in the theater and that the stage image is what we must create together. Can you talk about that? Does that mean theater is too tied to text and to conversation? Can images free us to perceive differently?

**DK**

I think, and maybe this is just an illusion on my part, but I think that even the words that are said on stage must still be a part of some sort of system of scenic images. I think words that are part of a play and are pronounced on stage are completely different from daily speech. Something that is simply said on stage is meaningless by itself; it's just an illusion of communication. The imagery of the stage and theatrical imagery can include dialogue and can include text; that's perfectly fine. It's just a part of the action on stage, the whole scenic imagery.

The text that is pronounced on stage is an image in and of itself. It's as different as walking on the edge of a pool versus

plunging into a pool. When you plunge into a pool you are surrounded by water, you're in a completely different environment. Pronouncing a text on stage doesn't necessarily create that. You need to create an image. When you pronounce a text on stage in the right way it creates an image. It can be done well, or not well, but the text on stage is a work in and of itself. It's like a painting in a frame.

**TS**

That helps me a lot to think about your work. I'll ask you some less abstract questions now, about your journey as an artist, your evolution. Your father was a legendary director, Anatoly Efros, and your mother was a very important critic, Natalia Krymova. Is making theater a natural instinct for you for this reason? Or does having parents so anchored in the theater make it more difficult for you to find your own path as an artist?

**DK**

No, of course it wasn't a hindrance in any way. I really hope that in the form of what I do I don't repeat my father's work, but in spirit I would like to be somewhere close to what he did. I think the form is my own. Not because I dislike his form, but because I want to find something that is my own. I actually really, really liked his form at one point. I admired it in fact, but copying or repeating something in theater is just silly. And, in fact, I never thought that I'd end up directing. But I am very glad to have found something with my stage designers and my actors that, in spirit, corresponds to his work, but in form is completely different. I really hope that if he could see the work I do now he would laugh, in a sort of benevolent way, and would say something like, "Look at you now."

**TS**

(Laughs) I'm sure he would. Can you talk about your transition from scenography into directing? It wasn't a direct transformation. You began in the late 1970s through the

1980s as a scenographer, a designer, and then after your father's death you left the theater and focused on painting for much of the 1990s. Can you talk about that time away from the theater? Were you disillusioned with the stage and the limitations of the stage, as a lot of theater artists are at various times in their lives? And then, how did you move from that period into the phase that you are in now, into directing?

**DK**

Well, the answer to how I stopped working in stage design is very straightforward. When my father died, I realized that working with other directors was simply boring. Of course I'd worked with other directors when my father was alive as well, but it was like a sauce for a meat dish. The sauce without the meat dish is just not good for you at all. So I left the theater world two years after he passed away and I moved to art. Especially since I'd always had a sort of ego issue, I guess, about being an artist or an aspiration to be an artist. An artist in my view was someone who talks directly to the gods, not to a director but to the gods.

So for 15 years, all I did was paint. I completely left the theater. And my return to theater was completely random. And for about a year after it happened, I didn't even really tell anyone, not my wife, not even myself, that I'd come back to theater. I actually returned as a director without even necessarily thinking of myself as such so much. And the first play I directed was actually quite widely criticized in Russia and canned by critics. And it was actually very insulting criticism. But, nonetheless, I decided to direct a second play.

In retrospect there was probably a lot of truth to what the critics said, especially since the first play I directed was based on *Hamlet*. And of course it's naïve to think you can direct a play based on *Hamlet* as your first directing experience ever and get it right and

do it well. But at the same time I think the critics were just dismissing me out of principle because I had just stepped up and done this thing, without being a director. So their reaction just made me angry and obstinate and made me want to direct another play.

**TS**

(Laughing) Good for you! *Hamlet* is an interesting choice for a return to the theater. It's a play about the theater. And it's a play about fathers and sons.

**DK**

Yes, you're absolutely right. And the whole father-and-son theme is exactly what I centered my direction about. For the roles of the king and the queen I invited the actors who had been the very first actors who had acted in my father's work. I wanted to feel like a son in that sense too. My father was already deceased at that time.

**TS**

This was around 2002, is that right? At the Stanislavsky Drama Theatre?

**DK**

I remember visiting my mother right around that time, and she was already ill, and I told her the basic premise of what I wanted to do. And I asked her, "Do you think that I should just set off on this venture on the basis of this idea?" And she said, "Yes, yes you can."

**TS**

From that production you then began a series of projects that did not use dramas as the source text, but rather turned to Russian folk tales, untold fairy tales, the *Golden Key* and *Pinocchio*. Can you talk about that choice of material? By moving away from dramas, were you finding a kind of freedom to experiment, to remake a form that was more yours, perhaps?

**DK**

Yes, after that I hit a gold mine like the American gold pioneers in Klondike. I, at that point, had been teaching already for several years at the theater academy,

teaching stage designers. And part of the curriculum was that the stage designers would devise a small play that they would completely create and act in themselves. And their curriculum told them they had to stage *Pinocchio*. I wasn't their teacher in that sense, I wasn't helping them with this play, but when they came to me for advice, we came up with this idea for this play together. The professor who was actually working with them on this performance didn't know they had come to me for advice. It was our little secret. And I asked them not to tell this particular professor that they had come to me and that I'd given them advice and direction. The next day, they shared this plan that we had come up with together with the professor and they presented it as their own idea. Thank God that particular professor liked this idea and she accepted it and went with it! And, when I saw this performance a day later, I was absolutely struck with it because that was the birth of a new language. Because this new theatrical language, which I think still exists today, was literally born in my workshop over the course of two hours from 11 p.m. to 1 a.m. in a really tired state.

And after that, I offered the students the opportunity to put together another performance, this time with me. That was the Russian fairy tales. And we were just so happy with our collaboration that we did three plays together, three in a row. And then they said that they were kind of sick of it.

(Laughing) But I wasn't.

**TS**  
Well, you found a very exciting model that allowed for improvisation while pedagogically giving a lot of responsibility to the students.

**DK**  
Yes. But it happened accidentally.

**TS**  
Yes. And then this laboratory had a home for

a while at Anatoly Vasiliev's theater. What was the effect of working in his theater and what was your relationship as artists? How did that influence the personal evolution you describe?

**DK**  
Well for Vasiliev, it was hugely important that he invited all of my students and myself to establish a creative laboratory at his theater. This was something that was very unusual on his part; he never invited anyone to come work at his theater. Not even his students. It was something that was so unusual that all of theatrical Moscow was just gasping in amazement because he was very respected and also a little bit feared. His theater was like an insular monastery. It was a place that everyone wanted to enter, but not everyone was allowed to do so. Even for audiences, for viewers, who could theoretically buy a ticket and come see one of his plays, he was *allowing* them to be present. We were essentially invited into the inner sanctuary. And in our naïveté we accepted this gift, we said thank you and we began working. Ten years have passed since that happened, and only now do I realize how unusual and exceptional that was on his part and I am very grateful to him.

**TS**  
I think it was around this time that I saw the first production of yours that I had ever seen, *Demon*, based on the Lermontov poetry, the 19th-century poet Mikhail Lermontov. Was that at his theater? I can't remember.

**DK**  
Yes, that was the third play I directed together with that class of mine that I was telling you about. And it was actually the last one that Vasiliev approved at the draft and sketches phase and then organized but didn't actually get to see because he left the theater.

**TS**  
In controversial circumstances.

**DK**  
Yes, it was a very dramatic time.

**TS**  
So, from there you began the Experimental Theater Project at the Russian Academy of Theatre Arts, your new base for laboratory work. Can you talk about how you extended those initial collaborations with your students into the model of theater-making you work with today?

**DK**  
(Sighing)

**TS**  
(Laughing) Are my questions too hard?

**DK**  
It's not a difficult question; it's just a difficult answer, because I didn't actually change anything. It was the people that changed. My first beloved class, with whom I put together those three pieces, had graduated and was gone. And some of these people left theater entirely. I took in some actors and I began putting together plays with actors. The stage designers that remained from that very first group, to some extent they continued to act in the old plays but they were also working on the new plays, strictly as stage designers. This continues through the present day. Right now my company consists of stage designers, partially those who were members of my very first class, and the second part is those who were in my second class and third class, the new generation of stage designers. The third component, the third part, which is probably the most significant now, is the actors. And they also change from time to time, but there is a core of about 10 to 12 people. All in all it's about 15 people, stage designers and actors, and a fairly large proportion of people from the outside who are just invited in to participate in one play or two, so overall it's about 20, 25 people. There is also, of course, the technical staff in the theater who works with us. Of course the composers, assistant directors, and so on.

So it's a fairly large group, but the core really consists of about 15 people.

**TS**  
It sounds as if, for you, the challenge is to find a balance between openness, inquiry, discovery, and on the other hand, control, composition, order. That's my impression; is that true?

**DK**  
Yes, you're right. My main goal is just to make sure that our next play or our next production is interesting. So that it's something new in comparison to what we've done before, and for that I need people. And sometimes there are people already on my team, and sometimes it requires new people. Unfortunately, and as difficult as it is, and as much as I regret it, I have to change those people around sometimes. And right now that's my biggest difficulty and my biggest pain point.

**TS**  
It can be difficult and painful, sometimes, in a company, to continue to grow and to evolve and to discover together when you also have found a way to work, to live together. To change things is hard.

**DK**  
Yes, it is indeed very difficult and it tends to be very painful.

**TS**  
So what are the future projects that you are thinking about with the company now? What themes and questions are you investigating? What texts will come next?

**DK**  
Well, we are actually rehearsing four different productions right now, at the same time. One of them is based on a Hemingway novel, the second is *Anna Karenina*, the third is a sort of collage text that we wrote ourselves internally and it's just about life, our lives, and the fourth is a series of performances for children that I've come up with. It was conceived specifically as a multipart series. But right now we are gearing up for the first one.

**TS**

Wow, no lack of ambition in your choices of text.

**DK**

Yes, there is a lot of ambition.

**TS**

What speaks to you in those texts?

**DK**

The Hemingway one is based on Hemingway's work *Across the River into the Trees*, and it's about love. It's about the love of a 50-year-old man toward a 19-year-old girl, so it's a last love. So it takes place in Venice, post-World War II Venice, and it's a last meeting and they both understand this and are aware of it, so it's very bittersweet. It's about a man who wants to preserve his life, sort of stay on the border between life and death.

*Anna Karenina*, of course, is a novel that is famous the world over but I don't think that anyone understands what really happens in the novel. It was very strange for me to see the film that Tom Stoppard, I think, was involved with. Even though I really enjoyed the theatrical approach to it with the set design and decorations and so on, I somehow didn't really become emotionally involved. I didn't feel any compassion for any of the characters. And I'd really like to be able to relay to audiences just how terrifying, and also wonderful, but how terrifying this feeling and these events can be. And it doesn't matter whether we are talking about Vronsky, or Anna, or her husband, this applies to them all equally. I think anyone who has ever lived through those sorts of events in their life understands this full well. But the novel itself is often viewed as this sort of candy-coated version of reality.

As for the series of plays for children, I really wanted to find a way to establish contact with young children. Usually in Russia, in our society, they are treated as either very little children, like, "Oh, you're

so cute," or some things are addressed to children who are a little bit older, but no one really knows how to talk to children about serious topics. That is what I am endeavoring to do here. I am basing this on classic literature, but also classic literature that is aimed for adults.

**TS**

I have a friend who says, "The only thing that should be different about theater for children is the size of the chairs."

**DK**

Yes, I think that is also important but that's not the only thing. The difference is that with adults you can rely on their intellect and you can use long pauses and expect them to read the complex meaning in something; you're relying on their background of experience, some emotional experience. With children, you need to tell a story that is interesting and you need to tell it in a positive way. In doing something for children, I want in a sense to purify myself and purify my language from this implied complexity of meaning.

**TS**

I wish we were speaking in person today, because these are all completely amazing subjects and I wish we had hours to drink tea and then some wine and talk about them. But I want to just say at the end of our talk, that I will never forget the image of Mother Russia at the end of *Opus 7*, it's one of the most unforgettable images I have ever seen in the theater, the way it was a force of creation and destruction in the same moment—something I have thought about a lot in my own country. This has really changed the way I think about what is possible on the stage. It was an honor to speak with you, and I hope it's not the last time. Maybe we can continue the conversation.

**DK**

I hope to see you in Moscow.



### TOM SELLAR

Editor, *Theater* magazine  
Professor of Dramaturgy and Dramatic Criticism  
Yale University  
New Haven, Connecticut, United States

Tom Sellar, a writer, editor, and curator, is Editor of Yale's international performance journal *Theater* and Professor of Dramaturgy and Dramatic Criticism at Yale School of Drama. He teaches courses on curation, critical practice, and contemporary global performance. He also curates the Yale Eastern European Theater Project, supported by a grant from the Trust for Mutual Understanding, and other programs. Under his editorship since 2003, *Theater* has published issues on a wide range of contemporary topics and global artists. (A complete list can be found online at [theatermagazine.org](http://theatermagazine.org).) Sellar's arts writing and criticism have appeared in national publications including the *New York Times*, the *Guardian* (UK), the *International Herald Tribune*, and *American Theatre*. He currently serves as an Obie Award judge and chief theater critic for the *Village Voice*, where he has covered theater and performance art since 2001. His recent curatorial projects include the 2015 Prelude festival in New York and *Live Remix: Stage Adaptations in the New Media Age* at Philadelphia Fringe Arts. He received his doctorate from Yale University, where he was twice awarded the John W. Gassner Prize for critical writing.



### DMITRY KRYMOV

Director  
Dmitry Krymov Lab  
Moscow, Russia

Dmitry Krymov is a painter, set designer, and theater director. He has designed more than 90 performances in Russia and abroad, many produced by Anatoly Efros. His paintings are included in the collections of the State Tretyakov Gallery (Moscow), the State Russian Museum (St. Petersburg), the St. Petersburg State Museum of Theatre and Music, the Victoria and Albert Museum (London), the Vatican Museum, and in many private collections all over the world. Dmitry Krymov currently teaches at the Russian Academy of Theatre Arts (RATI-GITIS), Moscow. In 2004 he founded the Dmitry Krymov Laboratory and began directing. The Laboratory is currently based in Moscow, at the School of Dramatic Art. Productions of the Dmitry Krymov Lab participate in Russian and international festivals. Krymov was awarded with a Stanislavsky Prize for Innovation, as well as Crystal Turandot awards. Along with his students, Krymov won the Golden Triga at the 2007 Prague Quadrennial, and their productions have several times been awarded the Golden Mask, a major national theater award in Russia. His work *A Midsummer Night's Dream (As You Like It)* received a Herald Angel award at the Edinburgh Festival. At the moment, Dmitry Krymov and members of his Lab are developing a performance based on *Three Sisters* by Anton Chekhov at the Yale School of Drama.



CONVERSATION

Martin Robards  
&  
Eduard Zdor

Environmental advocates Martin Robards and Eduard Zdor hail from different sides of the Bering Strait, but share expertise and interests in protecting the regional ecosystem and traditional ways of life in the north Pacific. In this conversation, they cover everything from the preservation of sea-hunting communities in Chukotka to the enduring value of sitting back and watching television with fellow scientists from time to time.

**MR**

We're here to talk about traditional natural resource management in the Bering Strait region and the current challenges. The goal is really to hear from Eduard about his relationship with the region between Russia and America and to look at how international connections and travel have aided in the work that he is doing. I want to start by getting ourselves in the scene with a question: Where is the Bering Strait region? For me, it's that juncture between the Eastern and Western hemispheres. Historically it was the Bering Land Bridge, a Pleistocene climate refuge. It's the entrance to the Arctic from the Pacific and it's a place filled with wildlife and people. And so, Eduard, I would ask you to describe your own thoughts about the Bering Strait, from a broad-picture perspective, about the villages or the wildlife there. What is your vision of the Bering Strait when you think about it?

**EZ**

Well, the first thing I'd like to say is that I wasn't born there, I was born in South Chukotka, but I moved there with my mother to the Arctic shore when I was six years old. My mother married a sea hunter there, so my entire conscious life has been spent on those shores and has been spent working for the people.

