

Dance in a transcultural landscape: roundtable with five artists

Mbingo K. Itondo and Yongli Li

Abstract

What does ‘transculture’ mean in the realm of dance and performing arts in contemporary Germany? How does Asian diaspora identity inform the creative process in transnational choreography and performance? And what factors shape the dynamic relationship between artists, curators, and audiences? These questions were explored in a stimulating roundtable discussion with five Germany-based international dancer-artists at the T(r)anzkultur Summer School in Düsseldorf in 2024. This article sheds light on the conversations that addressed issues such as cultural appropriation, tokenization, postcolonial power relations, rehearsal hierarchies, artistic visibility, and the responsibilities that emerge when working across cultural boundaries. Rather than arriving at a fixed definition of transcultural dance, the discussion framed transculturality as an ongoing process of negotiation shaped by movement, memory, power, and representation. Artistic practice emerged as a form of situated knowledge production, where dance functions not only as an aesthetic medium but also as a critical space for reflection, dialogue, and social intervention. In this sense, the roundtable provided insight into the complexities of contemporary transcultural artistic practice.

Keywords

Transcultural dance; Asian diasporic dance and performance; social justice in dance

Speakers (listed alphabetically by surname)

Sandra Chatterjee is a dance scholar and choreographer whose work focuses on postcolonial theory, transcultural performance, and sensory politics. Her recent projects include *Smells of Racism* and *SWEAT—Smells of Labor*, which engage audiences through olfactory choreography.

Olivia Hyunsin Kim is a German-Korean choreographer whose work spans dance, performance art, and curatorial practices. Her projects interrogate tokenisation, postcolonial legacy, and embodied identity, frequently with humour, subversion, and critical intimacy.

Fang Yun Lo is a Germany-based Taiwanese choreographer and director. She studied dance in Taipei and completed postgraduate studies in dance and choreography at Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen. Since 2011, she has worked as a freelance artist and artistic director of Polymer DMT, developing dance theatre productions, participatory formats, and performances for young audiences. Her recent productions include *Kim* (2023), based on the novel by Khueê Pham; *The Seas Between Us* (2025); and *When I Was Your Age* (2026).

Paula Pau is a Germany-based Malaysian dancer and performer. She has worked with Ben J. Riepe as a performer and co-creator across multiple productions (2020–2023). Since 2023, Pau has collaborated closely with choreographer Raymond Liew Jin Pin, including the co-creation and performance of *Lotus Fight Club* (2025). She has collaborated with Andras Meneses Sousa on *PANDORA*, which will premiere as a full-length production in October 2026. Her artistic practice explores migration, queerness, and post-migrant identity, bringing Southeast Asian practices and diasporic perspectives into dialogue with the European stage.

Yurika Sophie Yamamoto is a Japanese-German performer, dancer, and choreographer. She graduated in modern and contemporary dance from Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen in 2019. Her current artistic research investigates intimacy, power, and authorship in human-machine relationships through dance and generative AI. Recent engagements include a collaborative residency at TalentLab Luxembourg and an artist-in-residence position at the Institute for Computer Music and Sound Technology, Zurich University of the Arts, where she continues her ongoing research project, *How to Please an AI*.

Introduction: beyond borders—why transcultural dance matters today

Contemporary dance and performance practices are shaped by transnational collaborations, embodied encounters, migration, touring structures, and negotiations across cultural and institutional contexts. Questions of representation, postcoloniality, identity, and artistic visibility have become central to contemporary discussions within dance and performance, while the transcultural dimensions of these artistic processes have rarely been examined explicitly through the lens of Transcultural Studies.¹ Against this backdrop, the roundtable discussion ‘Beyond Borders: Dance in a Transcultural Landscape,’ held on 27 July 2024 and co-curated by Mbingo K. Itondo and Yongli Li, brought together artists, scholars, and students to reflect on transcultural artistic practice through dialogue and exchange.

Moderated by Itondo, this roundtable featured dance practitioners and scholars, including Sandra Chatterjee, Olivia Hyunsin Kim, Fang Yun Lo, Paula Pau and Yurika Sophie Yamamoto. Their artistic practices –covering scent, site-specificity, traditional movement

¹ The term *transcultural* is used here in distinction from multicultural approaches that tend to assume separate, coexisting cultures. By contrast, transcultural approaches foreground processes of translation, entanglement, and transformation across cultural boundaries. Transcultural Studies constitute an interdisciplinary field concerned with mobility, cultural encounters, knowledge production, and asymmetrical relations shaped by coloniality and global interconnectedness. This understanding builds on Fernando Ortiz’s concept of transculturation, which frames colonial cultural encounters as reciprocal and conflictual processes of change. While Wolfgang Welsch’s influential formulation of transculturality emphasizes cultural permeability and interconnectedness, scholars such as Monica Juneja and Christian Kravagna have shifted the focus toward coloniality, translation, and asymmetrical entanglements. See Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press 1995; Mary Louise Pratt, ‘Arts of the Contact Zone’, *Profession*, 1991, 33–40; Wolfgang Welsch, ‘Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today’, in Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash, eds, *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, London: Sage, 1999, 194–213; and Monica Juneja and Christian Kravagna ‘Understanding Transculturalism: Monica Juneja and Christian Kravagna in Conversation’, ed. Model House Research Group, *Transcultural Modernisms*, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013, 22–33.

vocabularies, queerness, and migration—created a polyphonic and sometimes tension-filled exchange that emphasised the complexity within asymmetrical cultural and institutional contexts.

The curation of the invited speakers was guided by the transnational dimensions of their artistic work and by the ways their practices unsettle essentialising accounts of cultural hybridity and representation. Throughout the discussion, questions of authorship, institutional framing, tokenisation, cultural sensitivity, rehearsal hierarchies, and audience perception emerged repeatedly, as lived and embodied negotiations shaped by artistic production itself. The conversation revealed how transcultural artistic practice is often marked by friction, contradiction, vulnerability, and unequal structures of visibility and power. This article approaches the curated roundtable not merely as documentation of an event, but as a form of situated and dialogical knowledge production, and as a productive site of transcultural inquiry. The edited transcript preserves the dialogical character of the exchange while remaining minimally edited for clarity and readability. At the same time, it retains the oral quality, tensions, and differing positionalities that shaped the exchange.

Transcultural dance—a fluid concept?

