Catalyst community arts fund supports Western Australian community arts projects where people have the opportunity to participate, learn together and express their local culture and identity.

The fund also supports individual community artists and cultural development workers looking to undertake research or training.

**There are three categories**

**INNOVATE**
**CATEGORY A**
Developing new and innovative community arts practices

**CREATE**
**CATEGORY B**
Projects that express local culture and identity

**DEVELOP**
**CATEGORY C**
Professional development for community artists and community cultural development workers

**Closing dates**
30 March for projects beginning after 1 July and 30 September for projects beginning after 1 January.
Applications to be postmarked before 5pm on the closing date.

**Thinking about applying for a Catalyst community arts grant?**
CAN WA runs a free workshop approximately six weeks before the Catalyst March and September rounds helping you to: formulate your ideas, understand the process and what the selection panel will be looking for, tips on how to write a funding application and prepare a budget, as well as provide information on other available funding opportunities.

Our funding staff will be on hand to answer any questions you may have about your future applications.

Further information on the dates, time, and location of the workshops will be released closer to the rounds on our website and in Around the Campfire e-news.

**Further funding opportunities**

**Department of Culture and the Arts**
The WA Department of Culture and the Arts offers a range of funding opportunities and support to individuals across Western Australia.

For more information on funding, visit the DCA website.

**www.dca.wa.gov.au/funding**

**Australia Council for the Arts**
Australia Council for the Arts supports community arts and cultural development through the Community Partnerships section. The support takes the form of grants to individual artists, financial and operational support to community arts organisations, support for key producer companies and community partnership support services, and strategic initiatives to build capacity across the sector.

For more information on Community Partnership funding opportunities, contact CANWA’s funding manager or visit the Community Partnerships section of the Australia Council website.

**www.australiacouncil.gov.au/grants**
The Department of Culture and the Arts is committed to improving access to and participation in arts and cultural activity. Community Arts Network WA (CAN WA) is integral to ensuring access for all West Australians to arts and culture. As well as their core funding, CAN WA manages two devolved funding programs on behalf of the State Government of Western Australia and CAN WA distributes $266,821 per year to the community through the Catalyst community arts fund.

The Catalyst bulletin is an exciting publication that captures the achievements and importance of community arts practice in Western Australia and highlights the many successes and milestones of Catalyst funded projects. The Catalyst fund has seen significant community connections created and sustained throughout Western Australia by individuals, artists and organisations.

CAN WA and the Catalyst community arts fund play a significant and valued role in improving community wellbeing, cultural identity, understanding and education and I hope you enjoy reading about these inspiring projects.
Over the following pages you will be introduced to an extremely diverse bunch of projects and an even more diverse bunch of people. I have been privileged over the past two years to see so many great arts projects develop across the state that give life to community problems, dreams, hopes and ideas that otherwise may never be explored or shared.

Thirty-three projects worth over $249,000.00 have been undertaken in WA during 2009 using Catalyst funding. Participants, regardless of their culture, age, region, physical or mental abilities have partaken in projects ranging from theatre and visual arts to multimedia and environmental art—all of them gaining new skills through this process.

This bulletin aims to show you the vast array of project possibilities and some of the different groups and people who work to make these projects happen in WA. Some featured are ‘first timers’ who are just entering the field, and others are some of the most experienced practitioners in the state—all giving you an insight into what drives them to develop and run these disparate but vital projects. Catalyst funding has been a major component in the life of every project in the following pages—as well as countless others happening as you read this.

Catalyst Panel 09-11

Joan Apel, Hayley Bahr, Nigel Bird, Nat Brunovs, Paul Doquile, Rob Ewing (Chair), Peta Galloway, Kym Harrington, Michelle Hovane, Jan Kapetas, Jane King, Gwen Knox, Georgia Malone, Jill Plant, Caroline Smith, Jane Tillson and Susie Waller.

A special thanks must go to Rob Ewing, our outgoing panel chair and member of CAN WA Board of Directors. Rob has worked tirelessly to ensure that the panel meetings run smoothly and that funding has been allocated to the projects that have submitted the strongest applications.

I would like to welcome Soula Veyradier, who will take over as chair for 2010-2011 and has a long history in the arts both here and overseas. Soula is currently the curator of the City of Melville’s Heathcote Gallery and a member of CAN WA’s Board of Directors. I look forward to working with Soula on the panel and I am sure she will bring some great insights and ideals to the process. Thanks must go to Sarah Wilkinson and Sarah Trant at the Department of Culture and the Arts who have managed the community partnerships program and provided their support and guidance to the funding program over the last two years.

It is apparent the environment for community based arts practice is changing dramatically in our state, with funding programs, including Catalyst, becoming highly competitive. This means it is becoming even more important to ensure that the voices of minorities and the disadvantaged are heard and we do our best to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to access these programs. Through programs that encourage creative development and cultural expression, everyone has the opportunity to show they are part of the rich and diverse cultural backbone of this state.
What makes a good community arts project?
Over recent years as Chair of the Catalyst funding panel, I have witnessed an increasing number of applications for funding coupled with equally increasing project costs. It would be reasonable to assume the current trend is indicating a heightened community awareness and acknowledgement for the social and creative value of community arts projects. However true that may be, there remains, as always, an ever present competitiveness in securing those highly prized funds that constitute the working capital to successfully realise that exciting project.

