

January 2012

Notes from the Director

Greetings and best wishes for a good new year from the [Peacebuilding and the Arts Program](#) at the [International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life](#) at [Brandeis University](#).

The foreword to the second volume of the “Acting Together” anthology is written by [Dr. Salomón Lerner Febres](#), the former president of Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation, and the person responsible for involving Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani and many other performing and visual artists in his country’s transitional justice processes. In “[Acting Together](#),” Dr. Lerner writes that “art is not just contemplation and transcendence, but also a form of justice that cleanses and vindicates our species in a universal way.”

Last month, The Center was honored to host Dr. Lerner as the keynote speaker at our two-day symposium, “[Just Performance: Enacting Justice in the Wake of Violence](#).” His remarks elaborate on his brief contribution to the anthology, offering a compelling, carefully reasoned, and vividly illustrated case for the unique and crucial contributions to justice that the arts can make to communities addressing legacies of violence. His speech centers on the concept of dignity and how violence is at its core an assault on human dignity:

“The cultivation of art is not, as many still believe, a superfluous practice meant to decorate or cover up lesser ambitions. Art is divorced from both efficiency and efficacy; its inspiration is not the pursuit of profit nor can its worth be established by its value in the market. Rather, its aim is to dignify all human beings—its business to shake us out of passive conformity to what is, and provoke us to dare explore what we can and should be.”

Dr. Lerner’s words articulate the impulses that underlie much of the work that takes places at the nexus of peacebuilding and the arts; I encourage you to read and explore them. His reflections on the Acting Together project can be found in [volume two](#) of the Acting Together anthology; we’ve posted the full text of his Just Performance [keynote](#), in both English and Spanish, in the [Resource](#)

[Library](#) of the program in Peacebuilding and the Arts.

Educators who would consider incorporating Acting Together resources into their syllabi can request free copies from [New Village Press](#).

With appreciation for your efforts to cultivate a more creative, less violent, more just and more peaceful world, and with best wishes for 2012,

Cindy

Cynthia E. Cohen, Ph.D., Director
Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts

Just Performance: Enacting Justice in the Wake of Violence

The International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life organized [an innovative symposium](#) with the Northeastern University School of Law on December 1st and 2nd, 2011, which examined the approaches through which societies seek justice in the aftermath of violent conflict and gross violations of human rights. The exploration focused on four different types of “performance” used by communities and societies to pursue justice and restore trust: public ritual, theater, truth commissions, and judicial proceedings. It also focused on justice-seeking efforts in three different countries: Peru, Cambodia and the United States.



Dr. Salomón Lerner Febres in conversation with students during "Just Performance." At right: Maribel Sánchez, MA Candidate, Sustainable International Development, The Heller School for Social Policy and Management.

The symposium marked the publication of the second volume of [Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict](#), edited by Cynthia E. Cohen, Roberto Gutiérrez Varea, and Polly O. Walker. Cohen, who heads the Center’s Programs in Peacebuilding and the Arts, directed the symposium along with Leigh Swigart, head of [Programs in International Justice and Society](#). Just Performance represented a coming together of their respective domains and provided an opportunity for sustained reflection in whether and how there might be more cooperation between what are generally seen as distinct responses to conflict. [Read the summary report](#) and [the article on BrandeisNOW](#).



Naoe Suzuki working on "Blue" in the studio at the Blue Mountain Center.

Featured Artist: Naoe Suzuki

[Naoe Suzuki](#) is a Boston-based visual artist who also serves as a senior program coordinator for the Program in the Peacebuilding and the Arts. [The Kniznick Gallery](#) at Brandeis University's [Women's Studies Research Center](#) will be exhibiting her psychologically complex drawings and works on paper in a solo exhibition, "[Blue](#)," from January 12 through March 2, 2012. Suzuki, a Japanese native, is an accomplished artist with an impressive resumé of exhibitions and artist's residencies. Her series "Blue" was created while she was at a residency

at [Blue Mountain Center](#) in the Adirondacks, where she was able to swim in a lake every day. There, she experienced the cleansing and renewing power of water, and she also thought a great deal about the terrible condition of water throughout the world. In her drawings, the water is contaminated with debris, organs, cells, bottles, antiquated machinery... [Read more on BrandeisNOW](#).

Opening Reception: January 26, 5:00-7:30pm

Artist Slide Talk: February 14, 12:30pm

Introduction to Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts with screening of "[Acting Together on the World Stage: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict](#)"

Tuesday, Feb. 28, 12:30p.m.

