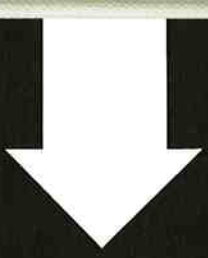


artwork

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The Community Arts Network of SA is a member based organisation. It forms part of a national network of sister organisations in most capital cities across Australia.

AIM

The Community Arts Network aims to support arts development and creative expression at community level toward the ideal of diverse and vibrant community cultures.

COMMUNITY ARTS

Arts practice and creative expression are at the heart of a community's vitality. People have always come together to sing, tell stories, enact rituals, to celebrate, to mourn and to mark significant events in their lives. Besides being able to see great art, people need to actively participate in these activities. This is what is meant by the term community arts, it might be a new name but it is not a new idea.

LOCAL CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

It is through the things we do together as groups and communities that we gain a sense of collective identity, a sense of place and a sense of belonging. When we value these things a positive concern for our social well being follows and we begin to take charge of our present and shape the future to meet our aspirations.

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Cover: Detail, mosaic armchair, Willmot NSW, artist Cynthia Turner. Photo: Marla Guppy. See article page 16.

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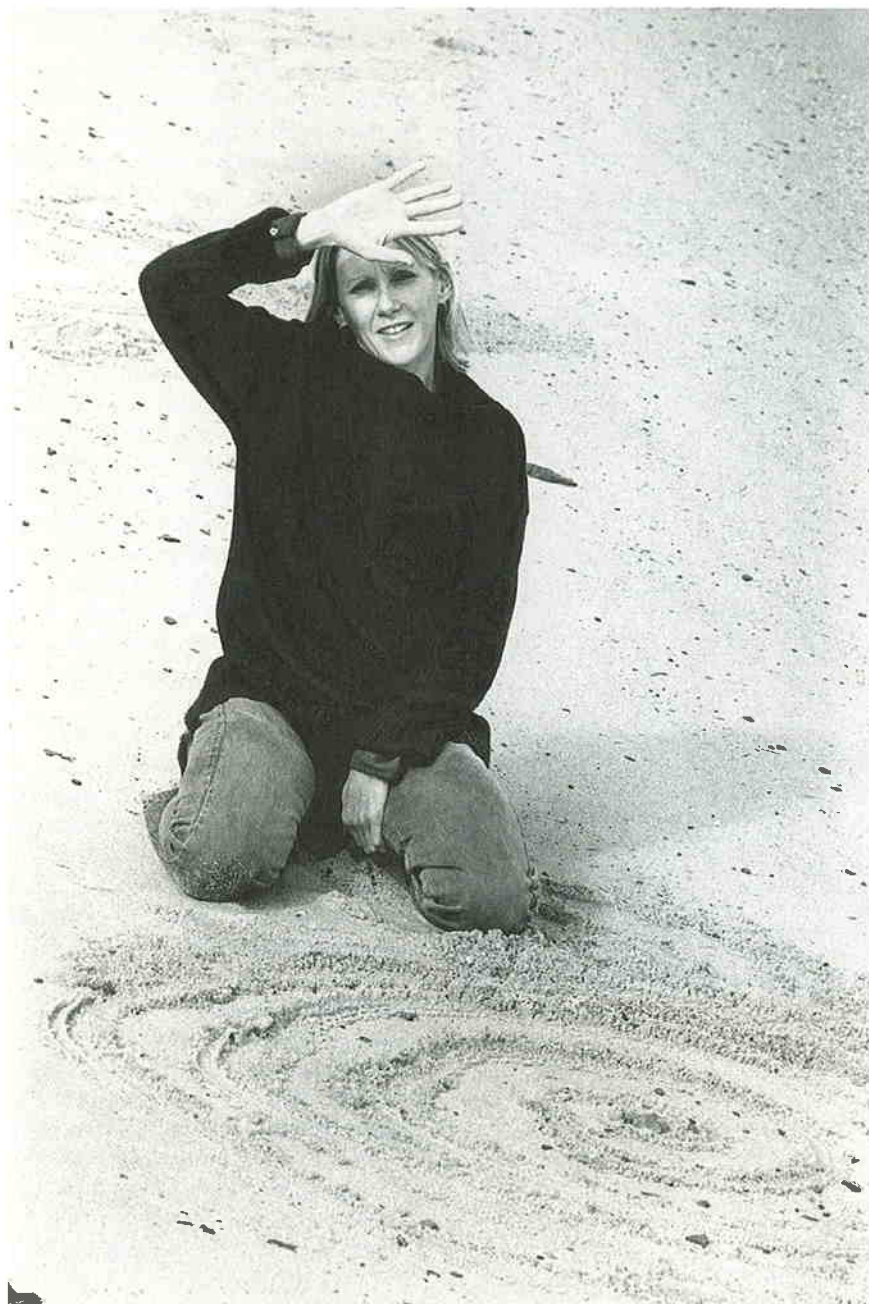
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inside out

Kath Walters



Maud Clarke
Photo: Ponch Hawkes

I hurry away from my afternoon with Maud Clarke, director of theatre company *Somebody's Daughter*, promising myself to write something powerful about this extraordinary woman. Is this the same yearning that she inspires in her troupe of players, whose performances have moved and changed so many audiences?