As each funding round draws near and the Catalyst panel prepare for their deliberation on who gets the go-ahead, it is a timely reminder to reflect upon what makes a good project.

What makes a good application?
A good fit with the funding criteria is crucial. Criteria remains as the fundamental equaliser and important moderator ensuring all project applications are judged on their merits. How well that is achieved involves the writing being kept clear and concise, assisting the panel to understand the intent and benefits of a project.

There is need for well-targeted and achievable outcomes that are validated through letters of support from project partners. A good project clearly demonstrates the role of all project partners and their contribution to the project.

Building your project
Interestingly, the process of developing a funding strategy and ultimately securing funding brings with it a whole bag of potential challenges. Firstly, in the process of satisfying any funding criteria the initial intent of a project may shift. It may widen in its ambition to engage varying sectors of the community, or narrow and focus to become realistically achievable within the desired time frame. Momentum is crucial to the delivery of a project, as is community interest and participation. A good project is one that is clearly targeted and deliverable within a realistic and conducive timeframe.

If a project is to be successful in its efforts to secure funding from any source, it must ensure that the emphasis of the funding source is realised in the outcomes sought. That is not to say that the funding source will determine the outcomes of any particular project, however funding does highlight the need to formulate a well structured and focused project with achievable outcomes.

Sometimes things go pear shaped and a situation may arise that has a direct impact upon the delivery of a project. It is times such as these that provide the greatest learning curves, situations where we are required to adapt and take a fluid approach to community arts practice and the outcomes we first sought to achieve. A good project has suitably experienced personnel, however, essentially it seeks to identify and build skills within a community.

When a project has community engagement in its development, design and management, it has a solid foundation and potential for success. A good project is many things, it is good when the intent of a project has manifested from within the community, with a clear focus to provide a framework for the empowerment of those involved. It is good when a project succeeds to generate positive outcomes beyond those initially anticipated and when a project has the potential to become significant to those that are involved.

I believe a good community art project can be big or small and that the success of community arts projects lay in their ability to continually manifest within the most unlikely places.
EAR TO THE GROUND

LISETTE KALEVELD
Department of Culture and the Arts

Are grants schemes the best way to support the arts? It sounds like a question an artist might throw to the ‘funding body in the sky’ in a moment of frustration. But, in fact, this was something the Development and Strategy Directorate (DSD) recently asked the sector itself. DSD has built sector consultation into the process of developing a new policy framework. By throwing ‘provocateur questions’ into their discussions with artists and arts workers, DSD has made it clear they want to unpack issues, provoke debate and remain genuinely open to ideas of the arts funding and policy and planning areas of the Department.

DSD’s current policies were inherited from a 2006 amalgamation from two previously separate sections of the Department. Updating policy this time, therefore, isn’t just about fine tuning—it’s about getting out the whiteboards and butchers paper and seizing the opportunity to clearly listen and respond to the sector.

Setting the tone
Consultation began with a discussion forum open to everyone. The second stage was set up as three smaller focus groups, allowing more in-depth discussion with key people from the sector and an all day workshop for regional participants. ‘The forums were based around the goals of engagement and creativity, with four outcome areas being creative people, creative communities, creative economies and creative environments,’ Deputy Director General for DCA Jacqui Allen says. ‘We received a rich array of feedback and contribution, around all these areas. It’s a very active and engaged sector.’

At the open forum, arts workers presented and led the discussion. While DCA took a back seat and listened. According to participant and Managing Director of Visible Dance Jeremy Philips, ‘It was a very, very safe environment for people to say what they thought, to express what they felt strongly about, to DCA and the sector. The facilitators did a really good job of setting that tone. The discussions were really positive and constructive.’ CEO of Country Arts WA Jessica Machin agrees: ‘The recurrent issues came up and there were lots of things that DCA had probably heard before. But they also seemed to say, “OK let’s put the burning issues we know are there aside...what else can we learn?”’

With a tone of openness established, it’s not surprising participation was robust with nearly 300 at the open forum, 60 at the focus groups and 55 at the regional focus group along with a wealth of information brought to the table.
Reaching Out

‘WA is so huge and we are proud to say we had nine regions represented,’ says Jessica of Country Arts, the regional arts peak body that coordinated the coming together of 55 people from around the state in conjunction with DCA. ‘Being in the same room was very important. People who have only ever spoken on the phone were able to meet face to face.’ Dot West, head of productions at Goolarri Media, says although regional communities could contribute via the DCA website, there is nothing like face to face contact for exploring issues. Both Dot and Jessica agree that certain issues will always be more relevant to regional and remote artists—-the cost barriers of accommodation, staff retention and the political intricacies of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights, to name a few. ‘The coming together was really important because it’s the first time we’ve been able to discuss these things as a regional sector,’ Dot says.