I grew up in a sea-hunter community. My whole life has essentially been spent in that community with that lifestyle. And now,

the work that I do, the problems that I try to solve, my motivation, my decisions are all driven by the memory of how life was when I was growing up. Although now I've moved to the capital of Chukotka, which is in central Chukotka, my mother, my sister, my brother, they still live in that village where I grew up in the Bering Strait, and I visit there often, so I care very much what happens to that region and to those people.

**MR**

And when you say "those people," Eduard, the Siberian Yupik, Chukchi, St. Lawrence Island Yupik, Inupiaq, how would you describe the connections between these people? The fact that they've been living together for millennia, and on both sides of the Bering Strait, we have this political boundary between the two countries, but not really between these different cultures. Could you talk about the connections between the different cultural groups in the area?

**EZ**

You're absolutely right, Martin, that is true, the people that live on both sides of the Strait are often directly related. When they meet they might list who comes from what clan, who comes from what family, and they'll try to speak in their native tongue. Of course they aren't always successful. The unfortunate reality of our days is the loss of the native languages.

People often ask us to say hello to one another on opposite sides of the Strait. For example, when someone from my organization is travelling, they might say, "Can you please say hello to my aunt in Alaska? Tell her I'll visit next time and that I'm worried about her health." So despite being very restricted in their contact for over half a century, it's amazing how people have maintained these relationships.

On the other hand, if we're talking about similarities in culture and lifestyle and traditional knowledge, it is not limited to relatives,

it extends to the people across the region. For example, when Inupiaq and Chukchi meet and they discuss hunting together, or go hunting, they find it very easy to understand one another. They both know the sea very well, they both know the different animals and their habits—they understand the weather and weather criteria and there are a lot of ritual similarities.

#### MR

And then, as we think about getting closer to the present day, I want to touch briefly on the early 1990s when there was a period of dramatic change in Chukotka with the collapse of the Soviet Union. As I understand it, the economy of the region changed profoundly at that time, and there was a huge out-migration of European Russians, and probably of more importance, there was a shift to to the subsistence lifestyle, which I believe saw some sort of resurgence at that time, in that post-Soviet transition. Can you talk a little bit about how subsistence became more important?

#### EZ

Yes, I remember that era very well, I remember many conversations from that time. My mother, she had a medical degree, and I remember her saying, “Can you imagine, son? There is a cold and flu epidemic right now and we don’t even have any antibiotics. We only have medicine that’s used for something completely different.”

Basically everyone at that time was left to fend for themselves. It wasn’t just the poor, it was the educated class, local government workers who would need to work in a village until then had a fairly high status—in essence the government ceased performing its functions of supporting the day-to-day life of the population at that time.

I also remember another example: My father-in-law would lament how there was absolutely nothing to eat at home and nothing in the stores either, even if you had

money you wouldn’t be able to buy anything. He would wake up and think, “What should I do today? Should I go out to the sea and hunt a seal? If I succeed then we will have meat for a few days, but I might fail and come back with nothing. Or I could go to the lagoon and catch 10 or 15 fish, and that would at least guarantee us dinner for tonight.”

That was a time when no one had any money, there was no food in the stores and people were left one-on-one with nature. That is exactly when this resurgence of the subsistence way of life took place. The hunters suddenly became the most important people in the village; everyone depended on their success, their skill, their luck. They determined whether or not people would have something to eat and survive through the long winter. They were the ones responsible for bringing, say, a whale or a walrus back to the village to provide for everyone else.

#### MR

Great. Before we get into what you’re doing now, I just want to talk about one more point. John Tichotsky, a few years ago, talked about how during this time of change when hunting became a lot more important, in particular the hunting of large whales, gray whales, there was some connection with the people from Barrow and the Alaskan Eskimo Whaling Commission, a connection between the two to help the Chukchi people to start whaling again.

#### EZ

Yes, the Alaskans did help. It wasn’t about restoring knowledge or skills, but it was material help. They provided the people of Chukotka with weapons, with boats and motors, which are absolutely critical for sea hunting. The people of Chukotka had the skills and they practiced those skills and restored them themselves.

#### MR

And so this is where your work really comes

into focus, where clearly we have these cultural connections across the Bering Strait. Can you now speak about how you moved into working with ChAZTO (Chukotka Association of Marine Mammal Hunters), and how you took on the role of being a diplomat for hunters both within Chukotka and across the Bering Strait.

#### EZ

Yes, it also all started in the 1990s when the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission and the Eskimo Walrus Commission started carrying out joint research with ChAZTO. We began to discuss about how to implement certain projects, we discussed results, carried out joint work, and essentially became partners in spirit. So over these years of collaboration, we’ve become, I feel, friendly partner organizations.

We also realized, not necessarily at that exact time, that we are using the same resources. The walruses and the whales we were hunting were all part of the same population and that is how we moved to a joint management of resources, and also began working with our respective governments to co-manage these resources.

#### MR

Regarding that work with ChAZTO, is there anything that is just emblematic, or is the critical need to share research or understanding across Bering Strait the driving force so that we can do the best management around these shared resources, whatever they are? I noticed that you are also working with the University of Alaska, Fairbanks (UAF) on self-governance, you work with the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) and International Whaling Commission (IWC) on research collaborations about whales, and then with the various co-management groups such as the Alaska Nanuuq Commission on polar bears and the Eskimo Walrus Commission on walruses, and also with other non-governmental

organizations like Pacific Environment or Wildlife Conservation Society. Can you talk a little bit about how important it is to have these collaborations with this broad sweep of groups?

#### EZ

Yes, well there are two aspects to this collaboration. The first aspect is research, and that came about when hunters began to ask questions at meetings such as, “What’s happening with the walrus? Why are they coming later in the year or not at all?” and “What’s happening with the polar bear?” In order to be able to answer these questions we turned to research institutions as well as the organizations that support them. You mentioned Wildlife Conservation Society and you mentioned Pacific Environment. They possess a whole lot of valuable information that is really helpful to us to understand what’s happening in our environment and to understand what problems might arise, in order to be able to foresee them and adapt to them. That is extremely important.

The second aspect is government and self-governance and policy. We realized that many decisions concerning natural resource management weren’t just being made locally in Chukotka or in Alaska, many of these decisions were being made in Moscow or in Washington or by international organizations, for example, by the International Whaling Commission. So together with Alaskan sea-hunter organizations we began to attend these various meetings in order to state our interests and ask, request, or demand that we be taken into account. We also travelled to provide traditional knowledge and scientific information that would help to ensure decisions were made in our favor.

#### MR

So, Eduard, you’ve talked a little bit about the importance of science and also of policy engagement. Can you touch a little on



traditional ecological knowledge? I know you've been heavily involved in collecting such knowledge in the coastal hunting communities in your region.

**EZ**

Yes, traditional ecological knowledge is a very important aspect of our work and we use a two-pronged approach. The first aspect of our work is to preserve this knowledge and make sure that it is passed on to new generations, to make sure that they retain the traditions, customs, and culture that have existed for millennia.

When we were working on this project related to traditional ecological knowledge, we came to realize that customs and customary rules and laws were actually something that helped us to create and preserve our ethnic identity. It helped us to understand who we are and what makes us unique. These rules also helped us to live in harmony with nature. I think that this principle of living in harmony with nature could serve as a good example for all of humanity, to show how we can live and, at the same time, protect and save the planet.

**MR**

We have talked about your role travelling across the Bering Strait to both sides, helping with science projects and engaging with policy at the local and international levels, and also about your work sharing traditional ecological knowledge and science. I was hoping you could speak now about the challenges you are facing on the horizon, which make these collaborative projects so important.

**EZ**

Yes, thank you for that question and it is an important one. In fact, I think it is key for our conversation here because it determines our chances for survival. I don't mean physical survival—I don't think that is necessarily going to be a problem. I mean ethnic self-preservation—I mean not letting

the Chukchi and the Eskimos disappear as a distinct people. And the primary factor that's coming into play here is global climate change.

With sea ice disappearing, there is an increase of industrial activity in our region, of human activity in general. We are very afraid of this increase in activity. We are concerned that it's a threat for us and we would like to see industry, which is rapidly moving into our traditional areas, take our concerns into account. By this sort of activity I am referring to the activities of marine transportation, which is increasing and is bound to increase significantly if you look at the ice forecast for the next 10 or 20 years. I also mean oil activity on both sides, in Alaska and Chukotka. I've seen a model of what would happen if an oil spill were to take place in the Chukchi Sea or the Bering Strait and it is evident that even a small spill would do colossal damage. It would be catastrophic for our traditional way of life. And without our traditional hunting, without the traditional foods that are a product of that sea hunting, we would become assimilated very quickly.

When it comes to industrial exploration in the region, it's important not only that we have a voice, but that our voice is actually listened to, and that action is taken as a result. It is here that I'd like to conclude talking about the climate and begin addressing another threat—one that doesn't have anything to do with climate or nature, but has everything to do with what's going on in the minds of our political leaders. I'm talking about political changes, political events that are taking place right now and leading to the militarization of the Arctic.

**MR**

Great, please go on.

**EZ**

One clear example of this is the situation on Wrangel Island. It's a UNESCO World Heritage site, it's a Russian Wildlife Refuge,

and it is a birthing place for polar bears and also where they breed. When we were prohibited from hunting polar bears there because of population concerns, we were kind of against that at that moment, but at the same time we understood that yes, perhaps additional measures were required to protect and save the polar bear population. And now, all of the sudden, in the span of one year, a military base has been built on this island. And this could do great damage to the polar bear population. I don't want to see our leaders using national security as an excuse to resolve some kind of current, fleeting issues at the expense of longer-term consequences for our people, for the Arctic peoples, or for the polar bear population.

**MR**

You mentioned that the changing geopolitics is leading to more militarization. I think back to when Gorbachev and the first George Bush agreed to have more collaboration across the Bering Strait. Do you think we are farther away from that now or are we still going in the right direction? I think about groups like the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) and the difficulties they have had within Russia. How important is it for the indigenous voice now?

**EZ**

Right now there's still some continuing movement, I think in part due to inertia from the processes that were launched by Gorbachev and Bush. So good things are still happening, but it's true that US-Russian relations are not in the best place right now, and unfortunately I have to say that I'm not seeing any improvement at the moment. But I do hope that we will see some improvement in these relations soon and that the Bering Strait will be preserved for all of mankind.

I think it's very important to continue these relations, continue relationships between relatives on both sides of the Strait,

and continue relations between the people of Chukotka and Alaska in the hopes that the government will actually listen to the opinions and the needs of these people whom they are meant to represent. Governments come and go but we are always going to be there.

**MR**

Such a good point, Eduard. And picking up on that point, can you talk a little bit about the importance of groups like Trust for Mutual Understanding or the Shared Beringian Heritage Program of the US National Park Service in continuing to support these exchanges? With respect to the governments that are in power, why is the continuation of these trans-boundary conversations so important?

**EZ**

Well, to say that it is very important would be a huge understatement. It's incredibly important, especially now when relations are so tense between our two countries, and it's vital that this support and these programs continue, and that the frequency of these exchanges does not diminish, and that the level of support for them does not decrease. Quite the opposite, I think it's very important to expand this work, to get more people involved, and to give our people more information about each other. It is the lack of information that really breeds distrust, that breeds inaccurate ideas and stereotypes about each other, and all of that leads to the wrong decisions being made.

**MR**

Before we conclude, I wanted to circle back to some of the things we have covered. You've talked about climate change, industrial development, and militarization as things that pose a great threat to the survival of the cultures of the indigenous peoples in the Bering Strait. But I also hear from you some great optimism that if we can continue to communicate and collaborate, there are

ways we can find some solutions that provide for the long-term health of the indigenous communities. So perhaps we can wrap up with you speaking about some examples of those bright lights of collaboration that are working well.

**EZ**

Yes, well I think one great example is a project that is being carried out by the National Park Service and the Institute of the North, and that is the monthly conference calls between Chukotka and Alaska, where the residents of those regions talk about their problems and they try to find solutions to them. And everyone has access to these teleconferences. You can be anywhere in Alaska or Chukotka and call into the conversations, and listen to the opinions of experts as well as ordinary people. I think this is a really good example of continuing collaboration and communication.

**MR**

And my final question is on the importance of in-person meetings where you can visit your collaborators or your peers in Alaska or meet in international venues like the Arctic Council, International Whaling Commission, or International Maritime Organization. How important is it to be able to go to those events in person?

**EZ**

This brings to mind someone we both know, that is Charlie Johnson [of the Alaska Nanuq Commission]. Even though it's been a few years since he passed away, I still recall how much I learned from him in terms of cooperation and organizing work, and I remember how we would just sit there together and watch television and talk about the weather. It was very evident that this type of interface was something that brought us so close together, giving us both a much clearer understanding of what we needed to do and how we needed to do it. I think this sort of personal contact, face-to-face, and I

don't mean Skype but actually in person, is essential for people to be able to truly work together. I also want to say that Martin, you and I also have the same thing happen from time to time.

**MR**

(Chuckles) Well, thank you very much, Eduard.

**EZ**

Yes, Martin, asking the right questions is half the job, so thank you as well.



**MARTIN ROBARDS**

Director, Arctic Beringia Program  
Wildlife Conservation Society  
Fairbanks, Alaska, United States

Martin Robards is the Director of the Wildlife Conservation Society's Arctic Beringia Program, a trans-boundary effort working across Chukotka (Russian Federation), Alaska (United States), and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Canada). He is an accomplished marine ecologist and policy analyst who has worked extensively with indigenous communities and their representatives in the Arctic. Martin also worked for two years in Washington, DC, informing policy-makers about the challenges of implementing regional-scale policies concerning the conservation of marine mammals in remote subsistence-dominated environments. His goal is to encourage the development and implementation of conservation policies that are more responsive to new scientific understanding and changes in the ecological, social, and economic conditions of the Arctic. In particular, he seeks opportunities for indigenous hunters and their communities to actively engage with scientists to address topics of mutual interest. He has more than 20 years of field experience, has published more than 30 scientific articles, has served as a reviewer for numerous scientific journals, and is affiliate faculty at the University of Alaska.



**EDUARD ZDOR**

Executive Secretary  
Association of Traditional Marine Mammal  
Hunters of Chukotka  
Anadyr, Russia

Eduard is a native Chukchi and lifelong resident of Chukotka. As the Executive Secretary of the Association of Traditional Marine Mammal Hunters of Chukotka, he is knowledgeable about the challenges facing indigenous subsistence communities in a warming Arctic. Eduard is active both in Chukotka and Alaska, where he liaises with scientists to monitor the impact of climate change on subsistence resources and helps local communities monitor the impact of climate change on their livelihoods. Eduard also works with remote communities, extraction companies, and the government to protect subsistence resources from industrial development.

MUZEJ JE ZATVOREN  
THE MUSEUM IS CLOSED

CONVERSATION

Michelle Coffey  
&  
Aaron Levy

Through their far-ranging academic and foundation work, Michelle Coffey and Aaron Levy share a common impulse to further global understanding through cultural production. Here, they discuss the complex yet essential relationships among individuals, communities, and institutions, and our collective responsibility to foster continued, relevant dialogue in the arts.

**AL**

My hope is that in this conversation we can unpack a particular image of what it means for an institution to close. Here's why I say this: In June 2013, I was given the opportunity to travel to Sarajevo on behalf of the Foundation for Civil Society, a TMU-funded organization, to help restart the Zvono Award, which is part of a larger regional network that enables a local artist to travel to New York for a six-week residency period. This award had been offered by the Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Arts, but had recently been interrupted by loss of funding from Open Society Foundation and the US State Department, as well as by larger difficulties in that region. While I was there, it was important to me to visit the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which in months prior had been closed due to a lack of funding. Shortly thereafter, I was asked by a local television company to comment on its closure. I struggled then and I struggle now to come up with a pithy sound bite. I definitely recall feeling angry and upset, and as if I was present at a twilight moment. I was witnessing not just the closure of this particular museum but the closure, in effect, of a civil society in Sarajevo.

**MC**

Do you remember your pithy sound bite? What was your response to the television crew?

**AL**

I remember that I struggled profoundly with the image in my head—that of a closed

institution. I felt as though something either had been lost or was potentially at stake of being lost. I struggled with that and with what I had heard from colleagues and friends while I was there—that in recent years the museum had battled closure and struggled to maintain a sense of relevance in that society, even before its doors had been shuttered. So I spoke about how this development might prompt us to reflect on institutional openness and impact, and how institutions that are open can paradoxically sometimes feel closed.