Somebody's Daughter is different: it's made up of women who were once at Fairlea Women's Prison [in Victoria]. The group began on the inside of the prison in 1980 when Clarke, then a student at the Victorian College of the Arts, began taking drama workshops.

'They were fun,' Maud recalls with animation. 'There was this huge old rec hall and we'd be locked in there for two hours. We could do whatever we wanted. We'd have improvisations where we'd all pretend we were at a school dance for a whole hour. And then you'd just hear the jangling of keys outside and you'd know it was time to go.'

Now *Somebody's Daughter* exists both inside and out. For more than ten years the company's performed inside the prison and Clarke's work inside still continues. But, when several of the original cast members finished their sentences and were released, the company decided to continue working in the outside world.

It was then that Melbourne's audiences felt the full force of the theatre created by *Somebody's Daughter*. *Tell Her That I Love Her* opened in 1992, and explored



the choices made by one woman on her release from prison: to go back down the old path or risk embarking on a new kind of life. Drawing the real life experiences of the women in the group, the play revealed the pain and conflict of addiction to drugs. Despite the gruelling content, audiences flocked to the Playbox Theatre and their enthusiasm sparked a return season in 1993. They came back for more in 1994 when Somebody's Daughter performed *Call My Name*, a harrowing account of life in prison, in particular the extraordinary experiences of the women while they were held in men's prisons. Yes, it really does happen.

With box office success the whole project ballooned, leading the company into celebrity and Maud Clark into a lot more work than she had bargained for.

At the door of her terrace [house] in Albert Park, Maud Clark welcomes me into her home. Her eyes are intense and dart about distractedly. Her lounge room is small, elegant and neglected. She steps around the clutter with the gangly step of the very tall. She's tired and down. Her current project at Fairlea is demanding. It's an irony that her work there is being hampered because the women she's working with keep getting released.

Last year, Maud Clark won the \$25,000 Ros Bower Memorial Award for outstanding achievement in community arts. She tells me that the day before she got the news, she was going to 'slit her wrists'. It was funny the way she said it and I laughed. But when she explained more, I wished I hadn't.

Somebody's Daughter was working on *Call My Name* at the time. The production was under pressure from the start, working with a development period of five months, which Clark assures me is short. As well, members of the group were struggling with their own life problems: injuries, illness and family. Then, tragically, two of the group died.

This is part of the price Clark pays for working in the way she does. The members of the group have tough, painful lives compounded by their years in prison. Some are struggling with



What's always fascinated me is how do you make something really live...I want something real and living, not some actor's voice.

addiction to drugs and alcohol, which they cannot use while participating in the company. The same struggles that generate the compelling drama create real life emotion and turmoil for the company. The material is dynamite, but the situation is explosive.

The Ros Bower Award was a welcome reminder that the work, assessed by Clark as some of the best that *Somebody's Daughter* has ever done, was also appreciated by others.

Maud Clark is unashamedly focussed on making good theatre. Yes, she's inspired by the courage of the women, but her real passion comes from the pure power of the theatrical experiences they can create together.

'What's always fascinated me is how do you make something really live. People (in *Somebody's Daughter*) are not trying to put layers over what's truthful for them. I want something real and living, not some actor's voice.'

There's no doubt that the company means something different to the performers. In a video about the work of the group some of the women say they feel like they belong for the first time in their lives, that *Somebody's Daughter* is like a family. The group is about drama for them, but it is also a transforming experience, enabling them to learn about themselves and in doing so, reclaim control over their lives.

How does Clark get the theatre she wants? How do the women come to disclose so much of their private and personal experiences? The answer lies in the process of workshopping, where the performers are asked to improvise on the basis of words, sounds, actions or situations. The workshop process is what fascinates and motivates Clark, it provides the energy, inspiration and content of her work.

'We use dreams. We use anything. People will go collecting things, we use guided imagery, whatever way you can open someone up. People come out with a word, a gesture, a movement. It might be one sound but you know that's the key, they're hitting on some deep truth. Often the words come later.'

But there is a lot of writing too. Clark scribbles furiously during the group's improvisation work and uses what she writes as the basis for her scripts. The performers also write. Clark takes into consideration the skills and capacity of her untrained performers in making creative decisions about what material will stay and what will go from the draft script.

'One of the most profound learning experiences for me as an actor was trying to handle something that was completely beyond me. It can crack you. It can disempower you completely. Part of what I'm doing is making sure people are

working within their range and finding those subtle moments when you take them beyond.'

The process of writing sounds thrillingly chaotic. Clark wrote the ending to *Tell Her That I Love Her* four days before it opened and *Call My Name* still had no last scene on opening night.

'I'd been trying to make it fit some play structure that I understood. It began with all these women at a memorial and I thought it needed to come back to that. But the play's journey had taken us too far for that ending. It ended with testimonials from the women. As soon as I accepted that, it was easy.'

What goes into the scripts is what is important to the women at the time, according to Clark, but it's clear that she continually shapes the outcomes of the group's work by judging the extent to which she, and the other company members, can delve into the material.

When she is feeling strong, and in her own words 'centred', she'll bravely lead her troupe back into the frightening worlds of addiction and imprisonment. Together they'll make some sense, something creative and meaningful, out of those self-destructive experiences.



Somebody's Daughter has given a voice to some women to talk about their experiences and from them we can learn a lot.

