



E-Quality: European Outsider Art Association Conference 2019

Friday 24 to Sunday 26 May 2019

DATE(S)	EVENT	VENUE(S)	ATTENDEES
24.05.19 25.05.19	European Outsider Art Association: Annual Conference 2019	Helio Pulitzer, Stockholm Restaurant Lux, Stockholm Studio Inuti, Stockholm Inuti Galleri, Stockholm Lilla Istanbul, Sala Aguélimuséet, Sala	80 x delegates 14 x interviews

Questions asked:

- Where have you come from?
- What has brought you to this event?
- What has been your experience of the conference so far?
- Can you tell me your thoughts about this year's theme, 'Quality and Equality'?
- Do you feel 'the artist's voice' has been represented and/or heard here?
- What improvements/changes might you suggest for future EOA conferences?

Interviewee 1

I'm the Leader for a trust and collection in Northern Norway. I think the issue or theme has encouraged me to come this year 'Quality and Equality'. It's very interesting and an extremely important issue in this field of work. I have been to the EOA conference almost every year, I find it a really valuable experience. This morning was very interesting, especially the presentation from Dr Roeske, Thomas Roeske the President of the EOAA. I think this conference is *fantastic*! Everything has been so well organised and lovely! The only thing for me, this talk was a little bit too short and I wish to discuss these things a little bit more, you know, this issue of 'Quality and Equality' after the speech from Dr Roeske. But yes, it's so far okay and very interesting. The suggestion that this thing is 'the elephant in the room', I think that is right.

The question of *equality* in Outsider Art... In my practice, people ask me a lot "What is this Outsider Art? I don't understand what this is. Is this work good and is it worth a lot of money?" They do not know, maybe it is good or bad art. So it is important in order to give an answer, to hear what other professionals are thinking about this issue. So for me, it's very interesting and valuable to hear these different perspectives. Absolutely, the artist's voice is being heard more now at the conference. I am an Art Historian and for me, this is very important to hear about the theories but also, from the artists themselves of course. However, we need a balance to hear what has happened in the past and how we have come to this current thinking in museums and the art world more generally.

For me, both sides are equally important and in terms of reaching any ideas regarding this issue, we still have some distance to go. This work is still not so accepted in the art world, this Outsider Art. We have only just begun the conference really but I would like to have a little more time for questions and answers, more time for discussion at the end of each presentation. Another thing to mention, the conference is for the most part in English and so, there are quite likely linguistic differences as we internally translate what is being presented. Even the terms of 'quality' and/or 'equality' might be perceived or understood differently, depending on the context. I think we might also be encouraged to think about and discuss these issues.

Interviewee 2

I'm an artist who is based in South Sweden. I *love* coming to the EOA conferences and events! I always meet a pile of friends and then, this year with the conference being held here in Sweden, there was no question not to come! I went to last year's conference in Chichester and it was brilliant! I've missed a few of the fairs and other events but I try really hard to make the annual conference. I went to Heidelberg and Palermo, I also went to Bratislava.

This morning was great! Very enjoyable and filled with contrasts. I think it's very important to give the artists their space here but I also think it's very important to have more formal lectures like Thomas'. That gives an academic level to the conference programme. It makes one really consider and think, it stimulates new ideas. So that combination, I think is very important here.

This year's theme is brilliant! The whole idea of talking about how Outsider Artists should be respected as real artists. Not as *normal* artists but rather, as real, professional artists who create artworks of quality. We need equality but the two terms, 'quality' and 'equality' are certainly not the same, or even very close to each other. It's so important to separate these terms. For me, equality here means not that you are equally respected for your work or your creative practice but rather, equally respected for who you are. Thomas' presentation began that discussion but we need far more time to respond to these issues. Occasionally because Thomas is so very intelligent, his talks can be too academic for me but today, I didn't lose him at all and it was a really thought-provoking talk to get us started in our thinking.