**MC**

Can I ask about this feeling of closure? It's one thing to look at this image and see the two-by-fours across what looks to be a beautiful door; it is literally closed. You can't enter. It's another thing to look at how the museum or the institution is a representative of some type of cultural production.

**AL**

Exactly, this is both an image of a particular museum, and at the same time it is an emblem of a larger cultural condition, a metaphor for all the struggles that have been taking place in that region in recent years. So, I don't know if this answers the question, but I felt like I was witnessing a particular moment in time that also stood for a larger movement, a larger development.

**MC**

So then, it isn't necessarily about site, it's about metaphor. Your description of this as a twilight moment or sun setting is an articulation of a movement.

**AL**

At that moment in Sarajevo, I definitely did not sense an emergent dawn, nor did those in the arts with whom I interacted. It was something more akin to dusk. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding that closure, an institution that had been open for 124 years had now literally and metaphorically closed. Bosnian civil society seemed equally fragile and precarious. It begs the question of how

an individual or a society remains open in the face of an impending sense of closure.

**MC**

I want to ask about the anger because you mentioned it angered you. Was it about the loss? Or was it about the absence of people standing up claiming the museum and demanding to keep it open?

**AL**

There had been protests, though I hadn't been present for them. I was angry because of what this meant for that society more generally. The arts and culture community in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Serbia, in Kosovo, and, more generally, in the former Yugoslavia, has long acted as a critical, progressive bulwark against far-right political ideologies. We need to do everything we can to save this community and preserve this cultural heritage. It was upsetting to me to see during my trip how fragile that bulwark is, to see how precarious the role of arts and culture is in that society.

**MC**

So, with a Western gaze, I'm thinking about how we put power on institutions and I'm wondering with regard to artistic practice and cultural production, where did you see rumblings or hope? My question, and probably challenge, to you is this: There is visible evidence that it's disappearing, but where is it emerging? You and I have talked about how on this trip you met individuals who were taking this work on and still doing it, but inside their private homes. I'm getting at the tension between these—the public versus the private, the large versus the intimate.

**AL**

I agree that we need to attend to where culture is still emerging and perhaps even thriving, and not just where it is disappearing. I want to avoid, however, opposing the individual and the institution, because I think we need to work across these two forms of production. While I was in Sarajevo I also gave a lecture on the idea of uncertainty

and the anxiety one feels when one does not know what the future entails. It took place in a small room in a private home that had been converted into a makeshift public space. It was called "Public ROOM."

**MC**

In somebody's home?

**AL**

Yes, it was a ground-floor space that had been repurposed as an intimate cultural space. There was a small room that functioned as a gathering space for exhibitions, discourse, and various projects. Just behind that was a little makeshift kitchen and a bathroom. So there was clearly an informality and an intimacy to it. There was something resilient and beautiful about the sense of hospitality that pervaded the space.

**MC**

And there was an audience asking for it and engaging.

**AL**

Exactly. But let's not forget that both are precarious. The intimate space of the home seems so generative and resilient, particularly when juxtaposed with the image of a barricaded institutional edifice. But it too exists in a state of fragility. Public ROOM had actually just received crucial funding from the European Union a few months prior, but the absence of matching support from the local government had now jeopardized this funding, and it too was at risk of closure.

**MC**

You can see the fragility and the intention and urgency in both.

**AL**

I think this is a really important point to dwell on. The difficulty of living and acting under stress was very evident to me throughout the Balkans. There is a traumatic dimension to having to function every day under this sort of perpetual pressure. The resourcefulness with which artists and others in the region are constructing civic and social

relations is exhausting and extraordinary.

**MC**

With regard to this potential tragedy of endured stress over time, we could look at worldwide movements, where it has been always in marginalized spaces and marginalized bodies that the nuance of cultural production or practice or an aesthetic signature is borne out. There is the care that we should take amongst our fellow citizens, non-citizens, and our fellow cultural workers around what we are doing to push it forward. But stress, pressure, and struggle often birth something new. I don't mean to romanticize this, but I've seen it happen in spaces around the world. What does pressure deliver, and is there a way that we can actually value it and not think that it is only in safety and comfort that production takes place?

**AL**

Yes, I think that's a great point. I am not sure if this will amount to an answer, but I do think that arts and culture have often been extraordinary mechanisms for making that pressure legible and visible. Visualizing that stress, and also developing ways to cope with and negotiate that stress...

**MC**

I think that coping, negotiating, and this idea of adaptation is vitally important. It's about what we have in our own capacity as well as when we come together.

**AL**

In Sarajevo, Belgrade, and elsewhere, artists and others were repurposing these closed institutions as sites for cultural production. Rather than evading or avoiding what was happening in society, they were trying to confront it and make it legible. They were not only calling attention to it, but also psychologically working through it.

**MC**

What about issues of timing and pacing? You were in Sarajevo in 2013 and experienced the region for only a short time period. You

have not been able to return yet, but what does this look like over a two- or three-year period? There's a gazing in over two weeks and feeling some immediacy and wanting to jump out at it, to release the pressure. I'm wondering what happens when we actually endure it. What is the learning that comes out of that? I think we have a tendency to want to jump out of the discomfort. Do you think about the importance of duration?

**AL**

As a tourist or traveler, the duration of one's experience clearly has an impact on one's capacity for empathy, endurance, and understanding as well. When one travels quickly through a place, one jumps into the uncomfortable, as you termed it, as quickly as one escapes it. So, yes, this is something that I struggle with and think a lot about. At the same time, should everything I experienced in Sarajevo be distrusted and perceived solely as the consequence of gazing in? Is what I experienced simply a projection of what I wanted to find, or perhaps where I come from?

Perhaps there is another way to approach this, namely that the duration of my stay enabled another kind of legibility, another form of solidarity. It enabled me to recognize a moment of urgency and crisis in the life of that community, one that I feel compelled to talk about. How can I respond to that sense of urgency, the fierce urgency of now, as Martin Luther King, Jr., famously termed it, while also being patient and acknowledging the need to recognize the persistence of crisis in that region? The particular crisis they are living through, after all, is a crisis that has happened before and will happen again.

**MC**

The urgency of now recognizes that we are losing lives, that we are losing lessons learned. There is this urgency to respond but where is the capacity for us to strengthen our muscle? To stand inside the chaos? Because we want to solve, closure happens.

**AL**

I'm also interested in how one composes oneself as an individual amidst the rapid changes and shifts that are always taking place in the social landscape. The pace of change in the region seems so erratic and uneven. So much is situated in the past and is still over-determined by Tito's era. On the other hand, so much is developing in a thoroughly contemporary neoliberal way, without transparency or commitment to a democratic process. I am interested in how artists and others in the region are responding to this perpetual destabilization of oneself, but also of communities and institutions. How and where does one find stability and community in the face of radical and violent disruption?

**MC**

The term *stabilizing* is interesting to me because when something gets stabilized I think about comfort. You stabilize yourself in order to get your footing and assure your security, even when everything is turbulent. In a recent conversation, a good friend of mine quoted Neale Donald Walsch: "Life begins at the edge of your comfort zone." This quote is really resonating for me right now. I wonder if there is a way of thinking about stabilization, or the ability to balance at an edge so that you build in the flexibility of the spine, you remember the muscles.

**AL**

We are trying to talk about a really complicated position. How does one find stability within a landscape of conflict and chaos? What does it mean to develop a natural familiarity with disruption? For a long time, I've been interested in the non-aligned movement that Tito had helped inaugurate and that the former Yugoslavia had participated in during the Cold War. I am interested metaphorically in thinking about arts and culture as a non-aligned movement, as a community that is often not in alignment with the society of which it is a part. Or

that sometimes seeks non-alignment and instability.

**MC**

I think that many of us can see ourselves reflected in the values of the non-aligned movement. There is a way of doing our work singularly but there is also room for all of us to articulate our stories, to put our stories forward so that they become a movement of the non-aligned. I think the simple act of seeing others put their voices forward to talk about their instability and insecurity brings about some sort of comfort that we are all in this together.

**AL**

The awareness that we share our precarity—both as individuals and as communities—can often be incredibly empowering and can bring us together. I wonder if institutions can enable that convergence as well, or if this is something that can only develop informally and in an intimate way, for instance in a home or a similarly non-institutionalized space.

**MC**

I don't know if the institution is an organism in and of itself or just the home of the organism. I think it's actually about a value system. Do we value all of this work as being just as important inside an institution versus inside a home? Both locations are needed. Not only needed; both locations exist.

**AL**

This is a great point. There is the tendency to conceptualize the institution in opposition to something more intimate like the home, rather than recognizing that they both carry value. Moreover, we may need to redefine what we understand cultural heritage to mean. It may not be something that resides in a physical object or that resides within an institutional setting. Cultural heritage may be more immaterial and it may be more interpersonal. It may be found equally within the home as well as within the institution. And maybe that allows for a more adaptive

and resilient understanding of culture that isn't perpetually threatened by variability in funding and the political climate.

**MC**

Or by large institutions claiming it. It's funny but when I hear *cultural heritage*, I immediately jump back into my skin and I think, "Hmm." The situation you're describing in Sarajevo in 2013 makes me think about what we have witnessed in the US during our own lifetimes, where larger institutions are now doing the kind of programming that used to be done by alternative spaces. And those alternative spaces were always our marginalized voices, whether queer, feminist, or from people of color. But who gets to claim cultural heritage? It's so problematic, yet time shifts the definition. The violence that takes place shifts the definition. When do we begin to see our interaction as being part of the cultural heritage? Maybe the term *heritage* is the challenge for me.

**AL**

I want to insist on holding on to these terms, though I recognize how easily they can be claimed and co-opted by institutions and dominant cultures and the violence that entails. What I understand culture and heritage to encompass is something profoundly lived and ephemeral—memory, values, and experience. This understanding of culture and heritage is both individual and collective, and always in formation. Its resilience can be found in social relationships and in the collective memories that ground a sense of community.

**MC**

It resonates deeply with me because we share this same timing, we share this same space, we have impact on this, and so, as of today, we share the heritage. Your perspective as an American citizen peering into Sarajevo for those two weeks was a shared time, a shared experience. The artificial boundary of the other disappears if we dare look into ourselves

and actually speak about this culture of belonging versus heritage. I think it would be radically beautiful if heritage becomes about a belonging and its continual shaping.

**AL**

I'd like to revisit the earlier image of the closed museum, in a way that builds upon the holistic perspective you've suggested. On the one hand, we can see this as a twilight moment where a form of belonging, a space for belonging, a certain institutional practice of belonging, has been radically disrupted and violently upended. It ceases to be in the form it once had. Alternatively, we can visualize this moment as the dawn of another form of belonging, another form of convergence that will invariably pop up, and that perhaps already has. According to this reading, belonging is not something that can be closed or shut down, no matter how much a state or any dominant group might attempt to do so.

**MC**

I want to add a little bit more around disruption. While it can be as violent as closure, sometimes disruptions are needed to actually shift our frame, to awaken us. That loss is a natural progression and is part of the life-cycle. We'll never become comfortable with radical disruption, violent disruption. But we have to think of space for a renewal, or a shift in our mindset and how we see each other.

**AL**

I am becoming more comfortable with disruption, but not with the notion that it was natural for this particular organization to close. When an institution closes, it often reveals the systemic conditions that structure the community in which it is situated. An institution, in other words, is a lens through which we can understand structural forces and symbolic violence. When an institution closes it is rarely the sole consequence of individual action or a deficiency in cultural administration. One institution is being

disabled so that another institution or practice can be enabled.

In the context of the former Yugoslavia more generally, acts of institutional closure seem to me to be playing out alongside a strategic redistribution of financial resources toward festivals and other outdoor activities of mass distraction.

**MC**

A key thing to think about is that institutions do not operate in isolation; they are part of a vibrant ecology. The relevance of that ecology is critical. When I speak of closure, I'm not literally speaking about lack of monies. I am really speaking about the institution's relevance to the local landscape, the local ecology. What does institutional closure look like in relation to something else that's coming forward, and continues to serve and to push and pull people together to engage in dialogue?

**AL**

You're proposing, then, that an institution is not a physical structure that withstands the passage of time, but rather an organic, living entity that is formed and reformed through its publics.

**MC**

Yes.

**AL**

OK, but I still want to insist that we need to understand it within the larger shifts taking place in that region and beyond. In United States as well, a festival culture of cultural production and presentation has similarly emerged that denigrates institutional space, and, importantly, that denigrates the grassroots sector, instead privileging spectacle, leisure, and distraction.

**MC**

Right, and denigrates our capacity for awareness. It denigrates aesthetic signatures and continually disempowers community.

**AL**

It amounts to a packaged form of culture that does not fundamentally enable dialogue,

except in strategic or predetermined ways. It often bypasses cultural institutions altogether based on the notion that somehow these institutions have failed us, or are not sufficiently impactful.

**MC**

The institution is not separate from us and we've allowed for that artificial divide to have its place and root itself. I say dig that out a little bit. Also, the emphasis on *impact* and *measurement*, again, this is a distraction.

**AL**

Isn't it fascinating how *culture* can be such an effective mechanism for social, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical control? New York is not the only city where this is evident.

**MC**

Give an example so we can be really specific on that.

**AL**

The work of artists such as Hans Haacke makes legible how corporations often use arts and culture to cement sociopolitical and socioeconomic control. In other words, a philanthropic bequest is never purely philanthropic, and is often a mechanism through which one exerts varying forms of influence, and amasses symbolic or cultural prestige.

I continually find in Sarajevo and elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia an example of what lies ahead for all of us. In speaking with you about that region I am, in this sense, also speaking about Philadelphia, where I am based, but also about the United States more generally. In Philadelphia, for instance, to give you a practical example, I've been really amazed and troubled in recent years to see active state support for a grassroots culture that basically provides the state with an alibi to not have to fund it. "Do it yourself" culture is American entrepreneurship at its best; you have so little to work with, yet you make something great. I've always been drawn to this economy and my work has always been built around this sort of informal approach to

cultural production, yet I am troubled today with how the state actively encourages that—though not with resources, of course!

**MC**

When you say "state," you are equating it with power?

**AL**

Yes, I am conceiving of the state as something powerful, and that is external to us...

**MC**

Because we are all implicated in that as well. The only thing I would challenge is the recognition of what we do to encourage state control. It seems that very few places are resisting it. I think about the social aid and pleasure clubs and the benevolent societies of the South. They represent communities that informally institutionalize and thus place community and tradition in a particular vernacular, a vernacular that provides support, but without state support.

**AL**

And would that amount to a form of resistance?

**MC**

Very much a form of resistance. But it also amounts to a form of care and a form of accountability within a beloved community. It's a complicated thing—not the institution itself, but our relationship to the institution. When can we be utterly honest about this relationship? What have we built for our own securities? What are they here to serve? Who are the others that want to serve alongside?

**AL**

I propose that we ought to radically experiment with the idea of institutionality. In Sarajevo, I noted a desire for a new institutional culture of nurturing and community. The smaller organizations I encountered were non-aligned with normative conceptions of institutionality and many sought to redefine what an institution is and who it is for.

**MC**

I am all for redefining institution, if it can be

based on a valuing of the multiplicity of practices that exist in order to resist the institution. How is this based on embedded inequities, embedded disappearances? I think it could be an interesting exercise; however, I do think the exercise is from a pretty safe place.

**AL**

Could we talk briefly about loss? It seems to me that you've been trying to gently shift the conversation away from a perspective that would recognize this closed museum as a site of irreparable damage. You've been trying to shift us toward a reading that would find in loss something generative, and maybe enabling.

**MC**

It's simply a natural occurrence: This happens. Instead of being jarred by it, surprised by it, stunned by it, can we simply allow time for grief? A time for grieving and mourning is necessary, but with an understanding that there is still forward momentum. When I hear "loss," loss isn't necessarily the end; there is potential for repurposing. I don't necessarily want to say rebirth or renewal, but there is space that's allocated now. There is something that is not so tightly held.

