

Interviewee Name: Patricia Wozniak

Interviewer Name: Jung Yoon

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Location: Tutti Arts

Length of Interview: 28 mins

Transcript

Jung: Can you tell me about yourself and how you become who you are now?

Patricia: I'm Patricia Wozniak, the Visual Arts Coordinator of Tutti Arts, I've been working there for about 14 to 15 years.

I first got involved while I was studying a Masters of Visual Art I had a mentor, who told me about the program and the interesting art that was being produced in the studio. I was intrigued and as fate behold I bumped into the coordinator of the program at the time and set up a day to visit with the potential of volunteering.

Jung: And then how did you get involved in that disability art?

Patricia: The first day that I volunteered at Tutti in the studios, I was blown away at the calibre of work that was being produced. Learning art at Art School had made art feel serious and pretentious for me. At Tutti I saw artists who were actually enjoying making art and it was really good. I just wanted to be there because it made me feel quite creative and liberated. The studio environment was a great one for people to share ideas and knowledge. Coming from a background of moving image, installation and photography, I shared my skills and knowledge with the studio artists. I also started to support artists by writing small grants so they could have the opportunity to show their work in different environments and contexts. I became really passionate about letting the arts community know about the studio and the extraordinary work created there. So that's how I started.

Jung: Yeah. So throughout that 14 years, how was your experience?

Patricia: After volunteering for a few months I realised I needed to expand my knowledge of disability so I stopped my Masters for 6 months and studied a certificate in

disability. Mel Fulton, the coordinator at the time was a great mentor and eventually I started working in the studio part time. As time progressed, Mel moved on and I became the new coordinator.

Jung: But can you explain a little bit more about how your experience.

Patricia: Of my role in the studio.

Jung: Or just the overall your personal experience in being part of the same organizations for 14 years?

Jung: Working with the artists, really various background artists. Yeah. Like disability

Patricia: Tutti, is a multi arts organization for Learning disabled artists. We have other arts forms such as Performing Arts, Music, Film and Choirs. The Visual Arts is the youngest but the one that has grown the biggest. It started off as two day program and is now running five days a week. We have probably about 16 to 18 artists that access the main supported studio program each day and have 2 satellite visual arts programs. In total we support over 80 disabled artists with various experience.

Some of our artists have been working in the studio for over decade and have established themselves in the arts community. Some artists are emerging and others just exploring. We support artists to follow their own goals so it is focused on what the individual wants to achieve.

Other ways in which we have supported our artists in the studio is through arts grants, opportunities to exhibit, inviting outside artists to collaborate, involvement in major festivals and access to quality materials and facilitators. By offering these supports in the program like this we have seen Tutti artists grow from emerging community artist to contemporary artists who are being invited to exhibit in major art institutions and earning an income from their art.

Jung: Forget? Is there a lot to take as a visual art coordinator was the most not just only easy, just always fun, but was what makes you more What motivates you?

Patricia: What motivates me to be.

Jung: There even though there are lots of challenges or.

Patricia: That's a really good question. What motivates me to be there like every morning I get up and I'm like, "Oh, what amazing things am I going to see in the studio today?" There is a lot of talent around, and a synergy of creative ideas and possibilities. I feel very privileged to see all this amazing work being produced to help facilitate artists to get this work out into the public and galleries I think a lot of it is really authentic and the different, the unique perspective that each artist has is definitely is fresh and new. It's something that the art world needs to see.

Jung: So that's why you just turn yourself motivated to be there for 14 years.

Patricia: The interesting thing about coming from a multi arts org is that a lot of the artists are actually performers and singers and visual artists, so they get to mix the art forms together and create multi art form projects. They might design a set, paint a background, perform and then sing. So that's also a really interesting thing about working at Tutti is seeing how they interact and come up with performance art pieces and installation work.

Jung: You know, in terms of the visual art, in the context of the visual art, it has lots of different aspects of art, which is looking at it as a therapeutic interventions, recreational series of art, you know, more contemporary art and sort of inclusive art practice or more become professional. So there are like multiple more two dimensional sort of aspect of visual art I know is like I understand that over the past 14, 15, 20 years and like it evolved that aspects push forward to move forward to become now is more recognizable.

Patricia: Yeah.

Jung: How, what was, what would you think, what was the momentum was or any major happenings that happened the entire context of the history of visual art.

