

THINKING
THOUGHTS

- waiting room
words project

*We would like to acknowledge the traditional
custodians of the land on which we work and live.*

*We acknowledge their history and would like to
pay our respects to their culture and their elders
- past, present and future.*


INTRODUCTION

This book offers people in waiting rooms, people waiting while seeking healthcare, a gentle means to think of something different – about the creative arts in our lives and in the lives of others. What the arts can be and what they have offered us.

A glimpse of a past and of a future. Our selves, reflected and – or - different.

Many different people have offered their thoughts here. Each entry is a small reaching out to connect with you, the Reader, who they do not know.

We asked each contributor to...



‘Take a moment to think about your first personal experience that made you realise art and culture had some impact on your life’.

These contributions come from individuals and groups; they come from across the state, from rural and remote communities, to the inner city; they include community groups, service providers and university populations; they include all ages and walks of life.

We included children: from a year 5 class from an inner city school. We helped them a little more. We asked them 'What do you think the arts are, identify an art form you really enjoy, what are your feelings when you are doing art and what does the world gain from having the arts?'.

We offer them now to you.

All contributors could use any written form they liked. Importantly, we trusted them to come with their own voices and as such have allowed their idiosyncratic grammar and syntax in the editing.

It doesn't seem like much, and yet, these reaching words are sparkling and moving in g

BACKGROUND

Around the world we are coming to realise what Indigenous and First Nations peoples have long known: the creative arts are crucially important for our health and wellbeing. Today we have extensive evidence for how, in hospitals, the arts can help patients cope with serious illness, use less pain medication, stay fewer days in hospital, and rehabilitate much faster; how creative activity is often key to healing from trauma and mental illness; how the arts offer us pathways to death and through grief; how they bring communities together, preventing illness and keeping those with dementia and chronic ill health active, involved and flourishing for as long as possible.

The Institute for Creative Health (ICH) is a national peak advocacy organisation that works to give all Australians more access to the creative arts, to support their health. In 2013 the ICH assisted both the Federal and State Health and Arts Ministers to endorse The National Arts and Health Framework, which stated that the Arts contribute to the health and wellbeing of Australian individuals and communities. This provides an ongoing policy commitment to including the Arts as a core component in supporting and improving the health of all Australians.

To further this momentum, the ICH designed the Health Arts Action Leadership Project (HAALP) 2017, which established Leadership Groups in Arts and Health in each state, who could undertake advocacy and lead efforts to consolidate principles and best practices in the sector.

The Waiting Room Words Project is the Arts and Health Leadership Group NSW/ACT's 2018 commitment to HAALP. It is our offering to the network of NSW Health and the Arts key contacts established by the NSW Health and the Arts Framework, to the Local Government Cultural Officers whose projects keep communities cohesive, to the doctors, nurses and allied health practitioners who include arts in wards and offices and clinics, to the patients and families and friends and carers and community who we serve.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**'Yes they said we would happy to be involved'
And we are a little amazed, and touched, - if not
a little grateful and inspired!**

We wish to acknowledge everyone who has been involved in this project. We have contributors from rural, remote, regional and inner city areas of NSW - from an inner city Men's Shed, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art groups, an older women's drumming group, community individuals, a year 5 class from a Sydney Public School and the staff, university students and lecturers, readers groups, artists, arts facilitators and the people from all walks of life who put their hand up to be involved.

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**Members of the NSW Arts and Health Leadership
Group who have driven this project:**

Claire Hooker - Senior Lecturer, Health Humanities,
Sydney Health Ethics, Sydney School of Public
Health, University of Sydney and Chair of the NSW
Arts and Health Leadership Group.

Michelle Jersky - Program Manager: Arts in Health,
Community Development, Ngala Nanga Mai
pARenT Group, Sydney Children's Hospitals Network
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Helen Zigmund - Arts and Health Consultant Director -
The Institute for Creative Health.

Timothy Talty - Art Program Co-ordinator, Sydney
Children's Hospital Foundation.

Vic McEwan - Artist with regional and international
practice and Artistic Director of The Cad Factory.

Katherine Boydell - Professor of Mental Health,
Black Dog Institute.

Christopher Smith - Executive Director, Shared
Reading, NSW.

Paul Bennett - Primary Health Care, Broken Hill,
University of Sydney, Department of Rural Health,
Sydney Medical School.

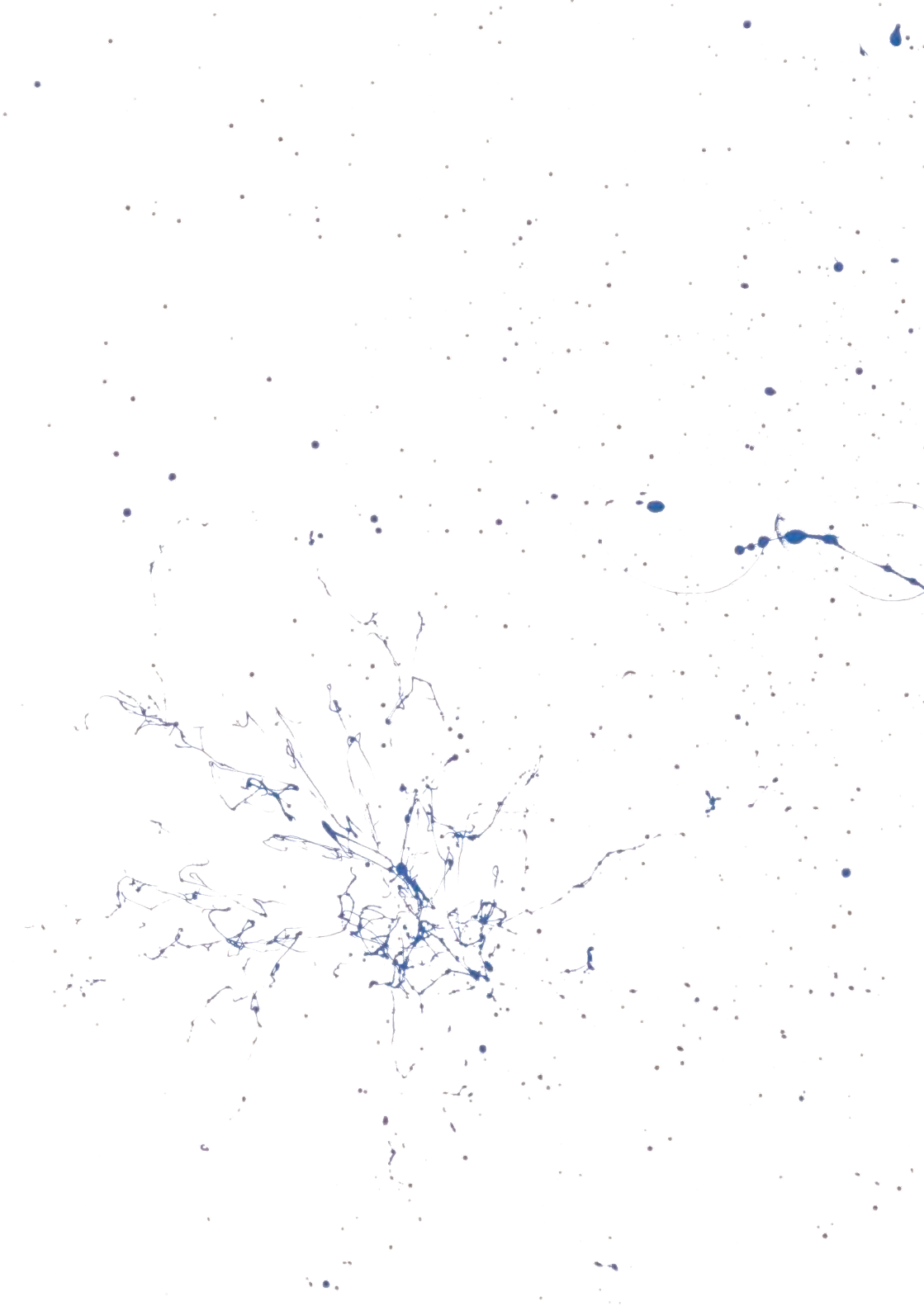
Christine McMillan - Arts and Health Coordinator,
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Peter Brown - Manager, Australian Journal of Rural
Health, National Rural Health Alliance.

