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## The Power of the Arts for Bringing Individuals, Societies, and the World Together

The Arts and Society (A&S) project is initiated by Mémoire de l'Avenir (MDA) together with The International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences (CIPSH) - Luiz Oosterbeek, UNESCO-Most – John Crowley and the International Year of Global Understanding, IYGU- Benno Werlen. The Arts and Society project is a global movement of artists and projects reflecting on the impacts of the Arts, of Cultures and of Creativity in all fields and matters of societies, as on the importance of local proposals upon a global plan.

*The Rio+20 Summit, when addressing poverty as the core issue of sustainability, called in fact for a revision of the original concept, going beyond the so-called TRB (triple bottom line, considering the environmental, social and economic dimensions). Yet, a new understanding needs to build from human understandings and cultural diversity is crucial, and a new specific framework of reference is required, to address the challenges of Rio+20 and to converge with other global initiatives, such as "Future Earth" and the proposed "International Year of Global Understanding" (IYGU).*

*The strategic partnership Apheleia / Αφέλεια aims at structuring a convergent set of tools that will foster the need for a properly Integrated (as opposed to dispersed) Cultural (i.e. human and diverse) Landscape Management (rooted in human understandings and leading towards governance through awareness and critical thinking) for Local and Global Sustainability (addressing the great global dilemmas, but also focused on individual anxieties and needs). Such a program implies a high degree of complexity to be dealt with by the academia, but also requires efficient operative tools, that render such complexity simple for non-academics and for daily lives.*

*An European contribution must, per definition, be open to other cultures, interests and perspectives, make the most of European diversity itself, and involve universities, the private sector, NGOs and local and regional public authorities, i.e., be based on a multi-stakeholders basis. At the same time, partnerships should be focused and leading to clear and tangible results... Thus aiming "To establish a solid consortium, involving academic and non-academic partners, focusing in education and best practices that for students' applied training in transdisciplinary innovative approaches to integrated cultural landscape Management." <sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.apheleiaproject.org/apheleia/index.php/escondido-about>

## Contextual

The International Year of Global Understanding (IYGU) begins with the premise that transformations of nature are based upon human actions, and that human actions are based upon schemes of interpretation.

With globalization, the conditions for human actions have changed dramatically. Dealing successfully with cultural, social, and climate changes, on a global level, requires people to understand their locally embedded lives in a global context.

**Global understanding becomes a new *conditio humana*.** It necessitates bridging a gap between local and global effects—as thinking globally and acting on an appropriate social, ethical, and aesthetic level presupposes.

A lack of understanding of the consequences of our actions may have a disastrous impact on our future.

**Individuals, and societies, must unite in order to live together in awareness of one another. Each can make a difference by proposing actions and providing solutions.**

Arts and cultures become powerful and ideal mediators in the constitution of social realities, via learning and interchange. With the ongoing rise of world free-media tools, digital platforms, and sociocultural practices, knowledge theoretically has a global reach.

Arts and cultures are a journey into the world of mankind, beyond political or religious limits. Art is an expression and emulation of the human mind. It criticizes, proposes, invents, thinks, transforms. It records our pluralism.

Artists demonstrate and reflect upon all questions of society. They create encounters between people, while often connecting global problems with propositions or solutions. We must encourage global implications, and enhance participations and collaborations beyond borders on issues such as education, environment, natural and human sciences, etc

**“There is really only one liberal study that deserve the name (liberal) because it makes a person free—and that is the pursuit of wisdom.”<sup>2</sup>**

*Seneca, Letter LXXXVIII on liberal and vocational studies (circa 55 CE)*

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<sup>2</sup> *Seneca, Letter LXXXVIII on liberal and vocational studies (circa 55 CE)*

The scientific community states and evaluates the ways in which we inhabit our increasingly globalized world:

How do we transform nature?

How do we empower new social and political relationships for the emerging global reality?

Societies and cultures often determine the ways in which we live and shape the environment. Nowadays, scientific communities recognize that there are different cultural paths to global sustainability. **Each and every-one can make a difference.**

Artists can make a difference by proposing actions or even providing solutions. The principal emphasis of our approach is the assumption that intuition and creativity are essential for our capacity to understand the world and propose rational constructions, while contributing to new outlooks on social, political, and ecological matters.

Within this realization, *Mémoire de l'Avenir* (MDA) and *Arts and Society* (A&S) contribute to this premise by suggesting that the arts are a replica of humanity, by soliciting our senses and reason, and by demonstrating creativity, innovation, pluralism and diversities, similitude and universalism all at once.

