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Artwork magazine is a collaboration between Community Arts Network SA Inc (CAN SA), Queensland Community Arts Network Inc (QCAN), Community Cultural Development NSW (CCD NSW) and Community Arts Network WA (CAN WA).

For contact details see the inside back cover.

Cover images: see back page

CAN SA, QCAN, CCDNSW and CANWA are assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding advisory body. CAN SA is also assisted by the South Australian Government through Arts SA, QCAN's major sponsor is Arts Queensland, CCDNSW is also assisted by the NSW Ministry for the Arts and CAN WA is assisted by the State of Western Australia through artsWA in association with Lotterywest.

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ISSN 1003 – 0216

62 Editorial

JANE GRONOW

Welcome to the 62nd edition of *Artwork* magazine.

I have been working on *Artwork* in various roles since 2001, when the National partners joined together to become the National Editorial Committee to produce the magazine collaboratively, reflecting a national perspective of community cultural development in Australia. Since then the brief for *Artwork* has been about exploring the breadth and depth of ccd work, discuss the practice in its many forms and represent this in a professional journal.

My role in this issue has been as joint commissioning editor with Bronwyn Jewell, director of QCAN (Queensland Community Arts Network), a challenging role that I have not done before but would be happy to take up again. This issue has been brewing for a long time, from conversations had years ago (and as many people know, I love a chat). With the demise of the Community Cultural Development Board of the Australia Council for the Arts (CCDB) and the scoping study currently being undertaken by the Australia Council I think 'an Artist's perspective' on community cultural development (ccd) is timely. I have had some amazing conversations with some inspiring people.

It was about three years ago through the production of *Artwork* magazine that I began having conversations with Victorian artist Julie Shiels about different ways of working with communities, artmaking and the artist role within ccd practise. As part of Julie's CCDB fellowship (2004-05) it was identified there are few opportunities for artists in Victoria to meet and discuss their practise, to discuss what it means and where it is going, so she started the Lonely Arts Club, a place for artists who work with communities to get together and talk.

The idea of '3D, a Symposium for artists working with communities' evolved from these get togethers. It was initiated by Berni m janssen and Julie, who developed 3D in collaboration with artists using ccd processes. Berni, who managed the Symposium, contributed enormously to the framing of this issue and discusses this symposium, the process used and the recommendations made in the leading article. This issue attempts to articulate and extend some of the discussions that took place, and the recommendations made during the 3D Symposium.

This publication is a national journal, put together in collaboration by an editorial committee with representation from peak

ccd bodies from SA, NSW, Queensland and WA. Each organisation contributes funding for this publication, however there is always the struggle of maintaining input from states without organisations that are not funded to work nationally. Each issue has a theme and we strive to gather articles addressing that theme and which also offer representation on a National scale. In this particular issue of *Artwork* the experiences and reflections of those artists involved in 3D and in ccd work in Victoria have been featured for a number of reasons; not least because the concerns of these artswokers have been so well explored and articulated through the 3D Symposium model; and maybe they raise questions for us all.

The articles included in this issue of *Artwork* identify certain issues of working in ccd which exist for many practitioners, artists, or artswokers, whatever their practise. As I was reading these articles there appeared to be an underlying frustration from some contributors about support for artists who work with communities. Could it be that groups who have access to support networks which facilitate discussions on an ongoing basis are better supported? As Berni points out in her article there has been no Community Arts Network in



Jane Gronow. Photo: Joyce Louey

Victoria for over 10 years. Is this feeling of frustration a national issue? Are the issues raised peculiar to Victoria. or does the call to examine the philosophy, practice and language of ccd and the role of the artist within this practice, have bearing for artists working in other states?

We begin with Berni m janssen's article, which gives an overview of the Symposium which provides the context for this edition, a sense of where it and the contributions came from.

Dr Robyn Rowland tells of an amazing journey of 'Green Turtle Dreaming', an international project in which the results were developmental in an exemplary ccd project. The article made me consider how we talk about the practise and how we use ccd language, particularly when repositioning or positioning the practise within contemporary arts practice, or cultural theories. The question of art or anthropology is one to consider here. Carey Lai, also a CCDB Fellow undertaking research into how to better support artists, shares some of her findings during the early stages of the research.

Dr Ros Bandt offers an interesting insight into community and sound art design, detailing the work of five sound installations created in Australia and internationally

Vale Kirk Robson

within a community context and asks 'Are we really listening?'

