

Get to Know the *Decolonizing the Arts* Speakers



Chris Creighton-Kelly is an interdisciplinary artist, writer and cultural critic born in the UK with South Asian/British roots. His artworks have been presented across Canada and in India, Europe & the USA. Chris has been persistently interested in questions of absence in art discourses. Whose epistemology is unquestioned? Who has power? Who does not? Why not? For 30 years, he has worked extensively as an arts policy consultant for artists in all disciplines; arts organizations/institutions; government agencies in Canada and internationally. In 1989-91, Chris was a consultant to the Canada Council on issues of cultural/racial equity. His work launched the formation of two important offices – the Aboriginal Arts Office and the Equity Office which have subsequently led the way in transforming the Council from an exclusively European arts agency to one in which multiple art traditions and practices are honoured and funded. In 1991-92, he worked at the Banff Centre designing and directing a 20 artists' residency, *Race and the Body Politic* which indirectly influenced the establishment of the Aboriginal Arts program. In 2012, Chris was a co-recipient, with France Trépanier, of the inaugural Audain Aboriginal Curatorial Fellowship awarded by Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. In 2011, they co-authored *Understanding Aboriginal Art in Canada Today* for the Canada Council. Chris appreciates his audiences a lot.



Dipankar Mukherjee is a professional director originally from Calcutta, India with a 25-year history of directing. He is the Artistic Director of Pangea World Theater, an international theater in Minneapolis that is a progressive space for arts and dialogue. As a director, he has worked in India, England, Canada and the United States. Dipankar has worked at the Guthrie Theater, Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival, New World Theater, Alliance Theater and at the Young Vic in London. Dipankar has worked with dancers to create cross-cultural work using his knowledge of Kalaripayattu, an Indian martial arts form. He has worked with choreographer/dancers from India, U.S. and Canada in the capacity of a director. His aesthetics have evolved through his commitment to social justice, equity and deep spirituality and these factors, along with a response to relevant politics, forms the basis of his work. Dipankar has been awarded the Twin Cities International Citizens Award by the Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul for contributions in the area of human rights and international co-operation. Dipankar has received the Humphrey Institute Fellowship to Salzburg and has been a Ford Foundation delegate to India and Lebanon. He is a recipient of the Bush Leadership Fellowship award to study non-violence and peace methodologies in India and South Africa and a Doris Duke Fellowship at Shangri-La. He co-taught a week-long masterclass on ensemble building using Pangea World Theater's methodology at PA'I Foundation in Hawaii. He also co-facilitated a workshop process that invoked the comparison between Indian and western theater practices at the South Asian Center in Vancouver, Canada. Dipankar facilitates processes that disrupt colonial, racist and patriarchal modalities of working and collaboratively searches for an alternate way of working.



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Meena Natarajan is a playwright and director and the Artistic and Executive Director of Pangea World Theater, a progressive, international ensemble space that creates at the intersection of art, equity and social justice. She has led the theater's growth since it's founding in 1995. Meena has co-curated and designed many of Pangea World Theater's professional and community based programs. She has written at least ten full-length works for Pangea, ranging from adaptations of poetry and mythology to original works dealing with war, spirituality, personal and collective memory. Her play, *Etchings in the Sand* co-created with dancer Ananya Chatterjea has been published by Routledge in a volume called *Contemporary Plays by Women of Color: The Second Edition*. Meena leads ensemble-based processes in Pangea that lead to works produced for the stage. She has also directed and dramaturged several original theater and performance art pieces. She is currently on the board of the Consortium of Asian American Theaters and Artists and is on the advisory committee for the Community Arts Program at the University of Minnesota. Until recently, she was a National Theater Project Advisor at New England Foundation for the Arts. She was on the Advisory Committee of the Community Arts Network, was on the founding board of the Network of Ensemble Theaters and was the president of Women's Playwrights International. She has been awarded grants from the Theatre Communications Group, Playwrights Center and the Minnesota State Arts Board. She was recently awarded the Visionary Award for mid-career leaders from the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits.



France Trépanier is a visual artist, curator and researcher of Kanien'kéha:ka and French ancestry. Her artistic and curatorial work has been presented in many venues in Canada, the US and Europe. France was the Aboriginal Curator at Open Space Arts Society in Victoria BC, where she is co-curated, with Michelle Jacques and Doug Jarvis, the exhibition *Deconstructing Comfort*. She also curated the *Awakening Memory Project* with artists Sonny Assu, lessLIE and Marianne Nicolson. France was the co-recipient of the 2012 Inaugural Audain Aboriginal Curatorial Fellowship by the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. She co-authored with Chris Creighton-Kelly *Understanding Aboriginal Art in Canada Today: a Knowledge and Literature Review* for the Canada Council for the Arts. Her essays and articles have been published in numerous journals and magazines. France is co-chair of the Indigenous Program Council at the Banff Centre. She worked at the Canada Council for the Arts before becoming a Senior Arts Policy Advisor for the Department of Canadian Heritage. She held a diplomatic post as First Secretary, Cultural Affairs at the Canadian Embassy in Paris. She directed the Centre for New Media at the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris. France was also the co-founder and Director of the artist-run center *Axe Néo-7* in Gatineau, Quebec.

