

ARTS ACCESS

# news

summer 2001

## Don't Worry Bee Happy

If you walk into a café or bar and spot a swarm of bees, don't be afraid!

For these bees are creatures appearing on a current series of Avant Cards, and created by Jeffery Phillips, a participant at Arts Access Art Day South Program.

This stinging visual was entered into the Avant Card "Call for Artists" and successfully selected to appear on the free post cards that are displayed at entertainment venues and restaurants.

The image was originally part of an exhibition of works by Art Day South participants held at the Stonnington Firestation Print Workshop in 1999, and is a classic example of Jeffery's style and approach, according to Andrew Tranter, the visual artist with Art Day South.

"His drawing approach is very direct, quick and concerns itself with a simple line form. He has great confidence in his work and a lot of creative energy."

The "smiling insects" piece could be described as humorous with a "black comic edge", which is a constant element incorporated into Jeffery's art.

Jeffery's passion for the visual art form began very early. He says that his interest in drawing started at a young age. "It was a way of expressing myself."

His sister Diane Zakanovsky recalls "Mum always used to say that Jeff was born with a pencil in his hand. She always spoke about Jeffery's artistic ability and she was very proud of him. Had she been alive this would be a magical moment for her."

She adds that her brother's artistic talents have only been further developed through his involvement with Art Day South, "expanding the possibilities of his art."

Jeffery has been attending Art Day South for the past four years and is one of thirty participants with an intellectual disability who collaborate with two artists and four support workers to create visual and performing art work.

The movies are one place where Jeffery draws great inspiration from, for his art. His next visit may see Jeffery spot his own artwork being displayed in the foyer of the cinema. Diane cannot wait for this to occur, "I am really looking forward to going to one soon and showing Jeffery his work on the card stand."

*Arts Access receives funding for Art Day South from the Department of Human Services, Disability Services Southern Region*

Jeffery Phillips' stinging visual.



Art Day Project Coordinator Jo Cohen presents Jeffery Phillips with an Avant Card that displays his artwork





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## From the desk of the Executive Director

Welcome to the first newsletter of the year, and the first update from me. I'd like to start by thanking Jane Haley enormously for her work for Arts Access, and to wish her all the best for the future. I'd also like to thank all my colleagues at Arts Access who have been terrific in supporting me through my first few weeks here, and allowing me to cruise along and get my head around the issues, while they've been doing all the work.

It's been great learning about Arts Access' programs and achievements of the past years, and starting to think about how we might increase our services and improve the programs.

I am really impressed with the variety and breadth of Arts Access' work, and by the commitment of everyone working for the organisation. I also love working in this gorgeous new building, with great computers and facilities, and I feel that Arts Access has an incredibly strong resource base now, on which to base an increased level of activity and programming.

My background is thoroughly rooted in community arts and participation, and although, in some circles, people are sick of hearing about community cultural development and access, I still find it really exciting to think about ways of allowing more people to make or to see more art.

One of the first Arts Access programs that I attended in my first week here, was a forum on the Companion Card proposal, that Fiona Hanrahan, Arts Access' EASE Manager, ran in conjunction with VICNORD. The Companion Card scheme will enable free entry for companions of people with high support needs who require support to enable them to participate in arts, entertainment, recreation and leisure activities.

The forum included an address by Acting Federal Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Susan Halliday, who spoke passionately about equal opportunity. In particular, she outlined the legislation that exists to enforce the implementation of equal opportunity and access for all people, regardless of gender, age, disability or race.

It was an eye opener to realise that many of the organisational representatives at the forum had a quite limited understanding of what equal opportunity meant, and what their organisation's responsibilities were in regard to it.

It's actually quite simple. IT'S LAW. You MUST ensure that your organisation is making real and significant progress towards providing equal opportunities and access for all people. If you don't, you are open to be sued. It is as much an organisation's duty as ensuring that Occupational Health and Safety is up to standard.

The federal Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) has been in place since 1992. (Call Arts Access if you'd like to see a copy of it.)

I think that it's a shame if organisations need the threat of a lawsuit to begin designing and implementing serious disability action plans, but if it means that we'll get better access, then we at Arts Access will be pushing that button as hard as we can.