In terms of the artist's voice, it is very important to give them that space but I would hope we never lose the academic content in the programme. It might be an interesting development to find a way of including the artists in an academic discussion, rather than allow the conference to be entirely artist led. For the next few days, I'm just looking forward to lots more of the same and the chance to share thinking with the other people here. Actually, just this morning I've made contact with another colleague from South Sweden and so I already have some new places to explore over the next months.

I think it depends who runs next year's conference. That's something I think is very important about these events, in that each conference is very much led by the group or country who is hosting and so it has that very individual feeling each year. This year's programme feels to be very much an Inuti event. Last year - although not knowing the hosts before - I guess it was very much an Outside In conference. The one in Heidelberg was very much Thomas' conference. I think that is both important and exciting, so that each conference has that feel and tenor of its own country. So who knows about next year, whoever is hosting, it is bound to be exciting! I'm already looking forward to it!

Interviewee 3

I have two hats on here at the conference, so to speak. One hat is as an artist in my own right, I'm creating portraits of the people here at the conference. I lead lots of similar events with different organisations, using portraiture as a creative intervention, I call it 'PortraitsUntold'. I'm capturing the essence of those people here but also, the essence of the conference themes of 'quality' and 'equality'. Sometimes, these portraits might be very subtle and at others, very much in your face! This is the first EOA conference I've attended. I went to an Outsider Art Conference in Australia some years ago but I haven't been to this event before. I was encouraged to come this year because I've set up my own studio, it's an inclusive studio collective for people with learning and/or physical disabilities. It's based in Shrewsbury and we're a group of eleven artists. I've been travelling around the UK and Finland, looking at different studio models and practices, in order to influence and develop our own studio.

Today has been really packed! It has been really interesting, with some hot topics beginning to be discussed. It has been really interesting to hear the artists and also, the discussions around 'quality' and 'equality' within the genre of Outsider Art. From my own perspective, I work as a disabled artist and that means that the work I do is influenced by my experience of disability, in a disabling world. I'm not disabled by condition, I'm disabled by the world around me. With the theme in mind, I think it started to get a bit more exciting or *juicy* so to speak, when we came to Minna's questioning or participatory activity of asking the audience. That for me was the most interesting. I want to hear the opinions of other people here! For the future of Outsider Art and Disability Art, it would be better for me if these events were more openly led by those artists with lived experience of disability or marginalisation. I want those artists to be able to influence policy, the art market, galleries, collections and society more broadly. At the moment, all of these are orientated and led by able bodied, highly educated, white men. We need to switch things around!

Regarding 'the artist's voice', they are setting the scene for that to happen more often and for that to grow and create momentum but it still needs further development and nurturing for it to flourish. It would be interesting for the next conference to have a part of the programme organised by the artists and from the artist's perspective. A little like Gus was describing, in terms of their conference and regional events. Karen talked at length about access issues, including physical access but once again, as the only wheelchair user here, I don't know why this happens but I don't see many disabled people here. It makes me feel a little isolated. Although everybody is trying their best, there are things that are fundamental regarding 'access' that might need to be clarified for future conferences. I've had to keep thinking about access for both me and my activities. If I go into a room, it shouldn't be my responsibility to think about the layout of the room, the number of chairs and so on. They had set a space up for me and my wheelchair in the auditorium but I wasn't consulted about where I might like to be. That choice was taken away from me and there is an equality issue there. The space for me was at the side and there was a very narrow gap for me to reverse my wheelchair in or to get out. The breaks are too short for me to get to the toilet and then have a drink or speak with other people. These things shouldn't be happening at an event like this. So time and space have both been issues here for me.

However, so far it has been a great journey for me and I'm enjoying it greatly! Everybody has been asking me about sharing the drawings I've completed but there hasn't been a space to do that. It could have just been a quick little interlude in the programme? It would have been good to just share what I've been up to with everyone. I will of course send everything to Inuti and I'll put it on social media but it might have been nice to just have a little moment during the programme. I would really like to come back and further my research into studio models and studio practices. I wondered if Inuti ever have artist in residence opportunities or schemes that I could apply to. I mean, they've had Mike this year and I'd love to come and work with them here. It might be a lovely progression of what I've completed with the conference and a development of this work. The most important part of me, is to get to know the artists, to interact with them and see how they work in their studio spaces. Once again, that research would feed back into the development of our own studio collective in the UK. I did apply for funding to come here with my own evaluator but I wasn't successful, so I had to self-fund in order to be here.