'It's a matter of making sure that it goes somewhere,' Clark says. 'A lot of deep stuff does come out. If it's simply going to take them deeper into darkness it's not worth it. If they're working through that and relinquishing it, that's when it becomes worth it...and the group itself becomes nurturing and healing.'

But at other times she simply has to recognise her own limitations.

'In the end,' Clark says, 'I'm a theatre director and writer, I'm not a counsellor...I know at the moment I'm feeling particularly tired. I'm not wanting big doors to open. As soon as something starts to get too (she whirls both her hands in circles in the air)...I'm deflecting it.'

Incest, for example, is an area that Clark finds difficult.

'Sometimes people will want to go a long way with that but I don't want to go too far down that path because I don't feel skilled enough,' she says.

'I would never set up a workshop and say, "We're going to deal with incest today", but it might come up. I might give someone a word like fear or black (as the basis for an improvisation). And it comes out in the writing.'

Because incest does come up, Clark has devised a way of dealing with the subject: she won't let people perform their own experiences of incest even if they want to.

'That's me protecting them.'

While the depth of the work may be guided by Clark's – and everyone's – capacity to cope at the time, she is consistent in her efforts to faithfully recreate the experiences the company are tackling.

'I'm looking for their voice all the time. Anything that comes from the moment...trying to find those moments that really burst out, when you've got the true life energy, the spirit of the person that's there.'

Peppered our conversation with references to books, performances and other directors, Clark appears profoundly sensitive to a creative world where passion and meaning, and yearning and truth, are the important features of life.

She got involved in theatre after seeing the first Australian performance of Lindsay Kemp's *Flowers*.

'I was riveted,' she reveals. She pursued the power of that experience through workshops with Kemp, clowning

workshops with Frances Batten, some work with children, and then entry into the Victorian College for the Arts.

Clark combines a receptiveness to the spiritual and intangible with a savage practicality. She admits with a smile to using crystals, clairvoyants, candles and many of the other trappings of New Age myth-ology. She reads about shamans and women's spirituality. But the performers of *Somebody's Daughter* have described her as 'tough, yet supportive'.

'I am tough in a directorial sense. You can't be friends. Well, you can be, but there has to be a point when it drops. You are tough, you're mum, you're everything – but at the same time you have to be that outside eye. You've got to push people when they need to be pushed. You've got to say "No, you can't have a cigarette break now", "No, I'm sorry, you *are* going to come in to rehearsal at nine". Also in a way they want it, any actor wants that, they want you to give them a structure.'

Clark doesn't see herself as a community artist, but she won't reject the term. She is simply sick of seeing theatre categorised, whether it's ethnic, political, whatever, theatre is theatre.

Categories aside, Clark reveals an important motivation for her in working in the community arts field: 'I came from a base where theatre or the arts was for the "chosen people" and not for yourself.' Overcoming that preconception took guts.

'There's something very committed for me in letting other people know, "No, that is for you, if you want it. Your spirit, your creativity is very precious". That commitment comes directly from my own experience.'

But she is concerned that the community theatre label can be used to diminish the work of theatre groups and that people perceive community theatre as less talented, creative and valid. She's adamant that *Somebody's Daughter* has earned the right to be judged against any other theatre company.

'I think we've done some of the most powerful work in Australian theatre. Sure there's potholes. But some of the performers I would put up against any actor in town.'

She points out with some resignation, however, that the theatre critic from *The Age* hasn't come to review their work.

Clark will spend two months travelling in America and England with the money from the Ros Bower Award, studying workshop methods, Shakespeare and voice – for starters. She won't be visiting prisons there; indeed she doesn't have links with any other prisons in Australia either. But she'll bring her new found workshop skills back to *Somebody's Daughter*, and some renewed energy.

'I'll be refreshed. I need some time.'

While she's away, *Somebody's Daughter* will continue their work in preparation for a tour in October to the Canberra National Festival for Australian Theatre.

Somebody's Daughter has given a voice to some women to talk about their experiences and from them we can learn a lot. That they use drugs for the same reason we all do – to dull pain. But in their case the pain is emotional, and often the result of extreme physical, emotional and sexual abuse that began in childhood. Most women in prison are there for drug related offences (over 80%). Through *Somebody's Daughter* we can see for ourselves the courage and resilience that many women show despite the punishment that begins in childhood and continues in prison. We have to face the fact that some give up, and some die. These things change our view of prisons.

Maud Clark doesn't know if she'll still be working in prisons in five years time. Certainly she admits to feeling worn down by the oppression she sees inside the prison system.

'The situation in the prison has gone backwards,' she says wearily. 'I don't think prison works. What it does is compound problems. I'm not offering a



solution here but I think I get more impatient...I don't want to make a speciality of this.'

For as long as Clark is involved, she'll be fully and passionately involved.

'People say to me, "You've got to learn not to take things on", but I think that's where the power of the work comes from, the fact that you do enter in so fully. I don't know how not to be involved in something I'm working on.'