**AL**

We live in a chaotic time, and we are rarely at peace with that turbulence. Loss is not something artificial that threatens stability; rather, that feeling of stability is in fact illusory. We develop habitual relationships to the present and then feel threatened or challenged when those habits are upended. It's really about being more comfortable within that landscape of precariousness.

**MC**

And it's not passive. It's not stepping back and being at peace and letting it go, but thinking about how to be engaged and actively let go. It doesn't mean that we lose everything. This is simply, I think, movement.

**AL**

Right, it's not that cultural infrastructure has

been lost in some radical, irreversible way. Rather, what we understand cultural infrastructure to mean is shifting.

**MC**

And the difference is the articulation of it.

**AL**

Exactly. We need to develop a capacity for talking about it, negotiating and coping with it, and perhaps even being at peace with it.

**MC**

And to stay in it, to feel the turbulence, to understand that we actually can balance while moving forward through the fear.

**AL**

Perhaps our shared experiences—both as individuals and collectives—can be the basis for cross-cultural conversation.

**MC**

How do we stop the performance and the pretense? How do we see across borders and across regions?

**AL**

I am also interested in complicating the divisions between local and global that often divide one community from another. How can the local and the global instead intertwine? What is taking place in Sarajevo has all sorts of consequences for my work in Philadelphia. This is an exciting and important conversation to be had.

**MC**

Yes, and what is our responsibility to the colleagues you met who opened up their home for Public ROOM? We are now in relation, and how are we all now accountable in this?

**AL**

This relationship carries a radical sense of responsibility, one that does not expire after a certain period of time has passed. How do we enable others to feel that sense of responsibility too? This may have something to do with the idea of dialogue. Dialogue is not simply a performance, but rather something that affects you. Dialogue has the potential to

bring together different people and perspectives in a way that shifts and alters everyone involved.

**MC**

It's this act of listening, where listening is valued.

**AL**

It's about a culture of listening.

**MC**

Yes, a culture of listening, followed by the ability to allow the lingering not necessarily to be marked and measured and seen immediately.

**AL**

How do we enable that culture of listening and dialogue as individuals, as institutions, and as funders...

**MC**

As practitioners.

**AL**

As practitioners, totally. That is and remains the greatest and most important challenge.

**MC**

TMU's 30th Anniversary has been all about active dialogues, relevant dialogues, critical dialogues, and allowing you and me to come together and spend this time journeying with each other.

**AL**

It has been so generative to have this conversation with you, but also over the years with TMU. I am deeply inspired by the culture of trust that underlies the way TMU engages cultural communities.

**MC**

(Laughing) Literally the "trust for mutual understanding!"

**AL**

(Laughing) Not just toward us and this conversation, but also in relation to its grantees and the projects the Trust has supported over the years. The Trust has always approached each relationship with great sensitivity and care, and a patience for conversation, wherever it leads.



### MICHELLE COFFEY

Executive Director  
Lambent Foundation  
New York, New York, United States

As Executive Director, Michelle Coffey designs, implements, and advances the strategic agenda, leadership, and vision of Lambent Foundation. Through innovative grantmaking and projects in New York, New Orleans, and Nairobi, Lambent Foundation supports the intersections of contemporary arts and culture as critical strategies for social change. Lambent's grantmaking provides critical general operating support for artist-centered organizations in the visual, performance, and alternative media fields.

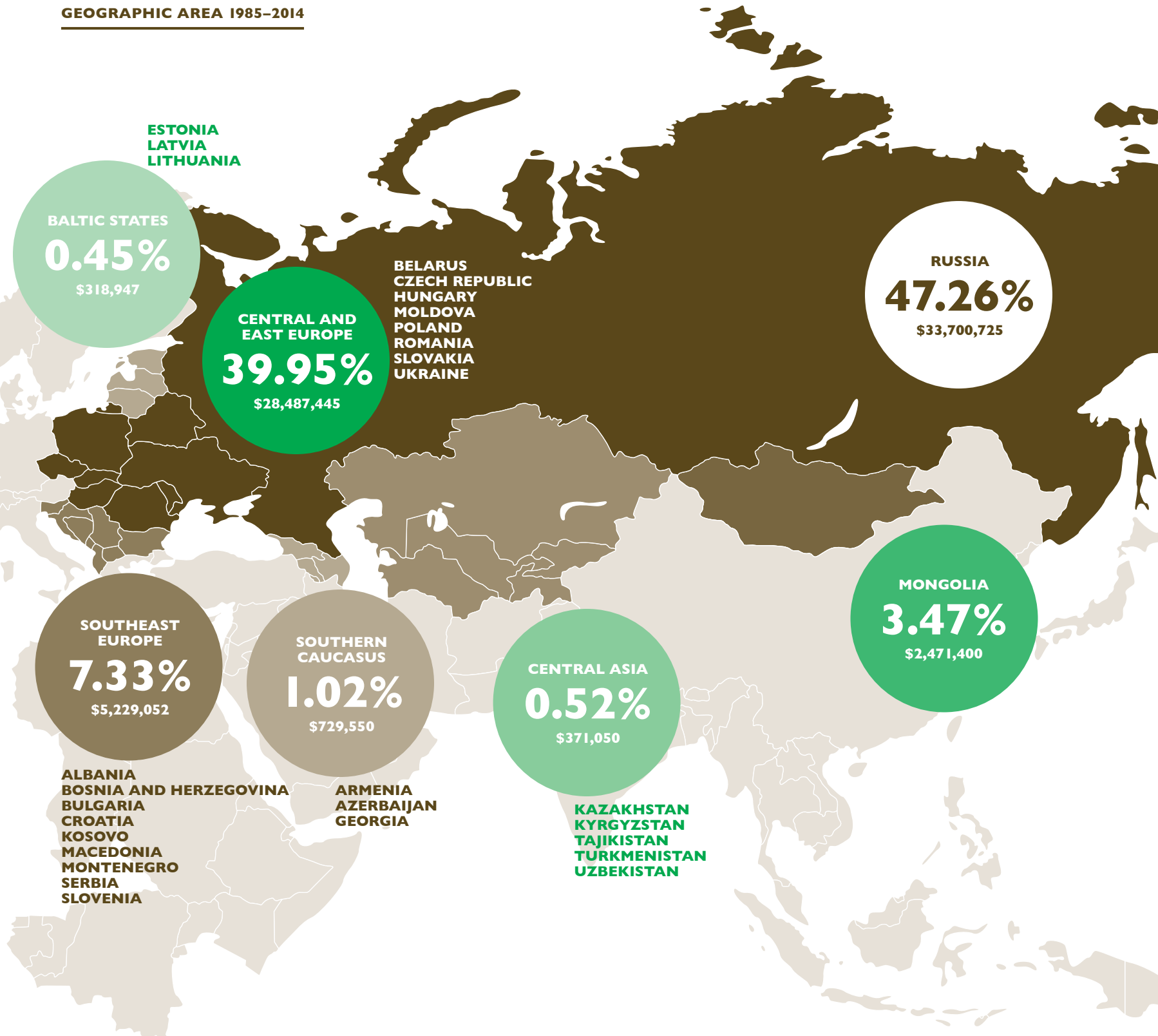


### AARON LEVY

Executive Director and Senior Curator  
Slought Foundation  
Senior Lecturer  
Departments of English and Art History  
University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States

Aaron Levy works with artists, communities, and institutions worldwide to develop cultural projects that encourage inclusiveness, advocacy, and the sharing of knowledge. His scholarly and curatorial work centers on histories and practices of public culture and the cultural politics of memory and display. His courses explore how artists and communities negotiate belonging, estrangement, and the consequences of modernity and globalization. As a founder of Slought, Levy is committed to reflecting on the responsibilities of cultural institutions, and to developing the institution itself as a performative work. Levy co-organized the U.S. representation at the 2008 Venice Biennale for Architecture, has served on the Federal Advisory Committee on International Exhibitions, and was a Cultural Envoy to Pakistan. He has edited more than 20 books, films, and multimedia publications.

**GEOGRAPHIC AREA 1985-2014**



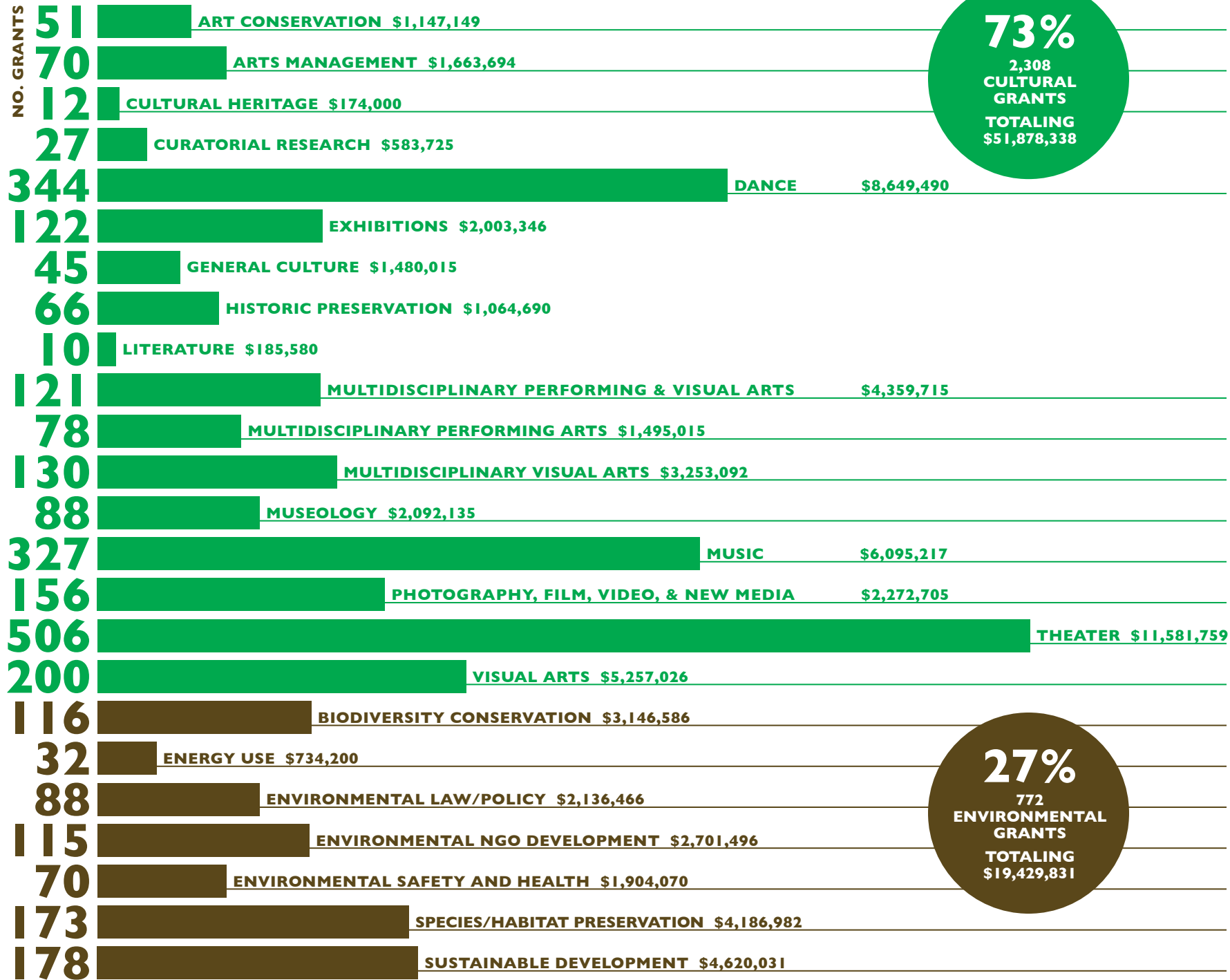
**GEOGRAPHIC AREA 2010-2014**

COUNTRY	NO. GRANTS	AMOUNT
ARMENIA	4	\$60,000
BELARUS	5	\$108,000
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	4	\$40,000
BULGARIA	17	\$153,150
CROATIA	10	\$112,250
CZECH REPUBLIC	12	\$116,500
ESTONIA	6	\$71,000
GEORGIA	7	\$104,000
HUNGARY	38	\$411,605
KAZAKHSTAN	1	\$15,000
KYRGYZSTAN	1	\$15,000
LATVIA	7	\$52,000
LITHUANIA	4	\$38,000
MACEDONIA	2	\$14,000
MONGOLIA	38	\$813,000
POLAND	53	\$829,845
REGIONAL	157	\$4,488,150
ROMANIA	18	\$298,000
RUSSIA	173	\$3,727,750
SERBIA	10	\$113,500
SLOVAKIA	5	\$58,100
SLOVENIA	10	\$159,700
TAJIKISTAN	5	\$74,000
TURKMENISTAN	1	\$5,000
UKRAINE	6	\$92,000
UZBEKISTAN	3	\$26,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>597</b>	<b>\$11,995,550</b>



**PROGRAM AREA 1985-2014**

**PROGRAM AREA / GRANT AMOUNT PAID**



**73%**  
2,308  
CULTURAL  
GRANTS  
TOTALING  
\$51,878,338

**27%**  
772  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
GRANTS  
TOTALING  
\$19,429,831

**PROGRAM AREA 2010-2014**

NO. GRANTS	AMOUNT
7	\$69,500
16	\$272,000
12	\$145,000
46	\$977,700
26	\$728,000
36	\$551,750
41	\$896,150
13	\$442,500
57	\$784,500
27	\$333,000
118	\$2,137,955
40	\$1,149,495
22	\$480,000
5	\$70,000
13	\$261,000
41	\$1,026,500
16	\$882,500
45	\$443,000
41	\$1,026,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,995,550</b>



CONVERSATION

Tijana Stepanović  
&  
Mladen Miljanović

**Celebrated Bosnian artist Mladen Miljanović and Budapest-based curator Tijana Stepanović both embody the dynamism of contemporary art in Central and Southeastern Europe. Here, they talk about their work and mutual admiration, and how art can function as a tool of accountability and reflection in their respective societies.**

**TS**

Mladen, do you intend to lie to me?

**MM**

Not at all.

**TS**

Do you consider yourself to be one of the most talented artists of your generation?

**MM**

Not at all. (Laughs) So, now you are turning my own questions against me?

**TS**

Of course I am! You received the Henkel Award in 2009 at the age of 29. It goes—as they say—to the “most talented” artists of the region. You were selected from 1,200 applicants.

**MM**

It was the subjective opinion of the jury members. For the Henkel Award there is an open call in 33 countries in Central and Southeastern Europe and Central Asia. They select a finalist from each country, all of whom go to the main jury session in Vienna. There they choose five finalists, and then one winner.

**TS**

I remember that you were truly surprised you won the award.

**MM**

Yeah, I was. I had previously received the Zvono Award, which is one of the most important awards for young artists in Bosnia. Actually, it’s the only award for emerging contemporary artists. After that, I heard about the Henkel open call and

told myself, “OK, this is an opportunity to see how my work stands up on a regional level.” And then they informed me that I made it to the final round and invited me to come to Vienna. It was really an incredible experience. Many of the other finalists were already established international artists. One of them, Agnieszka Kurant, had already been exhibiting in New York, London, and worldwide. Also, Ivan Grubanov, a Serbian based in London, already had a gallery representing him. I understood that I—coming from Banja Luka—was the only artist there living in a small town, in a “province” or periphery, and that gave me a bit of a complex. When they announced that I was the winner, I could hardly believe it! The international recognition that comes with winning this award was so important for me. The opportunity to present a solo show in the Museum of Modern Art (mumok) in Vienna really helped me to become more visible and get some attention in the region.

**TS**

Ever since I first watched your video, *Do you intend to lie to me?*, I have wanted to ask you the question, “Do you consider yourself to be one of the most talented artists of your generation?” In the video, you asked the same question of one of your former professors while he was connected to a lie detector. This project was a present for him, commemorating the 30th anniversary of his career. Basically, you had him arrested and kidnapped by an elite unit of the Serbian police who later connected him to a polygraph. Some people may think you went too far with your actions to realize this project. You certainly took a big risk because your professor was not aware that this was a staged kidnapping. What do you think about risk-taking in the arts? And how much risk can or should artists take?

