

LIVE NATIONAL PERFORMANCE ART RETREAT VANCOUVER OCTOBER 9 & 10, 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This groundbreaking retreat assembled representatives of organizations -each dedicated to the promotion and exhibition of performance art across Canada- to discuss and share working models on aspects such as curation, programming, travel, hosting, artist's remuneration, project and annual funding, historical archives, documentation, social media, and networking. Organized to build consensus around the support and presentation of performance art by Canadian organizations, the Retreat was made possible thanks to the commitment of national performance art advocates who provided recommendation letters in support of the organizers' application to the Canada Council for the arts' Audience and Market Development Travel Grants.

The purpose of the LIVE National Performance Art Retreat was to:

- Strategize and build consensus on how to represent and promote performance art activity in Canada;
- Discuss issues specific to the performance art practice;
- Coordinate ways of working together while respecting the varying objectives, methods, and regional interests specific to the intentions of each organization.

The nation-wide Retreat was successful in creating synergy between the participants, and opening up channels of communication necessary for the emergence of future collaborations as well as for the ongoing sharing of information on events, organizational challenges, methods and strategies.

The summary of meeting minutes was prepared by Stacey Ho and Randy Gledhill with the support of the Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference / La Conférence des collectifs et des centres d'artistes autogérés (ARCCC/CCCAA, aka ARCA).

The Retreat's primary recommendations include:

- Update programs to respond to new models being explored for the support and dissemination of performance art that focus more stringently on research, development and community involvement;
- Ensure that informed performance art practitioners and advocates are invited to visual art juries;
- Work with funding bodies to develop ways to encourage performance art programming in artist-run centres and other institutions;
- Revise and update the CARFAC fee schedule according to the concerns of current performance art practice, including collaborative performances or participatory works, whether in a major museum or in a developing emerging space, drawing from the experience and knowledge of the Retreat attendees;
- Produce guidelines and standard contract (update existing RCAAQ standard contract?) to ensure clarity and consistency around legal and ethical issues;
- Provide greater exposure and travel opportunities for artists by encouraging greater collaboration among performance art organizations through nation-wide meetings modeled after the Retreat;
- Foster different potentials by encouraging alternative ways of programming performance art, including mini-festivals, residencies, workshops, community projects, and further collaboration with galleries;
- Clarify and share the responsibility of documentation by ensuring that artists fully understand the organization's intentions in using their images;
- Bring the dialogue to regions outside of the big art centres of Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver by holding retreats in a different location, ideally extending beyond current participating organizations to include a growing network of current performance art advocates, organizations and initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Speaking with a unified voice, representatives at the Retreat showed collective support in demonstrating that performance art has a long history in visual art and is an important component of visual culture. Participating organizations across Canada have reached different stages of experience and there is a growing need to establish, or adapt existing funding programs, as well as the CARFAC fee schedule, in response to the evolving practice. There is also a growing need to produce some guidelines for the hosting of events ensuring the safety, well being and fair treatment of artists, organizers and audiences. Lastly, there is an awareness that performance art is increasingly on the radar of many organizations not specifically dedicated to performance art who wish to be better informed about future programming and tour organization.