

*"A performance art piece is unprecedented. It is difficult to censor since it has a good possibility of never being done before." - Jack Bowman*

## A Reflection on Moving Forward Through the Pivotal Point Grant

By Kay Burns

The Cox & Palmer Pivotal Point Grant is an amazing opportunity for NL artists. I was the fortunate recipient of the 2015 grant and it supported a transitional evolution within my practice. My multidisciplinary practice includes performance-based projects exploring the history and philosophies of the Flat Earth Society. Through this grant I was able to reinvent and restructure the research, materials, artifacts and residue of a dozen years of interrelated performance projects into a new ongoing public installation called the Museum of the Flat Earth (MoFE) on Fogo Island.

My performance work and the evolving MoFE installation consist of experiences at the intersection of fact and fiction, playfully incorporating the tools of authority to present eccentric ideas as a means of examining and interrogating processes of knowledge acquisition.

This grant contributed to the preparation of the museum venue and display materials, assisted with costs for a research trip to the UK, and helped finance collaborative performance projects undertaken at MoFE over the summer.

During my trip to the UK I was able to visit a number of alternative/fictional museums, and large institutions to observe display techniques that speak to 'museumness'. The Soane Museum is a curious museum, entirely unclear of what is authentic and what is invented within it. Dr. James Lattin, curator of the Museum of Imaginative Knowledge gave me a guided tour of the British Museum to point out the fakes present in that prestigious establishment. I also participated in the inaugural meeting of the International Association of Imaginative Museums as a founding member with Dr. Lattin and several others. During a trip to Cornwall, I was able to explore some sites with Dutch artist Marjolijn Kok and gather information and make preparations for our collaborative summer project on Fogo Island. I also met up with Christine Garwood, the definitive expert on the flat earth, author of *Flat Earth: The History of an Infamous Idea*.

During the summer, Marjolijn Kok came from the Netherlands for three weeks to participate in our collaborative project. Marjolijn is both an archaeologist and an artist. The Archaeologist's Visit project entailed a performance dig at Brimstone Head where the public could drop by and observe archaeological processes, followed one week later with an unveiling at the MoFE showcasing the excavated artifacts. Dr. Lattin also made a trip to Fogo Island and undertook research and collaborative performative projects, and did a public presentation with MoFE about his work with the Museum of Imaginative Knowledge.

Within this quiet and remote corner of Newfoundland (and indeed corner of the flat earth) I was able to engage with tourists and visitors through this hybrid contemporary art / museum project. Through the MoFE I became more involved within the local community; and with the support of a summer student employee grant the MoFE could have regular open hours, thereby functioning as a fully operational museum. Over the summer months, the MoFE welcomed approximately 2100 visitors to its site and its programs. Visitors left in bemused good humor, intrigued by this unconventional experience that offered a twist to their thinking through flat earth philosophy.



*The Archaeologist's Visit, performance dig (group gathered around to look at object)*