Itondo: Today we have the honour of hearing from five exceptional artists who navigate questions of culture, mobility, embodiment, and artistic practice through dance. Let's begin the discussion by unpacking the notion of *transcultural dance* as a fluid concept—or as a practice in motion. Fang Yun, can you elaborate on how you see transculturality manifest in your work, for instance in *Polymer DMT*?²

Lo: For me, *transcultural dance* is an identity that's inherent. It's a way of being that I was born with, something deeply connected to my sense of self. When I work on a project, I always analyse and try to understand the cultural context, but at the same time try to engage with its transcultural aspect—regardless of whether I work with dance or other forms of theatre. I think the transcultural aspect of my work is natural and organic. Instead of trying to force it or impose it on my work, I intentionally push my work in this direction. Whether I work across different disciplines or with artists and performers from intercultural backgrounds, I always try to create a space for transcultural exchange and understanding.

Itondo: When you said 'intentionally', I was thinking about Yurika's work, which integrates traditional Japanese culture into contemporary dance forms. Yurika, I was wondering how do you select and bring all those elements together with contemporary aspects in your practice?

² *Polymer DMT* is the interdisciplinary dance and performance platform founded by Fang Yun Lo in 2011. Based in Germany and Taiwan, the dance company develops transnational and transcultural projects that combine dance, documentary theatre, performance, film, and storytelling. See *Polymer DMT*, <http://www.polymerdmmt.com>, accessed 29 Jun. 2026.

Yamamoto: When I work on a project, traditional elements often influence me or provide a foundation for my work. I was born in Japan, but raised primarily in Germany, which gives me a unique perspective on my cultural heritage. I use traditional Japanese culture as a way to explore my sense of home and my connection to my roots.

Itondo: This type of hybridity,³ I think, was also apparent in Hyunsin's practice. Hyunsin, could you share your perspective on the cultural hybridity in your dance and how it influences your choreography?

Kim: I'd like to introduce myself first. I was born in Germany, but my family was deported when I was twelve. I grew up in South Korea for nine years, then spent a year in Hawaii, and eventually moved to Berlin in 2010. I see my work as transcultural. Part of the reason for this comes from the way I entered dance quite late—I only started when I was 23. Before that, I was always interested in theatre and the performing arts, especially through community-based projects. Growing up in a coal mining town in western Germany, I was exposed to a wide range of cultures and communities, including Gastarbeiter⁴ (guest workers) from different countries. This experience has taught me to value the complexity of cultural identity and the importance of its fluidity.

In my work, I try to reflect this diversity and hybridity while avoiding essentialism. I believe that cultural identity is not fixed but a dynamic, ever-changing process. I seek to create inclusive, diverse choreography that welcomes different perspectives.

Itondo: Sandra, you also raised questions about politics, migration history, and what this means for you when you discuss transcultural dance. What does the concept of 'transcultural dance' mean to you, and how does it reflect on your work at the intersection of dance, culture, and politics?

³ The concept of hybridity is used here not as a harmonious fusion of cultures, but as a framework for understanding cultural negotiation, transformation, and fluid identity. See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994; Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in Jonathan Rutherford, ed, *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, 222–37; Jan Nederveen Pieterse, 'Hybridity, So What? The Anti-Hybridity Backlash and the Riddles of Recognition', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 18.2–3, 2001, 219–45; Kien Nghi Ha, *Unrein und vermischt: Postkoloniale Grenzgänge durch die Kulturgeschichte der Hybridität und der kolonialen 'Rassenbastarde'*, Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2017; and Eva-Maria Troelenberg, Kerstin Schankweiler, and Anna Sophia Messner, 'On the "Objectscape" of Transculturality: An Introduction', in *Reading Objects in the Contact Zone*, eds Eva-Maria Troelenberg, Kerstin Schankweiler, and Anna Sophia Messner, *Heidelberg Studies on Transculturality*, 9, Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing, 2021, 230–31.

⁴ Gastarbeiter (guest worker) refers to labour migrants recruited to West Germany from the mid-1950s onward, primarily to address labour shortages during the postwar reconstruction. Although the recruitment programs were conceived as temporary, many workers settled permanently, often bringing their families and contributing to the country's social and cultural transformation. See Klaus J. Bade, *Migration – Flucht – Integration: Kritische Politikbegleitung von der 'Gastarbeiterfrage' bis zur 'Flüchtlingskrise'. Erinnerungen und Beiträge*, Karlsruhe: Von Loepfer Literaturverlag, 2017; Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland: Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter, Flüchtlinge*, Munich: C. H. Beck, 2001; and Jochen Oltmer, Axel Kreienbrink, and Carlos Sanz Díaz, eds, *Das Gastarbeiter-System: Arbeitsmigration und seine Folgen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Westeuropa*, Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 104, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2012.

Chatterjee: Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective. I was born in Munich to a German mother and an Indian father. I've been dancing since I was a child. My early experiences with dance were shaped by my Indian heritage. However, I also had a strong desire to learn classical ballet, which led to a sense of frustration and disappointment when I was told that I would never be able to succeed as a professional (ballet) dancer. This experience of being marginalised and excluded from the classical dance world led me to explore other dance forms, such as classical Indian dance, which I eventually studied. But I soon realised that my language and movement style were not compatible with the traditional Indian dance forms, and this created a sense of tension and conflict within me.

As I moved to different parts of the world, including Hawaii and California, I was exposed to a wide range of dance forms, including Polynesian dance and salsa. These experiences left a lasting impact on my body and movement style, and I began to develop a unique fusion of dance forms that was not bound by traditional categories or hierarchies. For me, transcultural dance is not just about combining different dance forms, but about creating a new language and movement style that reflects my own experiences and perspectives. It's about challenging the dominant narratives and power structures that shape the dance world and creating a more inclusive and diverse space for dance to flourish.

When I engage with dancers from different cultural backgrounds, I'm aware of the complex power dynamics and hierarchies that shape our interactions and our understanding of dance. But I also believe that dance has the power to transcend these boundaries and to create a sense of connection and community across cultures and borders.

Itondo: Paula, in your work, I also see this idea of traces left on the body and the kind of movement, you also incorporate elements from diverse dance cultures. Could you position yourself and dive into the question?

