

PRESENTATION 2: NICOLE MION

The complex issue Nicole explored was: **How can the arts reimagine and respond to the changing political and economic landscape?**

Nicole Mion is an artist and curator whose practice focuses on creating space that supports the making and experience of live performance. She is also the Artistic Director & Executive Producer for [Springboard Performance](#), an arts company that is passionate about designing space for art creation and the systems that support a cultural ecosystem which amplifies the careers of boundary-pushing artists. They produce the Fluid Movement Festival, Interrarium creation workshops and residencies, the creation and dissemination of new performance works, and design and activate the containR Art Park for cultural placemaking.

Nicole's 5 BOLD IDEAS focus on both crisis and optimism: a shifting from what art is, to what art does. She hopes that her five bold ideas can encourage us to develop our cultural interconnected-ness that define us as a city, region, or country. She believes we need to consider how we express without fear of failure, how we inhabit and respect the land, how we cultivate our distinct creative perspective, and how we enhance our cultural contexts and networks as a means to thrive.

1. CONSORTIUM SUPER EVENT (or a "Better Together Festival"): Create a Consortium Super Event that allows arts companies to curate simultaneous clustered programming and include public & industry events. For example, there is a program called [Progress](#) in Toronto, [Dance Massive](#) in Australia, and even the arts festivals that happened in Calgary in advance of the Olympics in 1988. We can take these models and have a shared collaborative festival whereby each organization is responsible for curating their part. This offers a chance to partner with the Stampede, to access different sources of funding, and provide a shared political statement about public gatherings following the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. RETHINK TOURS and instead have Small-Scale Reciprocal Exchanges: We need to reframe tours to not just focus on the product, but also on the artist and the ideas that are traveling. This can help emerging and marginalized Alberta artists to connect with a broader community that is both local and international in reach. For example, Springboard was involved in "This is Actively Built" creative exchange for queer artists in Montreal and Calgary and the "Cycling with Animals" creative exchange for UK and Calgary artists to create and share. We can develop a beautifully distinct and local way of being/creating positioned in a vast vibrating world of possibility that also considers our green responsibilities. We must consider industry standards on how we can be greener in our programming and travelling.

3. RETHINK FUNDING PROJECT ASSESSMENT: We need to think about “how and why” our arts funding is set up the way it is and how to get as much funding possible to the artists so they can create. We can develop a lottery structure for artists whose grant applications fall in the middle: those who are neither in the top tier of incredible applicants nor those who are in the bottom tier of applicants whose application does not fit the funding parameters. Jury members spend so much time on who is eligible in this middle group that this decision could be better made by a lottery system. This also ensures that we are cultivating a healthy way to say “no” to artists as constant rejection can have a negative impact on an artist’s work. We should also create a “yes” fund for small, short-term investment for emerging artists who are unfamiliar with the funding system.

4. CULTURAL DIPLOMACY and the Alberta perspective: There are so many innovative, passionate, and contemporary artists who live, dream, and work in Alberta; however, Alberta is only seen as oil with a western perspective. Right now, with oil prices being low in the midst of COVID-19, we have an opportunity to position the province as a place for innovation. Cultural diplomacy used to be about large arts companies like the ballet or symphony representing Canada in other countries, but we can encourage small scale creation and exchange instead as a means to cultivate artists and audiences while repositioning/influencing misperceptions about Alberta. We are part of a global community and there are many ways that we can bring our distinctive local perspective to the national and international perspective.

5. LIVE PERFORMANCE DURING COVID-19: As cultural leaders, we need to really think about how we can navigate the COVID-19 situation and reframe the discussion from what art IS to what art DOES. We need take the time right now to rethink the systems that make space for art, about how art is created, and how artists are supported. How can we express without fear or failure and how can we inhabit and respect the land and our cultural context as a means to thrive? We need to consider digital platforms, but there is an online saturation of content and a departure from liveness. What is our ethics and responsibility around online saturation? Can arts organizations offer a menu of online essential possibilities and at the same time provide an intimacy with an artist’s studio practice and process? How can the digital support the live experience? How can the curator mediate saturation and address our bodies exhaustion of the screen?

If you wish to learn more, please contact Nicole Mion at nicole@springboardperformance.com