**MM**

I think that you made the point with your

first question, “Do you intend to lie to me?” We need to ask the truth in art, even if it is risky. In asking the truth in art, we are actually questioning the truth of reality. It was very interesting to develop a project that penetrated reality on a very difficult and, in the end, brutal way. If you, as an artist or cultural worker, are dealing with reality—real social, political, and cultural problems that are, in most cases, very unethical—the question is: How can you deal with those problems in an ethical way?

**TS**

I find this question crucial with respect to your video. Do you think you found an ethical way in this case?

**MM**

For this film I approached a real system of power—the police and the Ministry of Interior—and asked them to help me carry out this kidnapping of my professor. I asked them to let me use real police cars, a helicopter, a lie detector... I went into the middle of the “real” reality, not the imagined one, where I used the actual tools of the system to overcome it. I was lucky enough, and maybe smart enough, to convince the authorities—the power—to allow me to use a police unit to arrest my professor. But they then asked me to let them use their own model and “working method” in order to “advertise” their capabilities during and after the arrest. In a way, they overtook the project, and it became more brutal, more realistic, than I originally planned. So, the question of this film then became, “How ready are we to accept the overtaking of reality in art?” It was not something that I set out to show initially; it was something that happened through the process. But when it became clear what was happening, I decided that I wanted to highlight this problem and try to solve it. That’s why I put myself into the action at the end of the video.

**TS**

You’re suggesting that in order to solve the problem you need to be part of it? I can’t help but notice that you were not only part of this reality, in fact, you created and moderated the situation, which then became a staged reality.

**MM**

Yes, and that’s exactly what I think art should grapple with in the future. Let me clarify some important points that are connected to this problem. We have a past, and we then observe it later as a history. We have a present, which is now, this moment, the two of us in conversation. And we have an upcoming time, a future. Until the late 1960s, most art was actually a reflection, an observation from a standing point used to elevate something that already passed. From the period of the late ’60s on, so much art was created that intruded on the sphere of reality, now, in this moment. And that is how we hold art today in context. Art is using all of its capabilities to interfere with reality, and to actually shape it. That’s the difference between making a film and making a documentary. A documentary is observing and filming something happening in reality. The person recording it is—ideally—passive, and usually able to, later on, create a story from it. In the case of making a film, the same moment you are recording reality, you are also shaping it. That’s what I am interested in. I’m really inspired by this quote from Tomislav Gotovac, a famous Croatian performing artist who died a few years ago, “As soon as I open my eyes, I see a film.”

**TS**

What does Gotovac’s thought mean to you?

**MM**

The question that arises from the quote for me is, “What can you do with your film? What can you change with your film?” It means that you are playing the role of recorder while you are playing the role of actor.

**TS**

In my interpretation, the quote also suggests the absurdity of reality as well as the immediate and maybe even automatic “direction” or “moderation” of reality. I think it is worth noting that your own reality, your real life experiences, play an important role in your artistic practice. Am I correct in saying this?

**MM**

Most of the works I make are based on my personal experiences, yes, as well as tools that are pulled from other fields of practice from my past. Before I attended the Academy of Arts, I went to a school for civil officers and then worked as a sergeant training soldiers for a period of time. Later on, I realized that the field of culture can be examined with the same tools, iconographies, and strategies borrowed from the military world.

**TS**

Your artistic motto is *I Serve Art*. This is also the title of the project for which you won the Henkel Award. I find this motto very touching and telling. Let me ask you about the most recent work where you “serve art” and use military strategies, the enormous painting titled *Occupation Hungary*. It seems that you are about to occupy my homeland. How should we prepare for your attack?

**MM**

(Laughing) The painting will be transported to Budapest on Monday, so I am giving you two days’ advanced notice; you will have time to develop a strategy and warn everyone.

**TS**

(Laughing) OK, thanks. You finished the art academy as a painter, but it certainly isn’t your primary genre. Why did you decide to create such an enormous painting?

**MM**

I am preparing this work for the upcoming OFF-Biennale Budapest. Over the last few months I have been thinking about the idea

and the reasons behind organizing a biennale such as OFF. I wanted to connect these reasons to my own work. OFF is not a typical biennale; it is truly rooted in local issues and is not organized for city promotional purposes. Your local issues grew from the political and cultural condition in Hungary, a situation where the plan of the prime minister is to build an “illiberal democracy.” The goal of these kinds of leaders is to generate outside enemies and create paranoia. That’s why I wanted to generate a huge paranoid work where some Bosnian artist is attacking the state. I use military iconography to make a plan of attacking and occupying the cultural system of Hungary from the position of me as an artist in collaboration with all of my capable relations: intellectual ones, personal ones, connections inside and outside of Hungary.

**TS**

As one can read in the legend of the battle map, your strategies are, “lobbying through curators to whom I gave my painting as a present; blackmailing with: ‘give me an exhibition or I will immigrate to your country;’ balanced reporting on reality to get a 700,000 Euro award; charming a young curator with glass of champagne at the opening,” just to name a few. It is fair to say that you are very sarcastic and critical toward the mechanisms in the art world too.

**MM**

Actually all of these strategies correspond with reality, with real possibilities, they are not fiction. I like this sentence of Maurizio Cattelan: “An artist needs to give all his possible knowledge, connections, material things, everything, to the purpose of creating art.”

**TS**

If I didn’t know you, I could think that this sounds careerist or opportunistic, but I believe you are describing passion and dedication without limits. Talking about impact

and military strategies raises the question of whether you would prefer to make peace or war with your art?

### MM

My aim is always to generate something that could bring peace in the future. This sounds like a cliché, but it's why I decided to use military iconographies and strategies: to apply them on the level of culture and make them meaningless. While many people after the war were running away from the past and did not want to think about or deal with militarism, I was going in the opposite direction. I was thinking that we should face our history of militarism and make use of this kind of heritage in our society, mainly for the sake of culture. Because what is the core purpose of a strategy? Strategy itself is showing that you are thinking about possible developments in the future. I saw a very interesting bit of graffiti in Vienna while walking back to my hotel from an opening one evening; it read, "There is no better history." Strategy doesn't deal with history—it deals with the future. That is why I think we need to be thinking and working more strategically.

### TS

This thought leads us to the issue of the role and impact artists have or should have on society today. What are your ideas on this question?

### MM

I think what matters is the artist's practical, direct impact on the public sphere, in the fields of culture and media, and then on society as a whole. This creates a huge responsibility for artists, and so much depends on their own personal awareness of this responsibility and ability to see their impact on culture at large. Today we don't act solely as independent cultural workers. Artists can provide their own ideas, ideologies, statements, and perceptions in solo shows, actions, performances, but if you are talking about a

real observation of a real situation, then curators are playing a very important role as well. Because "curating" today means the same thing as being an "artist."

### TS

I know many artists who would strongly disagree with you.

### MM

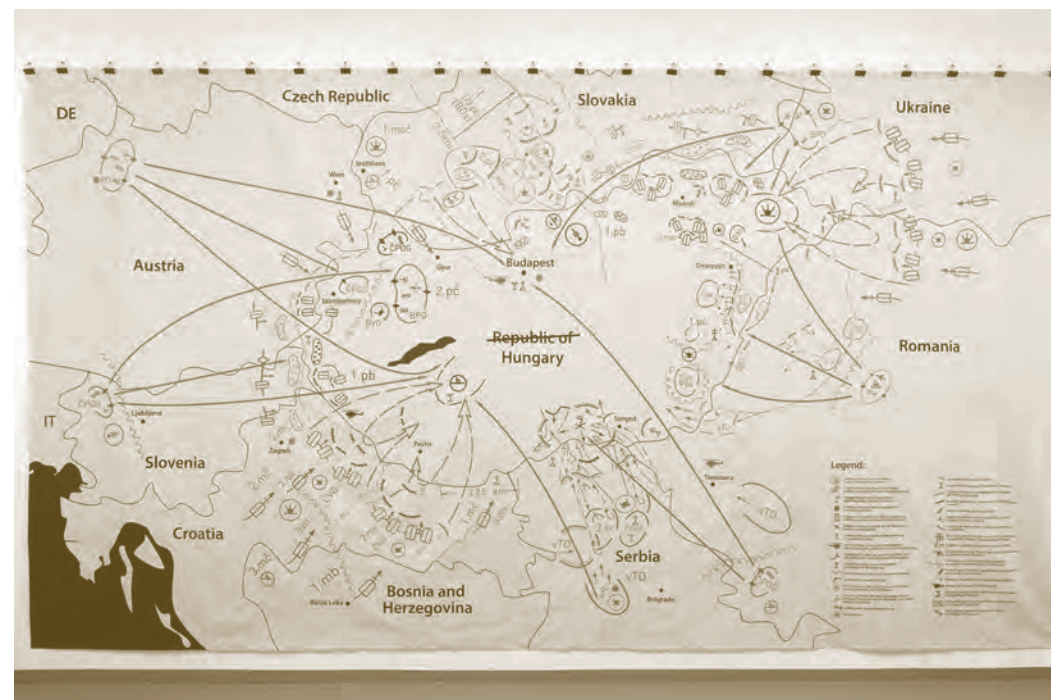
(Laughing) Both artists and curators create and produce cultural and social relations. I think curators are proclaiming the ideology, proclaiming the ideas. So, anticipating the artists' practice, power, and importance means, and goes hand by hand with, anticipating the role of the curators, the workers in the field of art. And when I say the workers in the field of art, I think of those people who are really in the field, not someone making a passive observation and analysis of the artistic world. Tijana, you as a curator go directly on site. You go directly with artists to the heart of the problem. You have not yet been arrested for your "problematic curating," but maybe you will be in the future. Maybe if you come to Banja Luka, I will have you arrested for a film. Then we will truly see if "you intend to lie to me"...

### TS

(Laughing) I can't wait for that! Sometimes I think about times and places when and where artists and cultural workers were or are arrested. I think about exhibitions being shut down by the authorities because they find certain artistic practices so agitating, irritating, or threatening to society that they need to stop them in such a direct and aggressive way. It was not uncommon in our region, particularly in the '60s. This is a very direct and clear message that you, as an artist, have an impact on society.

### MM

There is a different approach, I think, in different communities, societies, and cultures when observing threatening exhibitions or practices. Let's call these "threatening



exhibitions,” resistance movements; resistant to the influences that are always generated by social problems. As Gaston Bachelard says, “All art is generated from the point of resistance.” Whether this is resistance to your inner problems, your inner doubts, or resistance to the family, your surroundings, to the stage, to society, to the cultural system, it doesn’t matter. Art has always been generated from a different point of view, and if these different points of view don’t fit in with the established part of the culture, of course that is a threat. Of course it is a threat to disturb the common and wanted way of thinking. So, I am a little bit jealous of those societies where they want to shut down those types of exhibitions. In Bosnia, we don’t have this kind of reaction to exhibitions that are resisting the system and criticizing it.

**TS**

Yes, there are different approaches and tactics to deal with these “threatening” projects and practices.

**MM**

I am oversimplifying this a bit, but generally speaking, there are two different types of totalitarianism. This first kind, which I consider a more democratic one, even if they do close down your exhibition, opposes you with its own arguments and immediately explains how and why you are threatening to their system. The other kind is silent resistance or silent control, which says, “OK, you do whatever you want, but you don’t have enough power to change anything.” I think that you and your colleagues in Hungary are experiencing the second kind, and this is what brought the OFF-Biennale to life.

**TS**

I would not call either of these democratic in any way, but you are right. What we are experiencing now is silent control. The government is very confident making

decisions that have long-term consequences without any public debate. They don’t spend too much time or energy trying to silence criticism; they simply ignore us and, of course, defund the critical art sector. There is no way to be involved in decisions that impact the public. Culture is now being used for the sake of a political agenda. Yes, this environment is what led to the creation of the OFF-Biennale.

**MM**

I think that living in Hungary you can learn a lot from the Bosnian experience, which sounds very incredible now. If someone would have told me 10 years ago that the experience of Bosnia would be helpful to other European Union members, I would have thought they were crazy.

**TS**

The politicians in Bosnia have a very different approach toward culture than ours in Hungary, don’t they? There have been many examples in the last several years of major cultural institutions shutting down, though not because of any critical stance.

**MM**

Yes, that’s true, particularly in Sarajevo. Now we are approaching the topic of a serious problem in my country in the field of culture and for cultural institutions: neglect. This was gradual neglect, a process that began more than 10 years ago, immediately after the war ended. Describing this process is important in order to understand the necessity of changing the cultural policy of the state. Bosnia was an ethnically divided country; there is still a strong divide between the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the different ethnic groups. The cultural heritage remaining from the Yugoslavian period and from socialism didn’t have an important role simply because it didn’t specifically represent those particular nationalities or ethnicities.

So, no one went into the museums to destroy them. But, as time passed, these museums couldn’t pay the electric bill and then couldn’t pay the employees. Then the National Gallery of Bosnia didn’t get any funds, and so on and so on. In the end, the National Gallery had to close because they couldn’t pay for the heating. All this happened very slowly until the moment they put the locks on the door and wrote on it that the museum is closed. Then, suddenly everyone started shouting. And, actually, the reaction of the officials was that they didn’t really want to close those institutions but they didn’t know what else to do with them. Cultural institutions in Bosnia are like children without parents whom no one wants to adopt but everyone wants to take pictures with. So now, whenever any cultural institution is able to take a step forward to represent itself, everyone in the political sphere says proudly, “Look, we have very important cultural events!”

**TS**

You were the first artist to “represent” Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Venice Biennale in 2013. Was this also such a case?

**MM**

Indeed, the pure presence of Bosnia was more important than who or what was being presented. In Bosnia, at the level of the state, culture is a field that needs to exist and the political establishment wants to be shown as important and potent enough to generate changes, like establishing a pavilion for Bosnia and Herzegovina in Venice.

**TS**

All of what you just said shows a total lack of strategy. You mentioned earlier that strategy focuses on the future and we should think and work more strategically. Let’s talk a little bit about the future. There are many ways to impact society. Teaching, for instance, is a very powerful tool. You teach extensively and you are even the head of Visual Art

Department at the Academy in Banja Luka. And, very ironically, you are teaching in the very same building that was previously the military base where you served in the army. This ambiguous situation was the starting point of your work, *I Serve Art*. What does teaching mean to you? And what is your strategy in teaching?

**MM**

I use many strategies. I think that in art education individualized strategies are more effective than general ones. Teaching at an academy means power: It’s a position where you can change something. Five years ago, when I started to work as a professor, I told myself, “OK, if in four years—which is how long undergraduate studies are at the Academy—at the end of their studies you don’t have artists who are capable of thinking critically and participating in society as generators of values, then you did nothing. You should quit your job and go and live in a small village in the countryside, cultivate plants and collect mushrooms, and live your quiet life.”

**TS**

(Laughing) But you are still at the Academy.

**MM**

The generation I started to work with four and five years ago is already active in the art scene. They are young emerging artists, very present, and not only in Bosnia. Just a few days ago I got a text message from one of my students saying, “Thank you, professor, for your mentorship. The work we did during our studies won the first award in a festival in Copenhagen.” It is a 60-second video piece. Two other students just enrolled for their M.A. studies at Bauhaus Weimar, at the invitation of the professors from Weimar. Another student is now in Vienna in Kultur Kontakt Haus for a residency program because he won an award for the best student video work in Bosnia. This kind of confirmation is very direct. This is some

kind of practical proof that you can change something.

**TS**

That is very promising. Now you also have a chance to influence the future of a person, a very important person. Very recently, a couple of weeks ago, you became a father. Congratulations! How is it to be a father?

**MM**

Thank you. Somehow the feeling is unexpected, in a way. Of course, you expect it for nine months, but, in the end, the final feeling is unexpected. Unexpectedly big. But... I haven't yet fit this moment of becoming a father into my artistic and social theories. (Laughing)

**TS**

As you said, life and art intervene massively in your practice...

**MM**

The basic thing in art is to create values; that's why art is there. Art is also about producing life as a main value, as a receptor of the value of something. I need to admit that during this last period of my life, there were many deaths. During the war, I lost half of my family. Later, my father died because of the consequences of the war. There were too many deaths... And I think this moment of bringing new life and values into the world somehow, coincidentally or not, goes hand in hand with my artistic practice and my private life. The last few years were really intensive, productive, and satisfying for me in all fields, and I see that as a really good direction for future developments.