Other projects for 2001 include collaboration with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, on "Gneetung Tukae Arts Project" funded (with many thanks) by Vic Health. We also plan to begin the development of more art programs for people with disabilities, based on the Art Day South and Art Day West models, and I feel that this is potentially a huge and exciting area for us to take on. Our Art Day programs are in high demand, and, as leaders in the area, we can help other organisations to run their own programs.

We are also planning to continue our Training work - moving into organisational training courses and advice and consultations to the industry. We will continue our EASE ticketing service and our general information provision. Our partnership with Breastscreen has been so successful, we have been working on a plan to coordinate a statewide exhibition of the artworks and photographs that resulted from the collaboration. We hope to begin the tour in 2002.

Arts Access was also successful in an application for funding for a federation parade entry, and Jo Cohen has begun the work to produce a gorgeous entry. Come along on May 6th to see the parade down Swanston Street.

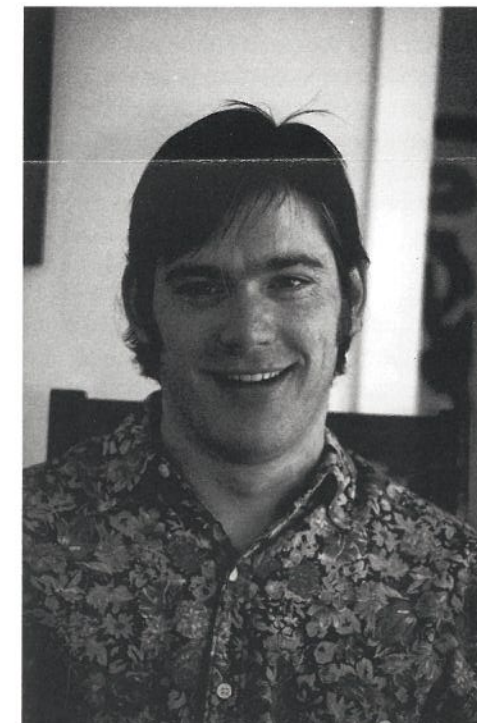
On an issue closer to this newsletter, Ashley Heenan, our Information and Publications Coordinator (and editor of this newsletter), has accepted a position as Access For All Abilities Coordinator with Hume City Council, and left Arts Access at the end of January. Ashley has been a valuable and committed staff member at Arts Access, and we will miss him. We wish him all the best for his exciting new job.

On behalf of everyone at Arts Access, we hope you all have a terrific year, and we hope that Arts Access can continue to provide fantastic arts projects and facilitate more opportunities to enable access for all people into the cultural life of the community.

I am delighted and honoured to be a part of the Arts Access team.

Nicole Beyer

*Nicole has been working in the arts for over twelve years, most recently as Executive Officer of Youth Performing Arts Australia, and before that, for four years as General Manager of Back To Back Theatre. Nicole spent three years working in New York in the visual arts, and she also has a strong interest in music, singing with the Melbourne Chorale. Nicole is currently President of the Arts Industry Council (Vic).*



Ashley Heenan says good-bye to Arts Access

An audio tape version of Arts Access News is available. Please call the office to arrange your copy.

Copy deadline for next issue  
**10th March 2001**

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New Executive Director: Nicole Beyer





## Home is Where the Heart is Art Day South

Throughout last year the participants of Art Day South explored the common themes around the notion connection to a place. This incorporated investigation into such issues as home, landscape and ritual. During this exploration the group experienced performance, "mark making", drawing, photography and audio recording processes, which then culminated in a significant body of creation. This then raised the question of what would be an appropriate medium to present such a strong and diverse collection of works.

It was decided one of the outcomes would be to formulate the work into a 'zine' (a low budget, non-commercial book) which would represent the drawings and text from the group. As described by Andrew Tranter, the visual artist for Art Day South, the idea of a zine borrows much from the 1970's punk fan-zines and could be quite cheaply and accessibly produced with scissors, glue and close access to a photocopier. Moving away from slick glossy production processes, the zine was seen as an appropriate means of production for the Art Day Southers visual art works.

The selection of the works for Issue 1 of the 'zine' was reached by general consensus. "It involved a number of weeks of what would be described as a group editorial system whereby works were presented for selection and

voted for by all members of the group," said Andrew. The production of work was never a problem and Issue 1 is a BUMPER PACK collection of art works, poems and stories with front cover design by participant, Vincent Granieri and comes as a package including free stickers. The success of this issue has laid the foundation for further 'zines' to follow. Perhaps with the potential for other individuals or groups to link into the idea, "Who knows maybe a Mopapa Zine on-line could be further down the track," adds Andrew.

