

artwork

ISSUE 44 SEPTEMBER 1999



C O M M U N I T Y A R T S N E T W O R K S A I N C



Published by:
Community Arts Network of SA Inc (CAN)
1st Floor 197 Hindley St Adelaide SA 5000
Ph (08) 8231 0900 Fax (08) 8231 0977
SA country freecall 1800 245 678
Email: cansa@adelaide.on.net
Website: http://www.cansa.on.net

CAN is a non-profit, membership based organisation that promotes cultural development by supporting community arts.

CAN

- works towards a society in which cultural diversity, artistic expression and human dignity are valued and supported
- promotes and supports excellent processes and practices in community arts
- advocates for community cultural development and community arts
- supports artists, artworkers and communities in work which supports these aims.

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.

Editor - Julia Tymukas
Sub Editor - Jane Russell
Design & Layout - Jayne Amble

Cover: Mural concept by young artist for *Thirteen Moons* project. Photo: Samiramis Ziyeh. (see article page 1)

CAN is assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body and by the South Australian Government through Arts SA.

All material is copyright 1999. Permission must be sought to reprint articles and to reproduce graphics. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the publisher.

ISSN 1033 - 0216



c o n t e n t s

ENDLESS CREATIVE FIELDS

- 1** Fairfield Community Arts Network owes its existence to the actions of some locals committed to multiculturalism and this spirit of inclusiveness has imbued its artistic endeavours for ten years. Arts Officer Samiramis Ziyeh offers her insights on the tenth anniversary of the Network.

RESTLESS DANCE COMPANY

- 7** Restless Dance Company artistic director, Sally Chance, traces the evolution of this critically acclaimed Adelaide youth company she helped form.

BOLD BAGS AND OLD BAGGAGE

- 14** An inspiring visual arts exhibition from Tasmania which is now touring Australia has changed the lives of the many ordinary women who took part, as Elizabeth Dean reports.

FESTIVALS, FAIRS AND CARNIVALS

- 18** The essential flavour of the traditional English village fair lives on in Bristol. Patricia Walton reviews two local community festivals that have a shared history spanning more than 25 years.

INTIMATE SPECTACLE IN THE SUBURBAN BADLANDS

- 22** Ian Maxwell reviews a performance prepared with the people of Speed St in Liverpool, Sydney's west, and performed by that community, with Sydney's Urban Theatre.



Nicholas Al-Jeloo, *Thirteen Moons* project. Photo: Samiramis Ziyeh

endless creative fields

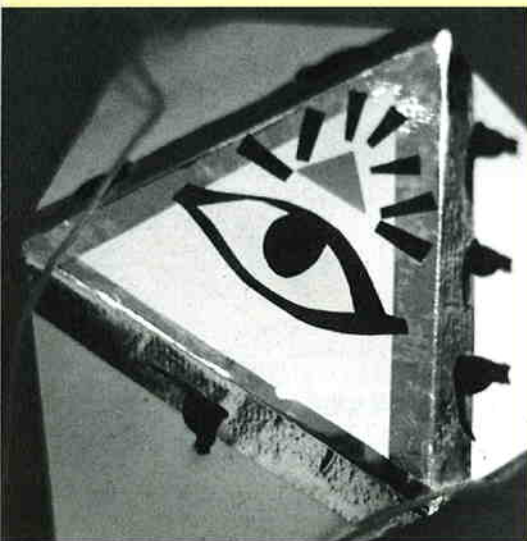
SAMIRAMIS ZIYEH

Fairfield Community Arts Network owes its existence to the actions of some locals committed to multiculturalism and this spirit of inclusiveness has imbued its artistic endeavours for ten years. Arts Officer Samiramis Ziyeh offers her insights on the tenth anniversary of the Network.

One of my father's favourite television programs on the Public Broadcasting is the cooking show, where professional chefs perform their culinary arts. During a recent visit with my family in San Jose, California, I watched on as my father observed. A famous chef instructed, "Now we brush the sliced potatoes with olive oil, add a pinch of salt and sprinkle them with chopped dill." Have you noticed that most good cooks never measure their ingredients, and often alter their recipes? At dinner parties when you ask for the recipe of a dish, isn't the reply usually a bit of this and a bit of that? The point I

am trying to make is that culinary arts, unlike science don't have formula. By now you probably are asking yourself, "What does cooking and recipes have to do with Community Cultural Development?"

In early May this year, I was invited to make a presentation of *Boghcheh (Bundle)* project during the lecture series *Persistence of Memory*, organised by the University of South Australia and Nexus, in Adelaide. During this visit I met with Julia Tymukas, *Artwork* magazine's editor and our conversation became the spark for this article. Julia was interested in learning about my techniques in working with communities, and the frustration and satisfaction that accompany community arts. Basically she wanted the recipe for FCAN's projects.



Boghcheh (Bundle) 1997, Contemplations of Placement and Displacement. Artist: Caroline Dang. Photo: Samiramis Ziyeh

The recipe that I have come up with is a pinch of this and a sprinkle of that plus a bit more. I believe that when working with communities we need to follow the criteria and guidelines, at the same time to recognise when we need to deviate from them, just like good cooking. When working with people each situation has its own unique circumstances and one needs to be sensitive and flexible to make decisions and alterations accordingly. My personal approach in working with any group of people has been to trust my intuition and not get stuck in my head.

This approach has been successful in most situations. I am a firm believer in form follows function and have tried to apply this theory to most things in life, including my practice of community cultural development.

I am going to share with you parts of my community arts diary, putting emphasis on positive and leaving out the negative. The arrogant, the jealous, the egotistical and the sexist will try to poison the harvest, but it is up to us not to let them poison the seed.

Border Crossings

On a cool September day in 1994, I was packing my suitcases and preparing to emigrate to Australia, a good friend of mine visited my half-empty apartment in New York. With great sadness she admired my courage for giving up the comfort of the familiar for an uncertain future in Australia. I remember the echo of her footsteps on the bare oak floorboards. As she was leaving, suddenly she asked, "Do you know what kind of work you'll be doing there?" Without hesitation, my reply was, "I would like to work with communities, especially young people." Later when I accepted my current position as the Arts Officer with Fairfield Community Arts Network, I realised that my predecessor had left this position at exactly the same time as when I had entered Australia.