The objective of the consultation was to build policy. But the process was powerful in its own right. Participants especially valued the commonalities discovered. ‘It was really good to get a broader picture of the sector; the common problems and common issues. To see what issues ran across the board and who was doing what about it,’ Jeremy says. ‘This time was about the new policy framework, but raising awareness throughout the sector should be done anyway.’ Scott says having this ‘sector view’ built bridges between art forms. ‘In the past I have met with DCA about contemporary music, and was a member of the taskforce around the creation of music grants. But this is the first time I’ve been able to contribute alongside other art forms. There should be more of it. If anything is going to be achieved for the cultural industry in WA, the different sectors need to be represented at forums more often.’

Next Steps

‘My only question is, what happens now?, asks Jeremy. This is the huge task that lies ahead for the DCA; to take everything that was so clearly articulated and generously offered, to prioritise these and work out what is achievable and create a policy framework that can serve the creative community. In the meantime, Scott offers the view that ‘the cultural development of WA is beyond just one Department. It relies on the whole art community to be innovative and entrepreneurial as a whole, not autonomously.’ And nothing demonstrates that more than a fruitful consultation with an engaged and responsive sector.

The Arts and Cultural Sector Policy Framework will be launched in early 2010. For more information visit www.dca.wa.gov.au or contact Marty Cunningham, Manager Research and Information marty.cunningham@dca.wa.gov.au Telephone +61 8 9224 7370 Freecall country WA 1800 199 090.
Upon arrival in Perth over twenty years ago, I was invited to be the ‘musician’ on a ‘community arts’ project where we explored the concept of the ‘angry sports parent’. Not only was I insecure as to my own musical abilities, and had no idea what a ‘community artist’ was supposed to do, but I was joining a team of lofty peers: Ingle Knight as the writer, Jean Tally as contemporary dance leader and Reg Bolton, circus skills and character extraordinaire. The project was a wonderful success, I learnt a lot about people, myself, my co-workers, and was duly anointed as a ‘community artist’.

I believe my path in the ensuing years to be similar to many other community arts workers. I worked in my own professional capacity as a musician and instrument maker, whilst engaging with community projects. It was a perfect blend for me; time to be creative, explore my art, and time working with people on projects that, more often than not, had important ‘issues’ underpinning them. Today I continue with my passion for making and playing music, whilst exploring projects focussed on people, issues, and the practice of community cultural development.

Throughout the years, and numerous conversations spanning states and countries, I have come to realise that our ‘sector’ is undernourished, largely unrecognised and with no discernable professional profile.
The Development Project

In 2008 I decided to find a way to research a concept that had entered into many conversations over a long period of time. I applied for, and was successful in gaining a professional development grant from CANWA, focusing on exploring ways for nurturing and nourishing the community arts sector in Western Australia and Australia.

This idea focussed on producing a gathering, to provide a unique and en masse professional development opportunity for all Australian CCD practitioners. The professional development grant would allow for a space of time to immerse myself in a process of research, listening, networking, garnering and collating perspectives, creative ideas and critical thinking.

As the links and conversations started to flow, I quickly realised that any event would require further research, and involvement of a large group of people. However, I was able to comprehensively gauge that there is extensive national and international interest and support for an International Community Arts Gathering to be produced in Australia. The breadth of recognition that such a Gathering is long overdue has been overwhelming and inspiring.

Eventually I had to ‘put a lid’ on my research and acquit the grant, as my budgeted three weeks swelled to seven, and work and travel commitments demanded a shift in focus. Yet I have continued to listen and engage in a myriad of fascinating feedback from CCD people all over the world. The concept seems to have hit a positive nerve!

International Community Arts Gathering-an update

The Gathering (Scottish word meaning ‘the coming together of clans’) has been hatched. It will bring together the local, state, national and international community arts sector, to share, explore and extend existing knowledge and practice.

We are presently in the development phase. Having formed our Board, we’re looking for partners and funding support, focussed on a Regional Gathering in Denmark 2011. This event will be a ‘mini’ gathering focussed on our own regional and Western Australian practitioners, and a guiding model towards an inaugural international community arts event, The Gathering 2013.

We value all input from practising artists and administrators, so that we produce the best project and outcomes for the development of our arts workers and the sector generally.

Goals

• Forge new perspectives with local, remote and regional arts workers.
• Building the capacity of local, regional and remote arts workers.
• Create significant networking opportunities.
• Bring together eminent, experienced, emerging, youth, local and Aboriginal community cultural development practitioners to create the ‘framework’ for The Gathering 2013.

Peter Keelan is a musician, Director of the Denmark Festival of Voice, manager of the Narasirato Pan Pipers (Solomon Islands), administrator for Cecile Williams exhibition with the 2010 Perth International Arts Festival, Executive Officer of Pan People Projects Inc. and has just launched his first film documentary.

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INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ARTS GATHERING
Peter Keelan

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Near a small backwater of the Serpentine River in Mandurah, not far from the lofty nest of an osprey, is the Winjan Community Centre. The centre is a learning and cultural focal point for the Noongar community. Its location close to the river and osprey nest provides the centre with a tangible link to the Binjareb heritage of the region and the naming of the city.