In this spirit, members of the Scientific Panel (IYGU, CIPSH, and UNESCO-Most) gave their backing to a global movement of artists, inquiring about the role of the arts and artists in a world facing major changes. Creative initiatives favor access to knowledge and to learning, to progress, and to critical thinking.

IYGU, CIPSH, and UNESCO-Most initiated with *Mémoire de l'Avenir* the Arts and Society project:

A&S seeks to connect propositions with solutions. We must encourage global understanding and enhance participation and collaboration on all issues of life, from education to humanities, natural sciences to economics, ethics to esthetics.

Artist projects offer an active and dynamic movement of shared methods, research, knowledge, and expertise around the globe. The premise is that **lack of knowledge** is the **root** of stereotypes, prejudices, and ignorance.

**A&S can illustrate, via a general schema of communication that Individuals and societies must bond in order to live together in respect, while recognizing diversities and pluralism.**

The goal is to overcome a lack of comprehension of cultural and/or individual diversities, to raise awareness of the impact of individuals and of local implications on all political, social, actions.

A collective of artists, transcending locations and personal differences, will illustrate our various realities; from our limits, tools, objects, symbols, references and languages, philosophies, histories, and civilizations, to the outlooks toward the future.

*Intangible cultural heritage is a living set and a perpetually constant re-creation of practices, knowledge and of representations, that enabling individuals and communities at all levels of society to express ways of seeing the world through systems values and ethical standards. (UNESCO 2003)*<sup>3</sup>

**Organizing a worldwide movement of artists is a contribution to the preparatory debate on the *World Of The Humanities* and its future.**

Through the arts, we illustrate a pattern of communication that transcend eras and difference. The originality of this approach is the emergence and promotion of universal and common values, in parallel to cultural differences, while valuing and preserving pluralism.

The IYGU project was born from a global scientific panel dealing with climate and social change, biodiversity, and ecosystems loss. IYGU aims to enhance global understanding of socio-cultural contexts. **It calls attention to a lack of awareness of the global implications of ordinary living.** It reinforces the idea that knowledge is essential to all actions. Global problems require global solutions. Individuals make choices and drive policies at local, regional, and national levels. **Global understanding creates awareness of the global consequences of individual choices within civic societies.**

**Daily life and science must act together.** Research should address to the logic of ordinary life. IYGU calls for a reconciliation between global and local, between science and practice. IYGU empowers people to make connections beyond borders. IYGU's goal is to promote actions and decisions that will harvest sustainable outcomes, daily and globally.

A trans-disciplinary approach, integrating academic facts with other types of knowledge has led to a global movement of artists and projects, proving the impact of the arts within societies. It stresses the need to take advantage of this to pursue a convergence between the natural

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<sup>3</sup> UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

sciences, the humanities, and the arts, looking to match short-term needs with visions of medium- and long-term solutions, fighting skepticism and ignorance.

A Global Action Platform for the Arts will connect artists around the globe, demonstrating their applications to society, making it possible to bring together tools and methods from the world of the arts on issues that are under discussion.

**The arts do not replace science, and are not reducible to the concerns of science, but participate in the process of enhancing wonderment, creativity, and innovation.**

### **Cultural Management in Education**

International surveys show that social inequalities in educational pathways and in "performances" are fundamental.

Jean-Yves Rochex presents an analysis of the production processes of inequality. In his view they are multiple and interdependent and due to "families and to social environmental differences, as to the current ways of organizing the system of Educational Policies, Socio-Geographic and institutional contexts, as classroom practices."<sup>4</sup>

Rochex proposed a number of means to reflect upon more effective political and professional actions to combat these inequalities. To my opinion, in his analysis a major track is missing.

...and, Although **transversal education - (a eaching approaches that are linked with an active and creative learning)** is proved to be one of the most effective method in the fight against inequalities, they are not seem to be part of his concern.

Active and creative learning are essential means in developing and valuing personal, intuitive and sensitive capacities for expressions. Imagination and creativity reinforce the value of pluralism as positive components of the whole, while enabling each of the elements to exist within a group.

**Creativity and expression are essential factors in the process of curiosity, understanding, critical learning**, opening to dialogue, arouse innovations, production, and transition. They are positive factors in the openness and acceptance of personal, social, and economical differences.