I settled with my aunts in Smithfield a suburb of Fairfield and began my current work after five months. Fairfield was not a strange place to me. Part of my family had migrated to Australia from Iran in 1970, when I had moved to New York. I visited my relatives twice in Fairfield prior to migrating to Australia. Smithfield is the industrial zone in Fairfield.

My family moved to this area from the eastern suburbs in the early seventies because of affordable property prices and industrial work offered to migrants in this area. One of my aunts, who has a Master in Child Education and operated her own kindergarten in Teheran, was offered a job in the auto assembly line. Obviously her qualifications and twenty years of work experience in Iran were not accepted in Australia.

In Smithfield like most parts of Fairfield, public transport is limited to hourly buses from seven in the morning to six in the evening and no buses on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. People have to rely on cars and for those who don't drive, tough luck mate! After twenty-four years living in New York, where every two blocks there is a subway station and every five minutes a train connects you to anywhere in the metropolitan area, living in Smithfield made me feel that I had lost my legs.

Upon my arrival in Fairfield in 1994, I immediately noticed the changes in the demographics there since my last visit to Australia in 1989. Fairfield CBD looked depressed. Half of the shops had 'For Lease' signs in their windows. You could tell that the economy was bad. Non-English speaking migrants and refugees had replaced the Anglo background settlers. The most recently arrived were the large numbers of Assyrian refugees from Iraq. Many were young.

I will never forget the day when Maureen visited my office. Her young and beautiful face looked tired. She had heard me on the SBS Assyrian radio program and had come to show me her artwork. Her work showed a lot of sadness and longing for her homeland in Iraq. Maureen had come to Australia after spending three years in refugee camps and could not go back to her village in North Iraq due to the Gulf War. Maureen and her family had left everything in their house, locked the door and given the key to her aunt, who stayed behind. We cried together.

Her story took me back in time. I remembered the stories my grandparents had told me about the massacre of the Assyrian people and their bitter suffering during the Great War(1). They had hidden their belongings in mattresses and fled from their homeland in Hakiari(2) in hope of return. I visited their graves in Rockwood Cemetery in Lidcombe and laid flower on their graves. Then I remembered their cousin Gagoo (George) who had been a young boy during the Great War and was living in Fairfield. To revive my memories of my grandparents' stories I needed to speak with uncle Gagoo. The signs were there. It was time for young Assyrian refugees to tell their

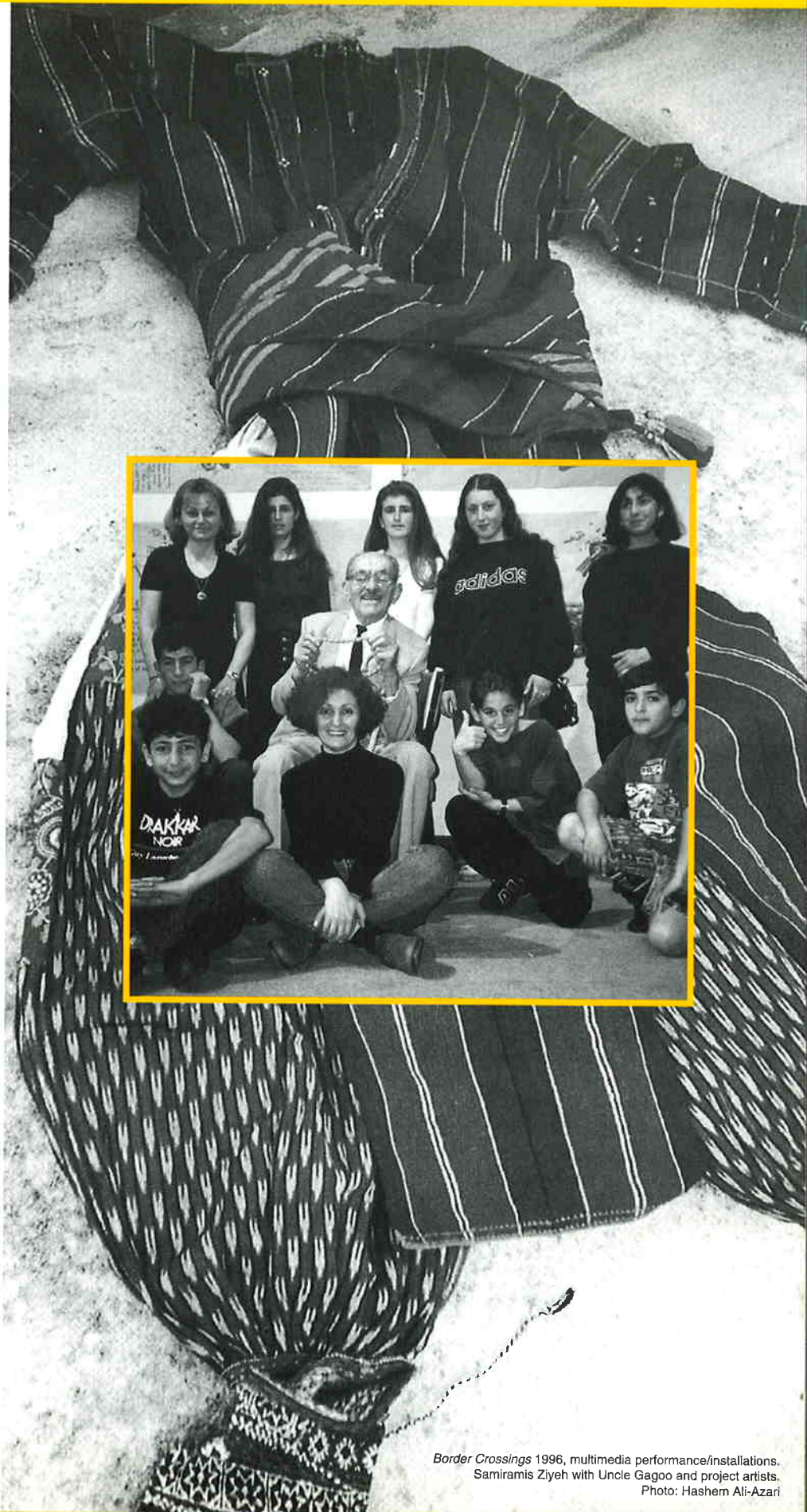
stories before they became swallowed sufferings. The *Border Crossings* project was conceptualised - a multimedia project for young Assyrian and Kurdish refugee people from Iraq. The funding application to the Australia Council for the Arts was successful, Work on *Border Crossings* began.