The osprey, a mighty fish eating raptor, can be glimpsed now and then gliding over Mandurah or perched on the look-out branches of dead trees on the estuary foreshore. The osprey is, according to the old ways, the guardian of the estuary. In fact, its superior aerial skills and aloofness would lead you to think that it still looks after the Peel Harvey Estuary today.

Close to the centre is the site where a traditional fish mungah (trap) was used to catch mullet downstream on their way from their spawning grounds. For many years before settlement, a gathering of the clans took place near the trap for an annual fish festival that drew people from far and wide to attend. Trading and negotiations punctuated the festivities and gave rise to the name Mandurah which is derived from the Binjareb word for meeting, ‘mandjar’. According to Daisy Bates, the first name for the city was in fact ‘Mandjoogoordap’ which translates to ‘meeting place of the heart’.

These stories give a glimpse of the rich Indigenous heritage of the area which is unfamiliar to the wider community. Mandurah’s Binjareb history is studied by the Challenger TAFE Aboriginal Cultural Tourism students attending the Winjan Community Centre. The centre, named after a famed leader of the Binjareb clan, is a hub of activity with school groups visiting throughout the year to experience cultural activities hosted by the students. The topics include bush tucker and medicine, environmental studies, traditional tools, mythology and walks through the bush garden.

Opposite Page: Participants at Stretch 2009, photos by City of Mandurah Staff
Every year the Winjan students and their families participate in Mandurah’s annual arts and cultural festival ‘Stretch’-showcasing their centre and local Noongar traditions. Using art projects, tours and hands-on workshops they engage the festival audience through cultural activities to increase the broader understanding of our shared heritage.

In 2008, a Catalyst community arts grant was used to support the Kattidj (meaning ‘to reflect’) celebrations presented by the Winjan crew. Two local artists, Carol Nicolson and ‘Tracks’ Taylor, were engaged to pass on skills in mosaics and screen-printing resulting in a body of work being shown at the festival and at the centre.

On a walk through the bush trail at the Winjan centre, school groups are introduced to a particular aspect of Noongar culture—the six seasons. The European tradition of plotting the yearly cycle through only four seasons does not capture the range of environmental changes that occur over 12 months in Western Australia. To better explain the characteristics of the six distinctive seasons, the students created a number of designs that interpreted the weather and lifecycle patterns associated with each season. These were subsequently used for mosaic installations along the garden trail. Located at convenient stopping points, the mosaics provide triggers for discussion on how life in earlier times was planned around the weather and availability of food. Discussions on care for country and conservation are also explored. The students assisted Carol with the design, cutting and installation of tiles and handmade ceramic components. The mosaics are now integral to the cultural experience to be had at Winjan.
Screen printing workshops facilitated by Tracks, developed skills that were used to create a temporary work for an installation over the Stretch festival weekend. Metres of fabric were screenprinted to represent the Serpentine River and were threaded in and around a representation of the traditional fish trap. A sand ‘mandalla’ that snaked along the picnic lawns of the eastern foreshore complemented this work. Putting this installation in place and keeping it maintained over the weekend was an opportunity for the artists to talk with the festival visitors and to provide information behind the stories and the making of the work. It gave the audience the chance to see artists at work and to ask questions in an informal environment.

The art installation and community engagement complemented a weekend of activities delivered by the students in Mandjar Square over the Stretch festival. At the Winjan marquee, festival-goers learned how to make tarp knives and play didgeridoo. Bush Tucker and medicine displays broadened the understanding of familiar plants. Stories about the old beliefs and practices, including the fish mungah and its associated festival were told. Such public interaction builds bridges between cultures, increases confidence and encourages social interaction.

During the preparations leading up to the festival John Kelly and Philip Meares developed a traditional dance based on the osprey to add to their repertoire. When introducing the dance, they were able to explain the guardian role of the osprey and to remind the community to care for their estuary and its associated waterways.

This project demonstrates the benefits of cultural exchange. It helped deepen the community’s understanding and regard for early history whilst building respect and empathy. It contributed to ‘pride of place’ and built confidence and self-esteem in the story tellers. This fund’s support of holistic community development in WA is critical during these times of our state’s rapid growth.

The City of Mandurah thanks Community Arts Network WA, the Stretch team and the Winjan crew for their support, energy and good heart in making this great project come to fruition.
The Wildstyle Store creates artworks by borrowing from the formats and language of buying and selling to be found in online platforms like eBay, and in the everyday shops, supermarkets and mega-centers that pepper our lived environment. Except that in The Wildstyle Store, creative exchange is the only currency; ideas, visual art, stories, dance, music, photos, personal observations and statements, critique and more are the dollars and cents of a local economy of inquiry, play and making.

Why e and traditional commerce? The Wildstyle Store responds to the importance of shopping centers and malls as hang out spaces and to the like-it-or-not reality that the act of material consumption is a big part of our way of engaging with culture. It’s also a format that has very strong relationships, expectations and structures for shopkeepers (artists) to interact with shoppers (audience). Marketplaces for exchange are a part of our environment and our history, and the cultural meanings they have held for societies both precede and far exceed the concept that they only represent the exchange of wealth and material consumables. The Wildstyle Store subtly plays with cultural literacy, readings of exchange and ideas of what’s valuable, while being a versatile and accessible ‘in’ for young people new to collaborative artmaking.