Pau: I'm originally from Malaysia, where I grew up in a transcultural society. Malaysia is a country with a diverse population, including people of Chinese, Indian, Malay, and Indigenous descent. As a result, I was exposed to a wide range of dance cultures at a young age. When I started dancing, I learned Malay, Indian, and Chinese dance forms, which were all part of my cultural heritage. However, as I continued to dance, I realised that the movements and techniques I had learned were not limited to a specific culture, but rather similar across different cultures.

This experience has shaped my approach to dance and has led me to incorporate elements from diverse dance cultures into my own work. I don't specifically set out to research a particular culture or dance form but rather allow my own experiences and learning to guide my creative process.

When I create new work, I often start by tracing the movements and techniques I have learned and exploring how I can extract and use them as a starting point or input. This process often leads me to new and unexpected places. I find that the diversity of dance

cultures I have learned has enriched my own practice and allowed me to create more complex and nuanced works.

The creative process—inspiration, struggles, and adaptations

Itondo: Paula, you described the creative process and the challenges you face when you blend traces and elements from different dance cultures, and how you sometimes only realise later what has gone into the creative process when you see your own dance. To some degree, maybe all of you have experienced this. Could you reflect on your creative process and the challenges you face, and revisit the elements from various culture in your choreography and your projects?

Lo: In my current work, I'm using documentary theatre as a base for my projects. Documentary theatre is an interdisciplinary form of theatre that combines different elements, such as performance, dance, and storytelling. When I work on a project, I don't just think about creating a dance or bringing different elements together. Instead, I spend a lot of time researching and digging deep into the stories, perspectives, and lives of the people I'm working with.

For me, research is an essential part of the creative process. I want to understand the context and the people and create a work that is authentic and meaningful. Instead of just looking for a specific outcome or a certain style, I try to create a work that is true to the people and the stories I'm working with. It is a challenge, but also the most joyful part of the process. It's not about financial problems or logistics, but about the context, the dialogue, and connecting with people. For me, that already feels like a performance. Sometimes, when I interview people, I think: I'd love to livestream this, or gather an audience to share in this intimate moment.

Itondo: Yurika, you also create intimate moments with the audience when you dance. The first time I saw you perform was in Munich, it was a kind of stationary dance piece with the audience present in the space. As you and your co-dancers moved through the room, the dialogue you created through your movements and your gaze—with the audience and within the group, really stood out. I also noticed this recently in your collaboration with Choy Ka Fai,⁵ where you engaged with the audience and blended different traditions and technologies with modern dance forms. What are some of the challenges in that creative process?

Yamamoto: With my background, I see myself as being in this in-between space—or maybe someone who can hop between different spaces. That's why I'm very curious about performing in galleries or museums, where I can have more direct encounters with visitors.

⁵ The collaboration refers to *Sometimes I See The Future*, a lecture-performance by Choy Ka Fai presented at tanzhaus nrw, Düsseldorf (21-23 June 2024). Yurika S. Yamamoto collaborated as choreographer and performer. See Choy Ka Fai, 'Sometimes I See the Future', Tanzhaus NRW, <https://tanzhaus-nrw.de/en/event/2024/06/sometimes-i-see-the-future>, accessed 29 Jun. 2026.

I've been in this in-between space from the start, and now I'm also interested in breaking the traditional stage setup. I actively seek different spaces—maybe because in the past, everything felt unsteady. Now I create my own spaces where I feel comfortable. I see myself as a mediator between people, between places.

Itondo: Hyunsin, you're also moving between spaces, cultures, and traditions. How do you ensure cultural sensitivity and authenticity in your cross-cultural projects?

Kim: I think I'm more theme oriented. When I graduated in 2015, there were a lot of expectations—especially from curators—that I could embody something international. That I could embody traditional Asian dance, martial arts, or Zen Buddhism on stage. But I couldn't—and didn't want to—fulfil those expectations. That wasn't what I had trained in. I had trained in a very narrow, US postmodern, Western contemporary dance. No matter what I did, those were the assumptions I faced. That's why I resonate with Hito Steyerl's quote: *'It is better now, but it is still like that.'*⁶

In my own work, I try to work from a very local perspective. A lot of postcolonial theories are based in the US or the UK, but not as much in Germany.⁷ But as you said—there's a local context. In the western part of Germany, people often think—after the 1968 movement⁸—that they've already done the work, and that discrimination is over. And in the east (part of Germany), there's this belief that because of socialism and communism, there was no racism. But that's not true—there have been murders.⁹

⁶ Although the original source of the quotation could not be identified, Kim refers to the work of the artist and theorist Hito Steyerl in relation to questions of cultural identity and representation.

⁷ For further discussion of the dominance of anglophone postcolonial theory and its uneven institutional reception within German academic and cultural contexts, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999; Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 2nd edn, London: Routledge, 2005; and Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 3rd edn, London: Routledge, 2013.

⁸ The 1968 student movement in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was formative in shaping a broadly leftist, anti-authoritarian political culture that directed itself explicitly against the silence of the wartime generation and the institutional continuities of National Socialism in the FRG. This gave rise to a culture of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past) and a self-understanding among progressive West Germans as a society that had critically confronted its history and moved beyond it. However, scholars have noted that this self-understanding remained largely focused on anti-Semitism and the Nazi genocide, and often failed to address structural racism, anti-Blackness, and Germany's colonial history—which received comparatively little attention in mainstream political discourse. For critiques of the limits of German memory culture, particularly regarding colonialism and racism, see Maureen Maisha Eggers, Grada Kilomba, Peggy Piesche and Susan Arndt, eds, *Mythen, Masken und Subjekte: Kritische Weißseinsforschung in Deutschland*, Münster: Unrast, 2005; Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2005; and Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

⁹ Kim's remarks can be situated within broader debates on racist and far-right violence in Germany, which challenge narratives that racism was overcome either through West Germany's post-1968 democratization or through the anti-fascist self-understanding of the former German Democratic Republic. Following German reunification in 1990, public debates on racism in reunified Germany were repeatedly shaped by a series of racist attacks and far-right violence, including the killing of Amadeu Antonio in Eberswalde (1990), the attacks in Hoyerswerda (1991), Rostock-Lichtenhagen (1992), Mölln (1992), and Solingen (1993), as well as later cases such as the NSU murders (2000–2007), the murder of politician Walter Lübcke (2019), and the Hanau attack (2020). For discussions of racism, migration, and far-right violence in contemporary Germany, see El-Tayeb,

So that's my challenge: how do I engage with the audience? Especially early on, the audience was often white, middle class, and university educated. And when you talk about postcolonial issues, many dissociate—they think it's didactic. People aren't always ready to learn. Therefore, I try to create situations—choreographed situations, they can be films or live performances, and in those situations, we're all in the same boat. Postcolonial issues and queer issues are not just the concerns of the people affected by them. They're also the concerns of those who aren't directly affected. Of course, our positions are different, but I believe there's a collective responsibility. I try to avoid passive consumption but rather aim for active engagement—some form of audience participation.