**TS**

I think that your thoughts about bringing new life into the world and creating new values for the future sum up what we talked about and is an excellent place to end our conversation—for now.

**MM**

Thank you, Tijana. I propose that we do our next interview 10 years from now to

summarize what we did after making these promises and strategies for the future, which then will be the past!

**TS**

With pleasure! I will put it in my calendar right now.



### TIJANA STEPANOVIĆ

Curator  
Budapest, Hungary

Tijana Stepanović is a curator of the first OFF-Biennale Budapest in 2015. Previously, she was a Curator and Head of the Agency for Contemporary Art Exchange (ACAX), the international department of Budapest's Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Arts; Artistic Director of acb Gallery; and Visual Production Curator at Prezi. Under her leadership, ACAX collaborated with dOCUMENTA (Germany), Manifesta, Istanbul Biennial, Liverpool Biennial, Paris Photo, PHotoEspaña, Mondriaan Fund (Amsterdam), ISCP New York, and Gasworks among others, as well as with hundreds of local and international artists, curators, designers, and organizations. As a curator she is dedicated to trans-disciplinary approaches, and her interest lies primarily in the intersection of art, social psychology, and science. Stepanović curated several exhibitions and projects and was one of the curators of *Transitland: Video Art from Central and Eastern Europe, 1989–2009*, an archive project that focused on video art of the post-socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe.



### MLADEN MILJANOVIĆ

Professor, Department Chair  
Academy of Art  
Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mladen Miljanović lives and works in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina. He graduated from the Academy of Art in Banja Luka and is now a member of its faculty and a department chair. Mladen is the recipient of the coveted Henkel Art Award (Austria) and the Zvono Award for Best Young Artist in Bosnia and Herzegovina (part of the region's Young Visual Artists Awards program). He has presented 20 individual exhibitions and more than 60 group exhibitions over the last decade at the Busan Biennale, Palazzo Forti in Verona, Antje Wachs Gallery in Berlin, and at the 2013 Venice Biennale among others. He was also an artist-in-residence at International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP) in New York as well as at Neue Galerie Graz, Austria, and FABRIKculture in Hégenheim, France. Miljanović was selected by two curators, one from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and one from Republika Srpska, to represent his nation at the pavilion of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Venice Biennale. Prior to the opening, he sent the following text message to 500 people, primarily people not associated with the art world: "Dear friend, what would you love or wish to see in the pavilion of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Venice?" He then engraved the responses on a marble tombstone, which he held, in his hands, during the opening of the pavilion, until he could no longer bear the burden of holding such wishes; the performance lasted around 90 minutes. This piece, entitled *The Pressure of Wishes*, underscores many of the ideas that recur throughout his work: that of service and responsibility to one's audience as an artist, the burden that carries with it, the suffering artist who suffers not only for his art, but also for his viewers, and of course the trauma involved in the experience of doing so.

## CONVERSATION

David Gordon  
&  
Dmitry Lisitsyn

Environmentalists David Gordon, from the United States, and Dmitry Lisitsyn, from Russia, have more in common than one might think. Here, they discuss everything from their first encounters with each other's cultures to their shared efforts to preserve the rich natural resources of the Sakhalin Island region.

**DG**

So how about this, let's start from the beginning and then we'll see how the conversation goes from there. You grew up in Siberia, correct? What do you remember about your childhood in terms of how you felt about the United States of America at that time?

**DL**

Well, I grew up in Krasnoyarsk Krai, on the lower part of the Angara River, in a small town on the shore of the Angara. And what I thought of Americans as a child? That's an interesting question. I've hardly ever asked myself that question. As a child, I associated America with a sort of menace, you know? It was the scariest menace, and my feelings about America were closely tied to my feelings about nuclear weapons. It's a really interesting thing, I was always terribly afraid of nuclear war. For me, it was a nightmare that never went away. There were several occasions when I'd wake up in terror, in a cold sweat, because I thought a nuclear explosion was taking place outside. This feeling stayed with me through my entire childhood, and it was always tied specifically to America. Later on, I always thought about how lucky I was to be living in the best country in the world, and how unlucky those who lived in America were, because life is horrible over there, it's scary, there are so many awful problems, people can't find work, and so on...

**DG**

When was this?

**DL**

This was in the 1970s and the very beginning of the 1980s.

**DG**

And afterwards, you went to university, you moved to Sakhalin Island. You probably remember your first encounters with Americans. When was this, how did it happen?

**DL**

Yes. You know, I think the first time I met someone from the West, so to speak, it wasn't an American, it was actually a British woman. And you probably know her.

**DG**

Emma Wilson?

**DL**

Yes, of course. But as for the first real American I met, it was BJ Chisholm who worked for ISAR, a US non-governmental organization that built civil society capacity in the former Soviet Union. And, obviously, both Emma and BJ opened up a whole new world to me, one that was completely different from what I'd imagined. Generally speaking, of course, this world had already opened up at the end of the '80s, when perestroika began and people started to understand that the real America was completely different from what Russian propaganda, Soviet propaganda, had tried to make us believe.

**DG**

When you met BJ Chisholm for the first time, you were probably afraid that she had a button that she could push to start a nuclear war?

**DL**

(Laughs) No, of course not. I actually wonder why nobody is afraid of nuclear war today. I think this is a big problem, because back then, everyone was afraid, and it was a very powerful moral deterrent. I think this fear of nuclear war went up to the very top. And now I get the impression that, at least in

Russia, no one is afraid anymore, and people feel perfectly comfortable saying things like, “Let’s drop a nuclear bomb on America.” I think this state of affairs is very dangerous. What about you, by the way? How did you feel about the Soviet Union when you were little?

**DG**

Oh, I was afraid you’d ask me this question! It wasn’t actually that different. I also grew up in the ’70s and ’80s, during the Carter and Reagan administrations. And from what I remember, when I was very small, yes, I was afraid of nuclear war. I grew up near Washington, DC, so I was always surrounded by politics, and I really disliked Reagan. I thought that he was the most dangerous president, the most dangerous person, one who could start a war. I was always skeptical of him, and I didn’t believe his words about the USSR and so on. That’s why, when I went to college, I began to study Russian. Then again, I also had to choose between Russian and math, and I didn’t want to study math.

**DL**

(Laughs)

**DG**

I was actually very interested in Russian history and Russian culture because it was something that was being concealed from us in America. Or at least that’s how I felt.

**DL**

But wait, America was a free country! What do you mean it was being concealed? You had alternative media sources, freedom of information, and so on...

**DG**

Yes, I sought those out, of course, and it was always useful. We didn’t have any difficulty finding points of view that differed from Reagan’s, but the main source of information was the government. Back in the ’80s, people were still afraid. They were afraid of and didn’t trust the Soviet Union. So I was always

interested in seeking out alternative sources of information. And, again, that’s part of the reason why I chose to study Russian and Russian history.

When was the first time you came to the United States, do you remember it well?

**DL**

Of course, I remember perfectly well. But I have to say a couple of words first about how, ever since I was a little kid, I wanted to travel very badly. I wanted to see the world. In the Soviet Union, being able to go abroad was a big stroke of luck and a big deal. It was something everyone really wanted to do, and I felt the same way. Then, once I was already an adult and had my own family, my own child, and I was living in Sakhalin in the early ’90s, I still didn’t think I had any chance of going abroad. I would sometimes think that maybe I’d end up spending my entire life without seeing the world at all. Then, in 1996, I’d saved up some money to pay for a visa and I was going to hitchhike to China, to at least see China. That’s when I met Emma Wilson, and I completely forgot about my plans to go China because my life in the environmental movement began.

In 1999, I went to another country for the first time, and that country was the US. I went on a TMU exchange to learn about the oil industry in Alaska, to see how they address the same kind of environmental problems that we’re battling here, to learn about eco-friendly technologies that we lack here, and to establish contacts within the environmental movement in the US. But I had actually begun communicating with fellow environmentalists much earlier. In 1997, I began emailing regularly with various environmental activists from the US, Japan, and Europe. So, my first trip was to Anchorage, Alaska, at the end of March 1999. This meeting had several Russian participants including environmental activists, professionals, and experts from Sakhalin

and Kamchatka. We came there for the 10th Anniversary of the Exxon *Valdez* oil spill. Pacific Environment organized this trip with the help of funding from TMU, and it was an unforgettable experience where I received a huge amount of very relevant information that inspired my future work.

**DG**

What do you remember about this experience and your impressions?

**DL**

Well, there are impressions that had to do with my work and impressions that had to do with cultural exchanges, such as getting to know a different country and a different culture. The interesting thing is, I liked the way of life, day-to-day life, very much. At the same time, I had this feeling that Americans who live in Alaska have isolated themselves from nature and nature from themselves. It’s a kind of coexistence but it’s not a life of deep interconnectedness. They truly respect nature as a standalone value, they love it very much as a standalone value, but it’s not like they feel a kinship with nature.

**DG**

So are you trying to say that in Sakhalin people are more dependent on nature or more interdependent with nature?

**DL**

Yes, absolutely. It’s not just in Sakhalin, but in Russia in general. People who live close to nature depend heavily on nature and nature is dependent on them.

**DG**

Well, you probably know that Alaska, for America, is the place where people are most dependent on nature, compared to California or New York, for example. I just find it interesting that you had this impression even in Alaska.

**DL**

It felt more pronounced specifically because it was Alaska. We went to a store, a huge supermarket, and we’re surrounded by this

austere, sparse northern environment, piles of snow, fir trees, the harsh sea, and then we walk in and there’s a huge variety of food products from all over the world. All sorts of products, food you can buy anywhere—bananas, etc. It seems completely normal now, and for Americans it probably always seemed normal, but back then for me, someone who had grown up in the Soviet Union and lived through the ’90s in Russia, which were a very difficult time, it was a very unnatural thing. People aren’t really getting anything from their natural environment besides salmon. Salmon is the only Alaskan food product that’s sold in stores there. I’m not saying it’s a bad thing, but it shows how much in general our civilization has removed itself from nature. And this was one of the strongest feelings I had in Alaska.

This feeling was emphasized even more when we arrived in the evening and went to take a walk around Anchorage. We didn’t see any people at all. It was 11 p.m., and there was no one in the streets. We wanted to eat but there was nowhere to eat at the hotel, and we were very hungry, so we went looking for a place to eat and came across a bar. It was completely quiet in the streets, not a soul, nobody, and then we open the door and suddenly there’s noise, a huge crowd of people, everyone’s sitting around drinking and talking, the air is thick with smoke. This was such an incredible contrast; it was so different from Russia—it was a big cultural shock. The most interesting part is that, when we left the bar at about 12:30 a.m. and were walking down the street, I suddenly heard someone yell, “Dima!” behind me. I turned around to see a guy running toward me. He had also come out of the bar, and he’s running toward me trying to catch up. So I stop and I see that it’s the environmental manager from Sakhalin Energy, whom I met and



interacted very closely with about a month prior. Can you imagine? It was very funny, of course.

**DG**

(Laughs) Yes, yes. And what was your impression of the people in Alaska, the people in the US that you met?

**DL**

Well, you know, it was a really positive impression. America, unlike Russia, has a sort of tradition of positive behavior. In Russia, people's behavior toward others can be anything at all, it depends on a large number of factors. In America, there is a standard of positive behavior that is the norm. In addition, yes, I was very pleased and very impressed by the fact that people there really care about the environment. This was really obvious. In the oil industry, there's also a standard of behavior to take care of the environment, even if they don't necessarily do it all the time. And there are lots of environmental activists in the US. I really liked and admired all the activists I met there.

Hold on, David, we're not just doing an interview about me; I want to hear about your impressions. When you first came to Russia, did it meet your expectations or, on the contrary, was it something completely unexpected?

**DG**

Well, the first time I came to Russia wasn't through TMU, it was a student exchange in 1989. It was still during the Soviet era. I went to Leningrad, in February, and of course it was a bit of a shock for me because I arrived in winter, in the North, and it was dark. But I loved it so much there! What I remember from that time is that I was able to, almost accidentally, through one of my professors at the university, meet a lot of artists in Leningrad. It was a very creative time when they really wanted to interact with Americans. For many of them, I was

the first American they had ever met, and they were so welcoming. I remember having so many conversations about life, about the world. This gave me a very positive impression of Russians as being philosophical, deep thinkers, very intelligent and cultured people. This continued when several years later I began working in the Russian Far East. Of course it was a bit different in that I was no longer in the European part of Russia. The culture of the Far East is, as you say, more dependent on and connected to nature. But I encountered the same hospitality and the same sort of profound thinkers, people who love conversation and love to debate various philosophical issues.

**DL**

Yes, you know, that's exactly what I remembered from that period and of those people. It's what I miss very much in Russia right now, I have to say. Today, these sort of people have all but disappeared, unfortunately.

**DG**

Listen, you started talking about environmental activism, and I want to know, what similarities and differences do you see between Russian and American environmental activists?

**DL**

That's a good question. What I really liked in Alaska was that there were a lot of activists protecting the environment because they really loved wildlife. Later on, I read the book *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold, and I realized that the motivation described there is really my primary motivation. I saw that, in Alaska, there were many who shared this primary motivation: the love for wildlife. It's very hard to explain in words, but it's a sort of deep inner understanding of the absolute value of wildlife—its absolute beauty and a sort of absolute justness and trueness. This deep inner understanding and love is the driving force for a number of environmental activists. In Alaska,

I saw many people like this. In Russia, unfortunately, people like this aren't that numerous. People have different motivations. It's normal that people have different reasons for protecting the environment, but those who protect wildlife because they love it very much, those people are, at least in my circle and in Russia, less numerous. I really felt that those people in Alaska were just like me.

As for the broader picture, I liked the large variety of different environmental organizations. It was very nice to see that they weren't competing against one another, at least not in any overt way. In Russia, this is a problem that existed back then and continues on, namely that many environmentalist groups and activists compete against one another and are sometimes in conflict with each another. The magazine *Call of the Taiga* once published an article entitled, "The Sanctuary Syndrome," which said that if a wildlife sanctuary has two scientists, it will have three public environmental centers. Larisa Kabalik of the Center of Protection of the Wild Nature wrote that article; it was a very good article. And this problem really does exist in Russia. But I always thought that it was very wrong and silly to compete in such a field... It's just very unseemly. I never built my work on competition with my colleagues; I always tried to join forces with them. In Alaska, I saw that people were capable of teaming up, of working together, and that was really inspiring.

**DG**

I'd actually like to disagree with you a little bit. Not on your second point, about competitiveness, but on the first point about attitudes toward wildlife. I think you're right about one thing: Russia has very few environmental activists in general. The environmental activists that do exist have a love for nature, an appreciation for nature's beauty, nature's importance; its justness, as you said. In the US, environmentalists like this are also not so

numerous, even though Alaska has more of them than the average state. Many of those who love wildlife move to Alaska to find that wildlife, to experience it, be close to it, and to love and protect it.

**DL**

Well, yes, yes.

**DG**

But I think I disagree with you concerning the following: When I was in Russia, in the Far East, I felt like nearly every person there had this love for nature and this understanding of its beauty, its justness—that there can't possibly be anything higher than nature, better than nature. Even though very few of those people become activists, many simply live their lives, ordinary everyday lives. They might even violate nature and become loggers or whatnot. But I saw such a love for nature and I've always respected this connection with nature, the sense of place that I saw there.

**DL**

Well, you know, there's a tricky thing here. Generally speaking, in Russia, or possibly everywhere in Asia, but especially in the Russian Far East, people have a certain flexibility. If you've interacted with indigenous peoples, maybe you've noticed this. There is a saying that goes like this: Oil industry people visit an indigenous community to tell them something, and they say yes, yes, they nod and agree with everything. Then the environmentalists come and the exact same thing happens. Maybe that's an extreme example, but people have this tendency where this thing you're talking about awakens their hearts, but when they meet with businessmen and oil industry people, other qualities awaken their hearts. People are all very different inside. Unfortunately, it's hard for me to separate these things.

**DG**

You're saying that maybe people were lying to me, or maybe I was just a naïve American?

**DL**

No, no, no.

**DG**

But there really was something there?