The 'zine' entitled, 'Mopapa Zine Issue 1' was officially launched prior to Christmas when Art Day South presented an event which also included, a performance entitled 'How 'bout that' and a photography exhibition.

Performance Artist Katrine Gabb said the performance piece, was devised around the concept of home. "Home means many things to many people. It involves a relationship with place, objects people and rituals".

'Mopapa Zine Issue 1' can be purchased at Arts Access for \$10 (plus postage).

*Arts Access receives funding for Art Day South from the Department of Human Services, Disability Services Southern Region*

## Hi -Tech Art

Emerging artists with a mental health issue were encouraged to down their usual tools of the trade and explore a hi-tech approach to art making. The Arts Access Saturday Morning Art Class (SMAC) Project entered the computer age!

Arts Access in conjunction with OPENChannel, ran a short course in multi media for the first time late last year, for a small group of artists, who were interested in developing their artwork in a new form and were open to the possibilities that multimedia technology can offer.

Participants were given an introduction to computers, the internet and learnt new artistic skills using the software package "Photoshop". They were guided by John Pierce, a multi media specialist and experienced OPENChannel teacher, with the assistance of an experienced multi media artist and two support artists.

Arts Access asked Janice Grant, one of the emerging artists who undertook the multimedia training, to personally reflect on her involvement in the course and what she received from it.

"Sometimes you are offered an opportunity that is so interesting and so creative that it exceeds your expectations. Such was one opportunity offered to me by Pru Flint one of the support workers of the computer course organized by Arts Access at the OPENChannel facilities. Since my mental illness [bi-polar disorder] was finally diagnosed in 1997, after years of debilitating depression and mania, I have found art to be one of my main life affirming interests. Having lost my profession of teaching for 35 years, my husband of 34 years and worst of all the very essence of my being, I became an absolute shell of a person. I was so depressed at times that I barely took breath. Medication along with the support of many professionals and family and friends and my still fortnightly visits to my psychiatrist for psychotherapy I am slowly filling the shell.

My illness has taken me to many new pathways in my life. Some have been self destructive some have been of other dimensions. I know now that life is like a candle flame and that we need to be gentle, oh so gentle with our vulnerable flames. Art has become like that for me now. So the computer course using PhotoShop was quite a revelation to me. I had never before realized the creative opportunities that were available on computer. I especially loved painting and playing with colour and opacity. I found it fun to scan a favorite object or picture and adapt it using the program. There are just so many possibilities to work with. I have

acquired enough skills now to be able to play on PhotoShop independently. This was mainly due to the patience and encouragement of the instructors who were great. Their experience with PhotoShop and the Internet combined with their artistic skills made them ideal support workers for us. No patronizing, no talking down to us. I thank them all so much.

However I did feel that I was just beginning to have enough skills at the end of the course to begin to create some of my own works of art. I would have appreciated some more sessions. This was my only criticism. I'd be first in line were another course offered based on this one at the next level.

Apart from the creative process and the acquiring of new computer skills I also recognized some other personal benefits. My self-esteem improved with the successful acquisition of new computer skills. My interest in the process developed weekly and I became more enthusiastic. The more I learnt the more I wanted to learn and to experiment with. My concentration improved markedly.

It was a healing experience to participate in such a positive course. The cost was within my means. Thank you to the organizers of the course especially Anne Riggs. More, Please!"

Computer generated self-portrait of Janice Grant.



"Happy" by Lisa Cook.

Andrew (visual artist) presents a copy of the 'zine' to Margaret (participant), who came up with of the name Mopapa Zine.





## Mission

Arts Access provides a national model for access to arts and cultural activity for people who are disadvantaged.

## Values

Arts Access' programs and services are based on four fundamental community cultural development principles:

- that participation in the arts is essential to the wellbeing of the individual and the community
- that all people should have equal access, choice and opportunity to participate in the arts and attend arts, entertainment and cultural events
- that the arts provide an ideal mechanism for the development and expression of individual and community identity and diversity
- that actions to ensure the inclusion of people with a disability improve access for the whole community

## Artistic Program

Arts Access' Artistic Program is diverse and aims to challenge artistic and social boundaries. The Program provides a range of opportunities for people who are disadvantaged including people with a disability to learn new artistic skills and to develop their own creativity.

