



Many Hands International
culture based community development

Australian-Japanese dance choreographer Yumi Umiumare hosted in Timor in July

Internationally recognised Australian-Japanese dancer-choreographer Yumi Umiumare visits Timor-Leste this month as artist-in-residence with Lospalos-based NGO Many Hands International. Yumi seeks to observe and learn about Timorese culture, especially ideas around ritual and magic. She also hopes to exchange dance practices with Timorese dancers and share informal Japanese Tea ceremonies with community members.

Yumi was recently awarded a prestigious Fellowship by the Australia Council for the Arts (Dance Board) to explore new artistic directions around the ideas of spirit, ritual and magic. This has led to the development of her *Pop-Up Tearoom* series that has been performed around the world: in Japan, Germany, Czech Republic, Malaysia, Philippines and the recent Festival of Live Arts in Melbourne. Her *Tearoom* series explores the sort of TEA we can make in a modern world of overwhelming information and choices.

Yumi's inspiration for this project came from the traditional Japanese tea-ceremony room, which has a small door under which people have to bow to enter and exit. This symbolises the fact that all people are born from, and return to, the same place. The samurai of the medieval period had to leave their sword behind to participate in the ceremony, stripping back the experience to the bare essence of being and soul. As long ago as the 16th century, tearooms were created in war zones, with the tea ceremony functioning to relieve emotional stress and restore social order. The deep sense of presence and silence afforded by the Tearoom offers participants time to reflect, and inspire innovation and new ideas.

In Lospalos, Yumi will collaborate with local artists and the community in creating a site-specific pop-up *Tearoom* space. Inspired by MHI's goals of offering local communities opportunities to identify their cultural assets and traditional knowledge, through participatory and empowering process, she will work with established artist Cesario Lourdes, his students in Many Hands youth arts program and dancers from local performing groups. Members of the community will be invited to enjoy these creative interactions.

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Photos: *PopUp Tearoom Series @ Manila Bay and University of the Philippines supported by 98B, March 2016*

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