

“tracking the blue sheep”

a regional touring exhibition exploring cultural diversity

Access Arts Inc

1997



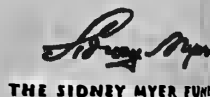
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Access Arts is a non-profit professional
Community Arts Organisation which supports people
experiencing disability or disadvantage to pursue their
ambitions in the Arts.

thanks to



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Concluding Report

Project background

The Executive Management Committee of Access Arts sought to develop more regional involvement in the Access Arts program for 1997 to meet the needs of the 100's of regional requests we receive each year for support and workshops. The regional program was designed to link communities and reduce isolation by using the Arts as a communication tool.

Access Arts has established a state wide network of contacts with Arts organisations and Disability Support Networks. These are vital in accessing support for the development of Arts programs for people experiencing disabilities. Because the project works from a Community Cultural Development and Artistic perspective, the impact on the community is measured in terms of civic pride, strengthening the community identity, creating inclusive health communities and providing better access for people experiencing disabilities to cultural services in the wider community. Access to labour markets was also placed on the agenda of the Project, creating increased awareness that peoples with disabilities need to work and be engaged in meaningful employment.

Access Arts last toured regional Queensland sites in 1993. Our project attracted a wide range of participants, including people experiencing disabilities, people disadvantaged by social conditions, Special Education teachers, Community Arts Officers, Artists and Community Welfare workers. A change in funding arrangements from the Department of Education resulted in Access Arts discontinuing the regional program. However, the need for us to reestablish our support in regional centres still exists. We receive a significant number of enquires from regional towns and cities for information, support, program development and interest in the development of projects utilising the built environment, galleries and public spaces.

The Project was established to support artists already working in regional locations, introduce new participants to creative programs, increase access to creative ideas and techniques to artists experiencing disabilities and increase public awareness of the contributions that people experiencing disabilities can make to the cultural lives of their communities. It was believed that during the course of the Project new skills and confidences would be developed by all participants. It was envisaged that the DADAA Network would be strengthened and revitalised to continue the role of supporting the future development of new initiatives.

Scotia Monkivitch, Access Arts Project Manager, coordinated and presented the Project. A local steering committee was developed within the centres visited to assist with the coordination of workshops, meetings and the hanging of the Exhibition. The people involved in these steering committees were representatives of the disability community - core workshop participants, representatives from local council, local artists, local gallery spaces and disability organisation professionals.

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Project Aims

- To enable core participants to contribute their ideas and actions through Community Arts Projects.
- To increase awareness of the cultural diversity of people experiencing disabilities.
- To demonstrate the Artistic and Cultural contributions that people experiencing disabilities can make to the community.
- To show members work in professional and broad reaching environments.
- To facilitate advocacy for people experiencing disabilities at council and community level.
- To offer artists experiencing disabilities increased exposure and professional development opportunities.
- To establish a regional team of skilled community-based artists who will work with community groups and individuals, involving people experiencing disabilities and disadvantage in the creation of community-based Arts projects in their local area.
- To invite people experiencing disabilities (core participants) to be involved in the project. This will be done through the DADAA (Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts, Australia)Qld Network, the media, approaching government and non-government agencies and inviting community groups to be involved with the project.
- To plan community-based arts projects with and alongside the core participants and the general community.
- To strengthen the relationship between disability services and the broader community.
- To facilitate the core participants to increase their personal circle of friends.
- To increase the health and wellbeing of people experiencing disabilities and disadvantage.
- To increase the employment prospects in the Arts for people experiencing disability and disadvantage.

Project Description

The tour was organised around three main activities.

Visual Arts Exhibition

"Tracking the blue sheep" touring exhibition was exhibited in each location visited to raise the profile of local artists experiencing disabilities. This was to elevate the contribution of people experiencing disabilities into wider community acceptance and inclusion. The exhibition was centred around a touring element of eight Access Arts members' works. This core exhibition was hung at each of the regional centres, acting as an encouragement and stimulus for local artists.