News from the Field

[Global Truce 2012: The Biggest Call for Peace the World Has Ever Seen](#)

For Peace Day 2012, [Peace One Day](#) is calling for and working towards a Global Truce - a day of ceasefire and non-violence observed by all sectors of society globally. To this end POD is engaged in an extensive diplomatic and grassroots communications exercise. POD hopes this will be the largest reduction in global violence in recorded history, both domestically and internationally... [Join the community](#).



[Artists' Præ-'spek-tæs* for the Nation](#)

In late 2012, [Artists in Context](#) will produce the first installment of its "Artists' Præ-'spek-tæs*" for the Nation, a multimedia work through which artists and other creative thinkers will propose innovative ways they, through conversations, research, creativity, and finely honed skills, could become integral to major debates on global, national, and local/regional scales. Incorporating various texts, visuals, sounds and participatory elements, the 2012 installment of the Præ-'spek-tæs* will focus on the AIC themes of NATURE, HEALTH and JUSTICE; it will present ways of thinking about and responding not only to the challenges of the time in regard to these themes but also the promises that a future of change may bring. [Read more](#).

[ARTISMYOCUUPATION](#)

Here in the US and also around the world, we witnessed a big people-powered movement, “Occupy Wall Street” last year, which began on September 17, 2011, and has spread to over 100 cities in the US. ARTISMYOCCUPATION has been creating a cultural moment even before it became a political movement. Organizers of the AMO team says, “Because as bad as things were in the US - from the housing crisis to the student debt crisis to the unemployment crisis - there was shockingly little cultural work being done on The Economy. The absence of art & culture was to us, a real barrier to social change. It was the artists themselves who took care of their own inspiration, created their own networks, and self-educated at lightspeed.” [Read more](#) about their work, and [learn about grants for artists whose work addresses economic justice](#).

[Art Exhibit: Pilgrim Father/illegal son](#)

Cambridge-based visual artist [Wen-ti Tsen](#) recently completed a project of the [Chinese Progressive Association](#) that explores themes of immigration. Tsen writes: “Pilgrim Father/illegal son” comes out of what seemed like an apt pairing of opposites: “Pilgrim Father,” in its socialized form, may be termed as the ultimate in American genealogical pedigree—the nobilities of our society; “illegals,” on the other hand, may be rated at the very bottom of this social formulation... Yet, if we look at history... [Read more](#).

[The Cittadellarte-Pistoletto Foundation Prize for Art that Creates Social Change: Visible 2011](#)

The winner of the €25,000 prize was the Colombian collective [Helena Producciones](#), with their submission “8 Festival de la Performance di Cali”. Based in Cali, Colombia, the festival’s influence extends over many parts of the country, acting as a free educational platform and as a vehicle for engaged artistic, social, political and economic debate... [Read more](#).

[Read more News from the Field on our website.](#)

Upcoming Events

Film screening of [Acting Together on the World Stage](#)

February 9, 7:00pm

Boston, MA

[Medicine Wheel Productions](#) will host a screening of the documentary "Acting Together on the World Stage." The film will be presented in conjunction with the art exhibit, “Points of Impact” by artist Linda Burke. Introduction and post-screening discussion by producer Cynthia Cohen. Reception starts at 6:30pm. [Contact](#) Medicine Wheel Productions for more details.

[Learn more about our upcoming events.](#)



Resources

Resources for Documentation and Assessment of Peacebuilding/Arts Initiatives

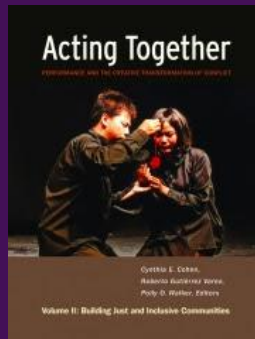
As the peacebuilding and the arts field is poised to gain increased legitimacy, questions of evaluation and assessment of initiatives in this area are becoming more prominent. This need arises in part to satisfy requirements of donors, but more importantly, from our own need to understand and strengthen our work, learn from each other's accomplishments and limitations, and ensure, to the extent possible, that we refrain from doing harm.

Artists, cultural workers and peacebuilders in the Acting Together project discussed questions related to documentation and assessment, exploring how they conceptualize excellence in artist-based and community-based theatrical works and ritual, and how they think about issues of instrumentalization of the arts in their projects. This 13-minute video is available in the toolkit that accompanies the "Acting Together on the World Stage" documentary, and is posted on the [Acting Together project's YouTube channel](#).

Visit our [Resource Library](#) for more resources in peacebuilding and the arts.

New Release

Acting Together: Performance and Creative Transformation of Conflict Volume II: Building Just and Inclusive Communities



Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts

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To comment on "Peacebuilding and the Arts Now"
or to join the listserv, send a message [here](#).

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