Interviewee 4

I'm an artist and I've been working here with Inuit artists during the past week to create this new exhibition. This is my third EOA conference, I just missed one in the last four years but I've been a member of the EOA for four years. I was always going to come because I love these events! Last year in Chichester, I enrolled for the advanced package, so I went on the studio visits and that was really brilliant! I just thought it was the highlight of my year! Although these are considered to be networking events, I'm here really to meet and speak with the artists. Last year, I spent a lot of time with the artists and also, with Marc. I found him to be one of the most authentic voices in the conference. His motivation is so powerful and honest, he has such integrity. Made me feel that I wanted to be part of this forever!

I was actually present while they were discussing the theme of this year's conference. I've visited Inuit before and they were charming. The suggestion was put forward for the theme of 'quality', then immediately Lotte said it should be 'equality'. Having just attended the Chichester event, it seemed how could it *not* be about equality? How could we now step back and start talking about 'quality'? As an artist, it's such a subjective thing anyway. We can't say whether work is good or bad, it's so much to do with taste or personal preference. So I thought this would be a great chance for us to push things forward.

In terms of today, I was very tired and quite emotional when I arrived and after our workshops. I was carrying all of that and haven't slept well, so I'm a bit highly strung perhaps because of that. However, I didn't expect at the beginning to feel anger and I did feel anger! Now I really like Thomas and I've learned such a lot from him over the years. I really respect him and I really respect what he does. I don't even think that he's wrong, I might have started with that idea myself. But then when you start to work with these artists - the sort of research I do is working really closely with the artists - it's all about people and you can't then look at the artwork in a vacuum. As an artist, I'm interested in a) the person, b) their studio and c) their process. The end result is just the end result. Yes sure, I see plenty of work I don't like but I still appreciate the process. As an academic, that causes some friction for me and it's why I never submit theoretical papers for conferences but rather, projects like the one I've completed here. Art is a very abstract language and then here, it is translated into English or whatever your language is. It's often then passed on through a book or paper or presentation before it reaches somebody else's ears, so how many times has it been translated - even mangled - before people are told what to think? I don't like that. I don't mind explaining my own work for myself, only after six months and when I've had a chance to think about it but I don't want someone else explaining it for me.

In terms of the artist's voice, I really want to see what tomorrow holds for us. It could now come backwards and forwards, it was only towards the end of today that we started to deal with some of the more critical issues. I think it's quite confusing because there are so many different opinions and so many different experiences. It will take a while to process but after today, I wouldn't say that I was overly excited. I felt it was a backwards step in terms of the discussion. I don't know if other people agreed with what I said earlier on but I was really angry. If people thought I was rude, it's because I thought we were taking a step backwards. Those big boys can take it and they need to be challenged from time to time. I did feel a bit rotten because it might have come across like a personal attack and I do really respect Thomas. But at the same time, I respect and support the position of the artists.

Interviewee 5

I'm the Director of Project Ability, an arts organisation based in Glasgow. I'm here to take part in this year's EOA Conference. I've been to many of the previous events, I was actually at the inaugural conference which I think was probably about ten years ago. I sat on the Board for a couple of years at the beginning but now I just come to meet up with people and just to get a flavour of what is going on in this area at the moment. With this year in mind, it was accessible for me. Stockholm is an accessible city to visit, which always helps. Also, there is so much flux across Europe at the moment, it felt quite important to touch base with people.

Yesterday was absolutely fine. It was a long, long day but it was broken up well. It was the best lunch I have ever had at a conference! It was astonishing, it's usually just a cheese sandwich! There was lots of time to connect and talk to people. They managed to make a long day possible, in that it wasn't too exhausting. The time to speak with other people is probably one of the most important aspects of the conference. As a direct result of last year's conference and meeting Garvald - who are based in Edinburgh and about thirty-five miles away from us - we have since built up a really strong partnership! Two of their artists have come and spent time with us on a residency and they are exhibiting with us next week. We also have more plans to work together in the future. It was just perfect timing for us to make that connection!

