



The Asian Cultural Council would like to share the success of the recent *ACC Forum: Making the Case for Cultural Exchange*. The forum, made possible by support from The Henry Luce Foundation, was a collaboration between ACC and the John Brademas Center of New York University. From New York to California, Hong Kong and Taiwan to the UK, individuals and organizations from a diverse range of geography and fields convened at NYU's Vanderbilt Hall from June 12th to 14th. Attendees included scholars, practitioners, and funders of national and international cultural exchange in the arts, education, nonprofits, and government.

Structured as a panel and discussion, the *ACC Forum* examined the importance of providing artists and cultural professionals opportunities for international engagement. The event began with a keynote speech by Peter Sellars, renowned theater director and UCLA Distinguished Professor of World Arts and Cultures, on cultural exchange and the role of artists. The subsequent panels addressed five themes in particular: The Importance of Cultural Exchange; Residencies & International Travel; Cultural Engagement & Models of Presentation; Technology & Contemporary Forms of Expression; and Contemporary Challenges & New Urgencies. In addition, there were performances by ACC grantees, including work by Kevin Doyle's theater company Sponsored by Nobody, poet Tracie Morris, dancers Chankethya Chey and Laurel Jenkins, as well as dancers from La MaMa E.T.C., CultureHub, and the Seoul Institute of the Arts.

Making a Case for Cultural Exchange focused less on the "why" of cultural exchange, but rather on the "how." How to measure the success of effective models of cultural exchange. How to best express the impact of cultural exchange. How to sustain that impact, maintaining relationships after an individual or organization's experience abroad. How technology can play a role in enhancing cultural exchange. How to provide continued support to cultural exchange programs. From these discussions came four main calls to action:

- To establish a new vocabulary to talk about cultural exchange across fields.
- To create partnerships between cultural exchange practitioners.

- To organize better processes measuring the impact of cultural exchange, quantitatively through increased collection of and access to data, as well as qualitatively through narrative.
- To use technology as a means of creating and maintaining cultural exchange.

These goals are interrelated. The field of cultural exchange is vastly diverse. Building a cohesive language to affirm its impact necessitates the collaboration of cultural exchange practitioners and funders to research trends and compile data. Technology—websites, social media, diagnostics—is a platform both for collecting and communicating the numbers and narratives of impact. It is a means of enhancing partnerships, expanding audiences, and building alumni networks. Furthermore, integrating technology into artistic practice pushes beyond the boundaries of geography and artistic discipline. For example, the *ACC Forum* ended with a collaborative piece by CultureHub, La MaMa, and the Seoul Institute of the Arts. Two dancers in separate hemispheres were brought together by video, projection, and music, dancing in real-time across time zones and cultures.

That said, technology is only a means, not the goal of cultural exchange. There is still a fundamental need for the physical immersion into other countries and cultures, still an importance to the meeting of people face-to-face. As Peter Sellars stated in his keynote speech, the walls that divide our world today “are not made from brick, the walls are mental. And the power of moving through those mental walls belongs to each of us. It just needs one person meeting another.” This sentiment held true for *The ACC Forum: Making the Case for Cultural Exchange*, which brought individuals and organizations together in the promise of deeper partnerships and continued discussion.