Itondo: In that case, how do you ensure that your work remains culturally sensitive and authentic?

Kim: I try to bring local context into the work, to connect local matters to the issue we're addressing. Because the so-called *universal* usually only applies to white, able-bodied, cisgender people. I realized early on that the black box and the white box are never neutral spaces. I try to play with that, to create situations where, even if you leave the piece, you're still making a decision. It's like voting. Your presence or absence still affects the outcome. You're already part of it.

Itondo: Sandra, I remember in one of your performances, you also created a space in which people had to choose how much they wanted to engage. Could you tell us more about how you create those situations? And how you approach challenges when merging cultures, especially in your dance and research project *Smells of Racism*?¹⁰

Chatterjee: I agree with a lot of what Hyunsin said. My experience is somewhat reversed. I was trained in a very traditional dance form in central Munich. It's a classical Indian dance, but not Bharatanatyam,¹¹ which everyone knows. Bharatanatyam has precedents, people like Shobana Jeyasingh or Chandralekha, they've toured internationally and even came to Munich. My form is less known, even in India. In my case, I fulfilled

European Others; Tanjev Schultz, *NSU: Der Terror von rechts und das Versagen des Staates*, Munich: Droemer, 2018; and Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, <https://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de>, accessed 2 Jun. 2026.

¹⁰ *Smells of Racism* is an interdisciplinary and participatory dance, performance, and research project developed by Sandra Chatterjee and collaborators since 2019, exploring the relationship between smell, racism, coloniality, and cultural stereotyping through performance, music, documentary material, olfactory installations, and audience participation. For further information, see Sandra Chatterjee, *Smells of Racism*, <https://www.sandrachatterjee.net/smellsofracism/uber-smells-of-racism/>; brut Wien, *Smells of Racism*, imagetanz 2023, <https://brut-wien.at/de/Programm/Kalender/Programm-2023/03/Sandra-Chatterjee>; and PATHOS Theater Munich, *Smells of Racism*, https://www.pathos.theater/veranstaltungen/2026/2026_03-04/03_20_Smells_of_Racism.php, all accessed 29 Jun. 2026.

¹¹ Bharatanatyam is one of the major classical dance traditions of South India, originating in the state of Tamil Nadu. Characterized by codified gestures, (*mudras*) rhythmic footwork, and expressive storytelling, it has become one of the most widely taught, performed, and internationally recognized forms of Indian classical dance. See Janet O'Shea, *At Home in the World: Bharata Natyam on the Global Stage*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2007; and Anne-Marie Gaston, *Bharata Natyam: From Temple to Theatre*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1996.

expectations. Classical Indian dance fits perfectly in the Ethnological Museum,¹² where I danced for much of my career. I still refer to the museum by its old name because I haven't yet seen the transformation that the new name, Museum Fünf Kontinente, suggests and because that's the period I'm talking about. Classical Indian dance fits that setting.

But when I tried to move beyond that, it was difficult. I wanted to find the contemporary aspect of what I did and I asked myself why it didn't overlap with what I expected contemporary dance to be. In a way, it's similar to what Kim said but from a reversed position. My performance work now rarely happens frontally. It's often in space, sometimes as installation, and the formats vary a lot. People are invited to engage, leave, and hang out and that's fine. They have to make a choice. However, there's no option to just sit and consume. That doesn't truly address transculture. But maybe it does, in the sense that it changes the relationship with the audience. That's the part I'm really connected with.

Regarding *Smells of Racism*: it's about exploring how racism functions differently in Europe. The discourse in the US is very strong, especially after 2020, but it focuses on a specific racial dynamic, which also leaves some people out. So I asked myself: how can we think about racism differently? How can we go deeper without negating things like colourism? Smell became a powerful way to do that. We created a piece called *Smells of Racism* with dancers from various backgrounds: a pop-trained dancer, someone trained in contemporary African dance, a dancer from Johannesburg, and one trained in commercial Bollywood dance. We aimed to find a way to move together where Western contemporary dance wouldn't automatically be the default, because that often happens. You spend half an hour improvising in the studio, and it sneaks in. So we centred the work around dancing to smell rather than to music. It changed everything. We had smells on our bodies and on stage, when allowed. You don't notice how powerful smell is until it's gone. *Smells of Racism* was a way to bring that back, but in a way that's not directly linked to a tradition or form that can be exoticized. We used local herbs, such as marigold, nettle, and alpine herbs, to metaphorically 'expel' the evil spirit of racism.

Hierarchy and power in collaborative work

Itondo: Paula, would you also say that when you lean more into your creative process and your work, you face challenges? And if so, how do you manage or process them?

¹² The museum referred to here is the Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde (Bavarian State Museum of Ethnology), which was renamed Museum Fünf Kontinente (The Museum Five Continents) in 2014. The adoption of its new name was part of a broader reorientation of ethnological museums in German-speaking Europe. See *Museum Fünf Kontinente*, 'Geschichte des Museums', <https://www.museum-fuenf-kontinente.de/museum/ueber-uns/geschichte-des-museums>, accessed 2 Jun. 2026. For further discussion of institutional renaming, colonial legacies, and ethnological museums, see Christian Kravagna, 'Vom ethnologischen Museum zum unmöglichen Kolonialmuseum', *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften*, 1, 2015, 95–109.

Pau: That's a complex question. There's always a challenge in the creative process, asking yourself: why am I working on a certain topic? Why am I choosing specific material to create a final product? As I go through the research, things keep changing over time. Even in just a five-week process, everything shifts each time we meet again. We go deeper or somewhere else entirely. That's challenging, but also essential. It raises new questions: why am I doing this? What do I want to say?