For me personally, a theme doesn't attract me to a conference. I'm interested in coming for a lot of other, different reasons. I'm not sure there is a common understanding of what that theme is. I'm not sure everybody at the conference has a shared understanding of what this year's theme means. In fact, I'm not even sure what the theme means! That's fine, since that's what conferences are about, to debate and discuss these things. However, after my experience of yesterday's programme, I'm not feeling it's something that is central to the debate at the moment. It feels like the surface only has been scratched for the moment. That might of course change during today and tomorrow. Also, you have to remember how incredibly generous it is, in that this is an English language conference! That means there is different understanding of words and context. So you have to kind of double think everything all of the time. It's not an academic conference where people might be presenting theses or developed arguments. I guess the theme is something to hang the content around.

I don't see a shift in terms of 'the artist's voice', not really. But once again, how incredible that the artists are here, are sharing their practice with us and in English, which for many is their second language. I'm not sure that artists talking about their work in this setting is comfortable for the artists. It's difficult because I know that when we run events, it's always far more hands on with the artists sharing their practice and people working together. I wouldn't do an event like this, where you have people on stage presenting. For me, it's not the best way for the artists to present themselves in their best light. It feels very contrived but then, conferences are contrived. There has to be some mechanism by which the whole thing flows and hangs together. It still feels like a 'them and us' type scenario. It's better than it used to be but I think they are different things. If you actually want to have the artists communicating with you, there are different ways of doing that. If you want professionals communicating with each other, there are also different ways of doing that. I'm not sure that the two sit so easily together.

These events are so particular to their environment. Each one is so very individual to the host organisation and country. Also, there is the expectation of the delegates. We are paying good money to come and maybe people don't want something radically different. You know what you're getting, kind of thing and so any big changes might not really improve things. There is a real and important place for these networking events, it's important for me to come and I'm certainly not being critical of it. I'm just saying that I can see how we might do things differently and also, how other organisations might do things differently. What can you really achieve in two days? I think you have to just be honest about these things. They are what they are. To do things differently would mean a very different event, starting from a very different premise.

Interviewee 6

I am one of the presenters here at this year's EOA conference. My colleague and I discussed ethical thinking in artist supported studios. We have been here the whole week, installing the exhibition in Sala. This evening we are going to have the opening of this show, which is part of the conference programme. I have been in many EOA conferences, I'm a member of the Board. During my years of coming, we have been creating really tight networks. For example, this exhibition we are having here in Sala, that has been a direct result of the EOA network. It's a Nordic collaboration and that all started here, with the EOA. We are also exchanging works, having works from different studios to show in our own galleries. There are many emails between us through the year!

Yesterday, there were many interesting presentations and all of this conversation during the breaks, that gives us more time to discuss these important issues. This is a very important part of the conference. They are not a formal part of the programme but they are really valuable as well. When I was looking at the schedule, I thought that it would all be quite tight but then, it was actually surprising that we were able to keep to the timetable. I think that yesterday was really well organised! Always, you are wishing to have longer time to have the conversations, both during the breaks and at the end of the sessions. There is never enough time for those discussions!

With regard to the theme this year, first it was about the 'quality' but then, these Inuti people, they were so clever that they just add the 'e' in front of this word, so the conference becomes also about 'equality'. I think this is a really good combination. Those are such important topics, those are the things we are discussing all of the time, which is how it should be. I am really enjoying discussing these topics.

Yes, we have had many artists here again this year. I think this is also really important that artists are involved. But also here, this year the Inuti artists have been so very active. They have a very important role here. There are lots of artists participating in the conference. I think it's really good but it's a pity that for example, our own artists from Finland were not able to come because it's so expensive. The trip to Sweden is quite cheap but the conference fee was quite high. So that's a little bit, um, I don't know. I would rather have it a little bit lower, so that more people are able to come. But I was also thinking that now there are so many people already in the conference room, if we were more, they would need a far bigger space and that of course would be more expensive. You always need to compromise and I think what has been organised for us all is really good!