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<sup>4</sup> ROCHEX Jean-Yves & CRINON Jacques (dir.). *La construction des inégalités scolaires. Au cœur des pratiques et des dispositifs d'enseignement*. Rennes : Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011, 214 p.

**The arts are mirrors of the histories, memories, and entire oeuvres of humanity.** Creativity is essential agent for theoretical or practical (cognitive) doings and learning. The Arts and Creativity offer knowledge and awareness of oneself and of the "others", thus acquiring self-confidence and contributing to living together, in various levels of information and skills of matters and of people. Enriching ourselves with learning is also a committed action in the fight against discrimination. Learning and comprehension will bring respect between individuals as between them and nature.

**No formal or informal education should isolate the teaching of academic topics from creative, artistic, or physical activities.** The principles of Multidisciplinary-Active Pedagogy aim at self-assurance rooted in the resources (limits/qualities) of each and every one.<sup>5</sup> wrote Dr Jon Ord Associate Professor in Plymouth Marjon University, speaking about John Dewey.

John Dewey's statement, "**Learning by doing**," is based on the fact that people learn best when they are personally involved in the experience of study. If knowledge has significant meaning and can impact the realities of individuals or groups, it must be comprehended by each person. Persons are engaged in acquiring knowledge when they are free to set their own rhythms of learning and defining objectives, and are actively pursuing the process of understanding.

**Dewey asked this question below in 1916**, in his book *Democracy and Education*:

*Why is it that, in spite of the fact that teaching by pouring in, learning by passive absorption, are universally condemned, that they are still so entrenched in practice? That education is not an affair of "telling" and being told, but an active constructive process, is a principle almost as generally violated in practice as conceded in theory. Is not this deplorable situation due to the fact that the doctrine is itself merely told? But its enactment in practice requires that the school environment be equipped with agencies for doing... to an extent rarely attained..<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> Youth & Policy No. 108 published March 2012 , p. 55 in article titled *John Dewey and Experiential Learning: Developing the theory of youth work*, by Dr **Jon Ord** Associate Professor in Plymouth Marjon University - a progressive university where students can (and do) achieve their full potential

<sup>6</sup> John Dewey remarked in 1916, in his book, *Democracy and Education*, P.38

As the 16<sup>th</sup>-century French satirist François Rabelais put it, "**the child is not a vase filled but a fire that is lit.**" This idea of an **innovative pedagogy** is essential to democracy, and to secularism in all societies. In *Moralia*, the Greek philosopher Plutarch wrote, in the first century AD:

*For the mind **does not require filling** like a bottle, but rather, like wood, it only requires kindling, to create in it an impulse to think independently and an ardent desire for the truth.*

From the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century a few new schools and social experiments were born, but sadly only very few.

Among The initiators are:

John **Dewey**—a philosopher, educator on art, logic, and education, and one of the founders of the new education movement.

The French pedagogue **Célestine Freinet** (1896-1966) based his work on the creative expressions of youth—free writing and drawing and inter-school correspondence. The printing press and the student newspaper were tools that correspond to his era, but this does not wipe away a proposal that applies perfectly in our day.

**Maria Montessori** (1870-1952), an Italian doctor whose pedagogical method bears her name, proposed a system of open education, and of mutual connection between the intuitive, sensory, and kinesthetic realms—education considered as part of life.

The neuroscientist **Antonio Damasio**, in his work on the neurobiology of the mind, rehabilitated the role of sensitivity, creativity, and emotion in cognitive decision making and in the operation of reason, but also in the development of self-consciousness. In *The Error Of Descartes* he explains that reason is not separated from emotion or intuition. The mind and the body have common roots and both are essential to cognitive development.

**Jean François Dortier** (*L'Homme Cet Etrange Animal*, 2012<sup>8</sup>) and **Pascal Picq**, Palaeoanthropologist and lecturer at the Collège de France (*Nouvelle Histoire de l'Homme*, 2007<sup>9</sup>) claims that humans evolved from intuitive, sensitive capacities to reach analytical and

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<sup>7</sup> Oxford University Press's academic insights for the thinking world combine authority, innovation, and excellence. From Oxford and New York @ <http://oupacademic.tumblr.com/post/57102769328/> 01 August 2013

<sup>8</sup> *L'Homme cet étrange animal, 2012 - 368 pages - ISBN : 9782361060220*

<sup>9</sup> *nouvelle histoire de l'homme* ISBN : 2262026637 editor **PERRIN** ( 2007

logical abilities and become capable of communication. In *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture, and Education* (1998), and in other texts, **Sir Kenneth Robinson**, an educational expert and art professor at the University of Warwick, defends creativity and innovation in all forms of education and for all ages:

*It's interesting that people see creativity and critical thinking as being opposed. It's partly because people associate creativity with being totally free and unstructured. But what we really have to get hold of is the idea that you can't be creative if you don't do something. You can be creative in math, science, music, dance, cuisine, teaching, running a family, or engineering. Because creativity is a process of having original ideas that have value. A big part of being creative is looking for new ways of doing things within whatever activity you're involved in.*<sup>10</sup>

### **Why Art and Creativity Are Essential Tools in all Areas of Society**

The arts create bridges between people, continents, cultures, and civilizations. Arts and cultures represent a journey into the world of mankind. Via the practice of the arts, we can illustrate a general schema of communication that transcends all time and all difference. It permits us to better understand our existence—our boundaries, trades, tools, objects, signs, symbols, and languages, as well as our philosophies. Nowhere on Earth are people without language and without art.

The need for man to express and to produce has led to his use of nature to invent theoretical and practical tools—rags to wear, images to communicate with—reflecting his perception of the world and his ability to decrypt it by fabricating representative languages. The human mind has the ability to memorize images as feelings, producing concrete or abstract memories, and the ability to project into the future.

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<sup>10</sup> Educational leadership, **A Conversation with Sir Ken Robinson**, September 2009 | Volume 67 | Number 1 Teaching for the 21st Century Pages 22-26/ <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept09/vol67/num01/Why-Creativity-Now -A-Conversation-with-Sir-Ken-Robinson.aspx>



Approaching art, or more specifically, artistic languages, can bring us closer to the symbolic thinking of mankind.

Symbolic elements in our languages highlight the common fundamental bricks between the differences of people and cultures. They offer the opportunity to recognize the “other.” They are great tools to promote the intertwining and convergence of cultures. The range of signs and references found throughout the world witness an infinite number of ways to express similar messages, and become a universal matrix of our wonderful diversity.

Emmanuel Anati, in *La Religion Des Origines*, says:

*The last research shows that the most ancient different artistic expressions, throughout the entire world, illustrate one similar typology, the same choice thematic, and the same type of association. Even their style is fundamentally inscribed in one and the same sequence limited in variations. Therefore it seems to be justified to speak about one & unique visual language, springing from the same language, from the exact same association of ideas and from a universal symbolisms that compose the human mental essence, which produced his imprint, under the form we call ART, and that is engraved on the rocks and walls the entire world where population lived by early civilization, before the birth of the written language..<sup>11</sup>*

As an artist, the question of universal qualities in mankind has always interested me. My interactions with the arts were not a result of my inspirations, needs, and artistic practices, but rather found intuitively in the course of trying to understand life. The more I examined and listened carefully to the world, the more I was able to come deeply in touch with my own perceptions and understandings, and the more I could understand art as the essential mirror and "language" of humanity—a language that served to build individual and cultural identities.

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<sup>11</sup> Introducing the World Archives of Rock Art (WARA): 50.000 years of visual arts Emmanuel Anati Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici, Published in New discoveries, new interpretations, new research methods, XXI Valcamonica Symposium , Capo di Ponte, Edizioni del Centro, 2004, pp.51-69. Source: [http://www.cvsp.it/ANATI\\_WARA\\_rev\\_PRE.htm](http://www.cvsp.it/ANATI_WARA_rev_PRE.htm)

I was raised and educated in Israel, lived and studied in the United States, and have lived in Northern Europe for nearly 30 years, while also working in Africa. Everywhere I have lived, I have wondered how to use cultural heritage, knowledge, and education to fight off racism and ignorance. In the *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal* (Notebook Of A Return To My Native Land), Aime Cesaire states:

My conception of the universal is that of a universal rich of all the particular, of all the individuals, A Coexistence and deepening of all individuals.

Morphological languages, dialects, idioms, pictograms, icon-grams, phonograms, psychograms are the results of a human need to understand, comprehend, leave a trail, express and produce at all times. This human function leads man to use transversal objects or mental representations, symbols, and references, which constitute the resources and the functioning of the arts as comprehensible tools of communication.

