



art of DISSENT

A national conference, spanning the Adelaide and Melbourne Arts Festivals, for artists and community activists working at the frontier of social and cultural change. The program will explore the dilemmas and ethics of contemporary art practice created from artists' deep engagement with communities in diverse social contexts. Passion and politics are the driving forces in a program that will attempt to go beyond the accepted jargon of 'industry models', 'marketing strategies' and 'sponsor needs' to explore a brave new territory where labels such as 'community' versus 'mainstream' are irrelevant. If you want to explore the hard issues of cultural expression outside the safe haven of traditional arts definitions, this is the conference for you.



WHO SHOULD ATTEND

- Artists;
- Social activists;
- Decision makers in the fields of culture, community capacity building and community development;
- Community representatives working with change;
- Cultural development workers;
- Community Organisations;
- Local government cultural and/or community services officers;
- Academics covering contemporary politics, cultural and public policy, social capital and community development;
- People passionate about social change and the direction of Australian society.

PROGRAM 20 - 22 October 2002

THE ART OF DISSENT - DISSENT AND DEMOCRACY

What role does Dissent play in a democracy? - How can artists use their skills and vision to move people to engage with issues that confront society? - Is public dissent being silenced? - How much are 'celebrations of culture' about dissenting voices? - Dissent for dissent's sake, or dissent to create new visions?

Gay FUNDLE - Deborah KELLY - Margot KINGSTON - and more...

BREAKING THE CODE: DISABILITY & GENETIC ENGINEERING

Questioning issues of genetic engineering from the perspective of people with disabilities, this forum examines recent projects on this theme. What insights can creative activity lend to complex and challenging ethical issues? Is there a gene responsible for our obsession with perfection?

Bruce GLADWIN - Kate SULLAN

FROM MARALINGA - BACK TO COUNTRY

This forum explores how the Oak Valley community on Maralinga Lands is using a new cultural project to re-present themselves and their own history. The Maralinga Project encapsulates some of the fundamental issues facing Indigenous people, including:

- Recovering lost history - rewriting history - Contamination and misuse of Indigenous land;
- Rebuilding cultural identity - Campaigns for the right to return to traditional lands.

Dr Archie BARTON - Indigenous Elder TBC - Paul BROWN - Alison PAGE - Lynette WALLWORTH

BALLFELLA/WHITEFELLA - TOEING THE LINE

A panel of artists and project managers will explore the question of working together, often in cross-cultural environments, for social change.

What is the most appropriate relationship between whitefella & Indigenous artists? - How can this relationship flourish? - If our role is to rebel and dissent, what should govern that relationship? - Should whitefellas butt out of the debate?

BOUNDARIES & BORDERS: REFUGEES, MULTICULTURALISM AND DISSENT

Artists are actively engaged in challenging government policy on Asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and racism.

What does the current debate on asylum seekers say about the current state of multiculturalism in Australia? - Are migrant communities and voices being heard and what are they saying? - What can artists do and what are they doing to change government policy on Asylum seekers? - Is it possible to make a difference?

Nikos PAPASTENGADIS - Deborah KELLY - Jemma STELLATO FLEDGER - Eva SALLIS

SENI UNTUK SENI; SENI UNTUK RAKYAT (Art for Art; Art for the People)

This forum will explore case studies of actions for East Timor including theatre, with representatives from East Timor Cultural Action Group.

- Which cultures post-independence? - What role for cultural action? - Redefining political and artistic practice in the world's newest nation - What drives Australian artists to engage in East Timor?

Maria Alice CASBIRDO BRANCO - Rebecca CONROY - Susan DITTER - Graham PITTS - East Timorese cultural activists

PROPAGANDA OF THE DEED: CULTURAL ACTIVISM

A new generation of activists are creating spaces to organise and militate. Behind this activism lies strong communities with national and international links and passionate cultural engagement with powerful issues.