In the transitional months between winter and spring 2009, the first exploration of The Wildstyle Store took place with young people in the City of Swan. The project was produced by Masters Of Nothing, a new collaborative and community practice orientated arm of hybrid arts company Hydra Poesis, in association with project partner DADAA (Disability in the Arts | Disadvantage in the Arts) who provided vital support and assistance in the project having a no-limits accessible process for local young people. Dance artist Shannon Riggs and I were the lead artists on the project and the trajectory was generated as a result of work we had undertaken in the City of Swan across a range of projects with different organisations.
Above
Screenshots from: Ballaz, Jelly, Delinquents, Danger, Darkness and Latrelle at The Wildstyle Store, photos courtesy of Sam Fox.
Shannon was lead artist on DADAAs Stepping Forward project and I had been the creative mentor to that process. Stepping Forward is a project that aims to increase engagement for groups of young people with and without disabilities in the use of creative resources and spaces in their local areas. Both this project and the City of Swan’s Hyper Festival placed great value on space activation and in particular had a practice of working with Midland Gate Shopping Centre in recognition of its placement in the lives of young people in the area. The concept of The Wildstyle Store responded to these initiatives and was a vehicle for us to bring threads of work from a number of different projects together in a shared process and presentation outcome that, through it’s video web platform and versatility, will now continue to grow and expand.

The process of producing this project was through a reflective evolution of ideas of what had worked across the informing projects, what was needed, and talking this out through pre-existing relationships with organisations, groups and stakeholders. The main desire was to create a project that could facilitate different groups of young people we had links with to start presenting in a shared project. We could build the foundations that could later become direct cross-pollination between groups where connections occurred.

We worked closely with Liz Randolph, DADAAs youth arts officer, who facilitated the support of Midland Gate Shopping Centre to come on board as a presenting partner and was our connection to DADAAs network in Swan.

Through existing relationships, we arranged to work with groups at Ballajura Community College, Governor Stirling SHS in Midland, with dancers from Stepping Forward and open workshops in the September school holidays. Working within schools was in recognition of the key role they play for young people in these communities. Both high schools allowed solid groups of students to work with us creatively, experimentally and outside of the confines of regular school practice but utilising the time, space and resources school represents. These schools placed a high value on what we were offering their students and took seriously supporting in-depth engagement.

The project resulted in an installation at Midland Gate Shopping Centre featuring 11 video works in the style of a materialised virtual store that were projected life-size into the entrance to the cinema, and an online platform featuring the video works created for the project that will grow in content over the next twelve months as discrete independent projects feed work in.

The concept ‘stores’ we uncovered with the young artists ranged from works about acting out and running amok, getting dangerous, original street culture, being African-Australian, to surreal explorations of aesthetics, kitsch and playful fun-ness. The process involved bringing in graffiti and sound artists in response to the desires of the participants in addition to what Shannon and I had to offer, and that was a flexibility we had built into how the project might play out in both timelines and budgets.

The project necessitated a dedicated website build that was designed to be a long-term investment featuring some elements we are still yet to fully play with: a dedicated profile editor and embedded process webforms, along with the core video platform at the heart of the site.

The longevity and the potential for new links between young artists are the most exciting elements of this project, with much still to come.

www.wildstylestore.com.au
www.hydrapoesis.net
CONNECTING TO PLACE, THE WONDERS OF ART IN PUBLIC PLACES ...
Every time I go back ‘home’ I see different things, new urban marks and images that seem to emerge from nowhere. There have been long periods between my visits, sometimes many years. Despite these prolonged absences, every time I go back I get a distinctive sense that there is an essence embedded in the place I was born. Is it the perennial mountains, the marvellous Andes that cradled my infancy, that make that place so familiar? Or is it the sense that I recognise myself in so many other people while I walk the streets of Santiago? Whatever the case, no matter how long it is, I always feel a deep sense of belonging there.

My last trip to Santiago was September 2009 when I spent only two weeks there. Such a short time, and yet I experienced such richness. I went for family reasons and a deep desire to find another point of connection to my heritage. I was looking for another thread to connect me back to my ancestry.

It is harder and harder to find those points of connection as members of my family pass on. Every time I go, there are more graves to visit. It is then that I turned to other clues to explore my cultural identity.

Some clues in the public realm are a powerful reminder of the history of the place. Cultural symbols, those accepted by all and created by some. All of them seek to mark the public space, to reclaim the right to be there, symbols to be seen and almost to be heard.

This is the beauty of urban, community art and cultural expression that happens in public places. It is the expression of everyday people, whose ideas are stamped on walls, performed in the public realm, and recreated over time.

Most often than not is more than the expression of a single talented individual, but of many who create together, who give a piece of their humanity to others who watch, interact with the work or stumble upon it.

I captured these tiny moments, big reminders of my hybrid identity.