Workshops

Workshops were run in each centre focusing on the development of drama and movement skills. These workshops were open to all interested persons.

Meetings

Meetings targeting Councils, Special Schools, Arts Organisations and individuals in order to plan with and advocate for the inclusion of people experiencing disability and disadvantage in community cultural activities. The task of researching and producing a cultural map of regional resources was begun. This involved meeting community groups, individual artists and local council staff to assess what facilities and resources (human and physical) are available to be utilised by projects and ongoing development. Meetings with individual artists were formed to establish career planning options and appropriate contacts for further artistic development.

The project was designed to develop its own support structure and resources so that it could be self sustaining and continue in the visited centres into the future

"Tracking the blue sheep" took its name in response to the vast attention that medical developments in cloning the sheep Dolly received and the resulting debates about the potential for the cloning of humans. We felt that we needed to draw attention to the fact that interest, creativity and the development of society is achieved through its diversity rather than its "sameness".

Outcomes

Ipswich: 1 - 16 April

Our tour was successfully launched by the Mayor of Ipswich, Councillor John Nugent, in the City Council's Community Gallery. Having the Exhibition housed here ensured that a wide audience of people viewed the work as they attended other council activities.

The workshops were well attended with a concluding performance "tya" (aboriginal word for earth) taking place in the grounds of Claremont House. The first major house built in the Ipswich region. This performance was presented in conjunction with the Ipswich Heritage Festival.

As a result of community meetings a Community Arts Forum was formed and has continued to work towards the development of a Community Project in Ipswich. We have applied to the Australia Council for monies through their Community Cultural Development Fund - Development Grant. This grant is to assist in the cost of employing a Coordinator and Trainee to devise and develop a Community Environmental Art and Garden Project. This project will link in with the Global Arts Link, Ipswich which is an exciting project redefining the concept of gallery use and Cultural development within the Ipswich community. It is a great opportunity for the disability sector to become involved in the implementation of what is recognised as a cutting edge development of National and International significance.

Toowoomba: 17 - 29 April

A disused shop in the centre of town was the site for the Exhibition in Toowoomba. This was a great venue with many passing shoppers dropping in to view the work. We had an overwhelming response from local Toowoomba artists which ensured a terrific display of diverse works. Councillor Bruce Hinchcliffe launched the Exhibition and supported our efforts strongly - even parading up and down the main street with several blue lambs to announce the launch of the Exhibition.

Once again meetings brought many individuals and organisations together with the decision to establish an ongoing Community Arts Forum for support and networking. An Australia Council Community Cultural Development Fund - Development grant has been applied for, towards the cost of employing a Coordinator and trainee to devise and develop a Community Environmental Art and Garden Project, linking in with the Toowoomba Council and associated Disability organisations. This project is to focus on a new creek development close to the centre of town.

Warwick: 30 April - 11 May

Warwick was our next stop and once again we used an empty shop to hang the Exhibition. The

space was situated on the main road into town, therefore ensuring a steady flow of interested visitors. The workshops were well attended and attracted many interested people who were keen for Access Arts to establish further workshops in the surrounding area.

I was able to assist a local emerging artsworke~~r~~ complete an RADF application, aiming to develop a performance project with local unemployed youth. If successful this project will ensure ongoing support for many people experiencing disability in Warwick as well as one of the largest groups experiencing disadvantage in that region - unemployed school leavers. Giving them a chance to address their issues to the general community and to address potential resolutions through a group devised performance

Stanthorpe: 12 - 26 May

The two weeks in Stanthorpe were spent between establishing contacts with disability organisations and individual artists and running workshops through the INTERARTS 97 Festival. The concept of a film project to be developed in 1998 was strongly supported. This project will link Access Arts, the Endeavour Foundation, the Granite Belt Disability Advocacy Group, local schools and theatre groups.

Our Exhibition was hung in the Stanthorpe Civic Centre, the hub of the INTERARTS 97 Festival activities. This ensured we had many interested viewers over the two-week period.