Karen Kerkhoven - Visual artist, dancer &
choreographer.

Ian W Thomson - Writer, director.

With thanks



...respect & appreciate

My earliest memory of being exposed to the creative arts was when I was in kindergarten. My teacher helped us paint and sculpt. She taught me how to make an origami boat, something I can still do today. My mother also encouraged my love of the arts. She took me to theatre shows, films, took me to a myriad of brilliant exhibitions and read and bought me hundreds of books.

At a dinner party the other night a friend referred to me as a patron of the arts. I am not a patron in the traditional sense of the word, but I do support the arts by showing up. I love all art forms and there isn't much I won't see. By the end of this year I will have travelled interstate at least 5 times to see theatre shows or experience art exhibitions. I love the way that the arts can educate; get you thinking about social justice issues or helps you to understand the lives of others. It is through the arts that I have learnt empathy. I have seen the arts build community and provide homes for those that felt they didn't have one. I have seen it build a person's confidence and provide them a platform to express their emotions.

I am now a primary school teacher and I hope to help the next generation respect and appreciate the creative arts as much as I do.



Got the Blues?

Music does it

Blues or Soul

Rhythm and Blues

Rock and Roll

Dance and Move

To the Beat

Get up & dance

Move your feet!



My first experience of the benefit of art and to the community & it's importance. As a little child in Murihiku, Aotearoa, watching Maori elders prepare the flax then weaving baskets and mats.

This is where I
learned about
culture.






I learnt very early that the ability

to create allowed me to get lost in what I was doing. Creating to my own style, agenda, to do differently than others. This started when I was very young perhaps 6 or 7 and I was given a little child's sewing machine, I would design clothes for my dolls and then put them together with the machine & some hand sewing creating some interesting & unusual pieces which I loved. I would lose myself in creating and making. This has continued throughout all my life. The ability to get lost in the creative & making process has been a catalyst for survival in my life.

...catalyst
for survival





...to be
transported,
comforted,
embraced,
stimulated

I suppose
I have two
memories that
make sense of the
arts in my life. The first is
the sitting around the fire on
a Friday after dinner at the age of
between 6 & 7. I remember gazing into
the red hot coals, being drawn into its fierce
mesmeric movement whilst listening to music.
Some evenings we had a choice, a number from
1 - 200 or more of the catalogued classical recordings...
it seemed like the number was more than anything I had ever
counted - though I'm not sure I always liked it. Then there were the
favourites, time and time again I would ask for 73. Today I'm not sure
if it was Vivaldi or Mozart. So many years ago and to this day that is what
I want from my music, to be transported, comforted, embraced, stimulated.

Then at about 12 - again after years of going to museums and galleries I saw, as if for the first time, the Execution Lady Jane Grey. I don't think that I had realised that art could explore so clearly the complexities of a single moment. But there it was in this (as I was later to appreciate) melodramatic painting 'before' an execution. The range of emotions was profound; the executioner's gentle hand hovering above the axe, hesitant, ambivalent, the turning away of the ladies in waiting to shield the emotional outpouring and the Chancellor, a father figure who was required to painfully witness the death of an innocent for political gain.

All that in a painting most people walk passed,
in a gallery of thousands of visual stories.
That's the draw then - that there is an
access point to the arts for us all,
because they are a reflection
of who we were, who we
are & who we might
become.



...who we were,
who we are &
who we might
become

How does a left hander knit?

As a young child I wanted to learn how to knit. My elder sister also wanted to learn but my mother said that as I was a left - hander, she could not teach me. I started very slowly and when I found that all the patterns were (and are) written for right-handers, I knew that I would need to acquire this skill. I was so determined, I persevered, now I knit all the time and am still slightly ambidextrous.



Dear people,

Aerial is my favourite art because it makes me feel free like a butterfly on a shiny Tuesday night with all the beautiful lights glowing around my feathers making me feelhappy. On the soft warm silk gliding around adding with the rough hard strong metal hoolahoops doing a sort of ballet by wasting all my oxygen.....this wonderful piece of art painting through my sorrow which keeps me happy.



When I first started art, I drew a little squiggle, I was so happy that I did a little wiggle. Then I was introduced to something new! A comic it was called, I was astounded, amazed. I thought a hard lot, some people called me crazed! When I completed my comic it was called 'Rock'. It was about a guy and a sock! A few years later, some people were shocked, my comics were getting flocked! Now I write this poem to show comics rock! Until I wrote a comic called (Lock)!



To express myself I write, my dad is a writer so I grew up around it and learned to love, poetry and creative writing are my personal favourites. It makes feel like I am creating and living in my own world. I do it to relax and make myself and others happy. I think writing poetry and creative writing makes the world a better place because people enjoy reading a good story and a writer likes to write a good story.



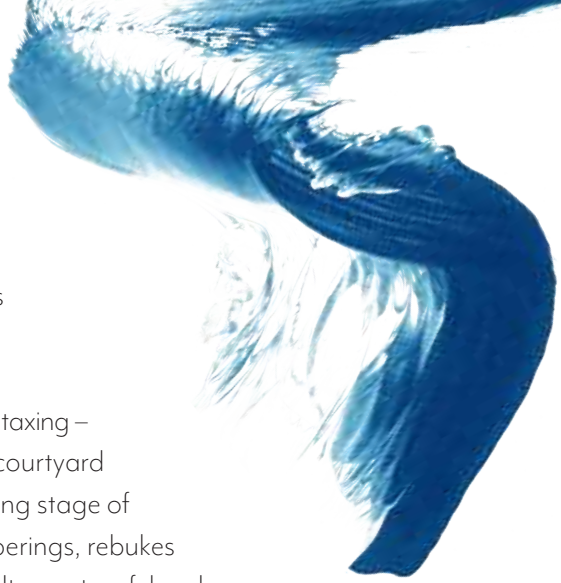
How art saved me. High school
was challenging. My family
moved between continents while
I grew up and my second high
school felt like a detention centre
crawling with sneering tribes
all vying for significance.

The environment was taxing –
a walk across the courtyard
was an exhausting stage of
judging whisperings, rebukes
and retorts. It was stressful and
I felt miserable. The art room
was my solace.

...the
art
room
was
my
solace

I have always loved making
art but here, an expanded
understanding breathed its
way into my consciousness.

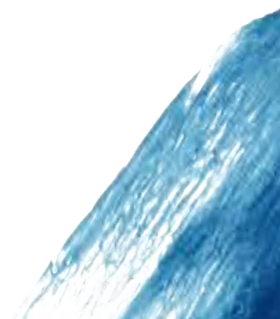
There, repeatedly stroking
clay into form or dragging
inks across a silk screen I
became aware of a kind of
calmness. A calmness that
became still, open – inquiring.
I could feel myself - more of
myself. I felt connected to
something bigger – something
with endless potentials. I could
enter worlds that reached far
beyond the school grounds,
my accent, my clothes, my leg
shape and caring if I was liked,
if I was good enough.

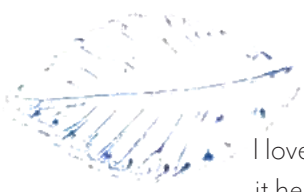


My imagination was carried
away into thinking about
colours, crafting techniques
drawn from the past and
possibilities for the future. In
an hour I could go to ancient
Greece vases and Picasso's
cubism. I could witness my
hand and mind working
together, morphing a hunk
of earthy smelling clay into a
form. I could be an alchemist
– dull pigment slurries became
prismatic glass in the kiln and
vivid batik dyes emerged from
yellow, fluid baths.

The loss of shattered ceramic fish
with thousands of hand carved
scales, offset by success in firing a
delicately glazed, Victorian child's
shoe. This was a wave I could ride
and here making art, I could see
myself unfold - my imagination,
my stories, my body's know how –
me with the world of matter.

At the end of lunch hour in the
art room, I could walk out
renewed, calm and inspired
with ideas that helped me
escape the confining feeling of
those school walls. **Art saved
me. 30 years on, it still does.**





I love drumming because
it helps me reduce stress.

I love being Loud
and Rocking Out.

It's so fun performing

Dramatic!

Rowdy!

Up lifting!

Making money!

Miraculous!