- Networks and nodes: How are cultural activists organising and how effective are they? - Translating visions to action - how does On-line activism work? - Tactics to targets: experiencing activism - What is the relationship between physical communities and on-line activism?

Nik BEURET - Azura HANKIN - Kylie PURR - Francesca d'ARMINI

WHOSE FESTIVAL? CAN ARTS FESTIVALS EMBRACE COMMUNITY CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT?

- Should festivals have a role other than showcasing outcomes of projects produced elsewhere? Should they commission and develop projects over a longer term and is this possible? - Do we need a new generation of programmers and how do we get them? - Who owns a festival and whose interests should it serve? - How have festivals embraced community cultural development and what did they deliver?

Teresa GREA - Jerri REICHTER - Stephan RICHARDSON - other community voices

DEMOCRATISING CULTURE

To create a new reality, we have to imagine it is possible.

Artists and creative communities are at the vanguard of transcending marginalisation: creating spaces where cultures are inclusive and transforming. Beyond accessibility, this forum explores new visions of society.

- Should we refuse the boxes we are put in? - Can the creative realm transform reality?

Jon HAWKES - Helen GOULD (Creative Exchange, UK)

GUILLERMO GÓMEZ-PEÑA

Guillermo Gómez-Peña is an extraordinary and inspirational performer and speaker who creates what critics have termed "Chicano cyber-punk performances." Politicised, yet uniquely un-PC, he rips apart traditional ideas of sexual desire, crossing geographical, ethnic and racial frontiers, undoing notions of identity, nationality, language and art-making. From Mexico City to LA to Wales to Helsinki, he works as a performance artist and writer, travelling between cultural identity and performance persona, practice and theory, art and activism, transgressive aesthetics and radical politics.

SPEAKING FOR OURSELVES: DISSENT IN THE RANKS

An exploration of the empowerment and dynamism inherent in working with young people: are young people being sold out?

- Who speaks for young people? - What is the role of artists working with young people who experience multiple layers of disadvantage? - Who controls the outcomes? - How do public outcomes impact on the young people involved? - Is the involvement of young people window dressing? - Is it possible to have a long-term presence working with disadvantaged young people? - What real change is possible?

Philip CRAWFORD - Martin THEILE - and voices from around Australia

REVERSING THE FLOW - ENABLING REGIONAL VOICES

There is a trend to acknowledge the depth of talent and creativity among communities in regional areas and to engage communities in exploring their own creativity, identities and issues.

- Ownership: Are artists and communities in regional areas being given real control of projects? - Are adequate resources being directed to employing regional artists working with their local communities? - Who speaks on behalf of regional communities? - Are there better ways of utilising existing resources to better meet the cultural needs of these communities?

PERFORMING DISSENT

If there is such a thing as radical performance, what is it?

- Is radical theatre effective - does it change anything? - Is 'political' theatre 'radical' performance; is it only speaking to the consented and is that enough? - Has 'radical' performance got a future?

REPRESENTING DIFFERENCE: FROM FRINGE TO MAINSTREAM OR: WHEN'S THE CELEBRATION OVER?

Many popular movements for social change started from a dissenting drive for change. Many of these consciously adopted a strategy of Celebration in order to legitimise their marginalised positions. There is now a widespread re-examination of the value of dissent and its problematic relationship with Celebration.

- What is mainstream and what is fringe? What is selling out? - Is social change still on the agenda? - What lessons can be learnt from embracing celebration? - Do communities risk being sidelined if more dissent is introduced? - What is the role of a 'radical fringe'? 5 panelists from Indigenous, multicultural, gay and lesbian and disabilities communities

RADICAL BODIES

Defining body image and sexuality has a long tradition of dissent, shock and actively seeking to challenge views of sexuality in Australian culture.

- Are new forms of presenting 'Radical bodies' actually seeking to change anything or are they manifestations of self-indulgence? - Are our physical bodies still a site of dissent that can lead to real change? - What new ways are being explored to demonstrate the 'radical body'?

Evolving program and speakers list available on Website
www.ArtofDissent.com