Rockhampton: 20 - 29 July

Rockhampton was the beginning point for the second leg of our tour program. We were fortunate to have Elizabeth Navratil join the tour for this stage as a collaborator for our workshops. The Exhibition was launched in the Walter Reid Arts Centre by Councillor Tony Hanson, with much interest aroused over the week that it was hung. Two local artists - Tim Slater and Symon Ward, were included within the Exhibition, the first time either had exhibited their work.

Several community meetings were held to discuss the possibility of collaboration on a community project. Information and proposal ideas were left to be brewed over.

A particularly good opportunity arose to assist Meredith McLeod in her attempts to develop a work book publication for artists working with artists with high support needs. We managed to link her up with the Queensland University of Technology where she may be able to complete a Masters using her book as her core research study. This publication will greatly advance the potential for artists with high support needs to have greater access and control over their creative output.

Whilst in Rockhampton we were able to establish a strong contact in Emerald which has great potential for exchange and project development in this region in 1998.

Maryborough: 27 - 30 July

We had organised workshops as the principal activity for our time in Maryborough. Initially our contacts here were minimal but the community quickly rallied around and our workshops were very well attended, with great interest in the possibility of further projects encouraged.

Outreach meetings facilitated contacts in Hervey Bay. There is a large community of people

experiencing disability in this region with limited access to cultural and artistic experiences. We are hoping to develop our contacts towards a project in 1998.

Gympie: 31 July - 1 August

We received strong organised support from the Gympie community. Once again workshops were the focus for our visit. The workshop participants had not had any drama participation in the past and we saw some fantastic work develop over the two days. The Cooloola Shire Network is very interested in ongoing collaboration and a proposed performance project has been put forward as a suggested beginning. Further meetings with the Cooloola Disability network have resulted in an application for an Australia Council Community Cultural Development Fund - Development grant. This grant is to cover the costs of employing a coordinator and trainee to devise and develop a Performance Project. This is a great project with potential for great flow on of arts skills development and presentation.

"Achy Breaky Art" DADAA Western Australia Festival: 22 - 29 September

On Monday the 25 August "tracking the blue sheep" Exhibition set off to Perth to be part of the DADAA (WA) Disability Arts Festival. This continues the link established last year with Elizabeth Navratil and Neal Price participating and presenting work at the "I Gave My Art To DADAA" Festival. Elizabeth once again performed as part of the "Achy Breaky Art" Festival program.

The Exhibition was hung in The Moon Building in Fremantle. The Exhibition was well attended and reportedly was received with great enthusiasm and offered encouragement and inspiration for local artists.

'Shake Hands Share Hearts' Arts Festa, Kitakyushu, Japan: 23 October - 3 November

The Exhibition of works made the big trek to Japan to be part of a Disability Arts Festival in Kitakyushu, a major city on Kyushu Island. "Tracking the blue sheep" was hung as part of a larger display of Japanese works. The Exhibition created much discussion and debate. This particularly revolved around the issue of how artists experiencing disabilities are presented to the arts audience, either labelled as "disabled" or labelled as "artists"? The Exhibition organisers were a little surprised when we requested a change to the large display banner, which had been made for the Exhibition.

The Exhibition was invited to the Festival along with workshops and lectures as a point of encouragement for participating artists and as an initiator of discussion about the development potential of cross cultural projects. A fantastic opportunity for exchange and discussion on the role Australia can play in the development of the Arts and Disability field in the Asia-Pacific region.

"Dare" National Community Arts Conference, Brisbane: 17 - 19 November

"tracking the blue sheep" Exhibition was invited to be part of the "dare" Conference as an example of Community and Cultural Development practice. Delegates from around Australia attended the Conference which ensured wide coverage and discussion about Access Arts' work. The knowledge that the tour has been recognised as an example of a good model of practice in this field supports the aims and aspiration with which we initiated the Project, those which have been supported with strong outcomes in all centres visited by the tour. This opportunity was a

fantastic conclusion to a tour which gave Access Arts and our Artist's huge State, National and International recognition.