During the three months of workshops, the young participants explored different media and had the opportunity to work with different facilitators. The *Border Crossings* workshops became the highlight of our lives. The numbers of participants rose over time and the workshops were a place where the young people could express themselves and learn. Many had been in Australia less than a year and hardly spoke English, hence their expression was not only through a verbal process. Physical movement, video and visual arts played key roles in assisting participants with their expression.

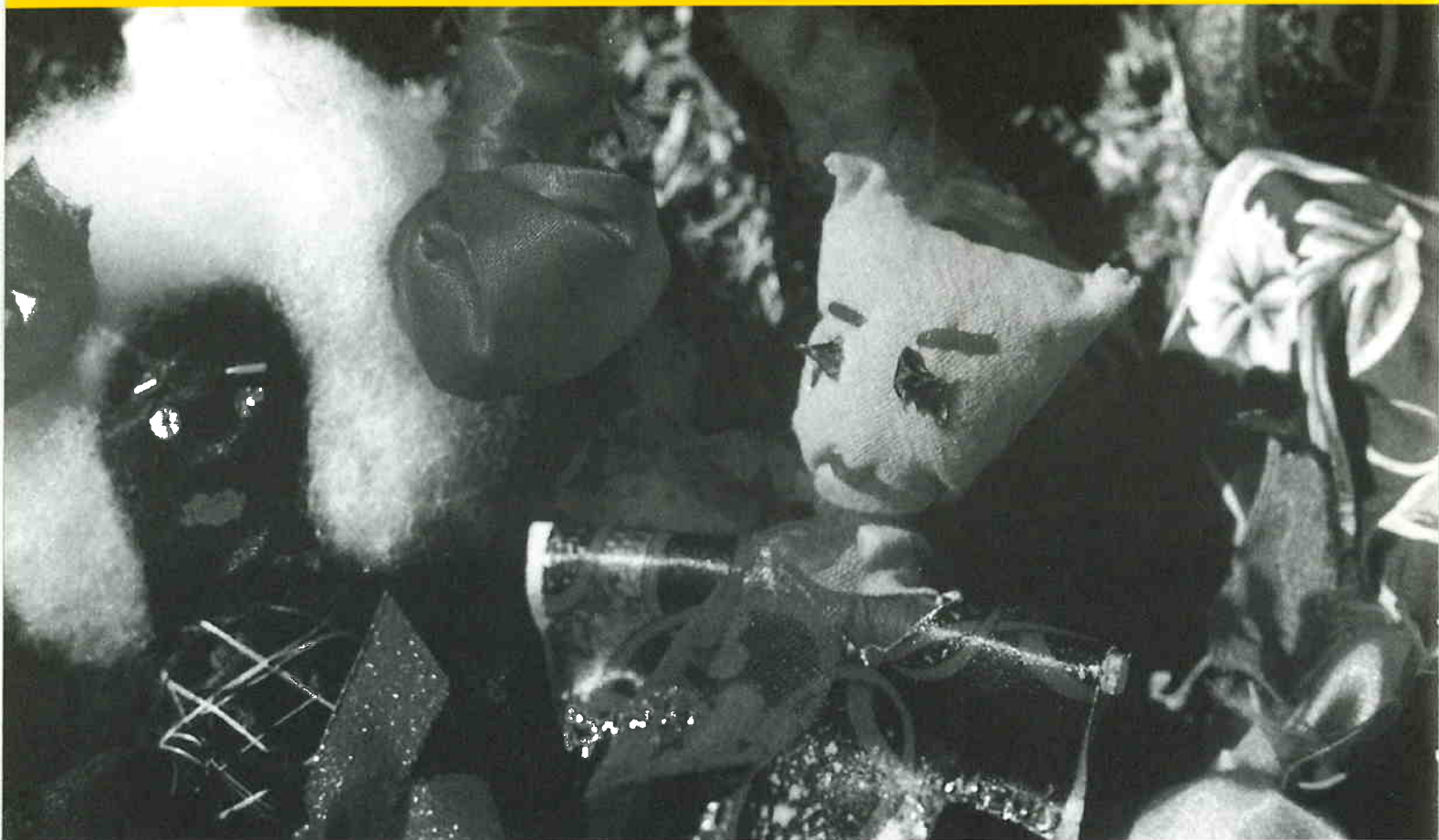
Ninety-seven years old uncle Gagoo was happily taking part in *Border Crossings*, through video interviews that we had arranged with him. Since physically he could not participate in the workshops, his video images were shown to the young people and he became part of the group. Three generations were brought together to find their commonality through the process of *Border Crossings*. We realised that those who had lived through the experiences were telling and recording history that was being repeated. It was important to record the stories, and by utilising creative and innovative techniques, communicate these stories with audiences.

The young people agreed with me that *Border Crossings* should be shared with mainstream audiences in Sydney. Two hectic months of making deadlines, rehearsals and sleepless nights resulted in a tear-jerker performance at the Fairfield School of the Arts and the Belvoir Street Theatre during Carnivale 96.

The *Border Crossings* project planted seeds of hope in the young people's hearts and gave them confidence. Upon its completion I met with them to discuss the project and to find out what they would like to do in the future. Maureen said, "No one had asked me what had



Border Crossings 1996, multimedia performance/installations. Samiramis Ziyeh with Uncle Gagoo and project artists. Photo: Hashem Ali-Azari



Boghcheh (Bundle) 1997, *Contemplations of Placement and Displacement*. Dolls made by women. Photo: Samiramis Ziyeh

happened to me after the Gulf War... After telling my story, I feel lighter and have hope for the future." Susan, another young participant commented, "Border Crossings helped me see beyond the land I am standing on." They wanted to do more of *Border Crossings* and to work with young people from diverse cultural backgrounds. This inclusiveness was a good healing sign. Another year passed before I could write the submission for *Border Crossings II*. Now we have crossed that border. With some delays, this project is currently in progress.