Patricia: Like, yeah, so I'm sorry, can you go back to the first part of that question? I've just kind of.

Jung: The first part of question is how do I get it?

Patricia: Tutti Arts has always been seen as a professional practice for learning disabled and neurodiverse artists, not as therapy. It's not at all a medical model, but a social one.

Only visual artists work at Tutti and facilitate the artists in the studio. Having this support has helped in attracting a lot of artists in the community wanting to come and work with the artists in the studio because they see like the incredible work that's being produced in the studio.

Tutti has never practiced art therapy or anything like that. It's always been a place for each individual artist, to develop their own, interest in their craft. So when the artists come in the studio, they write a goal of what they want to achieve and what they want to do, and we facilitate that to happen. Its very artist driven, which is critical, because for years other people have spoken for disabled artists and its important to get authentic voices and expressions out there.

We just help those professional opportunities happen buy providing supports to access the arts world. It might not happen straight away, but steps are made to help make it happen.

Jung: What so what makes the difference between like therapeutic art and Tutti arts?

Patricia: We're not doing therapy. Tutti artists want the opportunity to be professional artists and we just support them to have an environment where they can create their work, get their work in exhibitions and earn money.

There's three key things commonly expressed by Tutti studio artists that they like about a supported studio environment.

- To meet other creative people and make friends.
- Access to good quality materials and spaces
- Have their work put in exhibitions for people to see and sell.

So, making work, being around creative people and making money!

Jung: You know, so in the long term, is there any difference in the public perspective towards the artists with disability?

Patricia: I think I can only speak from my experience. There are definitely a lot of the larger art galleries asking Tutti artists to exhibit. So artists were invited to exhibit in the 2020 South Australian Survey exhibition at ACE- Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. A lot of curators and artists saw the work and have been approaching Tutti more and more looking to buy work or to curate exhibitions with certain Tutti artists. We recently completed a few projects where organised collaborations between disabled and non-disabled artists in mainstream institutions like the Art Gallery of South Australia, Carrick Hill and the South Australian Museum. The artists looked at archives and made work together, which has been a curious process. You know, learning how different people collaborate and what actually collaboration is itself is very interesting.

Jung: What do you think? What makes that changes?

Patricia: What makes a change?

Jung: The mainstream art? Well, I think well.

Patricia: It's letting the art community know what's actually being produced in the studio and inviting them in. So collaboration is a huge thing. In 2013 we did a collaborative exhibition called "Their Shadows in Us".

Tutti used to be positioned in an old institution for people with disabilities called Minda. The Tutti visual artists researched the archives and learned how disabled people lived 100 years ago. It was very confronting and interesting to see how the Tutti artists responded via visual artworks. This project, included collaboration with outside artists and those collaborations fuelled a lot of interest in the studio artists and opened a lot of opportunity.

Jung: So the next question is do you think disability art should be political in terms of changing people's health? Think how they think, act and treat each other?

Patricia: Definitely. It does have to be political. And, you know, language is changing all the time and it definitely has to be disability driven and focused. I think that's really

important. I mean, currently we use the social model and that's definitely how a lot of the artists view it at Tutti. Some artists don't really care about that as well, but most of them do and it's about opening people's awareness and letting people express how they feel so if there are self-identified disabled artists, they can say that. But if that's not really important to them as well, they don't necessarily have to use it.

Jung: So you think it's the art is the really good way to express their own identity

Patricia: Yes, art is a way to express identity.

It's an expression and it lets people know about the changes that are happening within the disabled community. Tutti artists have also reached out to other disabled communities in other parts of the world to create and talk about the challenges. I think that's really important. In the past Tutti has done projects over in Indonesia and Malaysia and met other disabled artists in Indonesia and Malaysia. Tutti artists have learnt a lot from them and they've learnt a lot from Tutti as well. So I think I think that's really important having that intercultural exchange and learning from each other.

Jung: So this is sort of last question is how would you define the success of disability art in the context? So let me rephrase. So how would you, how would you would you define the success in the context of disability art?

Patricia: I think success. I mean, there's the individual level of success and what each individual person feels is successful but I think more acknowledgement and this is a really big question.