Recommendations and Conclusion

"Tracking the blue sheep" brought a great deal of attention to the work of Access Arts and Disability Arts in general. In all towns that we visited we were able to arrange media coverage and had large attendances at the Exhibition. Contacts were established with numerous organisations, council members and individuals.

Each centre visited presented a different environment and community structure, some known in greater depth by Access Arts than others. It was found that in the centres where there were existing organisations who worked with people experiencing disability, and who had accessed Arts projects in the past, organisation of the Exhibition and workshops was much smoother. There were several incidents where communication lines had broken down between the Access Arts office and the associated working parties in the centres. This meant that much of the contacting work had to be completed quickly once the Access Arts team arrived in the town. As many of our contacts had been sourced through telephone conversations and faxes, we had no personal contact established and therefore no inclination of having found a reliable source. This could be avoided by a pre-tour visit to each of the centres to establish personal contact. This resolution would extend the organising time for another tour but would greatly support the smooth running of the Exhibition/workshop tour to follow.

Linking a workshop program with an event - the Exhibition - proved to be a successful arrangement. The public presentation attracted attention to Access Arts visit to the centre and hence brought other people to the workshops who may not have heard about them through other channels. I believe that this format would work equally well if the public event was a performance.

We left most of the centres with a group of people and organisation representatives who had established themselves as an ongoing interest group. This is a strong sign of the effectiveness of spending time based within a centre. Through moving around and meeting with groups and individuals links can be made and connections between these individuals and groups established. The most common thing heard during the tour was that people did not know what was happening with other groups / individuals or that other people working within the Disability Arts field existed within their community. The setting up of an established contact group was therefore an important achievement. With enthusiastic people within these groups an ongoing dispersal of information will ensure development and support for projects within the community.

Access Arts was able to establish strong networks in centres where they had previously little knowledge of individuals and organisations who were part of the communities. The contacts are now able to form a basis upon which Access Arts will continue to support and encourage on going activity throughout Regional Queensland.

“Tracking the blue sheep”

Concluding Budget

Income

Sydney Myer Fund	1,000.00
Gaming Machine Fund	10,586.00
Access Arts	5,645.00
Bus Operations	1,000.00
Total	\$18,231.00

Expenses

Artists Wages	1,640.00*
Project Managers Wages	7,636.00*(\$1,391)
Living Expenses	2,800.00*
Accommodation	2,286.00*
Travel	702.00*
Materials	693.00*
Administration	751.00*
Rent	60.00*
Catering	190.00*
Publicity / Promotion	73.00*
Travelling Crates	1,400.00
Total	\$18,231.00

***Costs covered by grant received from the Gaming Machine Fund**

tracking the blue sheep

a regional tour exploring cultural diversity

Access Arts is a Community Arts Organisation that assists people experiencing disability and disadvantage to pursue their ambitions in the Arts. This exhibition has developed from a tour which aims to strengthen contacts with regional Queensland and to work with individuals, organisations and councils to strengthen and support the role of these artists in their communities.

The experience of the artists in this show, their differences if you like, transcend the too narrow difference debates of race, gender and sexuality we are hearing in our communities today. Their voices are too often drowned out by the chatter of power politics and narrow self interest groups.

The way to create the ideal state according to Saint Thomas Aquinas is to keep the population strong of arm, moderately educated and in perpetual mistrust of each other. We might be forgiven for mistaking Saint Thomas' formula for social control as being very contemporary, given the current level of distrust being generated today in our culture. Aquinas understood that within culture there were differences. The tragedy is that he counselled the exploitation of those differences, rather than value the potential of a multicultural and diverse society.

Tracking the blue sheep takes its name, with some irony intended, from both the current cultural debate and a sheep clone named Dolly, or more precisely the boring potential that all sheep might eventually all become just Dolly. One would think if you listened to current social debate, that there are only two kinds of sheep and that only one might sit on the right hand of God. There is in this debate an underlying cultural Narcissism. Narcissus fell in love with his own reflection. As a consequence his world view was filled with reflections of only Narcissus. Tracking the blue sheep is both an exhibition and a project that attempts to transcend that Narcissistic reductive and ultimately destructive politics of difference with an inclusive diverse cultural model.

