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REWIND

**STRATEGIES FOR INTEGRATION
IN THE ARTS**



**February 1992
presented by
ACCESSIBLE ARTS INC.**

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REWIND - Strategies for Integration

A training seminar presented by

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Cumberland College of Health Sciences,
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INTRODUCTION

Accessible Arts Inc. is an organisation which encourages and promotes the development of opportunities for people with disabilities to have access to and participation in all creative artforms. Accessible Arts began, in 1985, as an arts project for people with disabilities at Community Activities Network.

In 1989 Accessible Arts became an independent, non-profit organisation incorporated as an Association. During 1990 Accessible Arts was financially supported by the State and Federal Governments to establish a statewide service for people with disabilities. The change from activities project to a statewide service has been significant. The organisation has compiled a state profile on what art facilities are available to people with disabilities in New South Wales; provides a consultancy service for artists, people with disabilities, disability services and arts organisations; assists the general community to initiate their own art programs and projects through the establishment of regional networks; provides training programs in the area of art and disability; produces publications; and, acts as an advocacy/educational body for the promotion of access and equity in the arts.

The Rewind Seminar was initiated after expressions of interest and concern were directed to Accessible Arts about the need for strategies to effectively involve people with disabilities in arts practice. Great interest in this issue was shown by co-ordinators of arts projects, disability workers, recreation officers, teachers, artists, community artworkers and volunteers. The seminar workshops were designed to address four main areas that cover the involvement of people with disabilities in the arts, as follows:

- * How to initiate, co-ordinate and teach an arts project,
- * Integration,
- * People with special needs, and,
- * Drama as a catalyst.

The workshops were complimented by a morning session of guest speakers, four of whom talked specifically about their involvement in the Accessible Arts 1991 Arts Program. During 1991 Accessible Arts established three regional networks and one metropolitan network to provide infrastructures for local arts projects. The four projects were as diverse in the artforms explored as they were in the variety of people with disabilities who were involved in them. They ranged from a written project in the Shoalhaven area involving people with M.S. to a visual arts project for people with intellectual disabilities in the Riverina, a photographic project for people with psychiatric disabilities initiated in the Central West, and, a radio project catering for people with physical disabilities in metropolitan Sydney. The culmination of these projects, "The Suitcase Show" exhibition, was launched by Peter Ross at the Seymour Centre in Sydney in October 1991. This exhibition continues to tour regional New South Wales as an advocacy tool for access and equity in the arts for people with disabilities.

These projects provided opportunities for participation for people with disabilities in arts activities, however, they also had many other positive outcomes, including:

- variety of choice for the participants through multi-arts workshops
- opportunities for integration in community based activities
- employment and practical experience for artists, disability workers and volunteers

During the morning session Kath Duncan, the Keynote Speaker, talked about her personal experiences and more generally about issues confronting people with disabilities in the arts. The remaining four speakers were invited to talk about their involvement in Accessible Arts' regional projects initiated in 1991. Two of the speakers, Cecelia Rochelli and Kyle Powderly, played key roles as co-ordinators of two of the regional projects, and were able to shed very positive light on the areas of "Drama to Facilitate Creativity for People With Special Needs" and "Community Participation", respectively. David King discussed the "Positives and Negatives" from his perspective as a participant in the Metropolitan Radio Project and Pru Jobling outlined her involvement in the co-ordination of "The Suitcase Show" exhibition.

A one-day training event, such as the Rewind Seminar, cannot address in total the issue of integration in all its' complexity, however, it is hoped that some practical experience, as conveyed by the contributors, will give the participants in this seminar scope for innovation in how they develop strategies and create opportunities for people with disabilities.