Recently, I've started asking myself 'why?' more consciously, especially when selecting material. Why is this important to me? Why is it important to the work? Because you can't just take all the things gathered in a process and put them into a piece. If there's no connection to me or the audience, then it means nothing.

In my work, I often deal with queerness, especially my transness. And sometimes I ask myself: what do I want to show on stage? What do I want the audience to perceive? In one of my recent works, I focused on my body as a commodity. Because when I'm on stage as a performer, I become a product, no matter the context. My transness has been sexualized. My body is looked at through a Western, European gaze. I get exoticized—as a trans woman from Malaysia. That's why I like to play with the gaze and with the audience. I give them a taste of something, but I also hold it back. I take it away. It's about self-agency! About being a performer and being on stage on my own terms.

Itondo: Self-agency does play a big role in your work. I remember one of your pieces in PACT¹³ a few years ago, maybe you can elaborate more on your recent project with Raymond?

Pau: That piece¹⁴ was a collaboration with another Malaysian artist, Raymond Liew, who's based in Hamburg. We worked together last year on a project about being queer in Malaysia, especially in relation to the sodomy law known as 377A.¹⁵ It's a colonial law that's still in effect. Being homosexual or trans is illegal and punishable in Malaysia. The piece

¹³ PACT Zollverein in Essen is one of Germany's leading venues for contemporary dance, performance, media arts, and artistic research. Pau's performance *PANDORA* was presented there as part of *ATELIER No 69—Plattform für neue Kunst und Choreographie* on 5 April 2024. See PACT Zollverein, 'ATELIER No. 69—Plattform für neue Kunst und Choreographie', <https://www.pact-zollverein.de/kalender/atelier-no-69>, accessed 29 Jun. 2026.

¹⁴ The dance and performance project referred to here is titled 'Maria Cencaru: A Southeast Asian Cis-Sis Reunion' (2023), choreographed by Malaysian artist Raymond Liew Jin Pin and developed in collaboration with performers from the Southeast Asian diaspora, including Paula Pau as performer and co-choreographer. The production was presented at WIESE eG (Hamburg), PACT Zollverein (Essen), and Schwankhalle (Bremen) in 2023. See Paula Pau, *Maria Cencaru: A Southeast Asian Cis-Sis Reunion*, <https://www.paulapau.com/maria-cencaru/>, accessed 29 Jun. 2026.

¹⁵ Section 377A refers to a provision of the Malaysian Penal Code that criminalizes 'carnal intercourse against the order of nature,' derives from Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code introduced under British colonial rule in 1862. Retained after Malaysian independence, the provision remains central to debates over sexuality, LGBTQ+ rights, religion, legal reform, and the colonial legacy of legal regulation in Malaysia and Southeast Asia. See Human Rights Watch, *This Alien Legacy: The Origins of 'Sodomy' Laws in British Colonialism*, New York: Human Rights Watch, 2008; Shanon Shah, *The Making of a Gay Muslim: Religion, Sexuality and Identity in Malaysia and Britain*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018; and Joseph N. Goh, *Becoming a Malaysian Trans Man: Gender, Society, Body and Faith*, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

focused on gathering Southeast Asian bodies. We were three Malaysian dancers. One of them was a voguer and trailblazer who founded the ballroom scene in Malaysia. There were also two Singaporean performers, one based in Europe, the other in Singapore. The process was really interesting for me, because up until that point, I had only collaborated with German choreographers. Working with Southeast Asian bodies was a completely different experience. We were more relaxed. We'd start the day with coffee, maybe a smoke. Then someone would say: 'Let's start.' We'd begin with body work and talk about the themes we were exploring. At some point, someone would say: 'Lunch?'—and then we'd take a break. That ease made me realize how differently we're trained and how practical our approach to working is. We just go to the studio, do our thing, and call it a day. The thinking happens while we're doing. By contrast, when working with European choreographers, they love to talk, like, a lot! You might spend two hours sitting at a table, not knowing where the conversation is going. Then they say: 'Okay, now go improvise,' and you're completely lost.

With Raymond, it was much more direct. We'd talk about what we needed, try things out, move, and if there were questions, we'd talk again. Here, people tend to put a lot of labels on everything. Labels are important, yes. But when it comes to hierarchy in rehearsals, I'm very anti-hierarchy. Often people say: 'There's no hierarchy,' but of course there is. With the Malaysian team, it felt more real. We were genuinely asked if we had questions. It felt sincere, like a real collaboration, a real exchange.

Yamamoto: Right! I totally agree. When I worked with Choy Ka Fai, there was a lot of trust in what I bring to my archive, my process. We might only meet two hours later and end up chatting about food or something totally unrelated. But the work still came together. I think it's because there was this mutual trust. Everyone was responsible for their own contribution.

Lo: I'd like to respond briefly to what was said earlier about hierarchy. Sometimes, I feel very sensitive about drawing these distinctions, such as when we talk about 'European' versus 'Southeast Asian' rehearsal styles. I work with German and international artists, and I'm not always sure if these dynamics really stem from culture, from transcultural thinking, or simply from personal beliefs and working mentalities. Maybe it's all interconnected. When I work with collaborators who mostly have transcultural backgrounds, we often talk about our different experiences of discrimination and racism. These conversations often reveal how past experiences continue to shape our sensitivities. When certain topics are touched upon, earlier traumatic experiences can quickly be reactivated.

Whenever people have had very bad experiences—which then become trauma—and when this topic is touched, maybe not even intentionally, it activates your sensitivity very quickly. This is a topic I deal with a lot. I don't know what others might feel about it. It's just important to me, especially how you look at people and how you listen. But still, there is

always some kind of stereotype in a work, no matter what we talk about. And it automatically turns into a label, a mark.

Pau: I was referring to my earlier example about the rehearsal process. That was one specific experience, not a general statement about European or Asian artists. I don't want to generalize, but that was the experience I had. And then, I luckily had another experience, and I saw that there *are* differences. I've also worked with great, different artists from Europe and of course, bad ones from Asia. I think that was just an example. Because I think it's also very valid, what you said, Fang Yun, that somehow our body gets activated by certain trauma. And we generalize a whole group of people and then just say that.

We live in a world where we travel. It's already so globalized. So, how can we move past these issues and try to find common ground and work together as a group, especially in the art scene? Because what we need is a community, not separation. Like what you just said—if you're Asian, you can only do martial arts, or traditional dance.