In a way, I am missing those Special Interest Groups. Before, we used to have those four groups: the art environment; research; museum and collections; artist studios. It was really good for the network, that kind of collaboration. It was chance to be with people from different countries who were working on the same topics. We were able to have those kinds of specific conversations together. It was a chance to check where you were and learn from others with a shared professional interest. That is more difficult now there is not the time for the Special Interest Groups. So I'm kind of missing those but I can also see that there is no room for those in the timetable.

Interviewee 7

I am from Sweden and I work with Inuti, the first and still the biggest studio of the three in Stockholm. We have been working with the EOA, as the hosts of this year's conference. The last time I was at an EOA conference was some years ago, in Poland. I created our own collection, that was in 2010 and I gave a speech about it at the conference. You always meet interesting people at these events, yesterday was no exception and I really enjoyed the day!

In terms of this year's theme, I have so many thoughts, it's difficult to describe them. From the discussion yesterday, it was very clear that the different levels or perspectives, it's so hard to discuss these issues in such a short time. It would take more than a week to discuss these themes. I mean, there are the commercial interests, there is the democratic interest, the human interest and so on. To combine all of these things is quite hard during half an hour or so. It was possibly very frustrating for people here yesterday, since it was just skimming the surface of these matters but at least it is the start to something else. Maybe everyone takes those questions back to their own organisation and it continues. At Inuti, we are always discussing these matters. It is critical because we have artists who are not having a very high intellectual level, so we have to decide many things for them. It's very important to discuss everything with your colleagues, prices, strategies and so on. It's almost thirty per cent of our work.

It's the most important thing, to have the artists here and speaking with their own voices. I'm not an academic, I tend to get very bored with academic speeches, I like the visual presentations. Also, sometimes these are very funny, so that is enjoyable too! They have managed to do it in a very good way this year. However, I wasn't there in Chichester last year, probably it was very similar there.

First of all, I would suggest the EOA has to continue to have many examples of artists work and show lots of pictures. That's very important. Maybe they need to 'sharpen' the questions a little bit before the conference. They need to be sharpened and maybe divided into different sectors. It's quite hard to make a discussion with democratic issues, human issues, social issues and artist issues, that's almost impossible! On the other hand, when the artists are sitting there with us here at the conference, it's really more about their struggle. Quite a lot of the time we help them and that's why we are considered experts in this field. But we come from so many different perspectives, I'm not sure these very big issues can be properly discussed in such a short time. The themes and the questions need to be more carefully thought about.

Interviewee 8

I am one of the Inuti artists from Stockholm. I am one of the hosts here in the conference. This is my first EOA conference. It has been very nice to be a host and to meet all of these people from around Europe. I have also enjoyed seeing the different exhibitions and the artist studios with everyone. I have enjoyed it a lot! I think the programme has been busy but not too much, it has been just right! The mix of artist performances and the other speeches and presentations, that has also been very good. It has been a long time to sit down and listen to some people, so it has been good to have these little artist performances in between the talks. It's very good to mix that because it is tiredness for the head if it is only speaking, speaking, speaking!

It is the right theme, quality and equality! All people, just because they have disabilities, if they are born with something different to other people, all people have the right to express their feelings. They should be free to choose what they want to make and which colours they choose to use, materials, everything! Here we are discussing these things and I think this is very important. But it is difficult to choose if some art is good or bad quality. Some people might love something and other people might hate this work.

There is a good mix of people here, including artists and academics, gallery managers and other people interested in art. I think we are hearing the artist's voice because there are many artists here who are speaking and we even are the hosts. Yes, I think the artist's voice is being heard here.