**DL**

Yes, without a doubt. There's a lot inside their hearts, including what you're talking about, but there are many other things in there as well. Maybe you're right, we need to do more to awaken this respect toward nature. There's the concept of the categorical imperative, a sort of absolute inner conviction that requires no evidence; an inner conviction that everyone has, to some extent. I think we need to appeal more to this inner conviction that people have about the need to protect nature. In the US, I really saw this in people right away. Maybe I'm also confusing it with some sort of standard of conduct, but I was really happy when we were at the conference dedicated to the 10th Anniversary of the Exxon *Valdez* spill, and I saw what a huge, deep tragedy this catastrophe had become for people, how strongly they felt about it, even those who weren't affected by it personally like the fishermen were. This had a profound impression on me.

**DG**

Yes, yes, yes. And, of course, you've been to the US many times, and many of those trips involved TMU somehow.

**DL**

I would say the majority. Probably about 90 percent. (Laughs)

**DG**

Tell me a little bit about how all this has helped you in your work. How did it impact your work?

**DL**

Well, the impact was simply huge. All of those trips were very valuable, and their value was actually twofold. First of all, the experience we gathered, the information, the contacts, and a general understanding of how environmental problems are dealt with

in the United States and how American society, American culture, the American system works in general. That's one part. And the other valuable aspect was that during these trips, my colleagues and I were able to directly resolve environmental issues. Back then, in the late 1990s and 2000s, Russia had closer ties to the US and was more dependent on the US in terms of natural-resource extraction. In those days, financial institutions had significant influence, at least in Sakhalin. I remember very well how, in 2002 or so, we met with fairly high-level managers from the International Finance Corporation, which is part of the World Bank, when they were considering financing the Sakhalin-II project. We were able to convince them to abandon that idea. This was still in the very early stages; they were just looking into the possibility. We convinced them that this project didn't meet environmental standards. We met with American banks and with various influential US politicians when we were working on the issue of the Sakhalin-II project. Without those trips, my organization, Sakhalin Environment Watch, and I wouldn't be anywhere near the level we are right now in terms of our ability to resolve environmental issues and protect the environment in general. It made a huge contribution; it really did.

**DG**

Of course, you and your organization also hosted many Americans who came to Sakhalin to research these issues. What do you remember about this, and what did you most enjoy showing them when they visited?

**DL**

(Laughs) Well, of course, just as I remember my first trip to the US, I also remember the first time Americans visited us in Sakhalin. And, actually, the first American visit to Sakhalin took place before my first trip to the US. You took part in that trip, do you remember?

**DG**

Yes.

**DL**

It was a group of experts from Alaska led by Richard Fineberg and Ann Rothe. Richard Fineberg is a consultant on economic and environmental issues with a focus on oil. Ann Rothe was, at the time, Executive Director of Trustees for Alaska, an environmental law firm. She now runs the Alaska Conservation Foundation. We organized a whole series of meetings between the US experts and people in Sakhalin, including a series of roundtables and various other events. Of course, for those in Sakhalin, it was a major contribution to their understanding of the problems related to oil and gas development. I also remember the cultural shock the group experienced when they traveled around Sakhalin. I was able to see Russia through their eyes, see our city through their eyes, and it left a deep impression on me. The year 1999 was very illustrative. In my opinion, it was an excellent example of cooperation development, of the growth of the environmental movement and nature conservation work only made possible with a grant from TMU.

When I travelled to Alaska and learned so many things—it was really a huge volume of information—we translated a lot of materials that were all vital to our work on protecting the Okhotsk Sea from the negative environmental impact of oil and gas projects. And after that, PERC [now Pacific Environment] organized, and we assisted on, an exchange where experts on oil spills came to Sakhalin. It was in October 1999 when Richard Steiner, Dan Lawn, and Jonathan Wills [Richard Steiner and Dan Lawn are from Alaska; Jonathan Wills is from Scotland] came to visit. With the help of you, David, they shared their experience with us. This visit had a huge influence on addressing the oil-spill problem on Sakhalin

Island and in the Russian Far East in general. If you remember, in 1999, the first offshore platform had just begun producing oil, and just two weeks before the US experts arrived, a small oil spill happened on that platform. I was naturally very surprised that the oil companies reacted so positively to the arrival of these experts; they even took Dan Lawn out to the platform so he could take a look at it and see why the spill had taken place. Dan very quickly explained everything, he saw everything and figured out the problem. The tow system was set up incorrectly and he gave them specific recommendations on how to do it properly. The report that group prepared at the end of their trip with recommendations on preventing oil spills and on spill-liquidation preparedness—that report is still relevant. Since then, our oil platforms and tankers haven't—I don't want to jinx anything—but they haven't had a major oil spill. Small spills do happen, but there hasn't been a major catastrophic one. And in that sense, of course, we're ahead of Alaska in terms of experience because a major oil spill took place there, if I'm not mistaken, 12 years later, and for us it has been over 15 years. (Laughs)

**DG**

We both know that a lot depends on an oil company's constant attention toward its rules and procedures on the platform in order to prevent such spills. Would you say that work in 1999 attracted enough attention to the issue to help to prevent such spills?

**DL**

Yes, absolutely. The role that our organization and others play in general, and the role of inspections like the one we organized in October 1999 in particular, is huge. We know that the visit of such world-class experts sets a very high bar. Because the oil industry people realized that they were being watched not only by a small, local environmental

organization, but that the organization had the ability to bring in world-class experts from abroad—people from whom it would be difficult to conceal anything. In that sense, I'm also interested in your point of view, David. You have much more experience working with TMU, and not just in Sakhalin. What's your view of these bilateral exchanges?

**DG**

They achieve real results. It's probably most difficult with oil spills and issues like the ones you work on. It's very difficult to look at most TMU exchanges and say, here's this trip, four plane tickets were purchased, and here's the result. It's difficult because, at environmental organizations and foundations and so on, we like to look at the end result. Was a protected wildlife area created, for instance? Were endangered species preserved? With an oil spill, you only know the result after it takes place. You can't say to TMU that this work led to a lack of major oil spills in Sakhalin. We all know that a major oil spill could happen tomorrow, and then we'd all say that it was a failure. But, in reality, I think that, yes, we did something right by attracting attention that made oil companies improve their standards.

**DL**

Yes, you're absolutely right. Look, more than 15 years have passed since that exchange in 1999. Now that time has passed, we see that there was indeed a result. We're still enjoying that result. It's very difficult to judge what would've happened if that hadn't taken place. And it wasn't just that one visit; there were many other exchanges sending US experts to Sakhalin Island and vice versa. Right now Russia is very closed off to the rest of the world; it reminds me a lot of the Soviet Union. Sakhalin is still more open in part because of these offshore projects. But times are changing, and trips like this are becoming

one of the few opportunities, in today's Russia, for cultural exchange and personal contact. Frankly, it's a very unfavorable time for such opportunities.

**DG**

Yes. I'd actually like to talk about that a little bit. Times are difficult now for environmental activists in Russia and for American–Russian relations. Can you speak a bit about this, Dima?

**DL**

Well, what can I say? It's a very sad thing. First of all, I have to say something that everyone probably already knows. I think that the main reason for the current state of affairs is television propaganda. Propaganda through other media sources too, but primarily through television. It's just unbelievable how it all works. You know, Goebbels said, "Let me control the media, and I will turn any nation into a herd of pigs." And something similar is happening in Russia right now. There's some kind of total hysteria about any and all Americans, all forms of contact. But I'm convinced of one thing: We need to preserve and maintain these relations because the situation could change drastically. That's pretty much what happened here in Sakhalin, you could say that it's a miniature model of this. We had a governor, Alexander Khoroshavin, and the whole situation was very similar to what's happening in Russia right now. I don't mean in terms of the attitude toward the US, but in terms of corruption and economic issues. And then, suddenly, that governor was sent to prison and another one was appointed in his place. Of course, we'll have elections in the fall, but until then we have an interim governor and this new governor is changing absolutely everything. This all happened very recently, but just in these last few days major changes have already started taking place. So I think we just need to hang in there, and there will be a light at the end of

the tunnel. A new day will come, and when it comes, we just have to be ready for life to go on again. The situation in Russia right now is completely abnormal; it can't last for very long.

**DG**

What would you say to those Americans, particularly young Americans, children, who look at these things and say to you, "Oh, I don't know anything about Russia, I'd like to know more, but I don't understand what's happening there."

**DL**

Well, I would say the following: Right now, unfortunately, Russia really is in a really difficult situation, but it could change very rapidly. That's the first thing. Second, I would say that there's no need to be afraid of Russia. You just have to be careful right now because, indeed, coming to Russia for an American is riskier than before. However, the worst that could happen is that you'd be deported from the country, and that's very rare. What else is there to fear? You could get fined for violating immigration law. But I don't think that's a particularly scary thing. Despite the fact that, yes, there's a fairly negative attitude toward Americans in Russia right now, a lot of people do not share this attitude. There are many people in Russia who don't think this way. It's a case of society being very polarized. It's split into two very distinct camps. Some people believe that we should be friends with the rest of the world and it's bad that we're isolating ourselves. These people are in the minority, but they're quite numerous nonetheless. Others believe that Russia is surrounded by enemies who just want to destroy us, they want to conquer us, etc. These people are in the majority, but they're still not an absolute majority. So I'm convinced that when someone else comes to power in this country, or, I don't know, when this propaganda machine is destroyed, people will become

completely different. And I believe that it's important to continue maintaining relations with our country.

**DG**

And what would you say to young Russians who live, say, on the Yenisei River, or the Angara River, or in Krasnoyarsk, or even to your own son about America and American–Russian relations?

**DL**

(Laughs) Well, I would say that America really is a great country; it's as great as many other countries, like Britain, India, Russia, and China. I think it's necessary to read more about America in order to form a proper opinion about Americans. For example, for me personally, the books of Jack London contributed greatly to my understanding of Americans. And I would say that those who live in America are people just like us. Their culture is slightly different, but we'll always find a way to understand each other; we should be friends rather than enemies. We need to exchange information, visit one another, adopt best practices from each other. I think that isolating yourself from the rest of the world, which is what's happening in Russia right now, is the silliest thing you can do.

**DG**

Thank you.

**DL**

Wait, hold on, you haven't told me what you would say to young Americans—and young Russians. (Laughs) It's not fair, you have to tell me!

**DG**

(Laughs) Well, I think I would say more or less the same thing. We're all people, more than anything, and we can all find common ground. We have to. If we have the opportunity to simply talk to one another, simply visit one another at each other's dachas, outdoors, in the woods, we will be able to understand each other better. And that's always the most

important thing for me. We need to work to find such opportunities. I understand very well that our respective governments are creating obstacles, barriers, which prevent us, as people, from finding that common ground. But we still have to find ways and means to do this.

**DL**

Yes, you're absolutely right. All right, David, will you tell me how you see the benefits that we've been able to draw from working with TMU?

**DG**

Of course, I completely share your opinion. I'm very happy for TMU that it's their 30th anniversary; it's a big anniversary for them. And they really have a lot to be proud of. It's difficult for them to demonstrate specific results, but what's most important is that they've brought people together, people who, without that support, would not have gotten together. And you would have hitchhiked to China.

**DL**

(Laughs) Yes, that's for sure.

**DG**

And who knows what would've happened then? So, personally, I'm very glad that TMU has been one of those organizations, along with Pacific Environment, along with the Wild Salmon Center, and with your organization, Sakhalin Environment Watch, and many others, who supported the process that allowed us to come together.

**DL**

And it's hard to say what's more important here, the cultural exchange that allows people to discover each other and each other's countries, or the contribution to environmental protection that this creates. Because both are hugely important.

I respect TMU a great deal. It's really a great organization that tears down barriers and builds bridges. It's what we really need right now between Russia and the US.



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David Gordon is the Executive Director of the Goldman Environmental Foundation, known for the Goldman Environmental Prize, which honors and inspires grassroots environmental activism around the world. From 2010 to 2013, David served in the Environment Program of the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation, where he was responsible for developing and managing grantmaking subprograms to enable local communities to sustain healthy ecosystems that perpetuate biodiversity and the ecosystem services that support human well-being. From 1992 to 2010, David worked at Pacific Environment, where he supported environmental-protection efforts in Siberia and the Russian Far East. He developed and sustained an extensive re-granting program, which provided more than \$5 million in grants to dozens of organizations in Russia and, later, in China. In 2003, David was appointed Executive Director of Pacific Environment. As Executive Director, he further grew the organization's impact and oversaw the growth of initiatives in the Arctic, Russia, Alaska, China, and California.



### DMITRY LISITSYN

Board Chair  
Sakhalin Environment Watch  
Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Russia

Dmitry Lisitsyn became the director of Sakhalin Environment Watch (SEW) in 1998, and has since been one of the strongest voices in Russian Environmental Conservation. SEW was instrumental in encouraging Sakhalin Energy, a consortium of Russian and Western oil companies actively depleting Sakhalin's offshore deposits, to employ best practices for pipeline construction, and to delay seismic testing to protect endangered Western Gray Whales. Dmitry also played a key role in the creation of the Vostochny Wildlife Refuge, which protects dozens of endangered and threatened species, and he has worked with local communities to create salmon councils and anti-poaching patrols, which unite stakeholders to protect valuable salmon rivers from poaching and industrial threats. Dmitry's accomplishments were recognized in 2011 when he received the distinguished Goldman Environmental Prize.



**CONVERSATION**

**Anne Bogart  
&  
Philip Arnoult**

**Distinguished pioneers of American theater Anne Bogart and Philip Arnoult share a friendship and artistic collaboration that goes back 40 years. Here, they discuss their shared history, their lives in the world of American and Central European theater, and the ways in which TMU has facilitated their journeys across creative and geographic borders and boundaries.**

**AB**

In thinking about our conversation this morning, I realized that my life would have been completely different without you, Phil. And I didn't realize the profundity of that until I actually went through the years in my head. I'd love to start there, if you would be so willing. I was a student at Bard College, I was probably 20 or 21 years old when I first met you, and at that time you seemed like God to me. You came to see a production that was directed by my dear friend David Schechter, and you took us out for a meal afterwards. In those days, people didn't do that. They didn't take students out for meals. And you talked to us seriously, like artists. That already changed who I was because I had never been treated seriously before. The next thing that happened is that right when I graduated college—and I'm talking 1974—I attended two summers of your international festival in Baltimore. Until that time I had never seen international work. Well, that's not completely true. As a college kid, and probably encouraged by your example, we all went to see Peter Brook's work in New York and we traveled to Philadelphia to see Jerzy Grotowski's work. But those two summers, those festivals, introduced me to the idea of cultural exchange. I mean real cultural exchange. I had never seen theater like that. So, as a person, as a trajectory in the world, as a director, as an artist, I don't know who I would've been without you. I just wanted to start with that notion and ask you how you

became a person interested in international cultural exchange.

**PA**

I had two really great mentors, and I think they are a big part of the TMU story: Ellen Stewart and Martha Coigney. They impacted me on so many different levels. What I connected to in both women was the investment they made, not in the product, but in the artists; the real commitment to people. Which, if your latest production is the hottest thing since sliced bread, then the next one ain't, most people move on from your work, right? Not those two. They were able to see who you are, get excited by your ideas, and intuitively feel that sense of, "Oh! I see what you're trying to do! And now, here is the next step." That, I think, from my perch, has been a real thread of TMU in supporting and fostering those longer-term relationships that are inevitable if the investment is in the person, not the product.

As far as my own regional interest, I'm not Polish, I'm not Russian, I have no blood from that part of the world, but the artist windows that led me into international work were all from Central and Eastern Europe. Grotowski was, of course, a huge influence. I first saw him in Philadelphia thanks to my old college buddy Richard Mennen. In Grotowski's work and the work of so many artists from that part of the world, there was an investment in individuals that manifested in a social theater culture. And rarely did I go to the theater in Poland, or later Russia, or Bulgaria, or Hungary, where I didn't feel like I was stepping into the middle of a much longer conversation. I can honestly say that the most interesting, profound, exciting theater I ever saw was from that part of the planet. And that's what has drawn me back there over the years. I've worked in other places and worked deeply in other places. I worked in East Africa for 10 years, I worked in the Netherlands for another 10, but the thread of

Central and Eastern Europe has always been there for me.