Navigating positioning and cultural appropriation

Itondo: Dear audience—feel free to join our conversation if you have questions or thoughts to share.

Audience A: I have questions about what it is like when a German or European tries to enter Asian society? How are they welcomed?

Kim: From my experience, it really depends on your skin colour. If you're white, you might be exoticized, but overall, it's relatively easy. That has to do with historical contexts: many Asian countries still host US military bases, such as South Korea and the Philippines, or have experienced Japanese imperialism.¹⁶ These imperial legacies aren't really addressed in German textbooks, but they still shape people's attitudes—often leading to anti-imperialist sentiments. In festivals I've attended, I'd say white Europeans generally have easier access, especially in the realm of contemporary dance, which is still heavily shaped by Western European and American aesthetics. There's something specific about educational structures. For instance, in places like South Korea, Japan, Thailand and Singapore, I've noticed that people are often expected to learn from white experts who are seen as legitimizing certain knowledge. So yes, there may be exoticization—but many white Europeans navigate these contexts with relative ease.

Audience B: The term 'transcultural' is so interesting, but I sometimes wonder if it can feel empty or overly politicized. I really appreciate how you all give it form in your

¹⁶ The history of U.S. military presence in parts of East and Southeast Asia as well as the legacies of Japanese imperial expansion in the region continue to shape political memory, cultural exchange, and perceptions of Western influence in contemporary Asian societies. See Takashi Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White and Lisa Yoneyama, eds, *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001; and Catherine Lutz, ed, *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle against U.S. Military Posts*, New York: New York University Press, 2009.

work. Hyunsin, I think you mentioned that your dance doesn't have to reflect where you're from, that it's more fluid. And Paula, you spoke about how things can mix, but hierarchies still exist. As someone without a dance background, I'm curious about how you deal with questions of referencing colonization, and who gets to dance what? Do you think dance engages these issues differently than writing or theory? I'm really interested in how you navigate this in your own practice. Especially without reproducing power structures.

Chatterjee: Thank you, that's such an important and also difficult question. There's a lot of discussion about appropriation in dance, what it means and how to approach it. And people handle it in different ways. Usually, it takes a long time to train in a dance form. I'll give you an example from my own experience, especially in relation to colonization. I trained in Indian dance. Later, when I started studying dance history, I realized that what I had learned—its current name, its structure, the idea of it as 'classical'—was actually shaped in the early 20th century as part of the anti-colonial movement. I had read about that in history books but understanding it through dance was different.

Later I moved to Hawaii. I love Polynesian dance. But hula,¹⁷ especially in the halau—the private hula schools—was central to the resistance movement in Hawaii. So what do you do when you're not Hawaiian and you love the form? Dance is often movement-based. You don't always need language. You can dance together without speaking. But if you engage with forms that are politically and culturally charged, you have to think carefully. Where do I position myself? Where do I place my body? In my case, I chose not to dance hula in a halau. I only danced hula at the university. The teachers knew they weren't in their own halau. They were teaching for non-Hawaiians, and they adjusted their approach accordingly. So that tension—loving something physically, with your body, while at the same time recognizing its politics and trying to find an ethical position within that... was a really important learning moment for me.

Audience B: What I hear in what you just shared is that there's a lot of self-education involved, and then there's a process of navigating.

Chatterjee: Yes! And also listening to people. My friend, with whom I went to the same *kumu* (a master teacher), he taught in Hawaiian, and if you wanted to study with him in his private school, the prerequisite was: you had to speak Hawaiian, then he would accept you. That friend chose to stay in that school, and she became a *kumu*. She's a German woman who lives in Berlin and runs a *halau* there. The *kumu* gave her that title, which involved years of training and ritual. But he also gave her a very explicit task: to go back to Berlin, open a *halau*, and to teach not just the dance, but also to educate people about the Hawaiian situation, as a counterweight to the commercialized, global version of *hula*. She's been doing

¹⁷ Hula is a traditional Hawaiian dance form combining movement, chant, music, and storytelling. Following US annexation in 1898, hula became closely associated with Indigenous cultural preservation, sovereignty, and political resistance. See Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*, rev. edn, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999.

that for fifteen, maybe twenty years now. It's really hard to survive that way, but she's committed. And she still does it today. What's interesting about her: she's a white German woman, originally from Namibia. And for her, this was also a way of dealing with colonialism and power structures—but from another angle. I think that's an important point. Because asking, 'Is this appropriation?'—that's only one part. The more pressing question is: What's your level of commitment? Are you immersing yourself fully in the form? Are you giving something back? She once said: 'I received this as a gift from my teacher. I'll do this until the end.' So it's also about giving and taking—and how you position yourself in relation to the form. Not just: Can I do this? But: What am I contributing to this context?

Kim: I also think positioning is crucial. Sometimes, the discourse around cultural appropriation leans too far into essentialism. It becomes: Because I have Korean heritage, I can dance Korean traditional dance, and no one else can. That's an oversimplification. There's a difference between appropriation and appreciation.¹⁸ This essentialist view ignores all the cultural exchanges that happened outside of Europe. Or take something simple: the banana. A product that moved across continents, from Asia to South America, the banana is a great example of cultural and material exchange. But yes, one's position in power relations matters, because power is real. To me, cultural appreciation is less about what you're doing and more about how you're positioned while doing it. I'm personally against nation-state logic. That's where the appropriation debate sometimes becomes dangerous—when it relies solely on identity: I can do this because I am that. That's not so interesting to me. Yes, you can do everything, that's not the point. But if you do it without reflection, there are consequences. That's the core: to reflect, to self-educate and to ask what my position is here. Everyone has some experience of marginalization and some of privilege. It's about recognizing that, instead of making categorical claims about who has the right to do what.

Audience C: Yesterday, I realised how haunted I was by something someone told me twenty years ago: '*You shouldn't perform Tibetan dance.*' As a Chinese performer, I internalised that judgment. I began to doubt my own artistic choices, thinking: *If I can't perform Tibetan dance, what am I allowed to perform at all?* My repertoire narrowed, and I gradually placed myself in a second-class position. I didn't see how much my thinking had been shaped by Eurocentric education and orientalist assumptions.¹⁹ Only recently—through

¹⁸ Many scholars addressed questions of cultural appropriation, appreciation, and essentialist understandings of identity within postcolonial and transcultural discourse, particularly regarding questions of positionality, power relations, and artistic legitimacy. See Susan Scafidi, *Who Owns Culture? Appropriation and Authenticity in American Law*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005; and Angela Gracia B. Cruz, Yuri Seo, and Daiane Scaraboto, 'Between Cultural Appreciation and Cultural Appropriation: Self-Authorizing the Consumption of Cultural Difference', *Journal of Consumer Research* 50:5, 2024, 962–84, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucad022>.

