



PRESS RELEASE - August 5, 2009

New York—freeDimensional brought together administrators from 13 emerging art spaces from around the world for a weeklong retreat in June. Hosted at the Breuninger Foundation's Wasan Island near Toronto, the retreat provided the space for these newest members of the freeDimensional (fD) network to reflect on their work, share strategies for sustaining their programs, and develop new partnerships.

Egypt, India, Israel, and Senegal were among the countries represented at the retreat (for a full list of participants visit <http://freedimensional.ning.com/page/wasan-retreat-2009>). Building community across the art space sector through knowledge-sharing was a key outcome of the EASSI retreat. In the words of Iz Oztat, co-founder of Cura Bodrum Residency in Turkey, "This experience has been very important for us. We are just starting out so I learned so much from the spaces that are here that have been functioning already for a while and the strategies they have been using."

For Arshia Sattar from Sangam House Writer's Residency in Pondicherry, India, the EASSI retreat was an opportunity to "meet other people who run residencies and know that we now have the capacity to share people and ideas. We've already begun thinking about joint programming we're thinking about sending people to each other." Participants also took away new ideas and tools for resource generation, management, and community outreach from a series of facilitated dialogues and one-on-one consultations with professional trainers (for the full program, visit <http://freedimensional.ning.com/page/wasan-retreat-2009>).

In addition to knowledge and community building, the EASSI retreat created the space for emerging art spaces to engage fD's mission of linking art to social justice movements. For Dolores Bengolea, who launched the Proyecto Victoria Ocampo in Argentina last year, "I was not convinced about bringing these two things [art and social justice] together until this retreat on Wasan Island. Now I am truly convinced about how enriching it would be for me, for my country, for my community, and for everyone to share this idea of sheltering creators who are needing help as they pursue their ideas or their work."

The Emerging Art Space Support Initiative (EASSI) is fD's program for new and emergent art spaces that want to participate in the fD network but who are still struggling to exist in their communities. EASSI offers new art spaces mentorship opportunities, technical training, access to resources, and a platform for visibility in return for their interest and commitment to the work of the fD network. For more information on the program visit <http://freedimensional.ning.com/page/programs-1>. This year's retreat was the official launch of the program, conceived in late 2008 following a survey of 20 emerging art spaces around the world.

The EASSI retreat was made possible by support from the Breuninger Foundation which hosted participants on their Wasan Island conference facility in Canada. The retreat program received additional support from the Ford Foundation, Cairo, and a re-grant from JP Morgan Chase through the Brooklyn Arts Council. Representatives from Musagetes Foundation and the Swiss Cooperation Office Arts and Culture Program attended portions of the retreat.

freeDimensional is an international human rights organization that advances social justice by hosting activists in art spaces and using cultural resources to strengthen their work. fD provides resources and safe haven for oppressed activists and culture workers; facilitates knowledge-sharing among art spaces who actively participate in local community organizing; and engages the art world and mainstream media to heighten public awareness and influence policy change on critical issues. You can find out more about freeDimensional at <http://freedimensional.org/>.

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