Julie Shiels examines how two experienced visual artists, Maria Fillipow and Megan Evans, engage communities in the art-making process, as well as discussing some of the challenges facing artists who work in community. Through identifying these challenges we may be able to get a feel for how artists can be better supported.

Alison Richards' interview with Glenn Romanis, offers us insight into the depth and breadth of community arts based practise. Glenn discusses his work in a practical way, demystifying the sometimes complex ways of working with community and making art. He also talks about the role of the environment in his work and ways its qualities can be expressed through community based art.

Western Culture: the art of Melbourne's west, offers an almost voyeuristic view of a conversation between Big West Festival's Artistic Director Jason Cross and Footscray-based artist, Scott Brook, who discuss the relationship between ccd and the Big West Festival model.

The article by Chi Vu arose from a talk she delivered at the Creative Shift Forum and discusses the project 'Vietnam – a Psychic Guide', a professional performance with strong community outcomes.

Ilka Tampke, David Everist and Robyn Szechtman provide snapshots of projects which have had an impact on them. They talk about the work that was produced in an informal way therefore beginning to develop language and ways that may be useful in developing methods to critique.

We have included a reprint of the article *Cooking Stories* by Rachel O'Reilly, which tells of an exciting project about the role of food in cultural memory, grief and freedom. It discusses situating ccd within other contemporary theoretical frameworks.

Also included from Graham Pitts is a heartfelt celebration for the life of Kirk Robson, artistic director of the Torch Project in Victoria.

Enjoy this issue, and as happens with each edition, we have set up an online forum on ccd.net to continue the discussion about issues raised. If you've not seen or used the site yet, it would be well worth your while to get online and register as a member to not only receive regular national ccd updates but also contribute to the ongoing discussions. Oh, and it's free!

Last but not least, I would like to give my sincere thanks and express my admiration for the 3D Editorial Team berni m jansen, Julie Shiels and Alison Richards.

Kirk Robson, the 27-year old Artistic Director of The Torch Project company in Victoria, died in a car accident in Arnhem Land on 20th July 2005. Actor and director Rachel Mazza, her mother, Vera, and her son, Ariel, were also in the vehicle. Ariel was seriously injured but after weeks in hospital has made a good recovery. Kirk and Rachel were on the way to Nhulumbuy, where they were to commence site-work on a film-based project with children at the Yirkala School in North East Arnhem Land as part of the Indigenous Garma Festival.

In Melbourne, at the Wesley Church funeral service, 800 grieved for Kirk's death... and also celebrated his life. And so they, or rather we, should. For grief passes though it passes only with time while celebration and the memories of Kirk's innate quality shall not pass, ever. We will, as people say, remember him. Always.

Surely it's fair enough to say not 'I' but 'we' when so many of us feel the same way. Gore Vidal, the American writer, once said that every time a close friend reveals a great talent, something in us shrivels. And so often, too, it does, though it's merely human envy. But none could envy Kirk his dedication, his generosity of spirit and, yes, his extraordinary array of talents. It's true he did so many things, especially for others, with an ease which baffled we whom his one-time mentors Steffo Nantsou and Steve Payne call 'The Old Farts Club'. Had the young fool no idea how difficult it was to write, to act, to direct and to inspire with such deft skill and grace? Yet to envy him, though envy might be the tribute age pays to youth, would have soiled oneself. All we could do was stand back, admire and realise, as Steffo said at the funeral service, that 'for us he was the future'.

Kirk was a fine though joyous cricket-player and a much loved member and elder of the Church of All Nations in Carlton. In 1999 he participated in the creation of 'The Torch', the theatre show that in its various incarnations until 2003 is the best known Torch Project production. Kirk was in every new reformulation and development of 'The Torch', was in 'The Bridge', 'The Race' and 'The Seeming' as writer, director, actor or organizer. He also, amongst other things, wrote and directed the films 'Dirt on Squirt' and 'Touching The Natural'.

Along the way Kirk wrote some truly fine things and one of them was a song, in 2001, about his sense of having always been surrounded by love:

'The Constancy of Love'

I'm so thankful for
the constancy of love
I've found

That swirls around my
present, future, past.

And while everything
around us screams
that nothing is forever

I got the feeling this is
gonna last.

Kirk is survived by his wife, Kylie Crabbe, his parents, Mavis and Peter, and his siblings, Natalie, Donna and Michael. It's a privilege to join with them, in knowing that Kirk was right about 'this is gonna last'. You were, and are, and will be greatly loved, Kirk. Always. Always. Always.

Graham Pitts