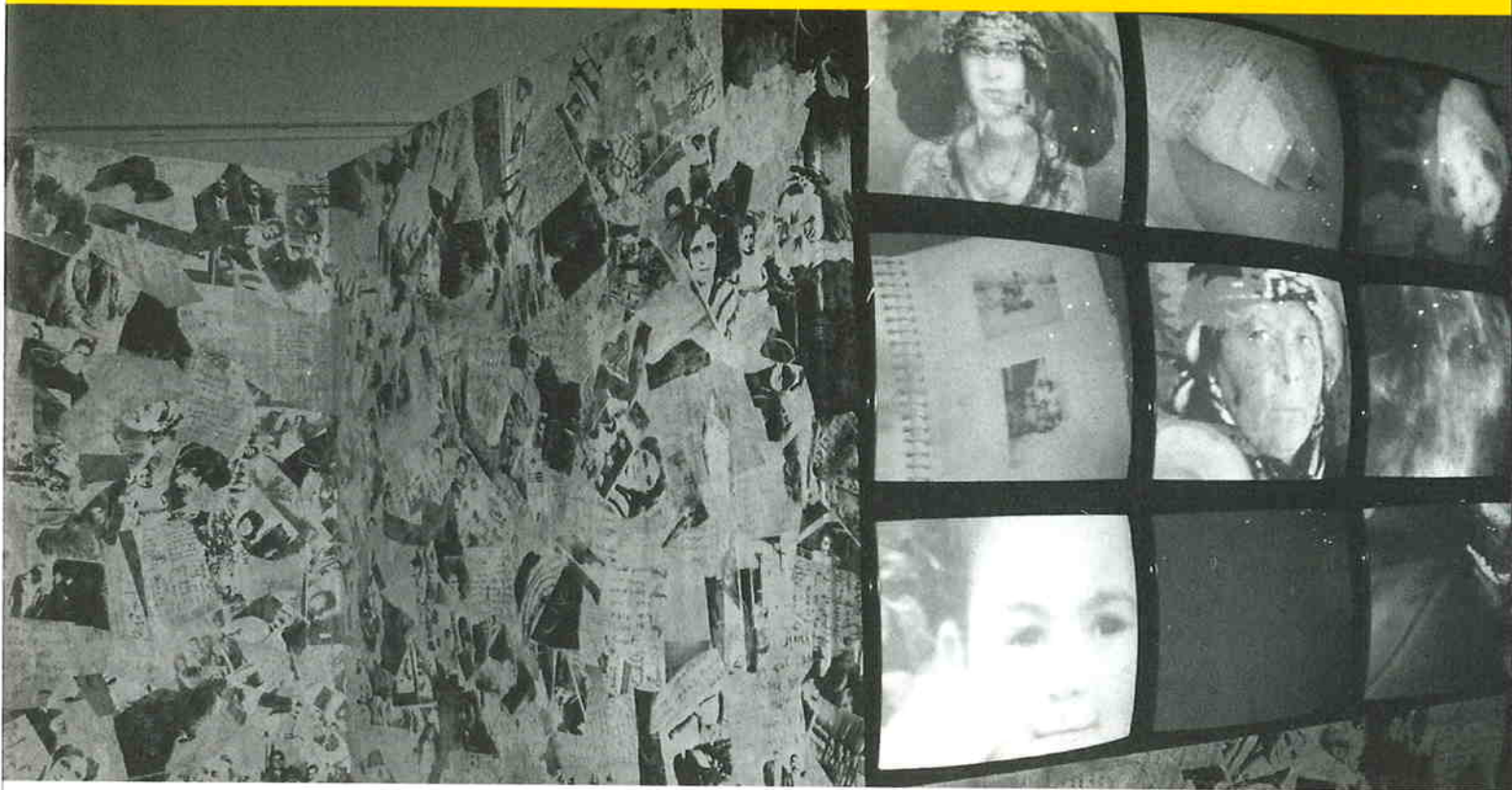
Transcending Stigma

Border Crossings II was delayed for about a year, because at the same time when Fairfield Community Arts Network was granted the funds for this project, another project with young people in Cabramatta was at its peak, *Thirteen Moons*. This project was aiming to dissolve the negative stereotypical images of Cabramatta presented to public by the

media. Through a process that took about two intense years from conceptualisation to completion, *Thirteen Moons* produced year round cultural activities in Cabramatta CBD, a thirty metre long mural and seven mosaics that now adorn the walls of Cabramatta train station. Concepts and stories for this work derived from workshops which artists conducted with community members, especially young people, in hope of creating a sacred space and reclaiming of community spaces by its residents. The media did not show interest in these positive efforts, therefore FCAN approached the public directly. By projecting video images of *Thirteen Moons* activities on the wall at the end of platforms five and six, in Town Hall station in Sydney, and from the Viewing Cube in the Museum of Sydney, we were able to communicate with mass audiences. This message was that Cabramatta is not what the media portrays.

Fairfield Community Arts Network's projects have gone beyond the expected in community arts and crafts. We are dealing with people's concerns, histories and cultural treasures. There is a great need to explore the new cultural heritage brought to Australia from different parts of the world, document, and present it to new audiences. But in so doing we need to use innovative approaches available through the different art forms. In other words, to present contemporary Australia through contemporary arts. FCAN's objective is to reach a mass audience and take the art by the people to the people.

Positive activities initiated by migrants, especially those of non-English origins are usually ignored by the media, while the smallest negative event is noticed and sensationalised. In 1998, through projects such as *Thirteen Moons* and *Tracking Art*, FCAN was invading the public transport spaces with art to reach



Boghcheh (Bundle) 1997, video wall, installation viewpoints, Australian Museum. Photo: Tiet Ho

mass audiences directly. After three years we had realised that by presenting our projects in galleries, museums, and performance spaces, only limited audiences were reached. Don't get me wrong, our events had great attendance.

