Introduction
Over the summer, I had the wonderful opportunity to spend 2.5 months in Europe and Indonesia. Without the generous support of the School of Art & Design and International Institute, this amazing trip would not have been possible. In this essay I will attempt to describe my experiences and observations during this time.

Amsterdam
My journey began in Amsterdam, where I went to observe a culture whose colonial influence I had seen in Indonesia during my four years residing in the city of Yogyakarta, Central Java from 2005-2009. With an interest in discovering traces of Indonesian culture in Dutch society, I was pleasantly surprised that despite the vast differences in culture and society between these two countries, there are indeed some interesting crossovers. My first unexpected observation was the intense and impressive bike culture: in Amsterdam bicyclists rule the road. Thousands of old classic cruiser bikes are stacked up EVERYWHERE in Amsterdam. If you want to join the ride, you better watch out, because if you go too slow, you might just get run over by the other bikers. While this observation at first thought might not seem significant in relationship to Indonesia, it instantly stood out to me as something that linked the two places together. The same classic old cruiser bikes that I saw in Amsterdam are also seen everywhere in Indonesia. In fact, the Dutch were the first to introduce Indonesians to the bicycle, having brought them over hundreds of years ago during their colonization in Indonesia. Although the bicycles until today look the same in both places, there is a big difference between the two. While the people in Amsterdam ride their bikes fast, those in Indonesia go very slow; a clear distinction between two cultures whose histories go far back, but ways of living are still very different.
In Amsterdam I had the opportunity to visit the Tropenmuseum, which I visited twice. With an entire floor dedicated to the Dutch East Indies, I was truly impressed. The historical interactive displays documented the Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia from 1619 until 1942. With everything from historic photographs and art objects to videos and wax museum displays, the Dutch East Indies floor exposed me to completely new perspectives on the relationship between the Dutch colonizers and their Indonesian counterparts during that time. The displays effectively documented both the positives and negatives of nearly 350 years of colonization and the people who inhabited those times.
In addition to the Tropenmuseum, I also had the opportunity to visit the Red Light District, the Sex Museum, the Holland Festival, and several Indonesian food restaurants owned by Indonesians living in Amsterdam, of which there are many. A large part of my time in Amsterdam was spent biking through the streets on my own rented bike, searching for signs and references to its past relationship to Indonesia.

Berlin
Following my time in Amsterdam, I stopped in Berlin for a week on my way to Prague and stayed with an artist friend who was willing to show me around and introduce me to the arts culture that Berlin is famous for. I was not disappointed. I visited the Berlin Neaue Nationalgalerie, Bauhaus Archive Museum, Berlin East Side Wall Gallery, saw a very intriguing experimental performance at the Ballhaus Ost, and visited several galleries hosting the controversial Based in Berlin contemporary art series. Berlin amazed me with its vibrant street art culture and international mix of people. It is most definitely a place I would like to spend more time in the future.
Prague
My time in Europe ended with two weeks in Prague, which proved to be the most amazing and influential experience in Europe during my time there. For ten days, I attended the Prague Quadrennial on Performance Design & Space, witnessing over seventy international displays on performance design and many unique and experimental performances both associated with the Quadrennial and in the Prague community at large. I participated in three workshops by international performance/sound artists (A Theater of Trash, The Intersection of Costume and Sound in Character, and Soundscape and Story) and made many valuable connections with performance artists and designers from all over the world. I cannot express enough what a unique experience attending the Quadrennial was for me, and how many new ideas I formulated for my own work as an artist during that time. In addition, Prague is a beautiful city with a rich history in theater and puppetry, and another place I would love to return to in the future.
Indonesia

The second half of my trip took place in Indonesia. While my time in Europe was a first, my time in Indonesia was like returning home again. To be honest, a month and a half flew by too quickly, especially compared to the four years I spent there before. There is only so much you can do in such a short period of time. However, despite the time limitation, I still managed to do a lot. My original project plans changed slightly, as the film documentary I planned to work on with the artist-run Red District Project was postponed to a later date due to lack of funding. However, my connection with the Red District Project is still very strong, and during my time in Yogyakarta I helped them to prepare for a project that will be displayed at the Jakarta Biennale in December in connection with the World AIDS Day on December 1st. I had the opportunity to visit the women in the prostitution area that I had worked with before, and participated in several discussions with the Red District Project aimed at formulating ideas for continued collaboration.

Another project I worked on in Yogyakarta was with the artist collective Taring Padi, whom I worked intensively with during my time residing in Indonesia from 2005-2009. For the past three years, Taring Padi has been working on a 10-year anniversary book, *Taring Padi: Seni Membongkar Tirani* (Taring Padi: Art Smashing Tyranny), which documents their artistic and political work in relationship to Indonesian history following the Reformation in 1998. I also have an article in the book that discusses my experience establishing a small children’s library with Taring Padi, titled *Omah Buku Taring Padi: The Taring Padi Library and Other Educational Activities*. The timing of my visit coincided perfectly with the official book launching, which was funded by the Ford Foundation and took place on July 30 at Taman Ismail Marzuki Art Center in Jakarta. In the two weeks leading up to the book launch, I helped do final English translation edits and preparations for the launching. I was once again impressed by the commitment of the Taring Padi members to work together tirelessly as a collective. Working with them again confirmed my own continued role and commitment as an active Taring Padi member.

