

Cultural Development Network

Cultures
Communities
Councils

Report on Cultural Development Network's Forum

The international context: community based arts initiatives in Europe, USA & the UK'

Friday 9th December, 3-5 pm, North Melbourne Town Hall

This informal afternoon featured four speakers who had recently travelled overseas to develop their skills and understanding of arts practice in diverse communities;

- Eulea Kiraly, a theatre director and the Community Cultural Development Officer at Tuggeranong Arts Centre in the ACT, who spoke about the 13 weeks she spent this year in the US, Scotland and Ireland with the support of a Churchill Fellowship. Eulea focussed on the use of theatre for community building, shared highlights from her journey and gave some very practical tips for artists who'd like to travel overseas. Eulea's complete report to be submitted to the Churchill Trust will be available from their website later this year.
- Jane Crawley, the City of Melbourne's Cultural Development Team Leader, who received a professional development grant from the Australia Council this year to work in Berlin, Germany this year. Jane spoke about the focus of her trip which was the relationship between cultural difference and the arts. She spent most of her time at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (House of World Cultures), Kreuzburg Museum and the Werkstatt der Kulturen (Workshop of Cultures) in Berlin. Jane described her meetings with key arts bureaucrats and politicians involved in immigration policy and in working with diverse communities, as well as her experience of being an outsider in a very foreign and non-English speaking culture.
- Ruth Whittingham, Artistic Program Manager, Arts Access Victoria who received a Department of Human Services - Ethel Temby Study Tour Award to visit disability art initiatives in the UK. Ruth met with key artists, groups and organisations to exchange project ideas, discuss issues and determine how people with a disability are actively involved in artistic direction and management. One difference between the milieu that that Ruth experienced in England and her work in Australia was the fact that many English organisations focus on the work of individual artists with disabilities who work at professional level, whereas Arts Access tends to emphasise a much deeper community focus. She was challenged however, by people she met asking about the involvement of people with disabilities in a management of the organisation and its work. Ruth showed a short film, a digital story that was created in an Arts Access/ ACMI joint project. Ruth took this film and twelve other short films with her to the UK, and they were subsequently featured in the London Disability Film Festival.
- Angela Bailey, photographic artist, who travelled to England as a recipient of an Australia Council Skills Development Grant. Angela spoke about her involvement with community arts projects in the West Midlands and Birmingham, UK including some on housing estates, and she showed a beautiful selection of images she took in Birmingham and West Midlands.

This informal afternoon was attended by about 50 people; a mix of artists, artswokers, local government workers, academics and workers from community organisations. The presentations were followed by drinks and nibbles, which allowed all attending the chance to network and discuss issues of common interest.



22 evaluations were received, an almost 50% response rate. Almost all respondents rated the sessions *'Excellent'* or *'Very good'*, and people appreciated all of the different styles of the presenters and the different places they travelled and shared.

Comments from evaluations included;

'great speakers',

'well prepared informative personal stories',

'sharing of stories was very generous and most informative',

'rich talks- beautiful meeting with interesting and appealing speakers',

'sensational'

People commented that they learned about

'the balance between arts practice and cultural development',

'the difference in approach to ccd around the world',

'to have vision; embrace the challenges, travel myself',

'to be ready to let go of all cultural expectations and points of reference when in an overseas residency'.

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

'absolutely, though it may be a lifetime project',

'Yes Yes Yes',

'Yes- will look for opportunities to ensure sustainability'.

Areas for improvement included only two comments;

'time for questions'

'more rigorous approach to discussion'

Full reports from presenters will be uploaded to our website as they become available.



**The Cultural Development Network's Forums program
is sponsored by the City of Melbourne**