We blue sheep understand implicitly that there are many more kinds of sheep, than those who exploit the politics of difference will acknowledge.

Ross Barber

Laurette Lynch



I enjoy putting the colours all together in different ways to create different images.

It amuses me that people can imagine and interpret so much from my paintings.

I feel glad that people have the opportunity to see my work. I use mostly watercolour and acrylics applying paint with brushes, sprays and other medium.

Hello my name is **Angus Douglas**. I was born in Brisbane in 1960. Most of my early life was spent on the move, in different parts of Australia and around the world. I got my first job at 14 working as a farm labourer and delivering papers. Since then I have worked in numerous jobs ranging from the book trade to gardener, kitchen hand, cleaner, shelver and musician.

I have been drawing and painting since an early age and got a diploma in ticket writing. I did my first real design work record covers and posters when working as a musician. That was some of the most satisfying work I have ever done. When the opportunity to learn printing arose I was keen to take it. In my spare time I play guitar.

Irreal; where the fast drug combines with the slowest.
Paint returns splatter
No check.....
..... then balance.....

Macushla Doyle

I love my art.



Success as an artist makes me feel happy and joyful. My work is about friendship, relationship, lovership and familyship. I love my space in my art studio.

Rehana Peters



My paintings are expressing feelings of happiness and sadness, through the use of bright colours, pastels, linocuts and acrylic paint. I try to blend different features and styles in my painting.

Ross Barber

The installation *Thinking making marking territories*



also has an autobiographical context in the sense that it also explores the differences in approach to art making between my daughter and son who work in very traditional art forms, architectural stonemasonry and decorative iron work. And in the approach to my work that I have begun to take due to "my disability" in the making of large and small installation work, with what would appear to be more "insubstantial" media that include sound and light. The coming to terms with the fact that I cannot "make work" in the way I used to has been difficult, but in the end very productive, and the pauses in the breathing piece (sometimes smooth, sometimes laboured) allude to that.

Craig Finn



My thoughts are spent.
My lungs contract.
My heart cries out.
My guts react.
What if my perceptions of the masses are wrong?
And I realise that I am living in despair?

Does this mean that my feelings are beyond redemption?

Well if so, for who's crying should I care?

David Portley

I am a 28 year old painter from Brisbane.



Comment: The simple life family and friends. A quiet time on earth free of nasty surprises.

David Smith

From an early age I have been an optimist. My influences include pictures from books, newspapers, magazines and the works of other artists in addition to my own original ideas.



My ambitions, apart from avoiding hospitals and living life to the fullest, are to produce distinctive works while securing recognition as a full time artist, both in ceramics

and painting.

DARE Conference -: Exhibition Launch .

TRACKING THE BLUE SHEEP - OPENING - 17.11.97

DO YOU RECALL JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO THERE
WAS CONSIDERABLE DISCUSSION SURROUNDING
THE SUCCESSFUL (IF SUCH A TERM IS
APPROPRIATE) CLONING OF SHEEP?

NINE CLONED LAMBS WERE BORN -- EACH AN
IDENTICAL TWIN OF THE PARENT.

NOW THIS HAPPENED IN SCOTLAND SO I SUSPECT
THAT A PECULIAR AND UNHEALTHY ADDICTION
TO HAGGIS MAY HAVE BEEN BEHIND IT ALL -- IF
YOU GET A PARTICULARLY GOOD STUFFED SHEEP
STOMACH THEN I SUPPOSE IT'S REASONABLE, IF
YOU ARE A SCOT, TO TRY TO ENSURE MORE OF
THE SAME.

