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**Critical and Reflective
Intercultural
Communication
Education**
Practising Interculturality
Through Visual Art

**Fred Dervin
Xiaowen Tian**

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Critical and Reflective Intercultural Communication Education: Practising Interculturality Through Visual Art provides answers to the following questions: *When we look at, engage with and experience art, what is it that we can learn, unlearn and relearn about interculturality? How could visual art support us in reflecting about interculturality critically?* This book adds to the multifaceted and multidisciplinary field of intercultural communication education by suggesting and urging those working on the notion of interculturality (researchers, scholars and students) to give art a place in exploring the complexities of the notion. No knowledge background about art (theory) is needed to work through the chapters. The book helps us reflect on ourselves and on our engagement with the world and with others, and we learn to ask questions about these elements. The authors draw on anthropology, linguistics, philosophy and sociology (amongst others) to enrich their discussions of art and interculturality.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Fred Dervin is Professor of Multicultural Education at the University of Helsinki (Finland). Dervin also holds several distinguished and visiting professorships in Australia, Canada, China, Luxembourg, Malaysia and Sweden. He has widely published in different languages on identity, the ‘intercultural’ and mobility/migration (over 150 articles and 80 books). His latest books include *The Paradoxes of Interculturality* (2023) and *Interculturality in Fragments* (2022).

Xiaowen Tian is a researcher at the University of Helsinki (Finland) and a lecturer at the Art Academy of Minzu University of China. Tian’s research focuses on Minzu art education and intercultural education. Inspired by Dervin’s interculturality in education, she proposes to systematise and theorise Minzu art education through a critical and reflexive intercultural lens, taking into account the specificities of the Chinese context. Tian has published on Mongolian and Buddhist art and the notion of Zhongyong in relation to interculturality.

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CHAPTER 1

The Power of Art?

Abstract The introduction justifies the needs and objectives for the book in relation to the broad field of intercultural communication education and research. It first reviews previous studies on art and interculturality in education and other fields and aims to make the reader reflect on their own take(s) on art and their (daily) experiences of it. In the next part of the introduction, the authors problematize the idea of interculturality. Different takes on the notion are discussed. The need to enrich our views on the notion is also emphasized. A fluid, transformative and interactional perspective is suggested in the book, focusing on the *inter*- and the *-ity* of the notion of interculturality, with each chapter allowing us to reflect on its characteristics. The introduction ends with a presentation of the chapters and a description of the book working principles.

Keywords Indian theatre • Interculturality • Art • Ideologies • Interdisciplinarity

[THINKING FIT¹]

1. Why do you want to read our book? What are your motivations? What are you expecting to get from it?
2. What do you think that we, the authors, learnt in the process of writing this book?
3. How would you define both *interculturality* and (*visual*) *art*? Are you aware of other ways of delimiting them? How different and similar are they from yours?
4. Try to review for yourself what you already know about interculturality (e.g. authors, ‘models’, theories, concepts, specific studies). How much have you read about (visual) art and interculturality? What topics and research results are you aware of?
5. Try to remember the latest art piece that you have observed, for example, in a magazine, online or at a gallery. How could this piece support you in reflecting on interculturality? What aspect(s) of interculturality could it help you consider from a (maybe) different perspective?

OPERATE SOME DISTANCING

We start this book with a short mind exercise to distance ourselves from our current location/mindset and from the re-presentations that we might have about what this book could be about.

Imagine that you are on the southern coast of India, in the state of Kerala, sitting in what could be described as a ‘theatre’. You are about to watch/take part in a dance drama in the open (maybe a village square), beginning at sunset and lasting through the night. The stage is rather small, and there is no scenery, just an oil lamp spreading the ‘light of knowledge’ to both performers and the audience, placed in the middle of

¹Each chapter opens with a list of questions to you, the reader, so that you can reflect on the content of the chapter [Thinking Fit]. As the authors, we are very aware of the diversity of multilingual and international readers who will open this book. Although the list might appear ‘random’ at times, it is meant to reflect the flow of interrogations that one faces in intercultural encounters. As will be argued in this book, interculturality does not go in a ‘straight line’. It is a complex, often incoherent phenomenon that confuses us. We may not necessarily have one answer to these questions (or any answer at all!). Therefore, treat these questions as a time for taking a short break, thinking and imagining answers for yourself about the issues that interculturality pushes us to consider.