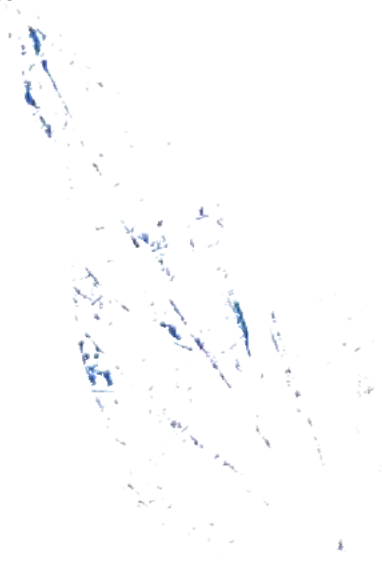
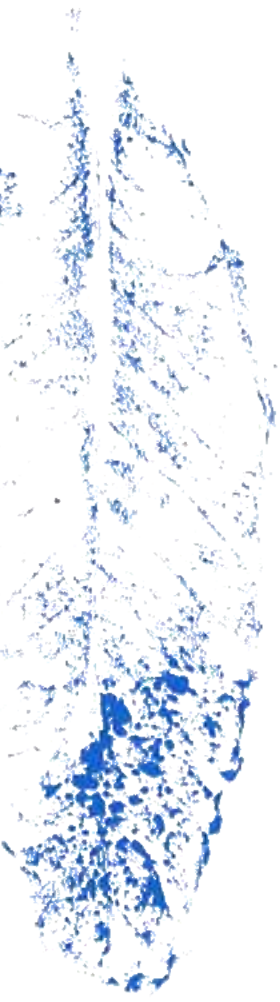
International!

Nice people great!

I LOVE DRUMMING.



I like singing because it makes me feel
like I have wings and I have left the world
behind. It lets my feelings go through the
lyrics and it is what makes me let go of all
the bad things and get on with life. To push
through the wall and take it down!



The tweet of a bird

The sound of the river

The thud of paws. That's why I love poetry!
The words flow together like streams joining a creek.
The lines of words are beautiful as the tweet of a bird.
That's why I like poetry, I hope you like it too.



Freedom from the world.

Rhythm, the beat, the tapping of the feet,

it all comes from singing.

My heart folds into a million pieces.

I mostly sing when I am in the shower,
not always in front of people.

My friends say that I have a hidden talent
but I don't know. Freedom means singing to me



I don't care
what I dance
I don't care
if I prance
I'm just free
because it's me!
I always try to fly!
It's the thing I love
And it's as soft as a dove.
If I see

It means I can be.

Thank you Mum and Dad
For the experience I've had.



Watching my father paint in the early mornings at home. Dad started painting when I was about 7 years of age. He would agonise over every painting he did, sometimes happy, often frustrated but very stimulated. He had one huge picture where he couldn't quite get two figures right and I remember my brother and I giving him options as to how to paint them. He would take his art to art fairs but never sold any. So we had a lot of "Dad" Art at home. But when he died they were the most valuable "parts of him" that we still had. I still have that big picture at home and like to touch the acrylic knobs on it when I am thinking of him. So Art to me is deeply personal – it is a way I can see into another person, what they were thinking and feeling – and it makes me feel connected to them.



...art to me
is
deeply personal

I used to work in Black Townships in South Africa, where resources for creative pursuits were minimal and one day I was working with a group of young children and their teachers. We embarked on a painting project and within minutes the children were animated, engaged with their teachers, gesticulating wildly and sharing their efforts in image making with each other. In that moment and subsequently, I bore witness to the way in which art could be transformative on an individual level and in entire communities.



Art has always been a part of my life. I do not remember a time when it wasn't, and I hope that I never have to.



My siblings and I would go to the beach with family and collect shells. Then when we got home, we would help sort the shells. We would sort the shells according to sizes, big and small and also according to shapes and colours. When I was young, my mum and Aunty taught me how to shell a small pair of shoes. There was a certain way to do it as they had to match each other. That is when I knew I would one day become an artist. Now I'm an artist – I paint and work with shells on occasion.



During the war in the UK my grandparents lived in a small holding in the country. Buses were few and far between so my short little 3 year old legs were used to walking, but they did get tired towards the end of a walk (no pushchairs were available). My mother used to sing nursery rhymes to encourage me to walk in step with her singing, then she would not have to carry me. It worked! During the bleak wartime winters mum would also pull twigs off trees and when we got home we would mould different colours into the leaves to stick on the twigs to brighten our home.

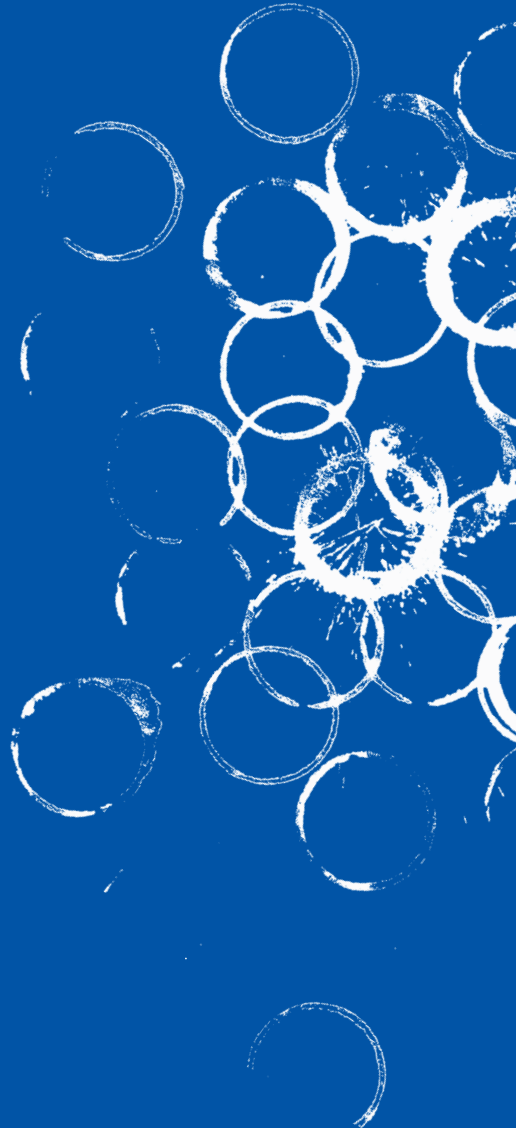


My first reflections are of my mother always being busy with her hands. Besides cooking and general housework she was always busy with her knitting needles and crochet hook, producing lots of lovely clothing which we were in need of, especially after the war. I was always fascinated watching her at her craft. My interest in craft therefore grew and I wanted to learn how she did things. Over the years this has given me lots of joy as well as enabling me to meet lots of other people.



...when I hear “Maggie”

When I was a child we lived in the country. My only company was my parents. When my mother was washing or sewing she would sing to me – all the old songs that I loved, like the song “Maggie”. To this day, 70 odd years later, I still relive those days when I hear “Maggie”.





First personal experience – it’s difficult to determine the first one. My parents didn’t visit art galleries however loved music and played the old 78s – mostly classical – Beethoven, Chopin and for my dad Tauber (a singer). This love of music resonated when I first learnt to play the piano. The “abbreviated” classics would have their composers spinning in their graves. However, with years – the music did finally partially resemble the composer’s versions.

From there as adults, my husband and I have attended art galleries and included our family – visits to Canberra to see The Book of Kells and the girls love attending.

Recently, we all saw Rembrandt and the Golden Age and all loved and discussed different aspects.

The music has morphed into ballet with one daughter learning for 15 years. So now we have all experienced music through ballet, concerts and eisteddfods. Exposure at an early age builds an appreciation that generalises to other aspects – architecture, art, music etc. and binds the family together.



When I was a child, my parents would send me to holiday with my grandparents who lived in a country home at the top of a mountain on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland.

...I held the brushes,
but my grandfather
guided every stroke

While I was there I would go for long walks that always turned into amazing adventures of imagination with my grandfather and his dog Winston. My grandmother baked bread and made jam for perfect breakfasts. In the evenings, we would stay up late, sitting around the open fireplace, enjoying books and old records. My grandfather was a painter. In his youth, he travelled around Europe on a motorbike, staying in farmhouses and earning his dinner and accommodation by painting the family.

My grandfather introduced me to the joy of drawing and painting and we spent many long afternoons creating our works of art. He made me believe that I was very good but I have no idea if it was true or not. After each session, we would meticulously clean the oil paints from the brushes and put everything away for next time.

