

Report on Workshop and Forum with Bill Cleveland **‘The Arts and Community in the 21st Century: what is best practice?’** **Monday, February 27 2006, Melbourne Town Hall**

Seattle-based writer, researcher and community arts activist and musician Bill Cleveland visited Melbourne in February 2006, while he was undertaking research for his newest book **Art and Upheaval: Artists at Work on the World’s Frontlines**. The Cultural Development Network, in partnership with the City of Melbourne’s Community Cultural Development program, invited Bill to address a public forum and lead a workshop for artists during his time here.

Both sessions were fully booked out, (50 in the morning workshop, and 90 in the afternoon forum) with a diverse audience of artists, artsworkers, local government staff, academics and staff from community organisations.

Guest speaker

Bill Cleveland is the Founder and Director of the Center for the Study of Art and Community, Washington State, USA. Established in 1991, CSA&C works to build new working relationships between the arts and the broader community. Bill’s twenty-five year history of producing arts programs in cultural, educational and community settings also includes his leadership of the Walker Art Center’s Education and Community Programs Department, California’s Arts-In-Corrections Program and the California State Summer School for the Arts. His book **Art in Other Places**, chronicles 22 model arts-based community partnerships in 17 American cities.

Workshop: Common sense survival skills for working in community/institutional settings

This common sense nuts and bolts workshop provided practical program design and implementation strategies for artists and arts organizations interested in developing residencies or collaborations with community organisations and institutions. The material presented was developed from research conducted on more than fifty successful and not so successful community and institutional arts programs in the USA. Workshop participants learned effective artistic, funding and political strategies used by model programs.

Topics included

- assessing your suitability for working in community organisations and institutions.
- evaluating prospective community and partners.
- how to make friends with unlikely allies.
- designing programs that can’t be undone.
- survival skills for artists in community organisations and institutions.



Bill and his ecology of arts-based community development

Forum: 'The Arts and Community in the 21st Century: what is best practice?'

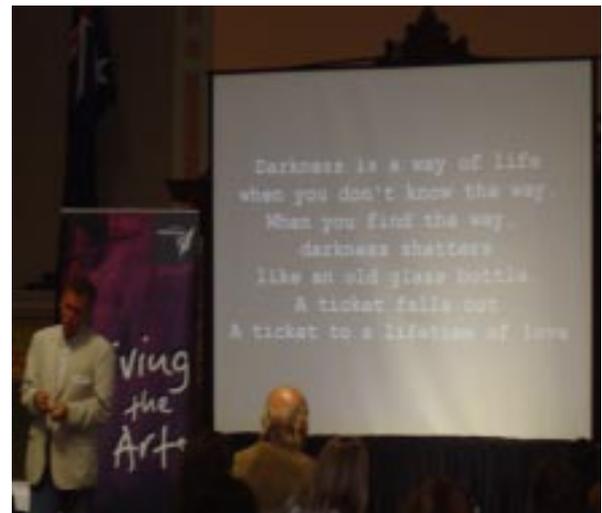


Bill discussing principles of best practice

Bill addressed the issue of what is best practice by referring to his recent research project 'Making Exact Change: How Arts-Based Programs Have Made Significant and Sustained Impact on their Communities'. The Community Arts Network USA commissioned this study to help the growing, but largely disconnected, community arts field learn from its most venerable and successful colleagues. The exemplary programs described in this resource have had significant, sustained positive impact on their communities.

Bill's presentation is available for downloading from http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2002/05/mapping_the_fie.php

The audience enjoyed Bill's presentation that was funny, deeply engaging and interspersed with surprising bouts of the most beautiful singing – art-making on the spot! Evaluations comments were very positive, with attendees describing a wide range of new learnings from the day, including *the international perspective, the credibility of community arts and cultural development in relation to all aspects of community and impact on health, the importance of sustainability, long-term effectiveness of projects on communities, the importance of trusting the transformative power of creative activity and being able to articulate that to the mainstream.*



Bill's presentation was followed by a discussion by panel of experienced artists reflecting on their experiences of best practice in community-based arts; activities they have been involved in Australia and overseas that have made a sustained and lasting impact on involved communities. This was facilitated by Vicki Guglielmo, Manager, Community Cultural Development Program, City of Melbourne.