Stitching Together

Boghcheh (Bundle), another multimedia installation/performance project at the Australian Museum was a series of contemplations of placement and displacement and fantastic turnouts were reported. The opening night attracted about two hundred people. This brings us to another issue - audience development. I strongly believe that audience development and inclusive programs go hand in hand.

Some of you may ask, what attracted all those people to *Boghcheh's* opening reception? Aside from the food bundles, which were prepared with great care and lots of love by the women who participated in the project, there were a few key reasons for the success of this project. The *Boghcheh* project brought five generations of women from diverse

cultural backgrounds together to unravel their ancestral and personal bundles and to find the common thread bonding the group. Although a majority of these women had indigenous or non-English speaking backgrounds, some of the professionals who worked on this project were English speaking. Therefore this project worked as a link between the new arrivals, not so new arrivals and the people of this land. Peta Ridgeway, one of *Boghcheh* artists described this process as, "Common bonding of women. This project embraces our roots, our journeys, our evolution and who we have become today. *Boghcheh* from a personal perspective is like a thread that I am using to sew parts of myself together."

The sense of togetherness and finding commonalities that was shared through this project was brought out in the multimedia installations and the performance presented in the Australian Museum's Viewpoints access space during Carnivale 97. The multimedia installations were electronically woven together to put the viewers on a journey of dreams, stories and experiences. In

early 2000 *Boghcheh (Bundle)* will travel to Footscray in Victoria and Nexus in Adelaide, to extend the sense of commonality with other communities.

This project has unlimited possibilities and can continue. With the passage of time new groups can join in and add their stories to those who initiated this process. And just like the bundle itself, a vessel for transporting one's treasures from one place to another, the exhibition can be taken to endless stops around the globe. My vision in working with communities has been to encourage concepts for projects that have unlimited possibilities and are seeds that blossom into endless creative fields which in turn produce multiple seeds to plant for future generations.

Inclusiveness has been one of the strong elements in FCAN's success with audience development. In marketing and audience development some of the promotion can be done by those involved with the project. By having culturally diverse people working on a project we can have healthy mix of people and



Thirteen Moons mosaic, Cabramatta train station

FCAN's Brief History

In September 1988 the Fairfield Council election resulted in a change of control from Labor to Independent councillors. One of the first decisions made by the new councillors was to discontinue the Arts Officer position's funding and to abandon plans for a new Arts Centre which was funded by the Bicentennial Authority. Despite the tremendous public outcry, council refused to move.

A group of concerned local residents with commitment to multiculturalism formed a committee and decided to obtain funding for an independent arts officer's position for the Fairfield Local Government Area, which was not under the auspice of council. Thus the Fairfield Community Arts Network (FCAN) was formed and registered as an incorporated association in August 1989. After a few years the NSW Ministry for the Arts picked up the funding for this position from the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme.

FCAN not only has been a powerful force in the development of community arts in Fairfield LGA, but has broken traditional boundaries by using innovative approaches in practicing community arts, taking its productions across borders to mass audiences.

anticipate greater numbers of audience. This extends to profit and non-profit organisations. Word of mouth is the best promotion. This doesn't mean that we don't have to write press releases and contact the media. Having many sponsors can also benefit the project and its promotion.

The *Tracking Art* project received \$130,000 in-kind sponsorship from Australian Posters who provided the free billboard spaces in train stations across NSW. Their commitment and that of Britescreen International for reduced printing rates, encouraged the Federal and State Government to fund the project. Works of nineteen emerging artists were reproduced on gigantic posters and displayed on billboards in public transport spaces. These posters not only promoted the artwork, they demonstrated support from the Government and the corporate world for the arts. All this made *Tracking Art* an excellent example of audience development and presentation and promotion.

Last Friday night I left work feeling exhausted. On the train I fell asleep, waking when the train was entering Central Station. As I opened my eyes and looked to my right, there it was a *Tracking Art* poster on a billboard, showing works of three artists. Suddenly all my tiredness was forgotten. Yes this work has its ups and downs, like all other work. There are times that I feel no matter how much I do, still there is so much to be done. Then I remember what Mother Theresa had once said, 'I do it little at a time.'

Less than a week ago Fairfield Community Arts Network celebrated its ten years of working with the community. FCAN's survival and progression in the past decade, has been due to its commitment to inclusive and participatory arts. I hope that in

the next decade the young artists, who have been a big part of FCAN, will take this organisation through another phase of innovative and explorative arts. The work on this has begun and the signs are there in Maureen, Peta, Barbara, Nahren, Nicholas, Julie, Miguel, Sam, Pauline, Seng, Peter, Hashem, Zainab, Niva, Sargon, John, Natasha, Farzin, Susan, Tony, Saman, Lucy, Ninos, Hellene, Lowanna, Danny, Michaela, and Ben.

It is Monday morning and I look at my diary. Today Maureen will meet with me. We need to talk about the photo documentation and the graphic design for *Border Crossings II*, which she will work on. Maureen has been working on numerous FCAN projects within the past few years, and she is in the second year of a Visual Communication degree at the University of Western Sydney, Nepean. She is no longer the frail young woman who walked into my office four years ago. Her dream of becoming a graphic designer is coming true. We have been through a lot together. It feels good to see her strong and self-confident.

Thanks for the abundant harvest ■

Samiramis Ziyeh has crossed many cultures. She was born in Teheran, Iran and followed her dreams to New York, where most of her academic and professional experiences developed. Samiramis holds a Master of Industrial Design from Pratt Institute and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the City University of New York. While working as a consultant designer in New York, she worked with young people in numerous art-deprived inner city public schools, through not for profit arts organisations.

FOOTNOTES

1. Great War: World War I
2. Hakiari: Highlands in Northern Iraq and Southern Turkey, where many Assyrian tribes had lived since the fall of the Assyrian Empire in 612 BC.