**AB**

There is something that you just said that I cannot let pass by. Maybe repeating it is enough; we don't have to expand on it. I want to highlight your interest in individuals rather than products. Because this conversation is in the cadre of a foundation discussion, I want to point out that the importance of the development of an individual, or individuals, as opposed to their product is unusual thinking in terms of foundations. I had a conversation recently with Moisés Kaufman, who has been encouraging foundations to think about theater artists and ensembles more in the way that one thinks about visual artists. You don't say, "I'm going to support this painting," you say, "I'm going to support your studio." And I think that is such an intelligent way to look at it.

The other thing I have to ask you is solely out of curiosity. When I said that you had a huge influence on my life in terms of the windows that you opened, I mentioned that I had been in Philadelphia in 1972 to see Grotowski's *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*. Was that the same thing you were talking about when you mentioned seeing Grotowski in Philadelphia? Did you actually make that happen? Where you the maven in that situation, too?

**PA**

I was the maven insofar as I reconnected with Richard Mennen. He was the one who brought Grotowski to Philadelphia. I'm trying to think if you were there in Philly with me. You probably were part of some of the conversations about *August Moon*.

**AB**

Oh, yes.

**PA**

I have to tell my favorite Anne story, if you'll indulge me for a minute. For *August Moon*, we charged a registration fee for workshops

in order to generate income. And so a young Anne Bogart called up. And I didn't know who Anne Bogart was at the time, or I didn't remember. And she didn't have the money for the registration fee. I forget whose idea it was, but they said, "Can she cook?" Well, I asked around and people said "Yeah, Anne can cook! She can cook!" And so we gave you a scholarship; I think you had just come back from Germany. You cooked for all 40 of us every damn day!

**AB**

I did.

**PA**

You fed us, Anne! And you still do.

**AB**

I like cooking for lots of people.

**PA**

OK, back to business. What I was beginning to think about before that story were the activities surrounding that 1972 Philadelphia trip. I was running the Baltimore Theatre Project at the time and was toying with the idea of starting some sort of producing network along the I-95 corridor. So, when Richard brought Grotowski, I asked him, "Can you give me 40 tickets for one of the performances? I'm just going to invite a bunch of people from the East Coast and see if they come." And this one guy from North Dakota caravanned to Philly. Do you remember him?

**AB**

Of course.

**PA**

He drove three days from North Dakota to come see the Grotowski piece! Then all 40 people had this four-hour meeting—a sort of dreaming time—and then everyone went home and he drove three days back to North Dakota. Somewhere in my archives I know I've got the list of who was part of that group. Right after that I found the Iowa Theatre Lab, which is another connection you and I share.

**AB**

Also life-altering for me.

**PA**

And I invited the Iowa Theatre Lab group to be in residence at the Baltimore Theatre Project. I got one of those little Theatre Communications Group travel grants to fly out to Iowa City and see the company.

**AB**

What show did you see?

**PA**

I think it was *The Naming*. After seeing that and meeting with the Theatre Lab and learning that they were losing their support from Iowa, I asked them to come to Baltimore. They were with me for two years and then they moved up to Catskill.

When they were in residence, it was an incredible time for the Baltimore Theatre Project. One day, the Iowa Lab was conducting training and this young kid in short pants named Oskar Eustis shows up because he wants to study with the Iowa Theatre Lab. I was bringing in students to do two- and three-week workshops back-to-back, and I think we were able to give them credit from maybe Bard at one point. I know Antioch was giving credit. All of the sudden, in the middle of the night, I get a phone call from Tony Abeson, and Abeson had this Grotowski-inspired company in Washington, DC, called the Washington Theatre Lab. He said, "I've been travelling incognito with Grotowski all across America, and this trip has been a bust. Grotowski is looking for a partner to do this project called *The Pillar of Fire*, and I thought about you. Can we come to Baltimore?" I said "Absolutely." So Grotowski came and saw the Lab. I have this wonderful image of Grotowski in my office with Ric Zank and all the Lab members sitting around, almost like we were in a tent. I had my chair, Grotowski had his chair, and everybody else was on the floor.

Grotowski talked about the resonances he felt with what he had just seen. And I said to myself, I don't ever have to read a book about this man, I got it.

Grotowski then invited me to Poland and said, "If you've got some friends, bring them along." So, I ended up taking some folks from The Play Group in Tennessee. I took Leonardo Shapiro and some of his Shaliko Company actors to Wroclaw to the Theatre of Nations in 1975, and that changed everything for me. It was a huge experience. I was coming to Poland to take on this project, which ultimately never happened. What Grotowski wanted to do was find a very high mountain and use whatever technology was available at that time to create the largest pillar of fire on the planet that could be seen from outer space.

**AB**

Early Burning Man!

**PA**

A real early Burning Man! And he wanted the audience to come via helicopter to this incredible theater piece that he was going to make on the top of the mountain! That very public event was the "outside" that sheltered research that would go on around the middle of the mountain—the inside of the project. But I digress...

**AB**

No it's great, but I don't want to skip *August Moon*. Because even though *August Moon* wasn't necessarily Eastern European, there was a lot of influence. I remember now that the first time I ever saw the Iowa Theatre Lab's work was at your festival, and I was so knocked out when I heard that they were doing a workshop at Playwrights Horizons. I signed up, as did Oskar Eustis, who was very skinny in those days and had very long hair. In the workshop, men had to wear g-strings and women had to wear dance skirts. I was Oskar's partner in an exercise where you had to "play your pain" across the space as

you ran in circles holding your ankles. That changed my life entirely. I think it affected Oskar profoundly as well. Ric Zank and the Iowa Theatre Lab were seminal and had massive influence on people and now, since Ric left the theater, we don't talk about him that much. He did move to Catskill, as you mentioned, and we—you, and me, and Ric and his company—put together a festival called *August Moon*. Will you discuss *August Moon* and its intentions, because it was a very international festival up in the Catskills. How did that come about, and what does it have to do with the conversation we're having now?

**PA**  
Well, first of all, it wasn't a festival. If you look at the language we used, it was a gathering. We didn't say, "We're going to show this piece, and that piece, and this piece." We showed some work, but the main question was, "Who do we want to bring together?" Again, there's that thread of looking at individuals. That was at a time where Ric and I were both connected to the Experimental Theatre Wing run by...

**AB**  
Ron Argelander.

**PA**  
Yes, Ron Argelander. I think he was writing a book on the Iowa Theatre Lab.

**AB**  
He didn't finish it.

**PA**  
He didn't?

**AB**  
No. And I wish he had.

**PA**  
But, as far as a festival, this leads me to the 1976 festival that I did with Herbert Blau in Baltimore. It was a week or 10 days long. We produced 35 companies, only five were international, and only one was from New York. You were there, Molly Smith says her life was changed by being there, Jim Nicola

was there. You guys were all 16 or 20 years old! And the Lab was in residence. That festival was one of the last things Ric and the Lab did in Baltimore before they moved to Catskill.

I loved that work and loved Ric and the idea of a laboratory theater. That's how I fell in love with Gardzienice. When I saw them for the first time, that bell rang and I felt the same way I did the first time I saw the Lab. When I found Stacy Klein and Double Edge Theatre 25 years ago, that bell rang again. Then 10 years ago, I saw Teatr Zar and that bell rang.

The sad thing about Ric and the Lab is there's no documentation. No one was in there making video tapes of what he was doing. He didn't write about it; other people did. I find that's a huge hole in the history.

**AB**  
I so agree. I wish we could find Ron Argelander's half-finished book and publish it because I think that Ric Zank is one of the heroes of the American theater that people don't talk about.

But I wanted to ask you something. What is it you said? "The bell rang?"

**PA**  
Yes.

**AB**  
When you say "the bell rang," can you describe what it is in the theater that you're experiencing? What makes that bell go off in you?

**PA**  
There are two sides to it. One is, if I talked about the work that I've been drawn to over the years, it's very catholic. It's very wide. But there's this niche...

**AB**  
Is that what catholic means? Wide?

**PA**  
Embracing.

**AB**  
Really? That's so interesting.

**PA**  
I think that's right. Carol? My wife is listening to this...

**CAROL**  
Catholic means broad, but you don't use it with a capital "c."

**AB**  
That's fantastic. I love knowing this, thank you!

**PA**  
For me, it's L.O. Sloane's *Three Black and Three White Refined Jubilee Minstrels* that I worked with 25 years ago. It's the exquisite early work of Complicite. But then there's also this deeply rooted thread of Grotowski, Ric, Gardzienice, Double Edge, Teatr Zar. Almost in that circle, for me, has also been Eugenio Barba. When the bell rings, it seems like the energy spills out, and I really feel like I'm looking at something that is so contained. Like a nuclear fission.

**AB**  
So, there's something about fission or a fusion or an electrical current that happens. And that's always really difficult to talk about. But, speaking of that, I'm going to ask a selfish question. When you and Ellen Stewart were in a room together alone, what was that room like?

**PA**  
I was very much a listener. And I first met Ellen before I started the Theatre Project. I was 32 or 33 years old. I went up to her apartment and spent three hours with her. She just told stories. I didn't walk away with images of her at work. I walked away with this image of her watching work happen. Or her telling stories about these long relationships she had with people from all over the globe. When I traveled to New York in those early years, I would spend most of my time at La MaMa. La MaMa and the Performing Garage were my two stops. And Ellen and I were really a big part of each other's lives for the rest of her life. Most of our interaction

involved the International Theatre Institute. A lot of times it was Martha Coigney and Ellen and me in a room together. I loved her. I loved Ellen and always learned from her.

**AB**  
Well it seems appropriate that she appears in our discussion because she opened a lot of channels that you then took up space in, you know what I mean?

**PA**  
Absolutely.

**AB**  
It supports the notion of us being who we are because of the guidance of others. In that spirit, in terms of you and what your work is, can you talk about the Center for International Theatre Development?

**PA**  
CITD allows me do my work without institutionalization. I am totally against institutionalization. When I left the Theatre Project, it was a million dollar a year operation. And I knew what Friday was. Friday was pay day. And that was so much pressure for me.

I want to be as nimble as possible; I want to be able to not spend any of my time doing anything but the work.

What I do is, basically, I invite people to join projects. And, being nimble, I was able to work in East Africa. I found an explosion of contemporary dance. The same thing was happening with the same generation in Russia; I was able to pair artists from those two parts of the world and conduct a five-year project. I've had three manifestations in Hungary. One of which, the Eastern and Central European Theatre Initiative, was heavily funded by TMU. I was looking at theater directors who were fully formed after the political changes in 1989-90. I took major American artistic directors to Hungary and to Poland to see these young directors, which resulted in Krzysztof Warlikowski, Grzegorz Jarzyna, Enikő

Eszenyi, Róbert Alföldi, and János Szász coming to America for the first time.

I don't have a five-year plan. I want to be able to turn on a dime. None of my work since the Theatre Project would have happened if I was in the business of building an institution.

**AB**

That makes a lot of sense.

**PA**

And my work has always been at the margins. That's what interests me. My big question now is, how can I give my knowledge base over to someone? Maybe what I can give is the curiosity. Maybe what I can give is the openness. I'm pretty attuned to the kind of traps, particularly the institutional traps, I just don't want to fall into.

**AB**

When I think about what your work means—besides influencing people, besides the productions that happen here and internationally—what I think you're managing to do is to create ongoing conversations that are cross-cultural. And that's huge. That kind of conversation is what changes things. So my question for you is: What do you wish for? What do you wish would happen in the coming years?

**PA**

It's rather stunning to think that TMU is celebrating 30 years and that I first went to Poland 40 years ago. And that a thread of all of my work—I took a detour in the Netherlands, I took a detour in East Africa, I worked for awhile in the UK—but the major thread has been that part of the world. And, honestly, I have never seen things as bleak as they are right now, particularly in Russia and in Hungary. I have been paying a lot of attention to Hungary over the last five years, and I've tried to support many of our artist friends by helping to tell their stories. It took me 40 years, but I finally figured out exactly what I do. I show up, I witness, I help

tell the story, and then I help people take next steps—really simple, simple things. I truly believe that now, the most important thing is to keep moving people, keep making sure they see each other's work, keep making sure they are able to collaborate and communicate. Isolation is the worst possible byproduct of this deeply troubling regional situation. So, I have an awful lot of witnessing and an awful lot of helping people take next steps to do.

**AB**

It sounds like your wish for the future is to keep the doors of communication open.

**PA**

And to allow people the mobility to make sure they remain connected to the global artistic conversation. That is what will save lives and legacies. I think we are at that moment, or right at the precipice.



### ANNE BOGART

Co-Artistic Director  
SITI Company  
New York, New York, United States

Anne Bogart founded SITI Company with Japanese director Tadashi Suzuki in 1992. She is a Professor at Columbia University where she runs the Graduate Directing Program. Works with SITI include: *the theater is a blank page*; *Persians*; *Steel Hammer*; *A Rite*; *Café Variations*; *Trojan Women*; *American Document*; *Antigone*; *Under Construction*; *Freshwater*; *Who Do You Think You Are*; *Radio Macbeth*; *Hotel Cassiopeia*; *Death and the Ploughman*; *La Dispute*; *Score*; *bobraschenbergamerica*; *Room*; *War of the Worlds*; *Cabin Pressure*; *War of the Worlds: The Radio Play*; *Alice's Adventures*; *Culture of Desire*; *Bob*; *Going, Going, Gone*; *Small Lives/Big Dreams*; *The Medium*; Noel Coward's *Hay Fever* and *Private Lives*; August Strindberg's *Miss Julie*; and Charles Mee's *Orestes*. Operas include: *Macbeth*; *Norma*; *Carmen*; *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*; *Nicolas and Alexander*; *Lilith*; and *Seven Deadly Sins*. She is the author of five books: *What's the Story*; *A Director Prepares*; *The Viewpoints Book*; *And Then, You Act*; and *Conversations with Anne*.



### PHILIP ARNOULT

Director  
Center for International Theatre Development  
Baltimore, Maryland, United States

Philip Arnould has happily haunted the margins of American and international theater for 44 years (and counting). He founded the Baltimore Theatre Project in 1971, supporting a quirky mix of national and international residencies, community projects, and pre-professional training programs. He was responsible for bringing two festivals to Baltimore: The New Theatre Festival (1976) with Herbert Blau, and The Theatre of Nations Festival (1985) with T. Edward Hambleton and Stan Wojewodski. In 1991 he founded the Center for International Theatre Development (CITD), which has had a constant focus of projects and exchanges in Russia, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Romania. Arnould has worked deeply, and in various capacities, with four laboratory theaters: The Iowa Theatre Lab, Double Edge Theatre, Gardzienice, and Teatr Zar. He worked closely with Martha Coigney and the US Center of the International Theatre Institute (ITI) from 1976 and served as a board member of the US Center and President of the New Theatre Committee. Arnould is the recipient of the 1990 Rosamond Gilder Award from the US Center of ITI and the 2014 Adam Mickiewicz Laureate (Poland). He lives in Baltimore with his wife and professional partner, Carol Baish.



**“It is always important for artists and scholars to challenge themselves and their own assumptions about the world and the work they do in it.”**

—Kara Walker, Artist, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation/CCA Ujazdowski Castle American Seasons

**“If more people could learn the stories and histories of others and let compassion and communication and even conflict flow more freely and not get stuck, we could make so much more progress in our world community.”**

—Abena Koomson, Participant, CEC ArtsLink One Big City

**“In isolation, it is impossible for an artist to see the real position and value of his or her art.”**

—Fritzie Brown, Executive Director, CEC ArtsLink

**“Although in theory, travel and communication should be easier than when TMU was founded in 1985, the economic and political hurdles for true collaboration are still extremely great.”**

—Steve Dubiel, Executive Director, Earthcorps

**“We see that we are not alone in our work—we see that people living in different parts of the world are working to solve the same kinds of issues we are. We have shared problems, but the approaches to solving them can be very different.”**

—Sergei Berezniuk, Exchange Participant, Pacific Environment Agricultural Fires

**“The most important thing was the interaction itself—a chance to meet different people, to get to know them, to have a conversation, to exchange ideas.”**

—Anna Orlikowska, Artist in Residence, Headlands Center for the Arts

**“It is in an environment of openness that the most extraordinary compositions are nurtured.”**

—Tim Thomas, Development Director, Bang on a Can

**“Together, we create something new.”**

—Robert Wilson, Artistic Director, Watermill Center

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