ASEF LinkUp | Asia-Europe Cultural Diplomacy Lab took place from 24 to 27 October 2023 in Singapore. Through this project, ASEF aimed to create new spaces for encounters and capacity building where various agents involved in cultural cooperation (e.g. diplomats, managers, funders, artists) can meet and share knowledge and approaches from different regions. For the first edition of ASEF LinkUp, we have invited curators, arts managers and artists to “link-up” with the diplomats and cultural attaches based in Singapore and the ASEAN region.

Here’s what happened over the 4-day programme in Singapore:

On day 1, Director of ASEF’s Culture department, Valentina Riccardi, along with Tay Tong, Director, Sector Development (Visual Arts) from the National Arts Council, Singapore welcomed our ASEFLinkUp participants from across the globe at Goodman Arts Centre. From a thoughtful introduction on what cultural diplomacy entailed to a dynamic urban permaculture workshop by Cultivate Central, the participants were provoked to reflect on what this concept meant in their respective contexts. The first day of the Lab ended with an intriguing provocation by Daniel Kok, the Artistic Director of Dance Nucleus.
1. 24 October - Day 1 of ASEF LinkUp - National Arts Council, Singapore’s Tay Tong, Director, Sector Development (Visual Arts), addressing the participants on the ground up initiatives and people to people exchanges of cultural diplomacy © Asia-Europe Foundation

2. 24 October - Day 1 of ASEF LinkUp - Daniel Kok, Artistic Director of Dance Nucleus who spoke of his experience as an independent artist navigating his way through the local, regional and international arts sector © Asia-Europe Foundation

3. 24 October - Day 1 of ASEF LinkUp - Snippets from the hands-on urban permaculture workshop by Cultivate Central © Asia-Europe Foundation

On the second day of the Lab, the participants were challenged by Ambassador Dante Brandi, Ambassador of Italy to Singapore, to think about the integral role the arts and culture have to play in diplomacy. The participants also had the opportunity to come together to discuss pertinent arts and culture, societal issues and sustainable development. The day closed with a networking visit to Siong Leng Musical Association, nestled in the historic neighborhood of Chinatown, where the participants were treated to an afternoon of Nanyin music and culture.

For the penultimate day of the Lab, artist and founder of Drama Box, Singapore, Kok Heng Leun led the participants through an Experiential Theatre workshop. They reflected on personal and contextual challenges they faced in cultural exchange and even embodied the perspectives of the stakeholders involved in such projects. To round off the day, ASEFLinkUp participants were treated to a visit at the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art, to learn more from their two artists in residence - Anthony Chin and Shahmen Suku.

On the final day, the Lab started with a dynamic storytelling workshop led by ASEF LinkUp facilitator and Director of MoonShadow Stories, Kamini Ramachandran. The participants then spent their day gearing up for their final project presentations. The Lab then concluded with a sharing by the participants with their suggestions for further international cultural cooperation through videos, storytelling and performances.
4. 27 October - Day 4 of ASEF LinkUp - 20 participants from over 13 countries and various artistic and diplomatic sectors, where they connected and engaged in conversations to rethink and reimagine cultural exchange © Asia-Europe Foundation

Stay tuned to ASEF culture360's social media channels to find out more about ASEF LinkUp in 2024!

ASEF LinkUp | Asia-Europe Cultural Diplomacy Lab is organised with the support of the Embassy of Italy in Singapore and Casa Asia. The participation of the Czech Republic participants is supported by the Arts and Theatre Institute (ATI) and Perform Czech.

ABOUT ASEF CULTURE360

culture360.asef.org brings Asia and Europe closer by providing information, facilitating dialogue and stimulating reflection on the arts and culture of the two regions.

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