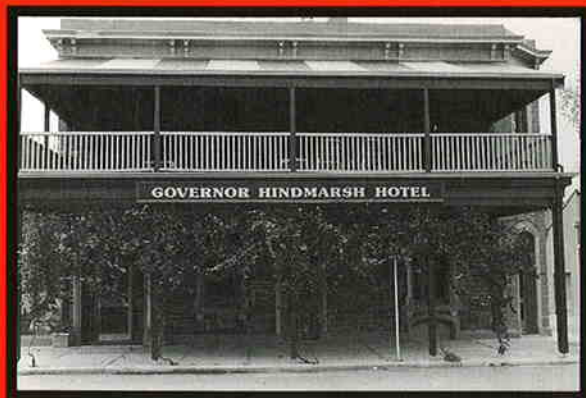
Clark's work with *Somebody's Daughter* provides her with a power in the theatrical experience that, for the moment at least, is worth the emotional commitment.

'You know when you're hitting someone's gut in a way that reminds them what they can expect from theatre.' ■

(All uncredited photos by Michael Silver)

The Ros Bower Memorial Award is awarded annually by the Community Cultural Development Board of the Australia Council with the Ros Bower Memorial Trust to an artsworker or organisation with a proven track record of high achievement in the area of community arts. The award aims to recognise 'distinguished effort in fostering and furthering philosophies and principles espoused by Rosalie (Ros) Bower' founding director of the Community Arts Board.

THE



g o v

element of their pubs. It was a successful formula which made popular other Adelaide suburban pubs such as the Bridgewater Hotel and the Maylands. Having made their bundle, the couple retired a few years ago but found the lifestyle didn't suit them. 'Drove me mad', says Brian. So they scouted around for a new project.

Over the years Brian had been noting, with some disappointment, the changing role of hotels in the community. Much of pub culture had become heavy drinking, male dominated and aggressive – families no longer frequented them. Many hotels had gone over to piped music with a DJ – no longer were they providing opportunities for new Australian bands. Pokies had brought people back into the pubs but meant they now interacted with machines instead of each other. Brian believed that an alternative community-friendly hotel could be developed, with music as its drawcard. Pubs had been good to them and they felt they were in a position to be able to 'give something back'.

So the Tonkins bought the 'lollipop pub' (so named because of its garish topcoat) for a little more than a song. Committed to developing the pub with and for the benefit of the community, Brian signed a contract which stated he and his wife would take no income from The Gov. They were in no need of an income – one was already provided by a successfully rented hotel in Port Elliot, south of Adelaide. Any monies earned would be channelled back into developing the pub. Through long-established links, Brian was able to bring on board several of the music associations around town. Associations could, if they so wished, program a night's entertainment on a regular basis. The Tonkins chose the associations; the associations would choose the acts. Blues, folk and jazz groups took up the offer. With a little organisation, musicians who would not normally be able to access a pub audience could find themselves with a forum and a few dollars in their pockets from the door take.

Music groups and other arts groups were also encouraged to hold their meetings at The Gov and rooms upstairs were

A HOTEL WITH HEART FOR THE ARTS

Erica Sharplin

It's Saturday night at the Governor Hindmarsh Hotel and there's a blues fest going on. Chris Finnen, blues guitarist extraordinaire has taken the stage for an acoustic set. His wailing guitar fills the entire space. Chris is visually impaired. He has a seeing eye dog. Later, another musician joins him on stage. This one plays up a storm on a piano accordion. It's a strange but electric combination. 'Chris is just about the best in the country.' Brian Tonkin, proprietor, a pub man from way back, surveys the scene he has, with a little help from his friends, created. Everywhere he looks people are smiling, talking, tapping their feet. The atmosphere is very mellow. There's kind

of a warm glow, and it's not emanating from the maroon velvet curtains backing Finnen's acoustic set. And, I have an idea that this atmosphere is the norm rather than the exception. A dog wanders past.

The Governor Hindmarsh Hotel, or The Gov as most call it, is a very unusual pub. You wouldn't know it to walk through the door – it looks much like any older style hotel nearing the end of a facelift. There are a few interesting pieces of artwork on the walls though nothing startling. But if you were to tarry a while it would soon become apparent that The Gov has something different going on within its walls.

Brian Tonkin and his wife Vivian bought The Gov about 18 months ago. An unorthodox team, Brian and Vivian had been running hotels for years. Both were lovers of folk, jazz and blues music, and had made live music an important

provided for the cost of the electricity needed to light them. A recording studio tucked away out the back has produced more than one CD.

The word soon spread. Punters started turning up with their instruments for impromptu jam sessions in the front bar (while I was interviewing Brian a man with a guitar strolled in). Given the opportunity to be creative within an offered space, the community had taken up the musical gauntlet and was picking up pace.

Tony Doyle, Director and Project Coordinator of Arts in Action had, like Brian, long-imagined such a community pub. Hardly surprising given they are long time friends (and both musicians). The Tonkins' vision for the hotel fit in very nicely with Tony's vision of a club which encouraged community inclusion and participation through the arts.

Arts in Action is a community-inspired organisation which promotes the arts as a medium for providing services, resources and opportunities for people with a disability and disadvantaged members of the community. Club Contagious, or Club C as it's usually called, is one particularly innovative initiative. Through Club C musicians and artists, including those with a disability, would be offered a forum to show their wares. Club C would foster the development of a 'disability culture' – people with a disability could take the lead by contributing to and thereby enriching the cultural mainstream. By bringing together those with and without a disability, Club C would encourage a culture of inclusion.

The Tonkins were extremely supportive of this Arts in Action initiative. To accommodate Club C wheelchair ramps were constructed and appropriate toilet facilities installed. The major function room in the hotel (its largest space) would be provided free of charge once a month. The \$5 per person collected at the door would be turned over to the artists.