In the years that followed my grandfather went almost blind, which was a tragedy. And then when I was 14, my father (my grandfather's son) had a heart attack and died. In the months that followed I went to stay with my grandparents and we decided to paint a portrait of my father. I held the brushes, but my grandfather guided every stroke. It was a time that will stay with me forever, even now, long after my grandparents have passed.



... STRAIGHT

INTO
MY
SOUL

Visiting an Aboriginal art exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art many years ago.

I had not known much about Aboriginal Art and culture, having grown up overseas. I was profoundly moved by the representation through art of the complexity and beauty of Aboriginal culture.

The visual rather than verbal depiction somehow travelled straight into my soul. I felt moved, altered, humbled in a deep and personal way, unimpeded by difficulties finding the right word, sounding “too this” or “too that” – simply feeling and opening up to the flood of cultural expression.



When I was young, I used to attend dancing classes and it became like a routine, just like going to school. It was sometimes even tedious.

But looking back now, I realise how much impact this has made on my life growing up. I learned about teamwork, community, hard work, persistence and the importance of these to succeed.

I learned about giving to others and charity as we used to run charity concerts and galas to fundraise for the needy. My life in dance taught me about life in general embedded in art.



Walking through the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican City I was in awe of the spectacular art works and attention to detail. It highlighted to me the importance of art over history and how spiritual it can be.



It **highlighted** to me the importance of art over history and how **spiritual** it can be

My personal experience with art and culture started at school. I attended a religious primary school, and was encouraged from a very early age, to read books, colour in pages and make drawings and paintings about the religious festivities we celebrate. This experience was important, it was a way of expressing my understanding of the traditional history and celebrations that my family and community was involved in.





I like
role
play because
it makes me **feel**
free
and creative.

I can
think
a story
and I can **be anything**,
so I can be creative
and also free.

And after finishing
the role play,
when
everyone claps,

I
can
be
happy!

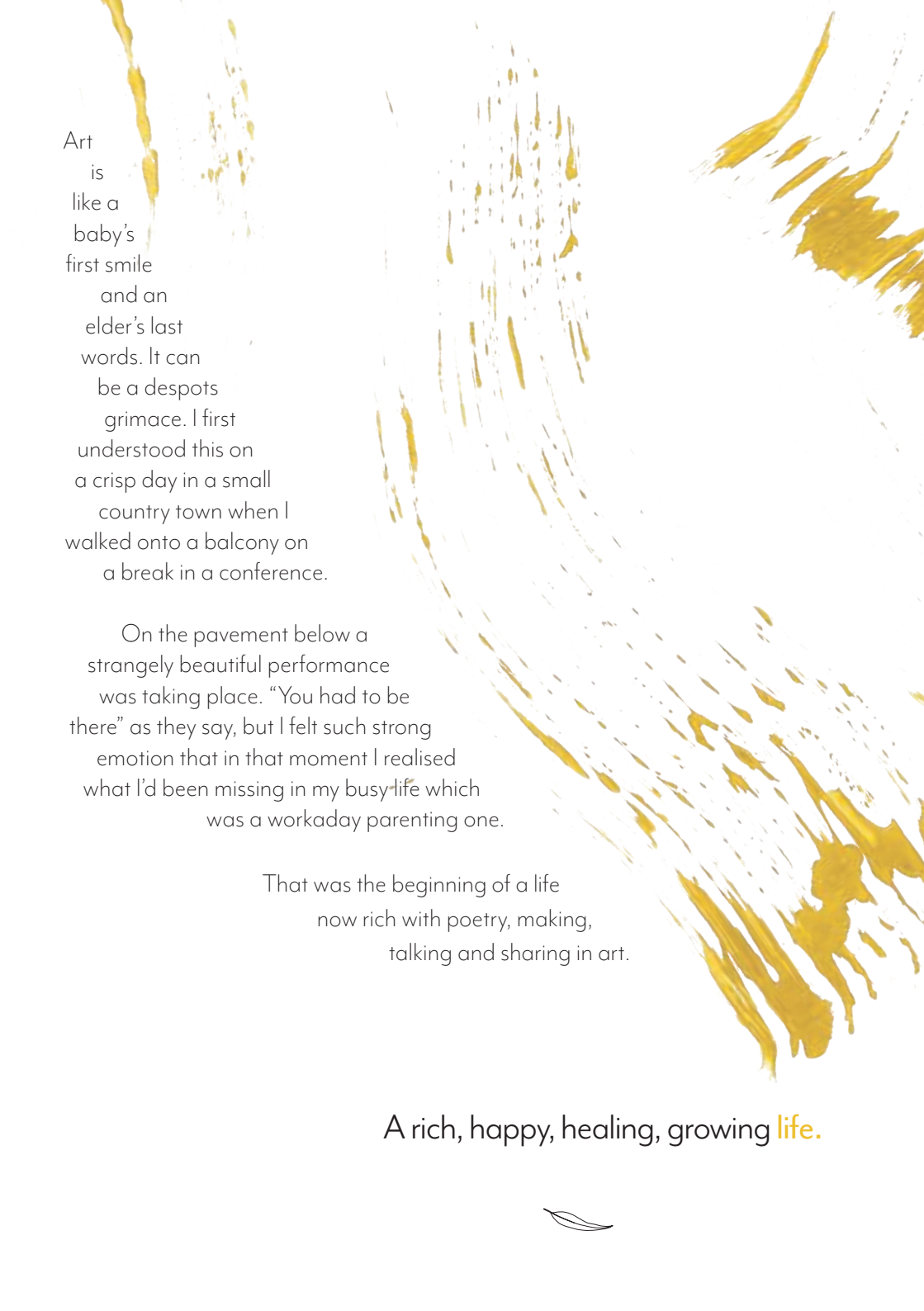


As a young child I attended an old, beautifully built stone church with **glorious stained glass** windows. On the front were crossed flags of Australia and the UK (I think). The sermons would go over my head of course, but when the magnificent pipe organ played and the people sang, **you felt connected to the place and the congregation**, and reflected on the wonder of the world. It made me look at details of man-made structures and how they reflected nature; the beautiful wood of the **pews with the engraved ends** – even though the seats got hard after a while!



At school I remember going to the art gallery in Sydney, mind you that was a long time ago. After this I learnt fabric painting at Tafe for a few years, did some pencil drawings with an artist friend of mine and learnt piano for 6 years of my life.



The background of the page is white, adorned with several large, expressive brushstrokes in a golden-yellow hue. These strokes are most prominent on the right side, where they sweep downwards and outwards, creating a sense of movement and energy. Some strokes are thick and saturated, while others are lighter and more delicate. The overall effect is that of a dynamic, artistic composition.

Art
is
like a
baby's
first smile
and an
elder's last
words. It can
be a despot's
grimace. I first
understood this on
a crisp day in a small
country town when I
walked onto a balcony on
a break in a conference.

On the pavement below a
strangely beautiful performance
was taking place. "You had to be
there" as they say, but I felt such strong
emotion that in that moment I realised
what I'd been missing in my busy life which
was a workaday parenting one.

That was the beginning of a life
now rich with poetry, making,
talking and sharing in art.

A rich, happy, healing, growing **life.**



When I retired I wondered what the future held for me apart from travel. One day in my letterbox I found a leaflet from the local TAFE, listing courses that were coming up. A new course 'Writing for Pleasure' was available, so after making enquiries I enrolled.

...this was a **life** changing moment

For the next 10 years I went to TAFE for one day a week, made lots of new friends, expanded my mind and did lots of writing. I'd always loved to read but had never been very interested in poetry. After a couple of years I was able to win competitions with poetry & short stories that I'd written. The culmination was having my own book published.


TAFE also taught me how to take better photos & how to relay them onto my computer.

This led to me winning prizes for photography.

All this led me to join the Narrandera arts which further expanded my mind with mosaic & a variety of arts and craft.

I'm no expert but have enjoyed learning new skills & meeting new people.





I was in year 6 at school. I was in an art class and I was watching the boy next to me drawing. He was drawing a Michelangelo sculpture (I think it was Moses). I was amazed and

blown away


by his skill - particularly the hands. I knew then that I would always be around art and creativity in my life.



