Creativity & Innovation in a World of Movement

CIM

Creativity and Innovation in a World of Movement is an international collaborative research project, led by Dr Maruška Svälek (Queen’s University Belfast), and was funded by HERA as part of the Programme ‘Humanities as a Source of Creativity and Innovation’ (2010-2013). Principal Investigators included Svälek, Prof Ólóvind Fuglerud, Prof Birgit Meyer and Dr Leon Wainwright (please see their affiliations below).

Fifteen CIM researchers, based at universities and museums in the UK, the Netherlands, Norway, Austria and India, explored the dynamics of cultural production and creativity in an era of intensifying globalization and transnational connectivity.

Instead of assessing the relative novelty of end products, a viewpoint that betrays a limited, typically modernist view of creativity, CIM analysed practices of appropriation, improvisation and material mediation in a broad selection of partly entangled settings in the spheres of (popular) art, religion and museums.

CIM research was conducted in:
- **Argentina** (Prof Arnd Schneider, University of Oslo)
- **Australia** (Prof Fiona Magoon, Queen’s University Belfast and Maria Ilene, University of Oslo)
- **Austria and Nigeria** (Dr Barbara Blankensteiner, Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna)
- **Brazil** (Dr João Reik, VU University, Amsterdam)
- **Canada and Norway** (Prof Ólóvind Fuglerud/Museum of Cultural History, Oslo)
- **Ghana** (Prof Birgit Meyer and Dr Rhoda Wisset, VU University Amsterdam and Ulrecht University)
- **Barbados, Cuba, Guyana, Trinidad and Suriname** (Dr Leon Wainwright, Manchester Metropolitan University and The Open University)
- **North India** (Tereza Kuldova, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo)
- **South India and the UK** (Dr Maruška Svälek and Dr Armit Deva, Queen’s University Belfast)
- **South India and Canada** (Dr Kala Shreen, MOP Vaishnav College for Women, Chennai)
- **Ireland and the UK** (Dr Barbara Graham, Queen’s University Belfast)
- **Sri Lanka and France** (Prof Ólóvind Fuglerud and Stine Bruland, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo)

**Aims and Objectives**

The overall aim was to analyse distinct, changing and possibly conflicting trans/local and trans/national discourses of creativity, and investigate concrete, interlinked creative practices across Europe, India, Africa, Australia, the Americas and the Caribbean. We explored:

1. How object/image production and the institutional management and evaluation of cultural production are shaped by implicit and explicit definitions of creativity
2. How transnational cultural production can trigger new forms of creative interaction, cultural hybridity, critical dialogue and empathy
3. How power struggle can be an important dimension of transnational creative interaction.

Our key concern was to develop a global perspective on the entanglement of the political and aesthetic dimensions of the production, circulation, valuation and appeal of images or, more broadly, material objects.

**Methodology**

Our ethnographic research combined participatory methods with interviews, textual analysis, photography and film. CIM research focused primarily on:

1. Contemporary artists, roadside artists and producers of popular religious images who recycled, appropriated and merged globally circulating styles and images,
2. Curators and leaders in cultural centres, museums and religious organisations who recontextualised artefacts and imagery with specific aims in mind
3. Consumers of art, craft and religious artefacts who creatively engaged with the items in various settings.

**Research Outcomes**

1. Our research demonstrated that the circulation of cultural forms in emergent and interconnected markets of art and fashion, museums of art and ethnology, and in vibrant places of religious practice depends on infrastructures that link different locations through particular technologies.
2. CIM studies showed that in specific infrastructures of circulation, changing and often conflicting ideas and practices of creativity and innovation are negotiated, and initially foreign materials or past designs are appropriated. This implies processes of remediation.
3. Our research demonstrated that competing discourses of claims to creativity, whether positively valuing or disregarding practices of copying, have often been part and parcel of conscious identity politics.
4. Our research findings also led us to connect our initial framework of object transition and subject transformation to theories of material mediation and the social imaginary.

**Major outcomes**

The resulting work is being made accessible through a large number of already published and forthcoming papers in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes, and several books directly resulting from our collaboration:

- The newly established Berghahn book series Material Mediations
- The Open University CIM Resource (on line)
- The Knowledge Exchange Project Disturbing Past: Memories, Controversies and Creativity

The CIM Project Website
http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/CreativityandInnovationinaWorldofMovement/

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