Using particular networks, Tony and the Club C organising group sent word to the communities of people with a



Brian and Vivian Tonkin
Photo: Di Barrett

Much of the pub culture had become heavy drinking, male dominated and aggressive - families no longer frequented them.



disability. A program of music and performance was drawn up and Club Contagious was launched in October of last year. Attendances have been phenomenal, vindicating Tony's belief that Club C would fill a need within the community. Over 250 people attended the last Club C, a large percentage of them were families. Club C, Tony reckons, is the only place in Adelaide, maybe even Australia, where you will see people with cerebral palsy, people with Downs syndrome, people in wheelchairs, up dancing with the general community.

The program for each Club C is deliberately diverse to cater for a broad range of tastes and give the greatest number of artists a shot at the stage. For example, one month a 16-piece elderly Italian women's singing group lined up against a Torres Strait Islander band. Thanks to the continued support of the Tonkins, Club C can be run on a very low budget. A raffle is held at each month's Club to raise a few dollars for

the generation of publicity fliers. Due to the success of Club C, Tony has already taken steps to broaden the event into a mini multi-arts festival, incorporating visual and performing arts. Present at the last Club C was a clown, a face painter and three visual artists, with paints and paper in hand, on hand to instruct those keen to learn.

The Tonkins, Tony and all on board at The Gov have come some way on their exciting journey toward realising a long dreamt of goal. Brian is confident the pub will become profitable in the near future. Both Brian and Tony are, in part, fuelled by a gentle nostalgia for the days when pubs brought people together. They are committed to building community.

Back on stage – the musicians take a break and Chris Finnen wanders my way. I ask him how he feels about The Gov and he says: 'It's like playing in your friend's lounge room.' ■

WAY OUT west

Donald Horne

Community Culture in Sydney's West

The Casula Power House didn't last long. It was put up in 1952, from a United States do-it-yourself kit, instantly despoiling a relaxation and picnic area a few kilometres from Liverpool (now a city, then a centre for producing vegetables, milk, eggs and chooks for Sydney).

Having transformed the area into a recreation facility for vandalism and clandestine sex, the Power House closed down in 1976. The Liverpool Council wondered for ten years what to do with it. There was a referendum. The people spoke. Another transformation scene began...

The Power House was to be turned into a regional arts centre, with exhibition galleries (appropriately named the Turbine Gallery and the Boilerhouse Gallery), a theatre, workshops, studios and meeting space.

It is now becoming one of the main cultural focus areas in West Sydney (an area holding more people than Brisbane or Adelaide or Perth) and, with immensely grand (although low cost) new windows; with renovations highlighting its kind-of Bauhaus design, with funky tiles in the toilets painted by local people and with what may be the most 'artistic' floor in Australia, it is also something of an architectural parable.

The reinvention of the floor tells an essential part of the Power House as a community arts story: an artist is brought in and consults the locals, then helps them get what they want.

The artist – Judy Watson, winner of the latest Moët et Chandon prize – consulted local Aborigines to find out how they saw things and what they would like her to do (West Sydney has one of Australia's largest groupings of Aborigines and almost two thirds of the Sydney total). Out of what they had to say she turned 400 square metres of floor into a polished landscape of red and ochre, with a representation of the George's River running through it, and Aboriginal designs and crossings as reminders of the indigenous Gandangarra, Tharawal and Dharuk people; along with seven remembrance pools lit up beneath glass

with reminders inside them both of the original inhabitants and the building's former use as a power house.

Another part of the community arts story is that the redoing of the building provided work for the locals and the development of new skills in producing something the local community can feel they own – just as they can also feel they own the new mall the Liverpool Council has created out of the old and declining town centre which leads up to a big Westfield edifice, but also includes Australia's oldest surviving church. The pop art fountain and the wonderful new-style war memorial, with diary fragments carved into broken columns and Aboriginal reminders on rusticated stone, were partly 'workshopped' in the Power House.

If anywhere is a 'New Australia', confronting old stereotypes, it's West Sydney. Before the new, ready-made suburbs flooded the plains, apart from the old settled areas on the Parramatta and Bankstown lines, it was mainly paddocks between a few small, although often historic, towns. Now, with more than one in five people born in countries where they don't speak English and something like two out of five households speaking another language as well as English, the region holds such resources that Creative Cultures (a local development organisation) is putting in a bid for West Sydney to be one of the principal cultural venues during the Olympic Games.

Talk of cultural tourism is more intelligent here than [what] you are likely to get in the capital city CBD's ¹. In the local networks, with their notion of 'creative partnerships', there is an understanding that tourism is best when

a local community uses it as a way of telling itself, as well as other people, what it thinks it is.

For example, at one part of the Hawkesbury River, at what they have renamed 'East Bend', the locals are working on a project to form a 'learning precinct' reserve for recalling both the Aboriginal and the colonial past. Near Camden a heritage centre has been formed in an old farm cottage doing the same thing differently. The two groups 'network'.

At Fairfield, where they have renamed their museum a heritage centre, they're encouraging local people to provide their own stuff for exhibitions. *The Italian Connection* is coming up soon, in which Italian-Australians will show themselves off to their fellow citizens by displaying some of their material culture. The museum at Liverpool will also work in on this.