In school we had an art teacher who was very interested in students. Used to spend lunchtime in the art classroom. Painting fabric, made scarfs, it (the scarf) was around for years. She was the only teacher that showed real interest in what she was teaching. Every time I wore the scarf,

I thought of
her.





I saw a painting of an old industrial site in Balmain. Before I saw the painting I thought the site was an industrial eyesore and should be removed. After viewing the painting, I could see the value of this old historic site.

Now I appreciate archeological sites and appreciate poor housing in Asian cities. The grunge has value.



My parents particularly my mother made me realise that art and culture were an important part of life. I remember very early on being taken to galleries in Sydney and shown different works. Music was always important. My father had a music system that could be transported throughout the house - very modern for its time.



My first aha moment was a realisation that I have to work with what I have - I have always had this feeling but especially when I was a teenager, composing, playing violin and engaging in devised movement/ theatre work - I have many talents.

I have had to tap into this feeling again and accept that I do many things and to not fall into a trap of being a man of many talents and a master of none. I had to change my mindset and be a master of one - which was myself. I had to start to look at what I create as an artist with a new level of responsibility and take care of my arts practice. To engage in a healthy discourse with my art and see what I can achieve with integrity and respect for myself and those around me in a cultural context. Mastering finite details of a piece of music for example - takes time in Aboriginal contexts and non-Indigenous contexts.

Time is limited in the modern day so I have to use my time wisely. Build up to the occasion of a performance. This is what interests me as an artist - The work that goes into a performance. It is the place of many discoveries about yourself and the world. Our interpretations of the world are so important and as artists we interpret the world in so many ways. To engage with this in a mature way is another level I have opened up to and being brave enough to rise up to challenges in this way.



...Art has
been a
significant
component
of my life

Art has been a significant component of my life. When I was a child I would sit with my grandmother whilst she and the Aunties did weaving. My mother and sister now is teaching my daughter traditional Aboriginal art. Involving her in their projects. At the moment they are working on a possum skin cloak. It is a beautiful way of passing down the Aboriginal culture. I find using art is a very important tool in my clinical practice. It provides the opportunity to have difficult conversations about trauma and assist clients to remain regulated.



My first experience of the arts was at primary school. We were taken, I think by the school to a concert hall in a suburb of Newcastle (Hamilton). The performance was called, I think from memory “meet the orchestra”. We were introduced to each individual instrument and how they fitted into the whole orchestra.

Finally there was a combined performance and I do remember feeling absolutely touched by the power of the sound. I knew then, as a small child, that it was a special moment.





We were a lower working class family living out in Mt Druitt amidst a lot of domestic violence. After a particularly awful episode we stayed with our Nan for a few days and decided to go and to see the film version of the Royal Ballet's Tales Of Beatrix Potter in the city. It was such an exciting day. A double-decker bus trip into the city from North Ryde then to see this amazing work with animals dancing - many perched up high on their toes (pointed). When we got back to her home I wouldn't stop dancing for days. Even weeks later I was flitting about our home in Mt Druitt - much to my father's horror. I was about 7 years old at the time.

...I suddenly realised I could
express
subject matter I related to

Many years later, at the age of 19, a female friend convinced me to join her to see a dance company from the UK for Sydney Festival 1987. I was transfixed - just as I was many years before - but this time because of the content as much as the dancing. The company was Michael Clark and Dancers. Very technical dancers but the music was composed by UK punk band The Fall and the content explored notions of gender, sexuality, diversity and perversity. It was the ultimate turning point for me as a young queer who'd survived a lot of domestic violence and extreme homophobic abuse from my father for so many years. It took several months to drum up the courage to attend class but it was a sure-fired moment bound to happen after that performance. I suddenly realised that dance could express subject matter I related to. That it could express so many things within the greater spectrum of what is deemed community.





...Going from fear
to art basically
was what had a
huge
effect on my life

When my mother left my father after domestic violence we went to the refuge of my grandparents house at Castlecraig in the morning I would wake to a huge dining room table filled with Kure dolls faces that my mother hand painted into the night.

There was also a Monet Van Gogh and Degas artworks on the walls and much talk of art.... my grandfather doing drawing with me and telling lots of stories of the Irish little folk who lived in match boxes for beds in the rocks they cooked the little fish he caught and I would play and dance fairies in the garden my grandmother would also speak with great excitement about when she saw Pavlova dance and she sat in a box at the theatre. Going from fear to art basically was what had a huge effect on my life.



When I completed a school art project and had other kids telling me how much they liked it and when I wrote creative short stories and other kids wanted to hear more.



TV AVAILABLE IN THE
WAITING ROOM
AND ON GAY B.C. 24
IF NOT JAMES MORISON
MUSIC ON PA
PLAYBOY AND
MOTORING MAGAZINE



That's right, a beautiful art room,
with colourful raffia

h
a
n
g
i
n
g

from the roof.

Loved the smell as well.



The burbs, in the 70's, our house was full of art. Mum was a keen gatherer of mainly paintings and sculpture, she didn't have much cash but she collected nonetheless...we were surrounded. I guess you could say that art and culture was in my life for as long as I can recall. I absolutely connect memory, art and creativity in the same breath; the following event really sums it up.

There was a particular Saturday afternoon, as usual lots of people, (kids and grownups) at our place. I don't know what the catalyst was, but mum handed us a whole load of texta, paint and implements. We were given permission to graffiti the rumpus room, which consisted of gloss white besser block walls. The next few hours was a lovely delirium of painting, drawing, poetry, slogans, dissertations, streams of consciousness and general unbridled creativity, from a bunch of people who probably didn't realize they were capable of it. There was conversation, laughter, scheming, collaboration, freedom and a wonderful *mes*. Subsequent visitors were really taken with it, so much to absorb in a previously dreary space!! We loved it, partly because of how it looked and the fact that it felt a bit like something you shouldn't have done. Eventually it was painted over and I remember thinking that was ok because it was almost more important that it had happened at all.

So I realize, that graffiti day was when I figured out you didn't have to be prodigiously talented to create. Forty years later, I don't have a graffiti adorned rumpus room in my home but we are surrounded nonetheless.



This memory is
not really my own.
It is my Oma's...

although I remember
her telling me about
it when I was a little
girl, sitting around
her dining room
table, half way
through a bowl
of ice cream,
surrounded by
pictures and
porcelain. She
was a little girl
herself, a visitor in
Paris for the 1937
world fair, when she
saw it – the Nike of
Samothrace, the
2000-year-old
winged sculpture
that sits to this day
in the Louvre. For
some reason it
was lit up blue.

And its beauty hit her in the
sternum, right at **the very core
of her being**. She thought it was
the most magical thing that
she had ever seen. I thought
it was the most magical
thing I had ever heard.

Transfixed.

Transported to ancient
Greece, to pre-war Paris,
and back, now, to that
dining table with
my darling Oma
remembering
her youth.





...planted
the seed
for my
lifelong
interest in
travel and
learning

High-school 'Art Theory' classes with the wonderful Christine Siyali involved traversing continents and civilisations alike. I particularly recall being immersed in the ancient art of the Minoans – as wide-eyed with fascination as the profile-depicted men and women in the art.

Through their art – from enormous frescoes to vessels for carrying water and wine, we caught a glimpse of their everyday activities, conquests, celebrations and fantasies. I remember being attracted to the blues and greens, the colours, textures, organic shapes and forms, and their obvious affinity and connection to the sea which I think I too have always been drawn to.

This Bronze age civilisation flourished in the second and third century BC and declined around 1100 BC, though I recognise the wide influences of this period in textiles, architecture, graphics and patterns to this day, and of course this exposure to art and culture planted the seed for my lifelong interest in travel and learning.



Lots of Pictures on

Lots of Walls

When I was 14 my father had his first heart attack and we began a journey of emergency rooms & hospital wards that lasted for over a decade & half, through heart attacks, renal failure & eventually cancer. I spent a lot of time staring at walls in an era before mobile phones and in situations where even a book provided no solace. Sometimes, not always, but sometimes, through careful planning or just serendipity, those walls held pictures and I found that I could lose myself in them. Exploring their beauty, disdaining their ugliness, but always, always finding in them another place, another feeling, the magic of escape. Art still has that magic for me. I have chosen it through galleries, museums & open spaces, it never let me down.