Therefore, I conclude, the arts are constantly tracing the past, the present, and the future. This process is a tool in transversal education, demonstrating at once the multiplicities, similarities, and universalism of each and of the whole, and essential for sharing life in today's multicultural societies. Just as metaphysics, cosmogony, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, and other forms of science are doing, the arts are complementary forms of research, aiming to understand and analyze the finds of archeology, anthropology, and ethnology:

We are constantly aiming to trace back the memory channels of mankind and to invite ourselves to understand our capacities to produce interminable concepts and products. Ever since humans have sought to survive, they have also attested their lives and expressed their questions, concerns, fears, and doubts, comforting themselves with beliefs, myths, institutions, and techniques. By so doing, they have created histories. Humans have always had the need to make sense of their feelings and their notions of beauty, and to leave legacies for future generations.

The assembly of all forms of expression enables humanity to endure its never-ending innovating, criticizing, proposing, producing, inventing, educating, and thinking:

*...The history of art and that of man are in-dissociable; Art begins with man or even, perhaps, with his direct predecessor the Australopithecus. From the beginning, man asserts himself as an artist, because he shares his first instincts with other animals, especially perhaps with some great apes, because he immediately collects and collects the "works of art" of nature, because he immediately creates shapes, he produces traces and traces, and very early invents the first ornaments. .<sup>12</sup>*

People today are exposed to endless beliefs and practices, while prejudices, stereotypes and ignorance are spread about cultural and religious identities, sexual and gender issues, handicaps, and matters concerning the survival of the planet. Via global networks of intercultural, creative workshops and exposure to artistic resources in schools, social centers, and prisons, we can help citizens of all ages learn to appreciate and attest diversities.

Intercultural dialogue and learning counteracts the misunderstandings caused by the nature of living together in multi-individual and multi-cultural contemporary societies. Transversal programs aim to contribute to a spirit of respect and reconciliation for all those confronted with questions of individual and collective difference, and seek to transmit the plurality of cultural and historical identities.

Art projects merging from around the world can offer an active and dynamic platform for sharing methods, research, knowledge, competence, results, and expertise around the globe. According to Tolstoy:

*Several conditions must be met for a man to produce a real artwork. This man must, first of all, find himself at the level of the highest spiritual conceptions of his time; He must, moreover, feel feelings, and have the desire and the capacity to transmit them to others...<sup>13</sup>*

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<sup>12</sup> Michel Lorblanchet , *L'ORIGINE DE L'ART* Presses Universitaires de France | « Diogène » 2006/2 n° 214 | pages 116 à 131 ISSN 0419-1633 ISBN 9782130557302 Article disponible en ligne à l'adresse : <http://www.cairn.info/revue-diogene-2006-2-page-116.htm>

<sup>12</sup> Léon Tolstoy, *What is art?*, press universities of France IBAN 978-2-13-078606-1 ISSN 0291-0489? PP 122-123

<sup>13</sup> Léon Tolstoy, *What is art?*, press universities of France IBAN 978-2-13-078606-1 ISSN 0291-0489 PP 122-123

The responsibility of an artist lies not only in his/her aesthetical research or intellectual impact, but also with the ability to influence, challenge, propose, critique, and raise awareness. The arts are a way to question and discover, while searching for new ways to express, to resist and, to act.

MDA gathers artists, art historians, administrators, and educators, with the aim of setting goals and creating tools. , transmitting methods and evaluative tools to artist/mediators, teachers, and community leaders in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Comparative studies conducted at various museums—the Louvre, Cluny, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, the Institute de Monde Arabe—has led to the creation of tools for intuitive and sensitive dialogue. In addition to producing nearly fifty paths for dialogue on social and political themes, MDA has created a guide for intercultural dialogue, published by the Musée Quai Branly, for teachers and community leaders. In 2010, MDA published *Du Dessin Au Symbole—Une Grammaire Pour L'Humanite (Alternative)* by Margalit Berriet and Patricia Creveaux, under the auspices of the Ministry Of Culture of France, the Agency For Social Cohesion, and the European Community. MDA has collaborated with a number of private and public institutions, including the Academie de Paris, ministries of education in France, Israel, and Senegal, ministries of foreign affairs in France and Israel, the Ministry Of Culture of France, l'ACSE and the cities of Paris, Jerusalem, and Djembering, Senegal, as well as with IYGU, CIPSH, UNESCO-MOST. Yearly MDA organizes artistic/educational dialogue projects in schools, social centers, integration structures, prisons ... aiming to encouraging each to acquire a place in society, respect Singularities. Collective event alongside the personal work of contemporary artists are an opportunity to gather the productions of participants and artists.

“Art is what makes life more interesting than art” / **Robert Filliou**

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