

Open All Areas:
Agile Methodological applications of
Disability Performance Art

Final Assignment:
Creative Practice Project with Written Component

Mark J Wilson: 903153
Principles of Arts Management

Creative Practice Component

This Creative Practice component will outline how a truly ‘inclusive’ space will be created for entry into the 2018 Melbourne Fringe Festival, taking the form of a new performance art work. The creative component of the assignment is a webpage entry, that maps a blueprint of the proposed creative practice.

URL: <https://markjwilson.com.au/access-all-areas/>

The webpage entry includes the following sections:

- Thesis statement
- Methodologies
- Crowd funding campaign (publicity / marketing materials)
- Milestones
- Podcast / song samples (copyright acknowledgment)
- Images (graphic design / photo) mind map

Research (Written Component)

Making it up as I go along: Community Arts contexts Redefined

This written component will contextually address how a new performance art work for entry into the 2018 Melbourne Fringe Festival, will create a truly inclusive space, titled; ‘Access All Areas, an open space for performance art’. The most critical component of this project attempts to define a new area of research. Driven by my current employment within the not-for-profit organisation, Annecto David House, Learning Lifestyle Day Services program delivered to adults with disability. Through this work, I have experienced firsthand the positive impacts of the arts in facilitating connection, self-esteem, skills development and expression.

This is not the practice of art therapy or professional art practice – it rests somewhere between the two terms. Possibly where recreational activities cross into community arts and becomes a tool to empower individuals and communities. Primarily those who are marginalised & at risk, disadvantaged, disenfranchised, socio-economically disadvantaged, people experiencing discrimination and stigmatised. Again, this causes red flags, because these definitions are more associated within the role of social services and social work.

Motivated to make a standout

Bridgstock and Cunningham (2016, p.12) explains Creative Degrees present graduates with very poor employment outcomes within the creative industries. There appears to be a disconnect between employment outcomes of creative graduates and the growth that is consistently reported by the cultural industries. Growth in the creative industries and occupations are reported “at almost twice the growth” as other areas within the economy (Bridgstock and Cunningham, 2016, p.12). Therefore, it can be argued that there are potential untapped opportunities within the arts and culture sector. Given the right formula applied to the creative endeavour, there is every possibility a viable creative practice will achieve a level of some success.

Potential funding opportunities are due to occur with the rollout of the NDIS in the Western Region of Melbourne in 2018. This creative practice follows a self-devised Work Integrated Learning model, that will provide opportunities to “theoretical, practical and general” contexts of my creative practice (Cooper, Orrell and Bowden, 2010, p.5). However, the creative practice will follow an agile methodology. The strategy of this creative practice will apply “flexibility, learning and entrepreneurship” in response to individual tasks, rather than applying a carefully planned development process such as that of a traditional performance creation model (Moran, 2015).

Crowdfunding will be employed using the social causes platform ‘Chuffed’, to raise funds for the marketing and promotion material component of the project. McCrea, Walker and Weber (2013, P.23) explains within the not-for-profit sector negative connotations are associated to concepts of crowdsourcing. Vital opportunities to view the process to develop “partnerships, community and transformations” are missed here (2013, P.23). Running a crowdfunding

campaign for the marketing material component of the project will adopt this position raised by McCrea et al., and facilitate establishing initial support and partnerships.

Primary literature is all about disability

There is extensive primary literature outlining the intention within the Victorian arts sector to provide opportunities to disabled audiences and practitioners. For example, this details incorporations and explorations into “gender and diversity” at the core to the City of Melbourne’s arts policies (City of Melbourne, 2017). Additionally, themes of connecting objectives to facilitate “artists, audiences and communities” are also highlighted (City of Melbourne, 2014, p.10). Melbourne Fringe Festival (2016) illustrates that out of the 75,443 attendees at ticketed events in their 2016 festival, 3% identified as having a disability. This suggests that there is an opportunity within this festival to attract audiences with disabilities. There is also a valuable opportunity to strengthen the position of the policy documents and increase opportunities for disabled performers and audiences.

Its real social

Providing open ended opportunities for participants to engage with a performing arts project will increase participations. Blatt-Gross (2017, p. 55) explains community arts provide opportunities for “social cohesion” to occur. Suggesting that during the prehistoric era, rituals provided groups with the forum to bond, stressing the connection between “art and communities” to occur (2017, p,55). This is relevant in providing a space for a type of ‘ritual’ in the form of performance art to take place. Strengthening the bonds within the process of community arts identifies communications as a key component for success. Blatt-Gross (2017, p. 57) suggests the providing participants with multiple ways to engage with a project helps to foster inclusivity.

Case study: Just another arty farty party

The ‘Stage Life’ program provides access to drama tuition to local individuals with disabilities within a day services program. Elements from this model will be adopted in the execution of this project. The benefit of participation within the creative arts is well documented. This area of research is now extending to include people with disability and the

wide-reaching benefits to participate and actively engage with the performing arts. Some of the benefits according to Stickley, Crosbie and Hui (2011, 252) include communications, sensory awareness, divergent thinking, enhanced relationships, self-esteem and social skills. Specifically, “personal freedom” and the breaking down of perceived rules in performance based movement activities (2011, p.252). It is evident that the case study recommends support staff are required in the participation of arts programs (2011, p.257). This is supported by several high-profile Victorian performing arts companies that have successfully facilitated performers with disability such as Back-to-Back and Rawcus.

We know what we’re talking about

Kuppers (2011, p.85) explains performance work is interconnected to “traditional places story telling” transpiring differences into an “artistic endeavour”. Important links in performance work is carried out in the community arts contexts encompassing “multi-bodied access”. Opening space for habitation and the separation from the “dominated story” to that of the local story is critical (2011, p.85). This is best described by Kupper (2015) an academic and performer with disability who explores the embodiment of space and contextualisation of community arts:

The performance act became the performative act: a conscious inscription of difference into sedimented patterns of naturalized ‘law.’ With this, our work is not located within art therapy, changing ourselves, but within political labor, changing ourselves and our world (p.85).

This project will attempt to create a performative act that consciously employs elements of ritual and draws the audience and performers to ‘come along on a journey’. This will be achieved by using music, direct communication with the audience and audience participation performance methods.

New neighbours and besties

The following research and methodology has identified the list of primary networking contacts:

- Community Arts (Footscray Community arts, 2017) Artlife ‘disability arts’ program

- Arts Access Victoria (2017), Art Finder, inclusive creative programs in Victoria
- Annecto (2017) community engagement “inclusive community” enhancing well being
- Deakin (2017) Sexual lives and respectful relationships peer led education, a program for individuals with disability

Summary

This written component has identified an opportunity to present a new performance art work in the Melbourne Fringe Festival in 2018. This proposal has been informed by WIL style project that combines my current academic studies specifically within the area of Arts Management and employment in the not-for-profit disability services sector.

Word count 1257

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