

# Atelier for Young Festival Managers

## Gwangju, 31 August - 6 September 2015

### Closing remarks by Grey Oh and Simone Truong

Atelier Participants

Closing Ceremony of the Atelier for Young Festival Managers GWANGJU 2015  
6 September 2015, Gwangju, South Korea

Dear EFA, dear mentors, dear colleagues, dear guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Good evening to all of you.

This last week saw the coming together of 35 colleagues of our generation and 7 experienced mentors, with different backgrounds, interests and visions but they, no, we, all share one thing: THE DESIRE TO CREATE AND TO RUN A DAMN GOOD FESTIVAL.

A festival is a place for people to gather and to share. And in this very spirit, we gathered for the past 7 days to talk about the idea of a festival, the past, the current and, most importantly, about the future of festivals. And in an extraordinary context that resonates most strongly with us, the very opening festival of the Asian Arts Theatre. We would like to address three topics to conclude this week:

1. **Potentiality:** There is an amazing amount of knowledge and experience in here that can be shared and learned from. Giving space, time and structures to unfold this knowledge, recognising the potential and ceasing the opportunity was what we tried to do this week. We addressed basic and philosophical questions of why we make festivals, but also shared more specific topics such as audience development, marketing, leadership, use of technology etc. I am sure that was just the beginning. When we depart from each other, a bigger space of resonance will open up that makes the process continue.
2. **Generosity and Specificity:** Be generous and share by giving examples of methods and formats, naming specific problems, and discussing solution strategies – this is how at the end questions can lead to actions. It's not enough to only discuss; we need to dare to be specific and concrete.
3. **Dangers:** When we are creating and running a festival, we did or will all face obstacles and boundaries. But maybe sometimes the biggest enemy might be ourselves. In a leading position, I think, it is extremely important to remind ourselves to be self-critical and allow vulnerability, to allow ourselves to fail. Art is often used as a mirror for society to reflect upon itself, so we have the responsibility to do the same thing by also holding a mirror in front of ourselves.

As current and future festival leaders, how can we go beyond ourselves and dare to step into unknown territory? How can we question the existing and find new perspectives of the current situation? How can we understand the past and anticipate the future? I believe that only if we allow the potential to unfold, dare to be specific and are able to be self-critical and vulnerable, we will be in the position to make choices and stand behind them.

Over the past three days we had the chance to witness the opening festival of the Asian Arts Theatre, one of the most exiting and courageous arts project of our time. We would like to thank the ACC for allowing us to be part of that experience, and at the same time wish you good luck and all the best for the coming weeks and the unknown and unimaginable future.

We would like to take this opportunity also to thank the mentors, the guest speakers, to thank Marta, Ysaline and Inge, but more important to thank ourselves for pulling each other up throughout this week. It's very cheesy of me to end this speech with this phrase: We arrived here as strangers, but we will now depart as friends. But friends with increased alcohol tolerance from whence we first arrived.

Thank you thank you thank you.