Poetry on a wooden fence celebrates one of the most wonderful Chilean poets of all time-Pablo Neruda. Murals, a colourful expression of the Chilean people, a style of public works, which became emblematic whilst the military regime was in power. Some of these amazing colourful and beautiful murals would appear overnight on huge concrete walls. They represented symbols of life, peace and search for freedom.

Our national Chilean dance represented by an allegory to the rooster and then hen in a dance of love and rejection. Many of these art works are a wonderful ‘disruption’ of the ordinary, colourful reminders of the spirit of the people in a city full of concrete.
ART IS ALIVE IN NORTHCLIFFE
FIONA SINCLAIR

Art is all about growth – for the artist in the act of creation, for the communities engaging in this process and for those of us attempting to ride the wild horse of managing the spectacle.

The most recent project I coordinated—Art is Alive in Northcliffe—was no exception, with growth the commissioning theme for four new sculptures, and growth opportunities for the project artists and management team.

No matter how well prepared you think you are before the project begins, there are always going to be challenges ahead. You can choose to ignore these, resist them or embrace the ‘surrender’ option. I’m into waving the white flag. It’s not weakness, but an openness that allows learning, and the seeding of future ideas. It can mean the difference between the facilitation of the project being a constant source of conflict or an act in itself of creative journeying.

I work within a team of similarly experienced and passionate volunteers—the Southern Forest Arts committee. Through the establishment of Understory (formerly called the Southern Forest Sculpture Walk) we have engaged over 50 artists, writers and musicians from across the state, over east and overseas during the past five years. Not to mention hundreds of residents from our local and regional community.

Most of the resulting artworks and art processes have been resoundingly successful (across many levels), with the occasional ‘spanner in the works’ to spice things up a bit. Our most valuable lessons have usually been learnt the hard way. Sometimes, we need to learn them more than once, before they finally seem to register!

When we secured funding in 2008 from the Catalyst community arts fund and the Regional Arts Fund to commission a new series of sculptures for our ‘Art in Nature’ trail, we knew from experience to expect the unexpected.

In the pre-planning stage (also known as ‘writing the funding applications’) we tried to minimise our vulnerability to setback. The first hurdle came earlier than hoped, when we were unsuccessful with our Regional Arts Fund submission. We used this to clarify our brief and change some of the pre-selected artists. Six months later we found ourselves on the ‘right’ side of the successful applicants list.

When it comes to inviting artists into your community, particularly if this involves hosting an interstate, or overseas artist, there are many factors that can cause project derailment. The earlier you can identify these obstacles the better.

Honest reflection on your personal skills, your organisation’s capabilities and your community’s resources means sometimes it’s wiser to not to proceed with a project at all, rather than gloss over your ‘weaknesses’ and tell possible funding partners, artists and participants that you can give more than you are really able.
A good contract is integral to avoiding future resentments. We refine ours each time we commission new work, so that the document is ‘alive’ and relevant, reflecting the changing needs of our community.

We separate an artist’s role in a commissioning project into two discreet parts embedded in the contract. Firstly, they are paid to undertake a short ‘Proposal Development Residency’ where they explore the area, meet people and develop ideas for a sculpture, poem, etc. These are transmuted into three formal concept proposals presented to us for final consideration. They are paid for this stage, regardless of the outcome of our decision. If we decide to accept one of the concepts we then progress to formal commissioning of the work.

This arrangement protects both the artist and the project managers. The artist is renumerated for their efforts of research and design, with no out of pocket expenses for travel and accommodation. The right of the artist to interpret the commissioning brief according to their own personal vision is also respected, as they aren’t expected to compromise their values in order to be paid. It also gives ‘protection’ to the organisers from feeling obligated to making financial investments in a tangible outcome they may not really want.

This process was tested during our ‘Art is Alive’ project where one of the four artists presented a series of final concepts that the committee did not wholly warm to. A stalemate could have ensued. Thankfully, our contract provided a solid base for resolving the problem and the artist was professional enough to know that our opinion of her and her overall body of work was not being ‘rejected’, just the three concepts she had presented on that particular occasion. We also had a good communication link with our funding bodies so that we could keep them informed of the situation and ask for their approval to seek a new artist.

It was a difficult fortnight, much of it spent on the phone. Eventually we found an artist who was a ‘better fit’ for that particular project, whose resulting proposals gave us that immediate feeling that we’d ‘hit the jackpot’ second time around.

It is not easy to follow your ‘intuition’ sometimes, when (perhaps against logic) it seems to tell you that continuing with a particular artist or idea is just not working. This is especially hard if you’ve already invested a significant sum of money and effort in the first stage of the process. This is where experience and belief in your own vision are important.

Of course, none of this applies to artists who’ve travelled a long way to take up residency, where payment of twice the travel fees is prohibitive. Then you don’t have the luxury of separating a contract into components. It’s very much an exercise in diplomacy for the organisers and artist alike.

German artist, Corenlia Konrads, was the international artist invited onto ‘Art is Alive’. She has spent the past decade traveling the world creating site-specific commissions and working within communities. Even though no stranger to the challenges of making the most of all situations, she found herself surprised by the constraints of local materials she chose to work with and had to ‘let go’ her favoured concept proposal when the committee chose to commission her second favourite.