Panellists:

Maud Clark, Director, Somebody's Daughter Theatre Company
Lisa Arnott, Scottish community artsworker now resident in Melbourne
Maria-Lourdes Doronila, Filipina-Australia playwright and theatre practitioner from Canberra
Kim Kruger, Audience Access program Manager, Ilbjerri Theatre Co-op
Carey Lai, artsworker and Australia Council fellowship holder and researcher



L to R: Vicki Guglielmo, Kim Kruger and Maria-Lourdes Doronila



L to R: Vicki Guglielmo, Kim Kruger, Maria-Lourdes Doronila, Maud Clark, Carey Lai, Lisa Arnott

The final session of the day was a group discussion led by Mandy Press, consultant and former Neighborhood Development Manager at City of Port Phillip. These contributed to the development of a 'charter of best practice in community cultural development', an ongoing project of the Cultural Development Network.

Mandy Press



Readings

Mapping the Field: Arts-Based Community Development, Bill Cleveland

http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2002/05/mapping_the_fie.php

Making Exact Change, William Cleveland, 2005, is available in print for \$14.00 from <http://www.lulu.com/can> or download as a free PDF from <http://www.makingexactchange.org>
In 2005, arts in the Public Interest (API), selected ten US arts-based community programmes and commissioned William Cleveland, director of the Center for the Study of Art & Community, to gather and interpret data on how they define and measure their own success. This report analyses their responses and presents findings about the best practices and obstacles in this work. It also makes strategic recommendations to service organisations and funders on how best to support and advance the field of community arts in the immediate future.

Continental Harmony: A Case Study in Community-based Arts, results of an evaluation, Patricia Shifferd and Bill Cleveland, 2001

<http://www.continentalharmony.org/objects/DownloadablePDFS/MillennialAssessment.pdf>

Beginners Guide to Community Based Arts, Keith Knight & Mat Schwarzman, New Village Press, 2005. http://www.newvillagepress.net/pub_BegGuideCommunityArts.html

Art and Upheaval, Bill Cleveland, will be published by New Village Press in 2007

Art in Other Places: Artists at Work in America's Community and Social Institutions, Bill Cleveland. The book recounts the histories of 22 institutional and community arts programs across the country that have pioneered the community arts field. It describes how the creative processes have been used to address some of society's most pressing issues.

<http://www.artandcommunity.com/aopreissue.html>

Community Arts Network promotes information exchange, research and critical dialogue within the field of community-based art in the US. <http://www.communityarts.net/>

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EVALUATION RESPONSES

Workshop and Forum with Bill Cleveland

‘The Arts and Community in the 21st Century: what is best practice?’

About the workshop

Most attendees rated the quality of the event ‘very good’, with several ‘excellents’ and ‘goods’.

Comments included:

After 23 years in the field I felt I gained a lot from the whole day

I am just starting out as a young graduate and I hope to learn more from this experience

Really enjoyed it- it made me more conscious of different aspects of work and how they all interlink in the bigger picture

Inspiring and visionary

About the afternoon forum

Most attendees rated the quality of the event ‘very good’, with several ‘excellents’ and ‘goods’.

Comments included:

Relevant, informative, hope there’s more

Yet again- superior quality forum with great speakers

Bill Cleveland was excellent, articulate, well thought out presentation of fascinating material

Comments about what people learned included:

I valued the international perspective

The credibility of community arts and cultural development in relation to all aspects of community and impact on health

The importance of sustainability

Long-term effectiveness of projects on communities

Networks of research and documentation

The importance of trusting the transformative power of creative activity and being able to articulate that to the mainstream

And as to whether their practice would be informed by knowledge gained, some comments included:

Yes, I’ll study the notes I took and get the info into my dialogue and practice

Useful definitions, networks and resources

Yes, a bigger overview of how my work connects with fund providers and community

Yes, I think I will be more thorough with defining my intentions not just for the overall project but for individual stages along the way

Absolutely- working with a greater consciousness and commitment to elements of respect and humility to think about my standards

Singing!

Areas for improvement

While many people commented that they enjoyed hearing the responses from panellists, there were some comments about the relevance and focus of some panellists’ comments in the light of the topic. Those responses that were more closely related to the topic of best practice, and lasting and meaningful change in communities were received most favourably.