Jung: You know how people kind of think the success is very abstract sort of concept of success. Like you said, like individual level of success, but at the same time is more tangible or success as someone who making lots and lots of artwork and then selling lots of them or recognizing. So but your personal view, you don't have to think about overall but you you what you think how would you define

Patricia: what would I think is success?

Jung: Sorry when you as a person. Coordinator Yeah. You feel if life was really successful, then how would you define the success?

Patricia: I see lots of individual success. I might give an example, like artist behind me, like who's such a prolific artist. I've worked with them over the years, they would always do the same kind of patterns. And somebody said, "Why don't you do different patterns?" And they were like, "No, I like these patterns". Then they had, they had an exhibition where we put all the patterns together into a massive installation. The exhibition was opened by another disabled artist and he was saying how amazing that person's work was and how they'd seen this work like in stained glass windows in Paris and that day when that speech was happening, I saw a shift in the artist and when they came back to the studio, they started to do so many different patterns and be so productive. I think just having that acknowledgement of them as an artist, really kind of helped shift something in their artistic practice.

So I think, you know, being part of a community where you have opportunities because there are lots of, there are lots of barriers to learning disabled artists in the art world and that could be simply, well, you know, contracts. Contracts are written not an easy English, writing, a grant for exhibition, taking work to an exhibition, putting work up. Etc. I think a lot of art bodies need to acknowledge this and help create other types of access for learning and neurodiverse artists. Some are starting to notice and change but there is still a lot of work to be done.

Patricia: And I think that that's where supported studios in particular have really been needed to help artists get their work out there. I mean, you know, all this stuff is quite difficult to do. Having a network of people who know how to do this and how to support and facilitate each individual with their unique learning needs is really important. It can help a lot of artists get their work out there and the arts community so they know what they're doing. So I think the role of the supported studio is really important.

In Australia in 2013 we had our first big conference in Sydney where all supported studios got together and started talking about what's happening in each supported studio and later we had another one in 2017. I think more of these needs to happen and we need to create more opportunities for disabled artists to get together from different support studios all over Australia, so they can meet their peers.

Creating more opportunities disabled artists to be at the forefront of decision making so the next generation of disabled artists can be leaders in their field I think is really, really

important. I think that is starting to happen and I think that that will help the success of disability arts in the future.

Jung: Thank you. Anything else you want to add up?

Patricia: I can't remember if I've forgotten anything. I've probably forgotten everything. I just when I'm in front of camera, I'm like anything that I was talking about before, I can't remember. Like I was saying before about having a hub where disabled artists can go and create a culture and a community, where they can share and collaborate on ideas is important.

Disabled artists have been expanding in their practice and it's becoming more digital these days and offering opportunities for disabled artists to experiment and learn these new technologies I think is really exciting for the future as well.

Some artists don't necessarily want to get their work out in exhibitions, but they do want to make a book and let people read a book. Not everybody wants the same thing as well. Not everybody defines success the same. The most important thing is it being artist driven, but also showing artists what other opportunities are out there for them as well.

Jung: Okay, cool.

Patricia: Sorry.

Jung: This is all done, but is there anything else you want to add on for overall perspective?

Patricia: Is anything that you think I might have said before that you think is important?

Jung: You didn't say much about your any challenges?

Patricia: Yeah, I can talk about challenges. Yeah. So challenges. Well, obviously, I've been in the sector since before NDIS and transitioning to NDIS. You know, that was

quite obviously a lot of work, and it's been good in the long run but you know there are still challenges.

The biggest challenge is getting funding from the arts and from disability and them not actually necessarily connecting and understanding each other.

So what might happen is that a creative opportunity might occur for an artist but maybe they might not have the funding in their NDIS plan to get the support they need. You need a good advocate when doing your plan who can help make sure you get funding for unexpected opportunities. Not everyone has a good advocate, so it's not equal or fair if you don't have one. Also you need to fit into what the NDIS rules and regulations.

So yeah, that's some of the challenges. I also kind of touched on before are the challenges of actually having contracts and that in easy English for individuals to be able to read and understand; I think that kind of access is important.

Having readily available information for learning disabled and neurodiverse artists about artist's rights and copyright. Tutti is always very proactive about this.

Jung: Do you think you're all covered? I don't know. That's a - You covered a lot.

Patricia: Yeah.

Patricia: Thank you so much.

Jung: Done. Yeah, yeah, yeah. All right.