...lost

in the magic of an artwork

When I was little, my Mother would read to me every night without fail. It was probably my favourite part of the day. I would snuggle under my warm blanket and be excited for what adventure would unfold in the pages before me.

The stories would come alive through the beautiful illustrations, especially in the Golden Books. The bright colours and sweet faces of the characters made me feel excited and warmed my heart. They made me feel like anything was possible and I knew that one day I would write and create little universes of my own.

There is nothing like being lost in the magic of an artwork, even now as an adult, I love to sit down and admire the artwork in children's books, read them to my children and know I am instilling magic in their hearts.



I love playing my guitar because I can let go of all my stress and the bad things that happened that day. When I play my guitar, I release the true meaning inside me. I can express my emotions like if I am sad, I can play something sad or something happy to cheer myself up. When I feel frustrated I just pick up my guitar and release the stress. My favourite thing is play songs that make other people happy, watching them smiling and laughing is my game. I will never leave my guitar and stop playing because it is the one thing that I love.



My first personal experience of culture was that of my first memory – in that it was my first recollection of something ‘outside’ of myself. It was a visit to Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh, where I was born. My mother would take me there regularly as an infant. My memory is of climbing a shiny, black rock, which I now realize was the steps leading to the monument to Sir Walter Scott. I never knew what this stone block was until I revisited Edinburgh as an adult.



One step, two steps and
I'm into someone else.
Taking out my soul feeling
empty then refilling it slowly.

Writing is my future.
Writing my path.

Leading to happiness, death,
sadness and wonder.
I'm in charge now
I can write my life as
I live in it, only as someone else.
Not needing to work out what

I'm writing down, it is just a
long stream of happiness going

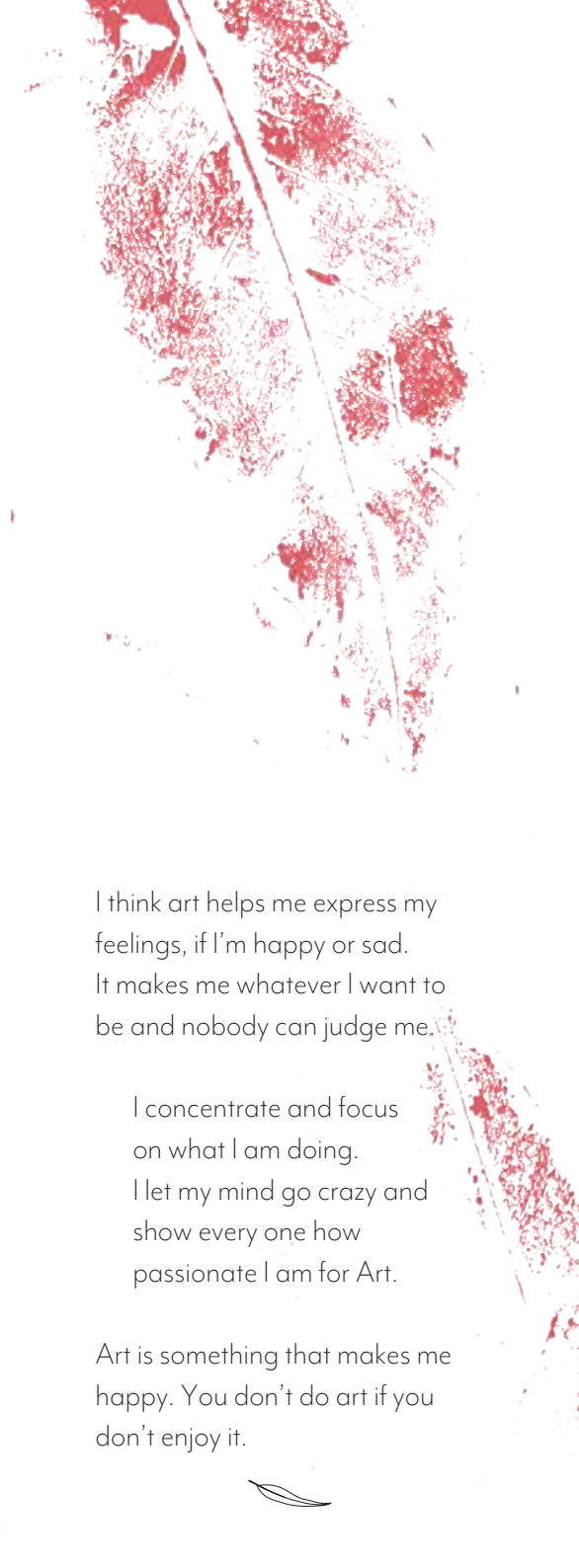
somewhere in the distance.
You can never get the line
where the land meets the sun
so the river keeps on flowing
and flowing for ever.



I think art helps me express my
feelings, if I'm happy or sad.
It makes me whatever I want to
be and nobody can judge me.

I concentrate and focus
on what I am doing.
I let my mind go crazy and
show every one how
passionate I am for Art.

Art is something that makes me
happy. You don't do art if you
don't enjoy it.



...can't you see the light now on her hair?

Watching my father furiously trying to finish a portrait commission. It was a rainy afternoon and quite cold and drafty in his studio. The smell of paints, mixed with humid rain and my mum's cooking. My father had been working on this portrait for about a fortnight and it's due quite soon. To my untrained child eyes, the lady in the painting looked alright but my father kept tinkering with her blonde hair, he said he really wanted to capture the light play on her blonde strands.

I left him in his studio till late that evening and he was still there at dawn the next morning really exhausted but so pleased with the result.

'Can't you see the light now on her hair?' he asked me. Yes, there were hundreds of different colours dancing in her hair and later on apparently the client was so happy with the portrait. My father was proud of his work, it didn't matter that he didn't get paid much, he always tried his very best for his art.



...still fills me
with excitement
and awe

When completing my HSC my class took a trip to see the Sydney Biennale. I remember being in awe of the scale, detail and emotive nature of many of the works - particularly those site specific installations. Here it occurred to me that the ability of art to be part of everyday public life was powerful and impactful and I realised that I could use my own practice to create socially engaging works that would have positive impacts on the communities and public spaces - that they were a part of the interactive and socially engaging nature of art still fills me with excitement and awe for the powerful and emotive impact it can have.





At about 8 years of age my mother got me to dress in Polish Folk costume (Gorali) and learn folk dancing. The costume was colourful and made me appreciate the artistic work that went into the decoration using motifs.



Hot, hot summer;

tar melting
in so
on
the street

I'm sitting with my feet in the gutter, poking the tar with a just finished lollystick.

Up the street I saw my friend Alec with his older brother carrying a big box, or something like that, and putting it on the pavement.

Alec went into his house and came back with some black round plastic discs.

Buddy Holly 'That'll Be The Day' played out on his Dansette – and I was hooked. My uncle got me a guitar for my 10th birthday.

I'm 70 now and still get a kick out of the opening riff.



I visited the Tate Modern Art Gallery to see a retrospective of Picasso and Matisse paintings done during the Second World War. The contrast of Picasso's cubism and Matisse's modern stunned me. During the war of great and terrible events, the artists produced beautiful and wonderful art, which moved me, and impressed on me that even in adversity, one can have hope.




...even in adversity, one can have hope

I used to witness my mother enjoying books and at about 11, I read my first book and was mesmerized by the experience. Have not stopped reading since and the great enjoyment it gives me is addictive.



The first experience with art that had an impact on my life was listening to the bands of Nirvana and Soundgarden. These bands' music gave a perspective on what it is like to be young and social in the modern age.





When I was in Year 12
and doing my HSC, I
developed really horrific,
debilitating anxiety. I
found it very hard to do
'normal' things like eating
(thanks, nausea) or talking
to people when I was anxious.

No one really knew what was
going on with me, and I didn't
go to see a psychologist until
about two years later.

It was art and culture – in the form
of television shows and books –
that really got me through.

I would watch my favourite television
shows or read books as a kind of coping
strategy when I had really bad anxiety.

I remember being so thankful at the
time for the wonderful writers/directors /
producers and other creative people who
were responsible for the creation of these
shows and books.

Art and culture is by no means the only way to
treat mental illness, but they are an important
part of it.



Well, what did I know as an 11 year old skinny girl who hadn't grown into the correct size of my hands and feet yet, there at a local comprehensive school in Dorset UK (1976). Not yet having life experience to know any other difference than some 'Thatcherism' flavoured landscape with working-class parental complaints to "stop asking for things" – life at this time seemed "bleak".