Articulating the non-verbal



The Flight, High Beam Festival 1998. Photo: David Wilson

Reflections on Restless Dance Company

SALLY CHANCE

**Restless Dance Company
artistic director, Sally
Chance, traces the evolution
of this critically acclaimed
Adelaide youth company
she helped form.**

The man with Down Syndrome took the microphone and began to talk. And talk and talk... "I don't want to stop the dance classes", he said. He was known to us all as a man of powerful dance but few words. The effort of finding them watering his eyes, his gentle, amplified request was humbling.

His name was Richard and he was still sweating from having just performed at

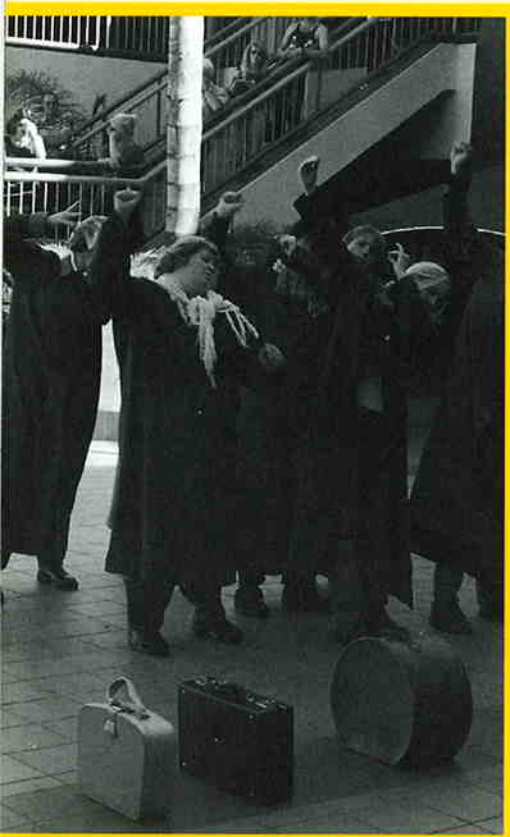
the Norwood Concert Hall, Adelaide, alongside 89 other people with a disability. This performance, in August 1991, marked the culmination of a ten week program of community dance workshops called MOC Connections.

I was the community dance worker charged with the responsibility of organizing this workshop program, of making dance and breaking new ground. But in fact, the groups were in charge of me; I was flying by the proverbial seat of

my track suit pants. The big charge that night was from the atmosphere generated by those 90 people, their families and friends.

Richard's words marked the genesis of Restless Dance Company.

After that electrifying evening in the Norwood Concert Hall, I worked to evolve the company over the next couple of months. Restless eventually became a project of Carclew Youth Arts Centre in November 1991. In 1996, it became an independent incorporated organisation.



Drift, commissioned by Adelaide City Council

Right from the very start, the company has worked with people with and without an intellectual disability to create dance theatre and run community dance workshop programs in which the dancers with a disability are the driving force.

The words of some of the dancers speak from the heart of the company: Restless is "...letting your thoughts and ideas run free", "... love and hugs", "... the best fun in my life", "...it reminds me of me", "...confidence in performing", "...just a joy in myself".

Opportunities for experimentation and development

The evolution of Restless allowed me an absolutely unique opportunity to grow and advance my practice of working in dance alongside people with a disability within a context in which disability arts were flourishing, through projects of organisations such as Arts In Action, while still providing opportunities for experimentation and development.

Prior to coming to Australia, I had been working professionally in community dance as a member of the UK's well-known Ludus Dance Company. This was towards the end of the 1980s, when practitioners were expected to involve people with a disability as a matter of course in their programs.

My earlier training at the Laban Centre, London, had focused on community dance. Methodologies taught at the centre for working with community groups included involving people with a disability, working in schools or in community centres, or teaching specific dance techniques, such as contemporary dance and jazz.

In practice, I found that working alongside people with a disability gave me the greatest satisfaction. The other methodologies too helped inform my approach to working alongside community groups, but my work was disability driven even at this stage and I didn't even realise it.

The principle was one which is familiar to community cultural development practitioners and was based on working with the skills a participant already possesses and then developing them.

Restless's programs have always reflected the twin priorities of community cultural and art form development.

The company's genesis directly reflects the combination of my grass roots experience in the UK as a community dance worker and the boldness of spirit of a range of staff members at Carclew who encouraged me to work with members of Restless, not only for their personal development, but also to break new artistic ground. A rich and energetic

youth arts industry in South Australia provided an appropriate arts context for this new group of people, aged mainly in their late teens and early twenties, to form and sustain the company through those early years.

Through Restless, in collaboration with their peers without a disability, young people with a disability were making their presence felt. The Restless dancers delivered performances at Carclew's Artery parties, Come Out, Next Wave and Fringe events, schools, theatres, youth arts network days, family fun days, the Royal Adelaide Show and many other events. Unplanned manifestations included a range of visual art openings at Carclew, an anniversary party for the Adelaide Review and the buffet car of The Overland to Melbourne.

The company has always involved around sixteen young dancers, with equal numbers of men and women and people with and without a disability. Being with them is warm, generous, hilarious, intimate and idiosyncratic.

Pioneering Cultures of Disability

Since 1991, Restless has created seven full length new pieces of dance theatre, devised works for outdoor performance, run hundreds of community dance workshops and initiated special short term projects such as *Fusion*, in which people with a disability from country areas are invited to Adelaide to get involved with Restless. The company has toured to Melbourne and Darwin and performed and run workshops for school students in Naracoorte, Strathalbyn, Port Augusta, Whyalla, Roxby Downs and Coober Pedy.

What is the bigger picture behind all this activity? What does it all mean?

For me and for the members of Restless, it means we have made and continue to make a significant contribution to a specific strand of cultural development, Cultures of Disability, which acknowledges the unique skills of artists and arts participants with a disability and draws parallels with other cultural developments such as multiculturalism, queer culture and Deaf Culture.

At the time of founding the company in 1991, my motivation had its basis in social justice. I aimed simply to redress the historical imbalance of dance not including performers with a disability and to demonstrate that people with a disability could make dance too.

A methodology began to evolve which I described as 'reverse integration'.

