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The Cosmopolitan is nothing if not eclectic, shifting and heterogenous. It suggests a familiarity with the diverse, openness to otherness and a fluidity that moves beyond the rigid constructs of modernism. At first glance it appears to be specific to the grandiose machinations of world politics and the growth of globalisation, but as these encroach further into the more mundane moments of our everyday lives, the concept of cosmopolitanism has evolved to sit more comfortably between and across disciplines.

It therefore seemed fitting that this conference attracted a multifarious group consisting of theorists and practitioners from such disciplines as creative writing, visual art, media studies, cultural studies, sociology, philosophy, design, history and urban planning. Together their work provided a delightful array of scholarly investigation, including topics as diverse as Reality TV (Dr Henk Hujiser), Australian Indigenous Art (Dr Sally Butler), Cyber Space (Isaac Smith) and the New Romantic Movement (Kathleen Horton).

Throughout the conference, the keynote speakers offered further guidance on applying Cosmopolitanism to their respective fields. Professor Gerard Delanty (University of Liverpool) opened the conference with his engaging lecture on the development of a “Critical Cosmopolitanism.” During the following day, Dr Randolph Delehanty (San Francisco) discussed in depth his conceptions of the ideal City/Regional Museum and Professor John Urry (Lancaster University) examined the role of travel/tourism and the global media in constructing a “Culture of Cosmopolitanism”.

In his address entitled “Cosmopolitanism and the Australian Imaginary”, Professor Graeme Turner (The University of Queensland), discussed the recent Australian shift from the ‘suburb’ to the ‘city’ and, following on, Professor Geoffrey Stokes also focused on the Australian context in his thought provoking address on “Cosmopolitan Politics”.

Beyond these fine keynote addresses, there were some specific papers that seem worthy of an exclusive mention. First and foremost among these is the collective effort of Professor Ien Ang, Associate Professor Gay Hawkins and Dr Greg Noble in their session “SBS as a site of Cosmopolitanism”. As well as this, the “Experience my Otherness” session consisted of some cogent philosophical discourse from PhD students Aran Cross, Daniel Hourigan and Christine Collier. Specifically, I enjoyed Dr Gregory Gow’s insightful paper on Sydney’s multi-cultural suburb of Fairfield as a site of cosmolopolitanism and, along a similar vein, Dr Konrad Gunesch’s exploration of multilingual individuals as disseminators of advanced cosmolopolitanism.

Congratulations and thanks are due to the conference organisers Dr David Ellison and Dr Ian Woodward as well as the team at the Centre for Public Culture and Ideas.

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