¹⁹ Orientalism refers to the system of representation identified by Edward Said, through which Western discourses have historically constructed 'the Orient' as an exotic, static, and fundamentally different cultural Other. Such representations have shaped ideas of cultural authenticity, authority, and legitimacy, including assumptions about who is considered entitled to perform particular cultural traditions. See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

exposure to non-Western, non-Eurocentric work—have I started to shift that view. Now I realise: *I can dance what I want*. But it took me twenty years to reclaim that freedom—because I had adopted what I imagined to be the audience’s gaze and let it limit me.

Itondo: That really connects to what Fang Yun said earlier—and to Hyunsin’s point about knowing your position. Becoming aware of power dynamics is one thing, but integrating that awareness into your practice takes time. You went through that: recognising the gaze, reflecting on it, unlearning, and slowly reclaiming space. It’s what Hyunsin emphasised: knowing where you stand—your privileges, marginalisations, and experiences—and working from there. From that place, you can experiment with form, style, and movement.

This also relates to some of the audience’s question about academia. I often see white German scholars writing about West African oral traditions, and I wonder if they reflect on their own gaze and position. In dance, similar questions arise but they become more embodied, more direct. Take voguing,²⁰ for instance. I love voguing, but I don’t participate. It’s not my space. Still, I appreciate and respect it deeply. I support others’ engagement with it as long as the form is honoured and not inappropriate. Sometimes I think dance and choreography may be more capable than academia of opening doors and bringing visibility to these forms while keeping their roots intact. That’s the potential of dance.

Reflections on power, privilege, and responsibility

Audience D: Thank you. I was actually going to ask something very similar, so the timing is perfect. First, I’d like to suggest we shift the focus away from questions like ‘Can this person do X?’ because when we individualise the debate, we risk losing sight of larger structures. Ideally, people should be free to do what they want. But reducing it to personal choice doesn’t get us far. I’d like to zoom out; maybe that resonates with some of the transcultural studies students here. I’m one of those people who feels a bit uneasy with the term ‘transcultural.’ In dance studies, we often use intercultural, and that term also gives me pause. As Hyunsin mentioned, these concepts—transcultural and intercultural—originally emerged to resist essentialism and to critique the rigid identity politics of postmodernism. And that history is valuable. Here’s my first question: How do we speak of hybridity or transculturality without glossing over material and historical power relations? How do we name these

²⁰ Voguing is a dance and performance style that emerged within Black and Latinx LGBTQ+ ballroom communities in New York City, particularly in Harlem, during the late twentieth century, and gained wider visibility in the 1980s. Characterized by stylized poses inspired in part by fashion imagery, improvisation, and competitive performance, voguing developed as a form of self-expression, community-building, and resistance against racism, homophobia, and transphobia. As voguing entered mainstream popular culture, it also became the subject of debates concerning cultural appropriation, representation, and the politics of visibility. See Judith Butler, ‘Gender Is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion’, in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*, New York: Routledge, 1993, 121–40; and Marlon M. Bailey, *Butch Queens Up in Pumps: Gender, Performance, and Ballroom Culture in Detroit*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013.

dynamics clearly, instead of neutralizing them? And secondly, do we really mean *transcultural*, or might transcolonial²¹ be more accurate? Because often, when we describe layered, inter-imperial, non-Eurocentric experiences, we end up using transcultural as a kind of euphemism. But perhaps what we're really talking about are transcolonial conditions, deeply relational, shaped by colonial entanglements.

Itondo: Thank you for your input and reflections. I think I understand where you're coming from, especially regarding discourse and terminology. At our Section of Transcultural Studies, we work with a definition of transculturality that emphasizes active engagement between cultures and identities. For us, it's never a fixed or completed state. Transculturality is constantly in motion—always shifting. It looks back at origins and first encounters, but also forward, asking what emerges from these interactions.

Our students—and we as scholars—often draw on thinkers and artists who frame transculturation as an open-ended, process-oriented concept. So when I ask how transcultural phenomena manifest in dance, I'm not looking for a conclusive definition. I'm asking: Where do we see something taking shape? Where are the points of tension, contact, or exchange? Where are the power dynamics—and how are they being negotiated?

As for your second point: I don't lean too heavily into transcoloniality, because colonial histories differ greatly depending on region, empire, and context. Even when discussing diaspora—which often overlaps with colonial histories—it gets complicated. Safran, for instance, proposed six criteria for diaspora,²² but many contemporary diasporic communities wouldn't meet all of them. They'd be labelled as migrants, expats, or something else. So rather than define you as diaspora dancers or postcolonial choreographers, I say: You are dancers. You are choreographers. You are scholars working within transcultural dynamics. And that's the lens through which we approach these conversations—grounded in your projects, ideas, lived experiences, and the dialogues you open up.

Chatterjee: To add to this discussion on the appreciation–appropriation continuum. I think we shouldn't overlook the exchanges and interactions happening in what we might call

²¹ The term *transcolonial* foregrounds imperial formations and colonial entanglements, while transcultural approaches emphasize contact, translation, mobility, asymmetrical power relations including violence, and the enduring effects of coloniality. These approaches do not understand transculturality as a neutral process of cultural exchange but as shaped by histories of colonialism and inequality. For discussions of transculturation and transcultural theory, see Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint*; Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London: Routledge, 1992; Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996; Christian Kravagna, *Transmoderne: Eine Kunstgeschichte des Kontakts*, Turia+Kant, 2017; and Monica Juneja, 'Global Art History and the "Burden of Representation"', in *Global Studies: Mapping Contemporary Art and Culture*, eds, Hans Belting, Jacob Birken, Andrea Buddensieg, and Peter Weibel, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2011, 274–297.