Suddenly – my eyes meet the eyes of another staring down at me from a huge semi-torn poster pasted to a youth centre ceiling.

"Wow" – I thought – "I don't know what this is" – but it's "big energy" and "I suddenly feel alive" and "connected" to something other in the world than anything else so far that had tried to pass itself off as "it just is".

Yes, Johnny "Rotten" Lydon of the Sex Pistols – a rude greeting and colourful awakening!! Culture – (and it's counter) – a fluid being never "done" thus gifting us all potential to shape and contribute to "what is".



...gifting us
all potential
to shape and
contribute

When I sing or listen to music I feel
In do what ever I want and no one can stop me.
It helps me relax and clear my mind. It helps me think
I am Boss and I like being Boss.
It's really a fun thing for me to do.



Dear people, I love comedy and role play,
the reason I like it is because I like the
pleasure of making someone laugh.
I think every person in the world no matter
how poor, how rich and how smart,
deserves a laugh.



Once upon a time, a boy called River
loved to shake his booty whenever
he had the time to do it, he was
a huge fan of the 80's technically speaking he
liked these bands; ACDC,
The Beatles and others like that.



In year 1, I guess I was about 5 or 6 years old, we had to draw a picture at school. We were told to make it clear and do it carefully. I drew a picture of a house. These pictures were then turned into plates that we could keep. My parents still have this plate. My picture wasn't perfect but my parents thought it was. I find it interesting looking back now that of all the things a young child could have chosen to draw, I chose a house. It must have been a happy and important place to me. It still is!



I like the art of drawing, because I can just put anything on a piece of paper or any other material and with just a pencil or other drawing object and I like it when my drawings come to life. When I draw I feel there is no care in the world and no one is disturbing me. When I draw I feel free and alive. I love drawing with pencil, how the lead spreads across the paper. If you can't bring some to life in reality, like a monster, you can definitely bring it to life on a piece of paper!




I'm an international student in Australia. I was born and raised in Indonesia. This is my first experience living and studying abroad. This first experience makes me aware that cultural differences really exist. I grew up being told not to speak unless I'm 100% sure of what about to say is valuable. When I was at school back in my country my teacher would deliberately tell me "You're wrong! How stupid you are!", in front of my class-mates. The experience made me a person who is always anxious to talk and tell people my opinion. But things are very different here in Australia.

...but things are very different here in Australia

People appreciate your opinion, and in fact you are encouraged to talk. No one will tell you if you are wrong, even if you are – they tell you nicely. I still have my anxiety to talk better talking here

(although I'm still afraid to talk).





...our love
of adventure
our relishing
of risk

I remember being completely swept away by the characters and settings in Enid Blyton's 'The Children of the Cherry Tree Farm.' I was a young girl of maybe 9 or 10 and growing up on a farm in Australia, whereas The Cherry Tree children were from a bygone age and growing up in England. We were very different and yet we shared similarities. One similarity apart from farm life was our love of adventure, our relishing of risk and a little bit of naughtiness, and maybe even an element of danger. At the end, it was also wonderful to seek refuge, tenderness and safety in the familiar environs of home cooked food & mum and dad's warm embrace. Alike, but different. Opposite ends of the world, yet the same. **At home and away, in art and culture.**



I can't remember a time when I was not aware that art & culture had an impact on my life. I grew up on a farm in western NSW and my mother had a passion to create and listen to music. She collected records, which we listened to a lot of the time. She made beautiful clothes, bought and shared wonderful art books. She drew then she painted, pottery kit making and batik dyeing, most of the things I got involved in. On the rare occasion we were able to, we would see art exhibitions. Mum got involved in the local art club – forever creating all sorts of things. My father dabbled in pottery and created in his own way, building, working on the farm. But he was so proud of mum's artwork that he would show everyone the things she had made. For years my creativity was put on hold. But with my mental health problems, it became a way to channel my mind into positive things. It helped to develop relationships and notice my sense of worth.



My parents sometimes had friends over for dinner & canasta games. This was back in the early 80s. My brother and I weren't invited. I was lucky though to be given a small TV in my bedroom to keep us both occupied and out of the way during such nights.

It just so happened that on one of these nights the ABC began showing the collection of the old Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers movies, all 10 of them. As a 9-year-old, I was instantly captured by the singing, the dancing, the costumes, the set design, and the often hilarious scripts. I was hooked, and I needed to watch all 10 films whether canasta nights were on or not.

From that moment I knew I wanted to sing and I wanted to dance. And that they could both be used as a means to an end (in the movies Fred always got Ginger after a dance). But they were so beautiful and capturing.

I was dazzled by this,
from then on.



There are so,
so many. Art, music,
performance, writing,
poetics.

Personally, I remember an
early drawing competition at
school where I submitted a
drawing that won a ribbon.
Then singing in choirs, drums
in Brass & Pipe bands, and
then escaping to play guitar
in beat bands at parties and
dances as a suburban teenager.

Also as an aspiring thespian at school
as a teenage Marc Antony in Julius
Caesar: 'Friends, Romans, Countrymen.'
A pattern was emerging regarding a sense
of identity, belonging, and making connections
with people through these various Art forms.

It set me on a trajectory of discovery and dedication,
which persists today as vocation. Arts & Culture
are 'intrinsic, not opposed' (Hartley) to our
personal and community health and
security. Their impact has been
the making of my life.



...it set me on a trajectory of discovery and dedication

I was seven when my parents signed me up for my very first dance class. It was jazz and I became hooked. I spent the next 14 years of my life dancing every single day. It was my identity. Dance transformed me – from a shy middle schooler into the confident and outgoing person I am today. Although I do not dance as much as I used to, it has made the most incredible impact on my life.



I remember being at home from primary school with a tummy ache, lying on the couch in my parent's living room, looking at an enormous oil painting of a beautiful Italian coastal scene. It gave me great comfort to imagine myself walking right into that painting, strolling along the jagged cliffs that hugged the sea, hearing the waves crash against the rocky shoreline and smelling the clear crisp air.



...ART AS WEAPON

CULTURE AS A TARGET

I don't think I can pinpoint a first experience possibly a timeframe. Art was everything to me as far back as I can remember, it informed my way of seeing and being in the world forever.

Culture, the great unifier, the great divider always present, in my formative years, always the divider. Art as weapon, culture as a target.

Meaning expressed by belonging culture and art as expression and defence.



Music was my first interest. I remember tuning the radio late at night, trying to find pirate radio stations that played English and American music as I was not too interested in Australian music.

A few years prior to this my mother taught me to knit. This is something I still do every day.



...touched by her art

One of my first experiences that I remember would be growing up and watching my Nan do shell work at home. I remember everything about it - the smell of the glue, the fact that she was covered in glitter or the hours we would spend in her room, sorting through shells and her letting me keep the ones that were no good. I never thought that much about how special it was, because it was just something I always had. But then when my Nan passed away, I realised how many people were touched by her art.



My first recognition of Art occurred when I was in Primary School in Saigon, listening to a piano recital played by a senior girl. I was so impressed with the powerful yet fluid performance. It gave so much pleasure to the audience including myself. I asked my parents if I could take lessons, so all 5 girls in our family were sent to lessons. However only my little sister and myself stuck out with it. And it wasn't until much later in Australia in my late 40's that I took it on again seriously.

It helped me through my lonely time after my son left home. A beautiful teacher whom I really got on with. Practice time is similar to meditation, self-reflection , listening to myself and mind clearing.

After retirement, I took on choir work, African drumming and drawing. Working in harmony as a team with others and to appreciate music from different culture, its rhythm at the same time, is always a tremendously joyous, health promoting experience for me. It opens up my heart and stimulates the mind – a great satisfaction. I also especially like drawing portrait, an interesting study of human physical expression manifesting through their internal working.

...opens
up my
heart and
stimulates
the mind



Art has been in my life right from the start: I have always been surrounded by art, art books and artists, even outdoors while hiking, bathing or stalking deer my father took sketches.

Patience is not my strong point by nature but watching him creating an image just by using a pencil fascinated me. I wanted to know what he did and why.

I also liked to handle paper but as much as I liked to draw or paint as a child my favourite paper was the one of a book.