ANYWAY -- THAT'S WHAT'S BEHIND THE SHEEP BIT
OF THE TITLE OF THIS EXHIBITION 'TRACKING
THE BLUE SHEEP' -- THAT AND THE POLITICS AND
DISCOURSE OF DIFFERENCE.

CAN YOU IMAGINE ANYTHING EASIER THAN
VISUALLY TRACKING A BLUE SHEEP?
THE COLOUR ALONE MAKES FOR INSTANT
IDENTIFICATION.

AND PERHAPS ALSO THE FACT THAT THE OTHER
NORMAL, DIRTY-GREY COLOURED SHEEP TEND
TO AVOID THE BLUE ONE – AVOID OR STARE.
SO DO WE END UP WITH THE BLUE SHEEP NOT
NEEDING TRACKING AT ALL 'CAUSE THERE IT IS –
STANDING ISOLATED IN THE CORNER OF THE
PADDOCK LOOKING QUITE DISTINCT AND EVEN
BEAUTIFUL BUT DEFINITELY SEPARATE FROM
'THEM' OTHERS?

NOW – 'OTHER' IS A TERM THAT GETS USED QUITE
A BIT WITHIN THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY DEBATE.
ALFONSO LINGIS HAS WRITTEN THAT A
SIGNIFICANT INTELLECTUAL, EMOTIONAL,
SOCIAL AND PERSONAL ADVANCE IS MADE WHEN
YOU REALISE THAT YOU YOURSELF ARE THE

'OTHER' OF THE ONE YOU CONSIDER TO BE YOUR
'OTHER'. HE ALSO SUGGESTS THAT THAT MAY BE
YOUR SOLE PURPOSE. A GOOD THOUGHT --
(WHETHER YOU ARE BLUE OR NOT).

THIS EXHIBITION HAS TRAVELLED THROUGH
SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND, IT'S BEEN TO PERTH
AND TO JAPAN -- AND NOW IT'S BACK IN ITS 'HOME
Paddock OF BRISBANE.

THIS IS AN EXHIBITION THAT SHOWS THE SORT
OF QUALITY WORK THAT ACCESS ARTS IS
INVOLVED WITH. QUALITY AND DEPTH OF
CONCEPT; QUALITY AND INCLUSIVENESS OF
CONTENT; QUALITY AND WORTH OF OUTCOME.
ACCESS IS A REMARKABLE ORGANISATION MADE
UP OF REMARKABLE INDIVIDUALS -- CERTAINLY
NOT A CLONE AMONGST THEM.

THE 'DARE' CONFERENCE THAT IS UNDERWAY
NOW IS LOOKING AT COMMUNITY CULTURAL
DEVELOPMENT.

I AM REMINDED OF A NICE LITTLE STORY FROM
THE MIDDLE EAST THAT SUMS UP A PARTICULAR
EXPERIENCE WE HAVE ALL PROBABLY HAD AT
SOME TIME:

ONE DAY A MAN WAS PLOUGHING HIS FIELD.
HE CAME ACROSS A TORTOISE WHO WAS MINDING
ITS OWN BUSINESS AND SLOWLY AND PATIENTLY
PROCEEDING SOMEWHERE THAT WAS IMPORTANT
TO IT AS A TORTOISE.

THE MAN PICKED IT UP AND TIED IT TO HIS BELT.
IT HUNG THERE FOR A WHILE THEN, AS YOU
WOULD EXPECT, IT STARTED TO STRUGGLE.

THE MAN HELD IT UP, LOOKED IT IN THE EYE
AND SAID:

'WHAT'S THE MATTER? DON'T YOU WANT TO
LEARN HOW TO PLOUGH?'

I AM VERY HONoured TO OFFICIALLY OPEN THIS
EXHIBITION.

I CONGRATULATE AND THANK ALL THE ARTISTS,
CARERS AND OTHERS WHO HAVE MADE THE
EXHIBITION POSSIBLE.

AN EXHIBITION THAT MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR US
TO SEE SOME OF THESE MULTI-COLOURED
TRACKS.

THANK YOU.

John Armstrong