As a committee, we had to learn about the extra demands placed upon us in hosting an international artist where we were responsible for providing everything–somewhere to stay, somewhere to work, materials, tools, helping hands, transport–the lot.
Our other main challenge in the project was the commissioning theme itself: sculptures that grow. We came to realise that the brief was too tight. It looked great on paper (the funding application) … but it just didn’t seem to manifest physically as we had envisaged.

In art projects, I think that a change of direction mid-course is not just OK … it is often essential. We, and consequently our funding partners, had to be flexible enough to allow the artists the creative space to interpret the brief in ways we had not expected.

Managing arts project is a constant balancing act of keeping a project within your control and yet allowing it enough room to breathe, enough freedom to grow and meet its fullest potential. Whilst a firm hold on the reins is prudent, holding back the wild horse of creativity too tightly means the journey will never venture into unexpected places—and I find that these are often the most wondrous.

Art is Alive artists: Cornelia Konrads (Germany), Tania Spencer (Lake Grace), Graham Hay (Perth), Peter Hill (Northcliffe).
THE GARDEN PROJECT

Clockwise from left: Shep's toy dog, Arif Satar, tissue paper cores, miniature garden, photos courtesy of Arif and Audrey Fernandes-Satar.
Exhibition at the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery

Audrey and Arif had been particularly interested in looking at the spaces we occupy, our sense of belonging and what we have brought with us in an Australian context. After an invitation from the Faculty of Arts of the Maharaja Sayajirao (MS) University in Vadodora, India, the enquiry has moved to an international audience.

The garden in this project has become an important space where cultural iconography is visually materialised. The notion of the garden is explored—not in a literal sense, but in an expansive metaphysical way—accessing the garden to express the personal rather than the botanical.

In June 2008, The Garden Project exhibited at the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle, and in August at the MS University Gallery in Vadodora, India. Community members from Fremantle to Delhi participated in the research, development, creation and presentation of the garden artworks.

The project evolved by considering the residential garden landscapes of community members in Fremantle and Section C of Defence Colony in Delhi, India—a residential area in Delhi. Workshops were run in their studio and in people’s gardens. Each community member produced a ‘herbaria’ book—a journal of sorts, documenting the participant’s engagement with their garden, the plants they have planted, the objects that they leave in the garden such as ornaments, old shoes, watering cans. These objects end up ‘inhabiting’ the garden and almost look like they have ‘grown’ roots beside other plantings.

Plantings take on a personal meaning in most gardens—people have named them beyond the botanical or common names—they have gained personality, a cultural trait and a history. The plantings in some gardens embodied the names of ‘givers’.

A digital diary was produced during the project, portraying the ‘voices’ of people and the ‘living entities’ that inhabit these gardens. From this digital diary a stop motion animation artwork was produced, that detailed the people involved, their choice of garden, the seeds they’ve planted, what they inherited and what’s new in the garden.

The project is an ongoing engagement by the artists within the theme of landscape and culture. Audrey and Arif are working on developing the project further with an exhibition at the Kew Gardens in London in the near future.

THE GARDEN PROJECT
Audrey Fernandes-Satar and Arif Satar

This Page
From left: Community members, exhibition and Baroda participants, photos courtesy of Arif and Audrey Fernandes-Satar.
The September 2008 round of Catalyst revealed two projects with a particular emphasis on encouraging young people in the community to embrace the literary world. All Saints College’s Lit Fest '09-Storylines and Arts Margaret River's behind the label saw the value in encouraging young people to read and write, for both their literacy, as an artistic expression and simply pure enjoyment.

Each March, All Saints College runs a three-day festival of young adult and children’s literature at their Bull Creek campus. Lit Fest–Storylines encourages young people from schools across the state and interested community members to get excited about literacy by presenting an interesting and fun program of workshops and ‘Meet the Author’ sessions for school children from Kindergarten to High School. The program features local and interstate artists including authors, illustrators, stage and screenwriters, puppeteers and Indigenous storytellers.

The workshops are hands-on sessions for small groups to work with an author or writer who has produced their own work. These authors and writers discuss their work, inspiration and processes and the young people then do the same. Matt Giles, (background in creative writing and journalism) worked with some of the older students on acting on the impulse to write, emphasising the importance of editing and writing something down, even if not what you thought it would be.
Authors Elaine Forrestal and Liliana Stafford and Education Officer Jennie Doust from The Fremantle Children's Literature Centre presented workshops on writing and drawing and presentations on featured works. Elaine and Liliana workshoped with the students on writing, editing and drawing covering themes such as multiculturalism, conservation, animals and family. Jennie presented original manuscripts and illustrated artwork from works such as Baby Broomsticks written by Margaret Wild and illustrated by David Legge, and The Red Tree, written and illustrated by Shaun Tan.

On Thursday, 14 May 2009, local children had the chance to meet bestselling Australian author, Kirsty Murray, at the Margaret River Library. Kirsty has won and been shortlisted for a number of awards including the WA Premier's Book Award and the WA Young Readers’ Book Award. Her works include the Children of the Wind series and works of non-fiction.