At Liverpool itself, where there are large Latin American, Cook Islander and South Asian groups, it is policy to include them, along with the Aborigines, to enliven city ceremonies. (At the launch of the Casula Power House as a cultural centre they had: the world champion Liverpool Marching Girls, a didgeridoo performance, a Cook Islands dance, the NSW Fire Brigade Band, a high art trio, an aerialist and a local rap group.)

At the Campbelltown City Art Gallery, in an act of cultural fusion, three schools brought together Aboriginal and Indian kids to put on a kind of show never done before to celebrate Mother Teresa.

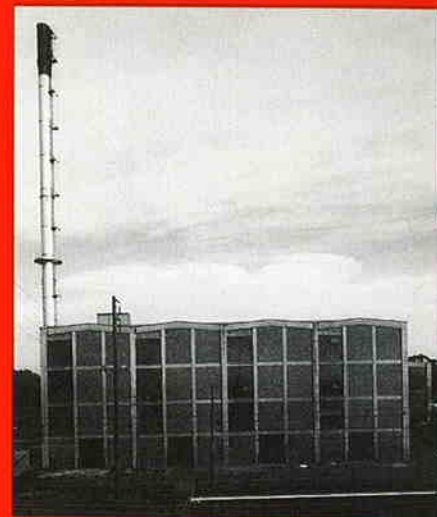
The Casula Power House has its galleries, and so do some of the other towns, but local artists are also breaking out of the

formal gallery experience. (Not that the Power House galleries are all that formal.)

A group of local artists called Contemporary Works for Shop Windows and Public Places, having been knocked back by the Australian Perspectives, are now showing their paintings in ten windows in David Jones' Parramatta store. (Perhaps there should be a policy that no current painting should be shown in any art museum – the museums could open branches in shopping malls instead. In fact, there are displays of prints in the Liverpool Mall.)

To these random examples, one can add drama, dance, music, art and writing groups from a range of cultures: an Arabic women's screen painting workshop at Auburn; an Italian Choir at Parramatta; a Vietnamese home movies exhibition at Cabramatta; a Spanish women writer's group at Fairfield; and a Maltese photographic exhibition in Blacktown.

An Artswest Foundation, formed in 1978 with Katherine West as its prophet, opened out the idea of the cultural potentials of 'the Greater West' and its monthly magazine *Artswest*, with 6000 readers, still provides the main sense of coherence. It has been a conceptualising agent, appealing to the imagination in ways that have encouraged many of the local councils to see cultural development as, well not perhaps quite as important as garbage collection, but important. The State and Commonwealth governments have come in with assistance and, very refreshingly, each of the campuses of the University of West Sydney has been a developmental centre.



The Casula Power House

Talk of cultural tourism is more intelligent here than you are likely to get in the capital city CBD's...there is an understanding that tourism is best when a local community uses it as a way of telling itself, as well as other people, what it thinks it is.



The Casula Power House floor designed by Judy Watson in consultation with local aborigines



Toilet transformation with tiles painted by locals

Community cultural programs are concerned with trying to do something about the alienation in modern societies between art and life

But what makes it work are the kinds of Australians living there who have some sense of concern about how they can expand their potential.

Those who see cultural policy only in terms of high art 'excellence', will have stopped reading by now. Even artists can see money spent on community arts as money wasted. For years it was derided as 'face painting in parks' – a smear campaign which ignored that any face painting that went on was not at government expense (how much does it cost to paint a face?). Face painting was a device, a marketing device in fact, to help ease away resistance so that people could imagine they could do things in public spaces.

Yet wouldn't it be funny if out of areas of such mixed cultural resources as Sydney's west, there came newer, more lively forms of art which redefined excellence?

Community cultural programs are themselves concerned with trying to do something about the alienation in modern societies between art and life – an alienation in which art has stopped being something you *do* or engage with, and becomes instead something you are *given*

and consume. (And it can be an acquired and often expensive taste.)

Community cultural programs can offer meaning to the unemployed or to isolated ethnic communities, indeed to anyone. If people can develop their own values and cultures and put them on show, they increase both their own self esteem and esteem from others. And in a prosperous world in which, for those who have eyes to see, there is no relief from unemployment by orthodox means, programs for increasing cultural amenities may be more relevant than economic indicators, because they point in a different direction.

Such programs are a reminder that a quarter of a century ago, when the present economic crisis began, there were hopes that extending cultural and general leisure amenities might replace manufacturing as the principal dynamo for employment and that the greater productivity that came from automation would offer more leisure for everyone.

And they are a reminder that our well-being is not something that only money can buy. It is also something that comes from how we live