I can't think of anything to improve yet because we still have tomorrow left to go. Come back to me then! But these two days I have been in, it's a very good balance and the days have been very well planned. We did not help with the planning, we were just asked to be the hosts. We did think about the welcome song and how we should share the introductions. It is just so nice to share Sweden with you all and to show you the exhibition with our work here at this gallery. I have been one of the artists in this exhibition. I have made a map of Sweden all from cross stitch embroidery. I do not use any machine, just these two hands, a needle and thread! I was on a holiday trip to the middle of Sweden and I found some postcards. I am thinking, oh, I have always liked to do embroidery and so it is a challenge for me, to see if I can make those postcards of places in Sweden into embroidery. Then when I see the results, I think to myself, wow, I have made a Sweden map! This work includes sixty pieces, stretching from the north of Sweden to the south of Sweden! Yes, I am a little bit proud of this achievement.

Interviewee 9

I am one of the artists at Inuti and I am here at this conference to present the guests, together with my friend and artist here. The conference so far has been very interesting. I have enjoyed meeting with a lot of new people from different art organisations across Europe and the world. I think the schedule has been very busy and with very much included. It has been fantastic to meet with everyone, so it has been okay for me, not too busy! Those artists who maybe think it has been too much, they can go out when they want. There are not so many of us here today, so maybe yesterday was a little bit too tiring for them. I have loved coming here and taking time to look at the exhibition too. I have four things in the exhibition, so that is very exciting for me to see.

I think it is important for us to talk about quality and equality but it is not easy. You can see that artworks are of quality in the way they are made but it is very hard to say what is good or high quality art. It's not like other things, you know, you can see if it's a good chair or a bad chair. If you see a lot of one artist's work, you can maybe see if they have worked hard and it is made very beautiful, or if it goes to your heart, then you will think this is good quality art. Other people may not agree with this, if they do not like this kind of art. With equality in mind, we have been hosting the conference here and we are the artists from Inuti. That has been good, I think it is important to be a good host for these special guests to our country.

When the event is about art and artists, then it is important that the artists are here, active and present. It's always interesting to hear about different kinds of work and what people think about it. Also, it is interesting to hear directly from the artist about how they make their work and what it means to them.

Improvements, um, that's always a hard question! It's always a little tricky when you are at different places like here. When you are lots of people together and when you should move to the next place. It is difficult to keep everyone together and also, to make sure the people who are presenting keep to the timetable. Today was a little bit tricky because many people went to have their lunch away from here and it took them a bit longer before they could come back. This made the beginning a little bit late this afternoon. It's a balancing thing, but I think it has been a good balance this year. I hope that the guests have liked seeing the different studios in Stockholm and then today, these visits in Sala. It's also nice to be here for the exhibition this evening and then the party. Yes, I think it has been a good programme for everyone here.

Interviewee 10

I'm from Finland and I came with my colleague just to make connections and to see what this conference is all about! It's my first time here in the conference. Yesterday was a very full day but I found all that I heard and saw was very interesting. I got a lot from yesterday's presentations and also, the connections that I made with people in the free time also. I most enjoyed the visiting of Inuti studios, it was really nice to see those spaces and where the artists work. In the presentations, I found good and important things to think about in all of them. I especially like the little details, like the Inuti artists or hosts, telling us what is coming next. I also really enjoyed Tanya's workshop but everything was interesting and refreshing for me!

This year's theme is very important for us to discuss here. For sure, yesterday we were talking a lot about equality and also, the quality. However, these are very complex issues. Art is very subjective and then, there are ethics included in these very big questions. I think it is a very, very important thing to have the artists present and included in the programme. They always give a perspective that we can't have. We always work in this way in our own organisation. We have artists with us always at these events, presenting or performing. It's something that is essential for me. It is super important to have them here with us!

I am liking it as it is and it's difficult for me, as I cannot compare with other years' conferences. However, I think it is most important to have many different points of view. That makes it fresh and rich! I hope that we don't have to concentrate so much in the future on this 'outsider art' versus 'normal art'. This is a question that I don't think there will ever be an answer for. We maybe need to just agree that we are in the same field but in different corners? Open minds and open hearts! For me, that is always a good way. Just the fact of us coming together and sharing our ideas and questions about this work, that is enough.