²² Safran's influential formulation of diaspora emphasizes collective attachment to a homeland, the preservation of cultural identity, and the idea of return as a constitutive element of diasporic communities. More recent approaches, including James Clifford's, have challenged these criteria as too restrictive and have instead highlighted mobility, relationality, and ongoing processes of cultural negotiation. See William Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 1:1, 1991, 83–99; and James Clifford, 'Diasporas', *Cultural Anthropology*, 9:3, 1994, 302–38.

the South or the East—however we choose to label it. It's important to not only think about access to power that centres whiteness, but also about other kinds of access to power that exist around the world. As artists of colour performing in Europe, we often take the reactions of white audiences as the primary reference point for how our work might be perceived or misread. But that's not the only context that matters. Our actions can have effects in other power relations globally—and we need to be aware of that broader frame.

Itondo: This also connects to what you said earlier about dance and relational structures. Western dance has a structure that many others are trying to enter, for all kinds of reasons.

Chatterjee: That is one part we are confronted with, and of course, we're all committed to addressing racism here. But Europe as such has already established a privileged space. It's really important to make the effort to move beyond that—to actively engage with power relations that are not only centred around whiteness. Also, but not only. It's really seductive to be in Europe as an artist of colour and to focus on your somewhat disadvantaged position within that matrix. But more effort is needed to examine your own position of privilege—especially when thinking about the ramifications of what you do. And those responses or consequences won't necessarily come to you easily. Because when you're in a privileged position, people are less likely to confront you about it.

You have to actively seek out those situations and engage in dialogue—to really determine your position and define your ethics. Because everything you do has repercussions, ramifications, and consequences. And ultimately, it's about choosing. Which consequences do I agree with? Which ones do I want to strengthen? Which ones do I reject? Which can I live with—and which can I not?

Audience E: Yesterday, we were also talking about who gets to do what: Can you do research on something that isn't part of your heritage? Is that okay? And I wanted to come back to cultural appropriation. What I've noticed—especially online, since around 2019 on TikTok—is that white users have kind of taken over the term 'cultural appropriation'. They use it to tell others what they can and cannot do, even though they're not the ones affected by it.

Kim: About what you said earlier—regarding postcolonial issues, and how to navigate the conflicts within yourself—I've struggled with that a lot. I still do. There was this international curators' academy I took part in. We were 32 people, plus one participant from Cambodia who couldn't join because their visa got denied. The event was at Maxim Gorki Theater, and Grada Kilomba was there.²³ I asked her how she deals with tokenisation—how she makes sure she's not just invited to tick a box. She said: 'I make sure I'm not a footnote

²³ Grada Kilomba's work critically engages questions of race, memory, representation, and colonial power structures within European cultural contexts. See Grada Kilomba, *Plantation Memories: Episodes of Everyday Racism*, Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2008.

in the program.’ Meaning, if she’s asked to give a talk, there should also be an exhibition or performance connected to it. That really stayed with me. Of course, not everyone can do that—especially newcomers or those in precarious situations. Sometimes, you have to take what you can get. And that’s completely valid. But this helped me personally. It’s one way to avoid being cast as ‘the good migrant’—the one who made it, but after whom no one else follows.

Itondo: Your reflection on tokenisation, Hyunsin—and especially the reference to Kilomba’s ‘I’m not a footnote’—captured a recurring thread in today’s conversation: how to remain visible without being instrumentalized by recognizing one’s place within shifting structures of power. Thank you all for your insightful contributions. I sincerely appreciated the honesty with which you shared your experiences—particularly when navigating personal and political tensions. What I take away from today is that change is already underway. Each of us has the opportunity to reflect, to act, and to reimagine the spaces we occupy. Today’s discussion also reminded me of the power of dance—how it moves across cultures and borders, and how it can become a space of exchange, resistance, and reflection.

Coda

What emerged during the roundtable was not a fixed definition of transcultural dance, but a commitment to staying with complexity. Rather than aiming for consensus, the panellists held space for tension between visibility and reduction, collaboration and hierarchy, freedom and expectation. The roundtable made clear that dance is not only a form of movement but a method of thinking, a way of navigating power, memory, and representation through embodied artistic practice. Transculturality emerged not as an abstract condition, but as something negotiated within rehearsal processes, sensory experiences, audience relations, institutional expectations, and collaborative dynamics. Questions surrounding gaze, tokenisation, rehearsal hierarchies, cultural sensitivity, and artistic visibility revealed how transcultural dance is shaped through asymmetrical structures of power, privilege, and representation. Who is perceived as ‘experimental,’ who is expected to explain themselves, and who gains access to visibility and institutional support remain pressing questions within contemporary artistic production.

As Sandra Chatterjee reminded us, the discourse must move beyond centring whiteness alone and toward a deeper examination of how power operates across global and institutional contexts. This includes seeking conversations across asymmetries, and asking what the ripple effects of our artistic choices are, and who bears them. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for students and scholars in transcultural studies. Approaching performance not only as representation, but as a lived and embodied form of knowledge, requires methodological openness toward rehearsal processes, artistic dialogues, sensory experience, and situated forms of exchange. The roundtable demonstrated how transcultural negotiations become visible not only through finished performances but also through

collaborative dynamics, curatorial structures, and institutional expectations that shape artistic production itself. It calls for interdisciplinary fluency and a commitment to unsettling what is taken for granted. As we map this evolving field, it is crucial to ask who is included in the conversation and who defines its terms. As panellists showed, transcultural artistic practice remains a dynamic space of dissent, solidarity, and reinvention. Perhaps it is here, in the in-between, that the future of cultural scholarship is already being choreographed.

As the field of Transcultural Studies continues to evolve, such dialogical and transcript-based formats may also offer new pedagogical possibilities within teaching and research, inviting readers, audiences, and participants to rethink how academic spaces can better connect embodied artistic practices with theoretical insight. How might students and scholars engage artistic reflection not as supplementary to theory, but as a critical site of transcultural inquiry, through which curatorial models, funding narratives, rehearsal methodologies, and institutional structures can be re-examined? This roundtable did not seek definitive answers nor did it provide them. Instead, it foregrounded practices of negotiation, critical reflection, vulnerability, and artistic resistance that continue to unfold across studios, stages, classrooms, and institutional spaces. What emerged was not consensus, but an ongoing engagement with transcultural artistic practice as a situated, relational field of encounter, continuously negotiated beyond established artistic and institutional frames.

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