FOOTNOTE

1. Central business districts

culture

Nick Hughes

Puppets and Professional Development in Pakistan

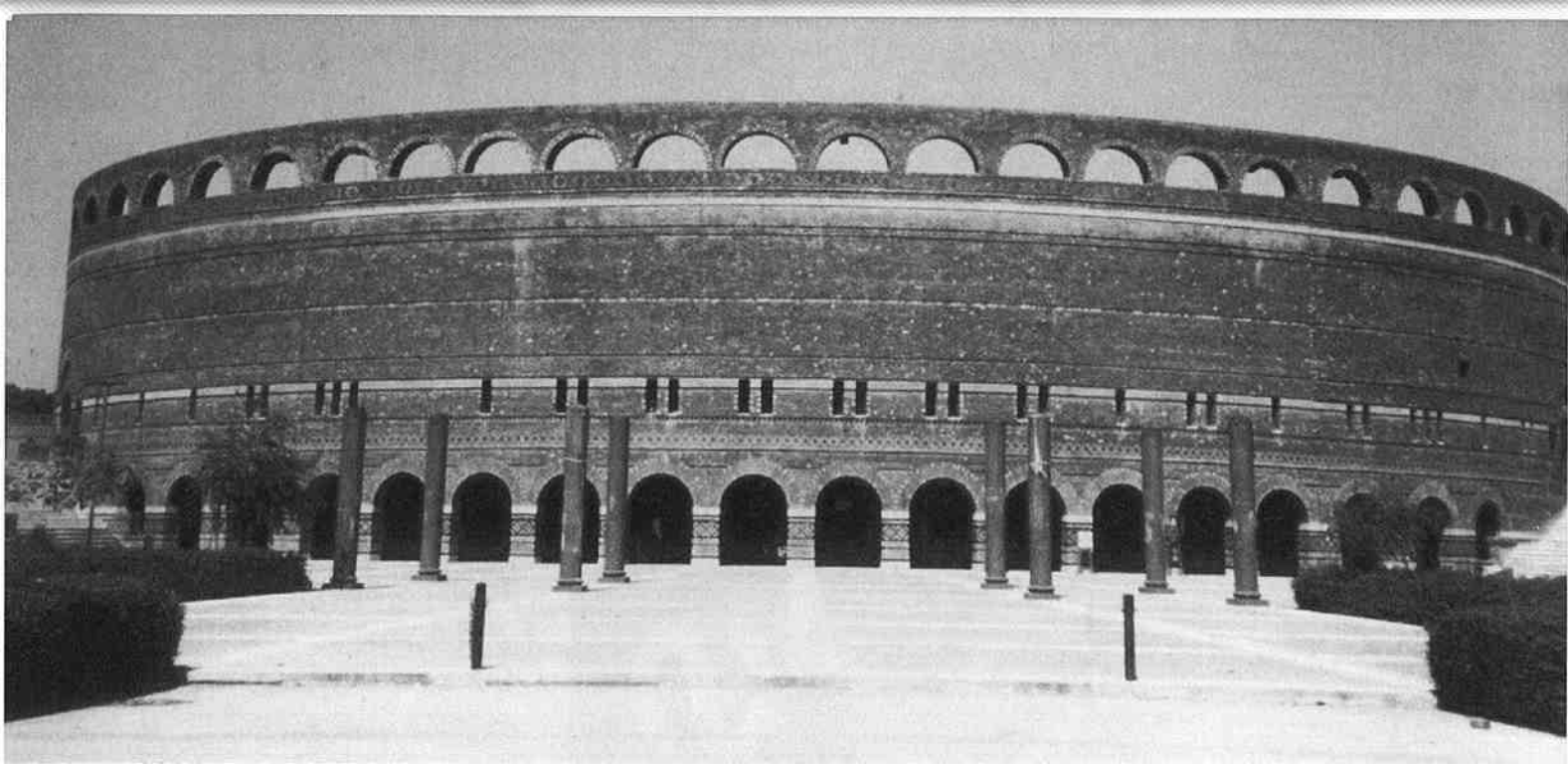
It is 10 October 1994 and three Australian artworkers are struggling to finish installing ten large puppet heads on a group of pillars outside a puppetry museum in Lahore, Pakistan. Bob Daly, Kalyna Flowerpott and Andrea Fox are working feverishly and frantically because it is the start of the Rafi Peer Theatre Workshop's Second International Puppet Festival and the museum contains puppets, paintings, books and drawings from all over the world. They finished the installation in time, but it was a close run thing and they had to work long hours in difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions to get there.

The road which led the three of them to Pakistan started when Bob Daly spotted a small announcement in the NSW Community Arts Association's magazine inviting expressions of interest from Australian puppeteers wishing to attend the festival. He wrote away to Pakistan and was invited to attend if he could raise the air fare to get there. That problem was solved by a professional development grant from the Community Cultural Development Board of the Australia Council, who granted each of the three artworkers \$2,500. Once they arrived in Pakistan, the Festival paid for their accommodation and fed them wonderful Pakistani cuisine.



SHOCK

IN PAKISTAN



Alhamara Cultural Centre, Lahore

The Festival was organised by the Rafi Peer Theatre Workshop (RPTW), one of the foremost puppetry companies in Pakistan which has toured the country for over 18 years presenting children's theatre and arts activities, including mime and puppet shows. The company is run by two remarkable brothers: Faizaan and Sadaan Peerzada who act as the Festival's artistic director and main administrator respectively.

The Australians are full of praise and admiration for the energy, commitment and artistic skills of these twin brothers. For most of their time at the festival, Bob, Kalyna and Andrea stayed with the brothers at their house and Bob found a soul mate in Faizaan. The two of them discovered that not only were there superficial similarities in their painting styles and colour preferences, but that they shared fundamental beliefs and inspirations about why they do their artistic work.

This special friendship will (hopefully) lead not only to a return visit to the next festival in 1996, but also to an Australian visit by RPTW.