Interviewee 11

I'm from the UK and I've come to take part in this year's EOA conference. I'm an artist but I've only been to one previous conference, last year in Chichester. I enjoyed it so much, I wanted to come again! I found last year's event was so stimulating and thought provoking and with our current political turmoil, it feels really good to be a European here! So far I haven't been disappointed. Inuti have provided us with such a warm and hospitable welcome and we have already seen so many wonderful sights. It has been very exciting to see the artist studios and exhibitions and the presentations have been interesting of course. Lunch at Restaurant Lux was a real treat too! I think the highlight so far has been our visit to see 'Little Istanbul', I found that beautiful and inspiring! I have also really loved the performances created by Anders, these have been like a breath of fresh air, smoothing out the frown lines from so much deep thinking!

With this year's theme in mind, I have found it quite confusing and just a little frustrating. There has been insufficient time dedicated to really drilling down into these difficult areas and it feels as though just as we begin to discuss these issues with any depth or meaning, the session has to end. Of course we can take these conversations forward but it feels we have only just skimmed the surface here. I do think that artists are represented and also, present here at the conference. Many of the presentations have included artists and also, Inuti artists are our wonderful, warm and creative hosts. However, there is still some way to go in terms of an equal playing field. How could there not be? The moments when we seem most equal and are able to discuss matters most freely are when we are away from the lecture theatre spaces, during the breaks, travelling or eating together. These appear to be the times when hierarchies are less apparent and everyone becomes more human, having nothing to prove.

The schedule has been packed but rich and manageable. More time is needed at the end of sessions for more participation and questions from the audience. Also, the theme or question needs to be refined for the next conference and content more closely aligned to the theme. The visit to Sala was wonderful but maybe talks should happen in the morning and any visits in the afternoon, when people have less energy for sitting and listening to a lot of information? However, the conference is really well organised, the programme is exciting and Inuti have provided such a generous and warm welcome to everyone here!

Interviewee 12

I am the Step Up coordinator with Outside In. I was presenting on a panel as part of this year's EOA conference, it was a discussion about 'Living Collections'. It's not my first experience of the conference, as last year I was the coordinator for the EOA conference in Chichester. I've been to one more, that was in Paris in 2014. It has been very inspiring so far, it's especially nice to see how involved the artists have been in the preparation, the planning and the execution of the conference. I've found that very inspiring! It's something that I'm very pleased has been carried over from last year's event in the UK. That feels like a legacy and that's really good. There has been a real mix of things to do and see. Lots of different artworks and different exhibitions and some really interesting discussions as well, which are very relevant right now.

This year's theme is such a big area! From what I've experienced so far at the conference, those issues have been touched upon but I'm not sure how deeply they've been explored. I feel there maybe could or should have been more time to explore the issues in greater depth. I think that certainly 'equality' comes into everything that we do in this field because we are trying to make it equal. So I don't know if that's a thread that runs through this conference and last year's conference anyway. The theme of 'quality' is very difficult. From my perspective, it's very subjective. It's very difficult to have objective criteria about quality and what that looks like. Maybe the way to talk about it is to have as many different opinions as we can, that's exactly what this conference is trying to achieve.

In terms of the artist's voice, I can see that there has been an even greater shift this year, which is really positive. It's so nice to see that artists have been even more involved this year and I just hope that is something that stays. Something that happens every year at these events.

The schedule has been very tiring but I think the length of presentations and panel discussions is almost perfect. Some of the programming has maybe been a little ambitious but we did the same last year. It's a case of trying to fit as much exciting and interesting stuff into three days as you can. It's always going to be a struggle, especially with more and more submissions to present each year. Maybe some things could have been combined or there could have been some options for different choices at different times? It has been very exciting but just a bit exhausting.

In terms of future conferences, definitely don't change how much the artists are involved! I think that has been absolutely perfect this year. Probably a consideration is more around how the talks and panels really relate to the theme. There certainly has been some relationship to the theme but some connections have been quite tenuous. It's really nice to see presentations about artists and studios, how they work and so on but maybe this could be an option for people to stay later in the evening? I guess just being more conscientious about how the content really relates to the theme. There is a danger of these conferences becoming very similar each year, even though there is a different theme. There is a real danger of us just having the same or similar conversations each year. If the themes were refined in some way, there might be the chance to have deeper discussions about one particular or specific issue, rather than scratching the surface of the same questions each year.