Both these projects had a united aim of promoting literacy and developing the skills of reading and writing for young people in the community. Both All Saints College and Arts Margaret River assisted young people in developing their own creativity and in some may have awakened a love of reading and writing. These young people have been introduced to future career possibilities, and the ability to develop better communication skills and discover more about the world they live in through literature.
WEST ARTHUR EXPRESSION 09

PHOTOGRAPHY FEVER
A group of committee members from the West Arthur Telecentre had a vision to increase cultural activities within our shire. After a number of informal discussions it was decided to do something ‘arty’ that was accessible to a wide-ranging audience within the Shire. The idea of WAX 09 was born—the vision was to create a biannual cultural event that gave locals an opportunity to be involved in a different artform.

WAX 09—Photography Fever was a series of events that included photography workshops, a week in West Arthur (photographing the community over a period of a week), a community BBQ at our local Lake Towerrinning and a photographic competition and exhibition of the work undertaken by the local community. The series of events, held in February and March 2009 generated a real buzz about town.

The workshops were held on 20 and 21 February 2009 and were facilitated by professional photographer with the West Australian, Astrid Volzke. The intention of the workshop was to examine ideas behind professional photography and the art of taking ‘Picture Stories’. It included examination and discussion of a photography display comprising of examples of Astrid’s work. Over a period of two days, the workshop was repeated three times enabling the community, including school students, to experience her expertise. Participants had an opportunity to practice some of the techniques discussed later in the workshop.

Following the workshop, the local community was asked to capture by camera what they valued most about living in West Arthur during one week (A week in West Arthur) from 20-28 February. Categories were provided for people to photograph including historical sites, local identities, Lake Towerrinning, at work or play, environment, nature at work, and invention and ingenuity. The students had separate categories to photograph. A Week in West Arthur ended with a community barbeque at Lake Towerrinning, a natural asset of the community with very strong community links.

The culmination of the West Arthur eXpression (WAX 09) programme was a photography exhibition held in the shed at Rarebits on Burrowes on 25 March. The shed was transformed with drapes of materials and some eclectic decorations, into the perfect venue for a photography exhibition with a rural theme.

Over 100 people attended the exhibition to view the 98 entries into the competition. In addition to the photographs on display, the students had additional photos screening on a digital photo screen installed for the evening. Three professional photographers judged the entries and feedback was provided to each participant. There was plenty of discussion generated about the photos and everyone was keen to see the judges’ comments.

There was a very ready and enthusiastic response to the call to ‘reflect your view of the community’ in the numerous photographs taken during the week. Broadly speaking, the photographs demonstrated each person’s identification with particular sites in the district, and how they chose to reflect scenes of local industry.

Organisers were very happy with the project and many participants have been seen wielding their cameras at various other events in the local community. It is hoped that the WAX project will become a biannual event and organisers have already begun to think about possible themes for WAX ’11.

WAX ‘09—PHOTOGRAPHY FEVER
West Arthur Telecentre

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Theatre Kimberley Inc. is committed to community development through artistic expression. Act Belong Commit Worn Art is one of the projects that Theatre Kimberley carries out each year. Each year builds on the strengths of the years gone before it, with 2008 being the twelfth production. It includes the participation of approximately 200 volunteers who work as dancers, models, back stage help and front of house. Most of our volunteers can’t wait to do it all again the following year. The volunteers are supported by a very competent group of professional arts workers who help by collaborating on the design of the show.

It is an extremely successful community based professional theatre that marries the visual and performing arts genre in an amazing display of wearable art, physical and visual theatre, and great music. It uses a community cultural development model to create opportunities for people living in the Kimberley to participate in community life by exploring their creativity, developing artworks and performances for the final show that is often referred to as spellbinding and beautiful. It provides the locals with an opportunity to celebrate the amazing creative community they’re a part of, and a vibrant, creative outlet for emerging and established artists. 2008 was an incredible example of just how spellbinding and beautiful it could be.
The project included training in the production of traditional Italian comedy, the use of a variety of masks and characters used in commedia dell’arte (Italian for comedy of craft) and new dance forms that incorporated stilts, trapeze and other aerials, and modelling. Karratha Senior High School submitted a number of costumes into the event and the participating artists travelled to Broome on a bus with their teacher to see their costumes in the show. We had costumes submitted from as far away as Cairns, Perth and Exmouth. Broome TAFE, St Mary’s College and Broome Senior High School developed costumes for the project as part of their curriculum, and the DADAA supported Jalaris Kids Future Club of Derby created large fluorescent puppets. A majority of participants in Act Belong Commit Worn Art are under the age of 25.

While Act Belong Commit Worn Art is an award exhibition, all awards are provided by local businesses, with the focus on the creative development of the concept, skills sharing and performance development. During the development of the project we rely on consultation with participants—visual artists, dancers and models—to ensure that we all stay on the right track and create something that everyone is happy with.

This year’s production of Act Belong Commit Worn Art was a very memorable event. People reported back how there were moments when they had tears in their eyes because of the sheer beauty of it all! The new stage configurations demanded some challenging choreographic moments but the professionalism of the artists working on the project ensured that the results were the best ever.
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