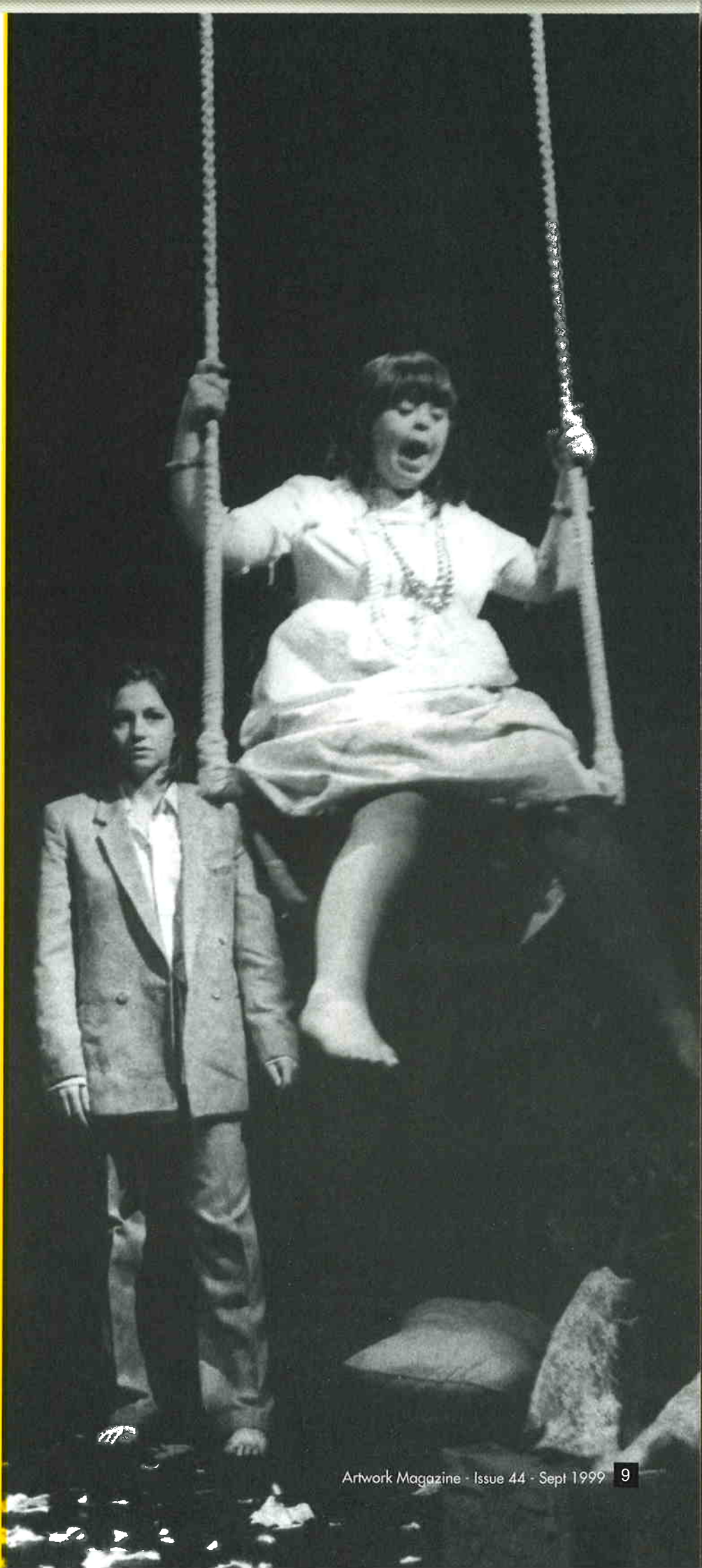
Reverse integration adopted terminology familiar to the disability sector - every person with a disability has the right to integrate into society, enjoying equal access to work, education, relationships, religion and politics - and then turned it on its head.

In the context of Restless, reverse integration referred to the idea that the young people without a disability entered a creative space which they did not automatically own. In other words, they were the people having to find their place within a 'normality' defined by others. In a sense, they became the 'other'.

To explain more fully what I mean, consider the following example: performance material is built from the dancers' personal responses to the director's tasks. At this stage there is a free flow of ideas and possibilities leading, eventually, to setting the material. The dancers agree on the 'right' and the 'wrong' of the imagery. However, sometimes the dancers with a disability might make a subtle alteration of pacing or spacing. If the dancers without a disability sustain material which earlier had been 'right', then they are wrong, because they need to pay attention to the constant creation and recreation of the dance.

Through reverse integration, not only did the people without a disability experience what the people with a disability experienced most of the time, but this notion also fundamentally challenged the idea that a young person with a disability would necessarily want to be more 'normal' by being made to copy the people without a disability or by trying to 'invisible' their disabilities away.

The Flight, High Beam Festival 1998.





Sex Juggling. Photo: David Wilson

Of course this working methodology of reverse integration did not disregard the powerful drive in every person to fit in and make connections, nor disregard the practical and emotional challenges faced by individuals with a disability. However, its principal focus was to create a space, through Restless's work, in which having a disability was advantageous and in which young people with an intellectual disability, with their intuitive and spontaneous creativity and highly individual dance languages, could excel.

Over time the idea began to go further than simply celebrating difference.

The dancers with a disability in Restless are not just accommodated. They have defined the way the company operates. They are redefining the nature of dance in their terms.

This I believe, is the secret to the company's artistic success. Restless's dance theatre offers audiences a unique world view, which comes from being a clear and truthful voice.

This concept, which I now would call Cultures of Disability, freed up the thinking behind the work to become far more complex and exciting than the earlier notion of reverse integration. The concept has now become dynamic and positive rather than defining itself in terms of what it is not!

Cultures of Disability offer people with a disability the option of defining themselves specifically in terms of their disability, because they have skills and qualities which can make a significant economic, spiritual, artistic and social contribution to society.

Far from being mere recipients of services and benefits, people with a disability are participating members of society. The dancers make the dance they make because of their disabilities.

This enters delicate and taboo territory. The self-image of the artist with a disability is challenged and the many years of striving to be a person first and a person with a disability second are potentially turned upside down.