Interviewee 13

I am from an arts organisation based in Finland and I was actually sent here by my boss! We are the first social enterprise established and run by people with disabilities. This is my first EOA conference, so I don't have another conference to compare it with. I have been really impressed with Inuti, the facilities they have and how brilliantly their artist studios function. I've also really valued their hospitality and also, the engagement with artists throughout the conference. I was hoping also to engage our artists but we decided it would be too challenging for them to make this trip and also, too expensive for us as an organisation. We are however hoping to make another trip here and will try to bring some of our artists with us next time.

In terms of this year's theme, I have been intrigued by this discussion around 'quality and equality'. I can see that it is still an ongoing process. Many of the organisations here are artist studios or not for profit organisations, often dealing with challenges of employment or other social issues. The discussion around equality is clearly central to their work but the question of quality is rather different. I'm not sure that it is very easy to discuss this when there are so many different perspectives here.

Our organisation places our artists at the centre of all of our work, the artists are the real agents and we are just people around them, who provide facilities and support. The artists or people with disabilities who are part of our organisation are the main drivers and they decide what happens, how and when. So yes, the artists are represented and present here but they are not the main drivers of the conference. This is a very new thing, to include people with intellectual disabilities in an academic conference. These kinds of changes or developments take a long time to negotiate and understand what will work well or not.

With development in mind, I would like to see more radical thinking, with bold moves and unexpected things happening during the conference. So beginning to make that shift where the artists become more the drivers of the programme instead of us, the administrators. There is no studio without the artist; there is no arts manager, without the artist; there is no art historian or academic without the artist. I would like to see more diversity in terms of the artists presented, maybe different media to include more music or dance, more performance work and so on.

Interviewee 14

I'm the Director of Outside In and also, the Vice President of the EOAA. I'm here from the UK attending this year's EOA conference. I arrived a little late and so I haven't seen everything so far but I've really enjoyed the continuation of having 'the artist's voice' still present in this year's event. There has been a really good mix of arts organisations, supported studios, academics and artists. It's really healthy to have that range of voices included in the discussions and I've enjoyed that. It's always brilliant to meet with colleagues, isn't it? I think that the camaraderie here and the shared learning and support from people across Europe, that is very special to this event. It doesn't happen in the UK so much, there isn't such a feeling of community.

With regard to this year's theme, they are two very different things. I'm not sure that you can cover both or even really touch upon them to any meaningful level in this short space of time. The 'equality' theme is a continuation of last year's conference on many levels. The idea that artists should be treated equally and what that might mean. However, 'quality' is a far more thorny or prickly conversation and from what I've seen, it's not really been delved into here. There is a real question about value in art. It's also a far wider conversation and so maybe to try to cover those two big issues here is just too much. This afternoon's discussion about 'Living Collections' was very interesting but maybe just a little tangential, with the themes in mind. There is always a slight stress between the host organisation for the conference and the body of the EOA. The host organisation naturally wants to put forward its core values or focus but then also, it's the EOA conference, so it has to be a collaboration of ideas or themes. I've enjoyed it but I think there is still a place for a more meaningful or deeper conversation around 'quality and value'.

In terms of future conferences, there is always a tone or tenor set by the host organisation. I think there was a commitment made after last year, that artists would always be represented and heard within the conference. I have a slight worry in that might not always be the case going forward because there are a number of member organisations who would like a higher level of discourse. So can it fit both camps? Does it work in this format? Do we have to have slightly different events or conferences in terms of emphasis? The next one looks to be more academic and theory based. What I have liked about the last two conferences is the opening out to new opportunities, in terms of inviting submissions. In the past, it has been more of a cherry picked programme, with people invited to present. As an organisation, the EOA needs to be able to offer opportunities to its members, otherwise there is no reward in it. As a member, you need to be able to be part of the conversation in terms of content, or at least able to submit a proposal. That is really important to keep any future conference programmes rich, relevant and exciting.