It was a belief in the importance of this sort of international artistic and cultural networking that led Faizaan and Sadaan to devote so much time and energy to organising the festivals. The first festival

**It is by interacting
cooperatively with
people who are
different from
ourselves that we
most readily learn
about them and
from them**

took place in October 1992 and was a huge success: as an international forum for puppetry, as a cultural event in its own right, and at the box office. This last festival was especially important because it was entirely an initiative of the Peerzada brothers and received no government assistance of any sort. The only financial assistance they received came in the form of sponsorship from international companies (Nestles, Coke-a-Cola and Colgate-Palmolive); and from local manufacturers of biscuits, ice cream and tea.

Sponsorships tend to be tied to specific items which means that when it comes to the infrastructure of the festival, the only plentiful resource is labour. The event is dependant on an army of about 200 workers. Even so, given the amount of work that has to be done, everyone is stretched to the limit.

The first festival took place at venues scattered throughout the city of Lahore and, following its success, Faizaan and Sadaan decided to improve the second one by bringing the performance venues together. This they reasoned, would give it more of a focus and a 'festival feel'. They were right and it did this very successfully, but it also meant they had to build ten complete stages (from scratch) in and around the Alhamara Cultural Centre, a large open air theatre. It is a tribute to their dynamism and abilities that they cheerfully took on this enormous task and succeeded.

Everything had to be built by hand, not only the stages with their lighting and other ancillary equipment, but also large tented areas were created out of brilliantly coloured, hand-sewn material. Three days before the event a storm all but destroyed these tents and soaked the ground. The tents were simply re-sewn and Sadaan was seen at the wheel of a bulldozer, cheerfully spreading the sodden earth in the sun.

Cultural differences were sometimes frustrating, but ultimately the central learning curve of their professional development

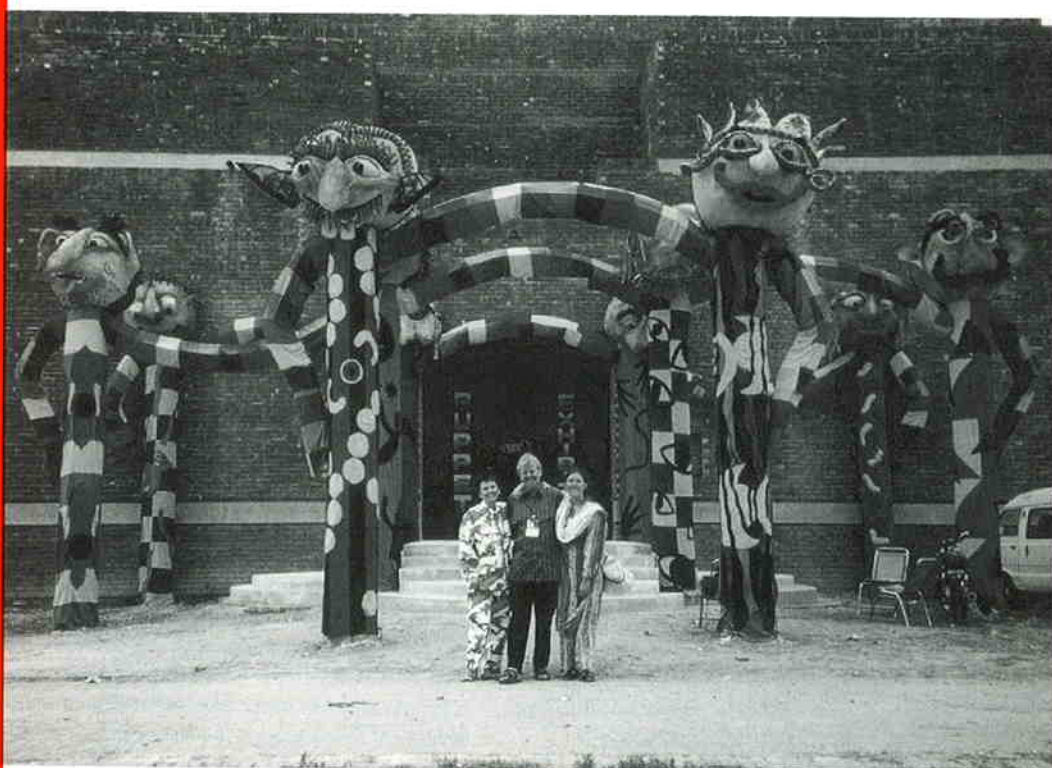


Bob, Kalyna and Andrea arrived in Lahore a mere three weeks before the start of the festival and soon found themselves caught up in the maelstrom of activity. Bob had been invited to attend because of his specialist skills in the construction of very large puppets out of foam rubber, so the major Australian contribution to the festival was the making of some large puppet figures to adorn the concrete pillars outside the entrance to the puppet museum.

The museum was to display puppets from around the world and to act as a central base for workshops, seminars and

puppet making classes. When they went to inspect the building, they found that not only was it a completely empty shell but that the pillars that were to support their installation did not yet exist. Like the rest of the festival, the puppet museum had to be made by the local workforce.

Undaunted by this, and putting their faith in the promises of Faizaan and Sadaan that the pillars and the museum would be ready in time, Bob and Kalyna completed a design and costing in double-quick time and went to meet the group of students from the National Arts School with whom they were going to



Kalyna Flowerpott, Bob Daly and Andrea Fox outside the entrance to the puppet museum