![Preparations for the Taring Padi Book Launch in Jakarta](image-url)
Lastly, my time in Indonesia and primarily Yogyakarta was spent exploring the many international arts centers that reside in Yogyakarta and facilitate exchange between Indonesian and international artists. A few of these centers include the French Cultural Center (Lembaga Indonesia Perancis, LIP), Karta Pustaka (Dutch cultural center), The German Film Club supported by the Goethe Institute, Cemeti Art House (Dutch independent arts center), ViaVia Yogyakarta (Dutch restaurant and arts center), and Milas Resto (German restaurant and arts center). My interest in these and similar art centers was informed by my prior time in Amsterdam and interest in both the challenges and benefits of facilitating international exchange in developing countries such as Indonesia. By observing these art centers this time around, I was able to further pinpoint what works in an international arts organization, and what doesn’t. The Cemeti Art House, for example, which began in 1988 had a huge influence on the development of contemporary art for young artists in the city of Yogyakarta. Karta Pustaka successfully facilitates educational forums with a focus on Dutch language and international student exchange. In contrast, a collaborative performance between a French and an Indonesian theater company at the French Cultural Center revealed the limitation of arts exchange done in a short amount of time in its lack of depth and inability to find a crossover
between the two cultures. From these observations, I have begun to brainstorm ideas of how I might establish my own international arts center in Yogyakarta aimed at facilitating exchange between Indonesian and American artists. This is something to hope for in the future.

![Cemeti Art House Yogyakarta](image)

**Conclusion**

With such a wide variety of experiences and observations, it will take a while for me to fully digest and reflect on everything I did over this summer. Writing this essay alone, so many more ideas have surfaced and planted new seeds of inspiration in my mind. I am deeply thankful for such a unique opportunity to shape my own international experience, and can guarantee that these experiences will resurface in my life and artwork in the many years to come. Thank you!!

For more information about my travels, please visit my travel blog: [http://vicarioustimes.wordpress.com/](http://vicarioustimes.wordpress.com/)

You can also visit the following links:
**Links**

**Amsterdam:**
- Tropenmuseum: [http://tropenmuseum.nl/-/MUS/5853/Tropenmuseum](http://tropenmuseum.nl/-/MUS/5853/Tropenmuseum)
- Amsterdam Sex Museum: [http://www.sexmuseumamsterdam.nl/index2.html](http://www.sexmuseumamsterdam.nl/index2.html)
- Holland Festival: [http://www.hollandfestival.nl/page.ocl?pageid=73](http://www.hollandfestival.nl/page.ocl?pageid=73)

**Berlin:**
- Neaue Nationalgalerie: [www.neue-nationalgalerie.de/](http://www.neue-nationalgalerie.de/)
- Bauhaus Archive Museum: [http://www.bauhaus.de/](http://www.bauhaus.de/)
- Ballhaus Ost: [http://ballhausost.de/](http://ballhausost.de/)

**Prague:**
- Soundscape and Story workshop: [http://tenderbuttons.co.uk/?page_id=23](http://tenderbuttons.co.uk/?page_id=23)
- Intersection on Costume, Sound and Character workshop: [http://web.me.com/zoonds/PQIntersection/The_Intersection_of_Costume_and_Sound_in_Character_Project_Blog/The_Intersection_of_Costume_and_Sound_in_Character_Project_Blog.html](http://web.me.com/zoonds/PQIntersection/The_Intersection_of_Costume_and_Sound_in_Character_Project_Blog/The_Intersection_of_Costume_and_Sound_in_Character_Project_Blog.html)
- Theater of Trash workshop: [http://web.me.com/zoonds/PQIntersection/The_Intersection_of_Costume_and_Sound_in_Character_Project_Blog](http://web.me.com/zoonds/PQIntersection/The_Intersection_of_Costume_and_Sound_in_Character_Project_Blog)

**Indonesia:**
- Taring Padi Arts Collective: [http://taringpadi.com/about/](http://taringpadi.com/about/)
- French Cultural Institute: [http://www.lipjogja.co.id/](http://www.lipjogja.co.id/)
- ViaVia Yogyakarta: [http://www.viaviajogja.com/viavia_yogyakarta_welcome.htm](http://www.viaviajogja.com/viavia_yogyakarta_welcome.htm)
- Goethe Institute Jakarta: [http://www.goethe.de/ins/id/jak/enindex.htm](http://www.goethe.de/ins/id/jak/enindex.htm)
- Ford Foundation Indonesia: [http://www.fordfoundation.org/regions/indonesia](http://www.fordfoundation.org/regions/indonesia)