The Disability Culture model still recognises that professional artists or community arts participants with a disability need to win the right for their art to be viewed, critiqued and experienced not as 'disabled art' but as art in its own right. In many ways the work of Restless had to achieve a certain level of artistic recognition from audiences, funding bodies and arts colleagues with and without a disability as a prerequisite before having the intellectual and artistic licence to pursue the thought process of Cultures of Disability.

Dialogue with dance critics

Restless has achieved a good level of artistic recognition, but the journey can never be ticked off as 'done'.

This year for example, we initiated a dialogue with dance critics at the Adelaide Advertiser in an effort to stop reviewers counting up the number of performers with and without a disability as part of their review submissions. As a company, we would be more interested in an analysis of the style of dance theatre that the company devises because half the

membership of any given cast comprises performers with a disability. Indeed, some of the dancers are people with disabilities that are not apparent just by looking.

Other forms of recognition are also important to us. We are currently working to better the understanding of our work among disability sector professionals, who are generally more concerned with the personal development of an individual.

We are working ever harder to ensure the people who are our audiences and stakeholders are better informed and educated about our work. It would be disquieting for our work to achieve a level of artistic recognition while alienating the company's grass roots. Nonetheless, the performance side of the work must reflect the developing skill level, thematic courage and boldness of presentation that the youth ensemble is achieving, which can be challenging for some.

Agreeing with the idea is not a prerequisite

People with an intellectual disability need to see themselves reflected in Restless works, but the work can never represent all people with an intellectual disability.

Cultures of Disability is a state of mind with which not every member of Restless agrees. Agreeing with the idea is not a prerequisite for becoming involved, but it provides an intellectual framework for our thoughts. These broad issues are raised at some level within every Restless group.

In the second half of 1998 we ran a workshop program entitled *Vividha; diversity*. Alongside an Indian dancer, the project aimed to explore Indian culture as a mirror for a general look at culture and to find out how comfortable the thirty or so participants with a disability were with the idea of Cultures of Disability.

Similarity and difference were thoroughly explored through games, discussion and dance. Some participants embraced the idea of disability culture in the context of their involvement with Restless, but were

more ambivalent about considering it as relevant outside the company. Others responded primarily to the notion of the 'difference' of Indian culture.

Part of the challenge of operating within this framework is the intellectual nature of the discussion among people with an intellectual disability. In these performance indicator-orientated times, we have recently set ourselves the challenge of measuring the extent to which participants with an intellectual disability experience their involvement in Restless as an expression of their cultural lives as people with a disability, and inviting them to articulate that experience.

We invited participants' responses to the notion that Restless is disability driven and asked them how they felt about being involved alongside other people with a disability.

A positive response to the concept emerged through the evaluations of *Vividha; diversity*. A participant explained that the project had been her first opportunity to be with disabled people and have fun. She said, "We all sort of helped each other in an indirect way and we were able to relate to one another".

Developing meaningful systems whereby people with an intellectual disability are able to evaluate the company's work and their involvement within it will need our sustained attention.

The same is relevant to the performers without a disability. A major shift in my thinking occurred during a 1997 interstate tour, when I realised that the constant emphasis on the performers with a disability was in danger of undermining the significant involvement of the performers without a disability. Ironically, in retrospect, the performers without a disability were on the brink of the kind of marginalisation and exclusion that the company seeks to redress on behalf of people with a disability.

Our evaluation processes do now include exploring the attitudes of the performers without a disability to Cultures of Disability.

Articulating the non verbal

In the early days of developing Restless's work I was often asked "how do you do it?" The questioner would usually have a particular view of what a dance performance should look like and would be wondering how people with an intellectual disability fitted this view.

Finding words to pinpoint the style of Restless's works and the role of the company in the lives of the people involved is a challenge, because the main power of the company's work lies in creating non verbal images to articulate the world view of people with a disability.

The methodology which I evolved under the influence of the dancers, allowed dance to become a language for the members of Restless. Expressing their attitude to the world through movement comes more easily to the members of Restless than words, which means that their non verbal imagery is a most powerful and comfortable form of communication.

The answer to the question "how do you do it?" is to create work in which the dancers look like themselves, rather than trying to emulate other dancers. But Restless's dance theatre and programs of community dance workshops articulate the world view of people with an intellectual disability in ways which appear able to speak to universal audiences.

Successive performance works take as their theme issues in the lives of the performers, which tend to evolve from previous projects. But I would stress that Restless works have never been 'issues based', about living a life with disability, or about inequality. Rather, they engage audiences with broader human themes.

Defining the theme, title, process and style of successive works for performance is part of my role as the company's artistic director.

This is a fascinating, intuitive process. It is a form of consultation, but a very indirect one.



Sex Juggling. Performers: Ziggy Kuster, Stephen Noonan and Rafts Esposito

I put questions casually to individual dancers based around an idea that has percolated through to me drawn from their behaviours and apparent preoccupations. I never directly ask the ensemble what they want to look at next, partly because of the lengthy time lines of applying for funding and partly because so broad a question would not necessarily yield interesting ideas.

In keeping with the culture, the dancers' concerns are revealed to me non verbally and over a long time. For the company members 'understanding' is not just cognitive and is not merely intellectual. Understanding is also physical and emotional and is best demonstrated through dance.

In performance

The first major work created by the youth performance ensemble was *IKONS*, devised in 1993 for the Come Out youth arts festival of that year. *IKONS* responded to the power and gravity of the performers, expressing their collective and intuitive sense of ritual and community. It was described as "a visual and musical feast" by *The Age* newspaper.

The rehearsal process of the piece allowed our long term methodology based on improvisation to develop. The process also enabled a sense of ensemble to grow, which has been sustained ever since. Some of the performers in *IKONS* are involved in Restless's new ensemble of five performers with an intellectual disability which formed in April 1999, having 'graduated' from the youth ensemble.

The youth ensemble now focuses on dancers aged twenty six and under and currently involves sixteen young performers in the devising of *Precious*, a new work directed by Ingrid Voorendt for production in October 1999.