Teaching and Learning Scholar Interim Report  
For period ending December 31, 2009

Project Title: Introducing Cosmopolitanism into Fine Arts Classrooms through Digital Networks

Principal Investigator: Kathleen Irwin, Associate Professor  
Theatre Department FA  
Kathleen.Irwin@uregina.ca  
Co-investigator: Rachelle Viader Knowles, Assistant Professor  
Intermedia, Visual Arts Department FA  
Rachelle.Viader.Knowles@uregina.ca

In collaboration with:  
Prof. Henny Dorr  
Head of Design (Theatre)  
HKU (School of Art Utrecht)  
Dr. Anita Ogurlu  
Faculty of Communications / Visual Communications Design  
Istanbul Bilgi University

CONTEXT AND DEFINITION OF THE ISSUES:  
With the emergence of mass migration, globalization and the growing desire to attract foreign students to our universities, there is a growing necessity to introduce an explicit intercultural orientation into our programs or, at the very least, take another look at the assumed universality of what we offer. Like everyone else, Fine Arts programs are facing challenges in coping with cultural differences and are realizing their responsibility to address the notion of cross-culturization and how we manage difference in our classrooms. While we strive for a learning environment that values difference, there is a danger of homogenizing the classroom through developing processes that end up eliminating differences and unintentionally removing healthy tension, conflict and movement. While consensus is meritorious in many aspects of social dialogue, in art practice it frequently creates stasis.

The notion of Cosmopolitanism, the ethics of negotiating difference in a global society, was central to this approach to teaching and provided a theoretical foundation from which to tackle these issues within a studio practice. Crossing Over, the practical project central to this investigation, linked students and faculty from the University of Regina with a partner school in Utrecht, Holland. Significantly, both institutions represent countries that favour policies of open / controlled immigration; at the same time, both societies are tested and challenged by these policies.

In this proposal to the Centre for Teaching and Learning, the research team applied for second phase funding to work with our partner, HKU (Utrecht School of Art) in bringing on line a third collaborator, an art school in a politically stable country with a significant Muslim population. A link with the Department of Performing and Visual Arts Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Faculty of Fine Arts in Canakkale, Turkey was under consideration, found non-viable and has been replaced by the Faculty of Communications / Visual Communications Design at Istanbul Bilgi University. The details of this agreement, while currently under negotiation, are stalled due to the sale of this university to Laureate Education, Inc., an international chain of universities. As a result, Bilgi is undergoing major changes commencing in fall 2009. As I am the Principal Investigator on this project and am on sabbatical leave until January 2010
and as this project is organized through my undergrad and graduate classes, no teaching link will be made until, at least, the winter semester of 2010 pending the outcome of the situation in Istanbul. Nonetheless Dr. Anita Ogurlu, my contact at Bilgi, are in communication and I am using my research time to further this collaboration.

**WHAT WAS DONE:**

**Phase 1:**
Knowles and Irwin completed two trips to Utrecht in which the *Crossing Over* Project was first developed (Oct. 15 to 19, 2007) and subsequently realized through two workshops delivered by Irwin and Knowles (Phase 1) that investigated international practice-based research and tele/digital performance in Regina and HKU/School of the Arts Utrecht (January 2008). The result of the practical part of the workshop can be viewed at [http://cat.uregina.ca/crossingover](http://cat.uregina.ca/crossingover). A full overview of this process and the subsequent evaluation of its success has been presented at several conferences and currently is in publication (see following section for details).

In November 2008, Irwin presented a workshop (with representatives from the School of Art, Utrecht) and a paper on the *Crossing Over* Project at the ELIA (European League of Institutes of the Arts) Conference in Gothenburg City, Sweden. Some options that were discussed at the time between the two institutes in regards to further iterations of this project included:
- 1.) Building on this first contact through student and faculty exchange.
- 2.) Building links at the graduate level.
- 3.) Adding other partners to create an international network.

**Phase 2:**
Of these three options, both partners gave the highest rank to the idea of including a link to an Art Institute in a country with a significant Muslim population to complete an international network. To this end, funding to investigate options was attained by Irwin/Knowles through the Centre for Teaching and Learning in Fall 2008. During the winter semester 2009, Irwin made contact with two possible partnering art institutions in Turkey—a country with a stable Muslim population currently seeking overseas partners. While the initial contact, Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, proved to be nonviable, the second contact, through Dr. Anita Ogurlu, a Turkish Canadian now teaching at Istanbul Bilgi University (and from Saskatchewan), appears viable and is now in development.

**RESULTS AND OUTCOMES:**
- “Crossing Over: Theatre Beyond Borders / Telematic Performance” currently in publication in *Theatre Research in Canada / Recherches théâtrales au Canada*, Bruce Barton, Guest Co-Editor (with Bruce Kirkley), “Theatre and Intermediality” Theme Issue, University of Toronto Press.
• Presented Crossing Over Paper at ReSEARCH: Designing Performance – Performance Design Panel at the OISTAT Joint Education Commission/ History and Theory Commission in Helsinki, June 2008