

## **Call for Conference Papers: “Curating Under Pressure”; Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand, November 5-9, 2015**

The Goethe-Institut in cooperation with Creative New Zealand, ifa (Institute for international cultural relations, Stuttgart), SCAPE Public Art Christchurch Biennial and the University of Canterbury will host a four day conference in Christchurch from November 5 through November 9, 2015. The conference will address ethical issues around contemporary curatorial practice under the title “Curating Under Pressure”.

For more than a decade, we can observe the increasing bialisation of the art world. This phenomenon has manifold reasons; the rise of the independent curator, art as a tool for city marketing, the crisis of the museum, the growing importance of countries like China, Brazil, India and more South Asian and Latin American countries, their desire to participate in globalized trade and cultural exchange, to break Western dominance and to make their voices heard.

The bialisation goes hand in hand with an increasing politicisation of art. While Venice still pursues the model of national pavilions, most of the new biennials entrust single or teams of curators with the task to conceive and to produce exhibitions that have the potential to develop perspectives on political and economic, societal and demographic changes and to examine the role of the arts in an increasingly interconnected and internationalized world.

Those presenting and supporting biennials increasingly claim that exhibitions contribute significantly to the welfare of communities, that they can instigate social and political change and represent a powerful tool to support the development of civil societies. There is no better occasion than the 2015 SCAPE BIENNIAL and no better place to critically discuss these claims than Christchurch, the second biggest city of Aotearoa New Zealand, which is in the processes of recovering and rebuilding after devastating earthquakes in 2010 and 2011.

What role can art play in these circumstances? What relevance has an exhibition in this context? What can be expected from the arts in terms of the processes of healing and recovery; of community-building; and of encouraging the inhabitants and the people of a city or a society struck by disasters and catastrophes?

National and international speakers and curators will try to find answers to these questions. A series of talks, panel discussions, guided tours, public gatherings, loosely programmed encounters and conversations will address the “ethics of exhibition making” in the context of the ever growing biennial business.

The organizers invite academics, curators, artists and other cultural practitioners from Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific Islands to submit papers that focus on the following key questions:

- What can artists and curators contribute to the flourishing of a society threatened and hurt by natural, social and / or political disaster? What might be the value of exhibition-making in the face of disaster?
- Is there an ‘ethics’ of curating? How can biennials avoid servitude to states and governmental organizations seeking cultural tools to conceal oppressive politics and to produce the impression of liberalism and democracy?

- How can artists' and curators' social engagement and responsibility be defined? Is the desire of artists and curators to 'do good' in the present – which is the implication of much socially engaged site-specific practice – sufficient? How can art, which often out-lasts societies and civilisations, contribute beyond the present moment?
- In which ways could the arts be described as a tool for social, ecological and / or economic improvement of a society?
- Is there something like a "politics of art" (as distinct from "political art")?

Please submit an abstract (one page) with a short CV to Sophie Rau (sophie.rau@goethe.de) before April 15, 2015. A jury, consisting of 5 members drawn from the mentioned institutions, will select papers for public presentation in Christchurch. The presenters will be notified by April 17, 2015. The hosts will provide for travel costs, accommodation and a per diem. No fees will be paid.

The conference will take place in conjunction with the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the SCAPE Public Art Christchurch Biennial, October 3 to November 15, 2015. The programme of the symposium will be announced in June 2015. The SCAPE 8 exhibition programme will be announced in April 2015.

