

Cultural Development Network *Cultures Communities Councils*

'The international context: community based arts initiatives overseas' *Presented by the Cultural Development Network, December 8, 2006* *Arthouse, Meat Market, North Melbourne*

CDN's final public event for 2006 was an informal talk and Christmas drinks on at the Meat Market in North Melbourne. Guest speakers were three artists who had recently travelled overseas to develop their skills and understanding of arts practice with communities.

Liss Gabb is a community artist who works primary with the Arts and Culture Program at North Richmond Community Health Centre. Liss spoke about two recent periods of international professional development that focused on participatory arts projects; the first in communities experiencing multiple deprivation in the UK and the second, an exploration into traditional cultural celebratory practices in Vietnam with communities preparing for Tet Trung Tho, the Moon Lantern Festival.



In this presentation, Liss focussed on her experience of the work being done by leading UK company, *One to One Productions* with a gypsy community and former single industry communities experiencing third generation unemployment.



Ana Vrantzis is Arts and Cultural Development Officer with Brimbank City Council.

Ana feels strongly that festivals can be a great vehicle for community cultural development but this is not always understood by the powers that be. This feeling prompted her to explore the various ways that communities participate in local



events, through a recent visit to three community festivals, Fatima's Day of Our Lady, in Portugal, the Feast of St Yves, patron saint of Brittany and Chippenham Folk Festival in England. Ana's observations of these festivals were informed by her Portuguese cultural background and more than twelve years of work in community cultural development projects and community events in Victoria. Ana's article 'Events and community participation: an informal study of local and overseas events' is available for download from www.culturaldevelopment.net/cdnevents_past.htm

Marcela Nievas an Australian-Argentinian community cultural development practitioner,

photographer, performer and educator. described her work during the past two years in Spain and Ecuador working on community cultural development, theatre and photography projects. She initially went to Barcelona in 2004 on an Australia Council international artist residency. She was invited to return in the following year and continue working as a speaker, writer and practitioner, on consolidating the Australian model and practice of CCD projects in a European context. Marcela found that Spanish councils, artists and artswomen were very receptive to new concepts of thinking about arts and communities.



During her time in Spain, Marcela was involved in a huge range of initiatives including; the co-ordination of an international CCD conference hosted and funded by Granollers Council, Barcelona with speakers and artists from Argentina, Australia, Chile, England, Germany, Ireland, U.S; a keynote presentation at the conference on community cultural development practice in Australia, leading a week workshop and performance on forum theatre on the theme of poor housing conditions in Barcelona, and co-directing of a women-over-60 theatre process and performance at Canbassa Community Centre, Barcelona. The performance, entitled 'Espejito, Espejito' (Mirror Mirror) was based on two symbols and their significance in the women's lives: a book and an apron.



Marcela also spoke briefly about two other trips; one in which she lived with and photographed groups of ethnic Chinese women in Yunnan Province, south west China, that resulted in a solo photography exhibition titled 'Yuen Fen' ('Destiny' in Mandarin) and her participatory photography project with HIV positive and affected participants in Ecuador.