The Artistic Program initiates arts projects for people with limited arts experience, through to emerging and professional artists. The Program works directly with individuals in the Saturday Morning Art Classes and the Art Day projects.

The Saturday Morning Art Classes in 2001 will include multi media training and ceramic classes for people with mental health issues. For further information please call Arts Access for a flier.

The Art Day Projects are visual and performing arts projects for people with an intellectual disability. Art Day West is based in Spotswood and Art Day South is based in Dingley. For further information about please call Arts Access for a flier.

The Artistic Program also works with a range of arts, health, community based organisations to work with specific groups of people. Current partners include: Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Handspan Visual

Theatre, BreastScreen Victoria, Tallangatta Secondary College and OPENChannel.

The Program staff represent Arts Access on a range of independent arts project Steering Committees such as the Deaf Arts Network, Club Wild, the Royal Children's Hospital - Travencore Festival for Healthy Living and the Gasworks Arts Park - Art of Difference Festival.

The Arts Access Artistic Program employs approximately sixty professional arts workers and twenty support workers and more than three hundred participants are involved in our projects annually.

## EASE (the Entertainment Access Service)

EASE (the Entertainment Access Service) is a membership-based service that provides information on access and specialised seating for people with a disability and people who are disadvantaged for arts, entertainment, cultural and sporting events.

It works in partnership with promoters and venues to deliver the service and is often able to also offer reduced price tickets to its members. EASE also works in partnership with venues and other arts organisations on audience development initiatives that not only increase the awareness of the needs of people with a disability or who are disadvantaged but also advocate and promote equal access to the arts.

EASE bookings can be made by contacted: phone 9699 8497, TTY 9699 7636, between 10 am and 4pm (Monday to Friday).

## Training

Arts Access has an annual calendar of seminars, forums, training programs and custom made programs that cater for just about everyone. If you are an arts organisation, venue, artist, cultural organisation or just plain interested in Disability Awareness Training - with a twist! - then we can meet your training needs.

We offer a safe and welcoming environment in which to discuss and explore current issues that face people living with a disability and also provide advice to the arts industry (promoters, producers, customer service staff etc) on resources, solutions, access and marketing.

## In the Spotlight

### Dancer and Choreographer Marc Brew

"How do you dance in a wheelchair?" This is often a question asked of Marc Brew and one he had to ask himself after he became a quadriplegic.

"I first thought that dance was the furthest thing from my mind," said Marc, but the desire to dance haunted this young ballet dancer. He personally admits that he tried to deny his passion for movement and the need to continue to dance, after a car accident resulted in his spinal injury. "Dancing is who I am and it is part of me", he now confidently states. However, this newfound confidence did not come to full realisation until Marc travelled to New York to work with Infinity Dance Theatre, a mixed ability dance company. In the three months that he spent with the company under the direction of Kitty Lunn (who has a disability) Marc says that he retrained as a dancer and found a different way to move. "My passion for dance came alive once more". During this time he also returned for the first time since the accident to perform on stage, "The moment the curtain went down, I knew I was home - with the audience clapping." Since this experience Marc has endeavoured to continue to challenge himself and break down some barriers "Dance definitely comes from the heart and is about expression, using our bodies as tools. For me now it is exactly that and I am using my wheelchair as another

tool." This expression through dance is something that forms all the work and arts practice that Marc wishes to explore.

He teaches ballet classes, runs movement classes for children with disabilities and last year undertook to develop and stage a performance (at Chapel off Chapel) that he both choreographed and danced in and was also involved in Arts Access - Handspan - Melbourne Symphony "Synesthesia" project. All this work led to Marc receiving the Young Victorian of the Year-Collins Booksellers Arts Award. "When I began dancing, using a wheelchair, I was terrified about what other people were thinking and thought they must be thinking, this guy, why doesn't he give up, he has lost it". But the response that I hear from people's mouths is nothing like that. I have received encouragement and support, the whole way.

One of Marc's missions is to show people how disability can enhance performance and also break those boundaries that are traditionally associated with dance, "to change one's perception of what a dancer is". And Marc says the question "How do you dance in a wheelchair?" can only be answered by witnessing it, "It is a visual thing, so you need to see it".

Dancer and Choreographer Marc Brew with dance Annabel Dickens



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