My love of reading and writing combined with the one thing that could catch my attention for hours made my future choice of profession: I became an art historian.

...cannot
imagine
my life
without
art

I cannot imagine my life without art and should pay university for the opportunity to talk about art instead of getting paid, to be honest, and hope to continue for the rest of my life because I still enjoy the unique and boundless world that opens up for me whenever I have the pleasure and privilege to work with a piece of art and the mind of the artist.



Dance! Dance! Dance! Dance!

Dance made me feel alive.

I would twirl and spin around to

Find myself. The music allowed
me to keep going.

To explore something new.

To feel something special.

To find happiness within myself.

**Through dance I was given
permission to express
myself**

“Living”

Close your eyes.

Exactly how I felt

in that very moment.

Listen....



Open your eyes.

Watch. Seek.
Explore. Feel! Touch!

Close your eyes.

Remember
Each Movement. Each voice
Each thought
Each Story

Remember
&
Learn.



...they stopped
being scary
and began
to calm
me

How do I write
in the language of
colour? That's what
it's all about for me.

Colour is my first memory. I
used to dream in bright colours
and I remember trying to
translate the colours in my
dreams. How they made me
feel; good and bad. My family
started to call colours 'bad
dream yellow', or 'scary car
blue' and yet now I know those
colours as something completely
different and they are colours
I love. I really don't know when
they stopped being scary and
began to calm me.

When I
first discovered
the world of colour
influencers; how one
colour could change
another it was like magic

A full colour scan is the first
thing I do when confronted with
a new image or surroundings. It
might be the many colours in
someone's eyes, the coat of an
animal, is it one colour or lots
of colours? If I squint my eyes
I can see over ten types of green
in that tree. I often wonder
how many other people
around me might be
doing the same
thing.

- put a stripe of green on a
white background and add
a stripe of pink next to this and
you've got something wonderful
happening, add a crimson or indigo
and suddenly you're dancing or maybe
trying not to. Whoever said red and green
should never be seen? What about the white
and gold/blue and black dress that nearly broke
the internet. **Who knows what colours and
how many each of us can see - anyone?**



...the power to be transported

I watched this
film when I was
about 14 and fell
in love with Italy.

I love the power
to be transported
somewhere else, to
a different time by
a story. The story of
a boy in love with
film resonated so
strongly with me.

At the end of the
film when all the
kisses that had
been censored
by the priest

were shown to
the village, on the
wall of the village

square, I cried. It
was the first time

I cried because I
was moved by art.

I cried for the first
time and fell in love
with the boy in the
film. It made me
want to cry and fall
in love in other films
over and over. still
love Cinema
Paradiso.

...moved by art



I can remember when I was 4 or 5 years old, posing with my mum, dad, sisters and brother for a formal family portrait. The resulting photograph was framed and hung in our house for decades, communicating very little and an awful lot at the same time.



Walking through market in London I saw a beautiful painting for sale. There were many paintings, but this one really stood out. A black and white scene. The only colour popped out in the leaves of a tree. One single tree. A scene in Paris, with beautiful but tiny strokes of pink and reds. London. Paris. Pink. Red. Elegant. Moving. Joyous. Fun. Carefree. Adventures.

Why would I not want that vision, those feelings with me every day?

Why would I not want to be transported to such a happy place with warming, pleasurable memories on a regular basis?

I, of course, purchased the painting. But this has led me on a path to seeking more.

Visions, images, paintings, drawings, arts. Glorious and makes my soul happy.



...I was surprised at the feeling of pleasure and relaxation that the music gave to me

My first experience was when I attended a concert of classical music at “The Joan” in Penrith. My daughter was playing the cello in the concert and I went to hear her play. I was surprised at the feeling of pleasure and relaxation that the music gave to me. The atmosphere in the auditorium was very special.

a



When I was 9 I entered a poetry competition for the Gould League of Birdlovers. My poem was about a wily wagtail. To my delight I won the competition. The prize was a beautifully illustrated book about a circus and I was hooked! Since then, apart from a few periods when I was bringing up a family, I have written short stories for magazines, articles and collections of poetry, which have all been published. That wily wagtail.



...need some appreciation


Ever since I could hold a pencil I knew that art would have a big impact on my life. But it wasn't until high school that I realized it could do so much for me. Being a weird kid, an outcast even, I could use art as a way of expressing myself. That realization came when I attended the first art class. After having a rough day with bullies I saw that I could go in and start drawing (the thing that I most loved to do) and the class loved my work. Even the ones who teased me commented. That is the moment I realized that this skill makes me stand out from the crowd. It even allowed me to connect to some people who previously considered me a wierdo. From that day forward I strive not only to continue with my art, but to learn to appreciate others, because maybe those who create work like me at one point - need some appreciation.



Whilst living with my Mother at 5 years old for 6 months at boarding school in Tasmania the youngest boarder. It was a Quaker school called Friends. I would paint pictures of Holland and Switzerland which seemed to be my fantasy countries and I remember doing puppet shows for the class. At the end of the year concert I had a part I can remember going on stage but knew everyone's part prompting from the wings. I used to fly to Sydney alone in the holidays to my grandparents and fly down William St in a fairy costume with my grandfather as he delivered the newspapers. Also went with my Mother to Alcorso's Silk and Textiles artist's studio on Saturday mornings and I would paint with her as she finished her designs. Claudio Alcorso wanted to use my artwork for a textile design but it had too many colours!

...it had
too many
colours!



The background of the page is white with large, expressive green brushstrokes that sweep across the top and bottom, framing the central text. The strokes vary in intensity and direction, creating a sense of movement and energy.

...spirit and teaching

My first dance class that had a profound effect on my life was a contemporary dance class. When I was about 8 years old my grandmother heard about this European Teacher Jean Dembitza at St Johns Church hall in Darlington. The class started with cartwheels and finished with being told to go home and make up a dance about Red Riding Hood. The other classes I had experienced were classical ballet this teacher had an excitement in her spirit and she taught dance to us as an Art form I was her student till I was 15 years old.

Dance became my life because of her spirit and teaching. I also remember choreographing myself and students at boarding school Fire, Wind, Drought the teachers sat at a window as audience as we danced on the lawn outside small school we learnt ballet, piano and a bit of school work!!!



‘Such A Touch Of Kafka!’
(The Waiting Room...)

“...men and women hate each other until they fall in love, bad boys always have a heart of gold, villains may die but they come back to life and surprise everybody, childhood can be accelerated by years in the blink of an eye and no one will even blink an eye and family members can be replaced by a complete stranger who looks or sounds nothing like them ”

So apt that this communique comes across my desk as I am interred in a hospital, much like the waiting room at some all ways delayed airport (“Such a touch of Kafka!”), whereby they have hospitalised me, forced me to take a rest, made me take a holiday, intervened so that I might save some money, coins on the Commonwealth’s purse, a meeting point where commerce meets art, as many artful zombies and swift moves as a “Thriller” video, a modern day Tuberculosis retreat, where one may be alone with one’s thoughts...

Except that they have a bunch of clinical professionals, to attend to one, and make one deal with one’s neuroses...

My favourite one is a lady Psychologist who has been picking over the bones of my childhood, which I thought quite the wrong direction for the woes I face, until this challenge made me see it in a different light... Quite elemental: whereas many on the commerce axis/access might have formed and toppled their building blocks with the abacus, I remember (clearly, my first memory) the word board (in the beginning was the Word...) ~ a felt board with chunks of letters where the early school pupil could form his words. I had an astute aptitude even at that age, but the memory

that sticks in the throat was my first stumble: the “ch” block, where I mistakenly thought that “children” was “cheese” - that cheddar my first inkling that there was something beyond my knowledge, that may have to be discerned via further investigation, rather than pat accepted facts.

Swimming in murky childhood memories: I have been reminded of early reading prowess: usually plenty of room for waiting in group readings: three children to a book - an early indicator of my tendency to “speed read”, rather than, say, a deep read...~ one unsuspecting Aunt all these years later still complains how much money she had to fork out during the MS Read-A-Thon, for the amount I read. An early brush with the concept of Impetus.

Then there was one fateful week when I was off school sick, and somehow became hopelessly entranced with the soap opera “Days Of Our Lives”, which had this eternal looking hourglass as its emblem, with a solemn and authoritative male voice intoning: “Like sands through the hourglass, so are the days of our lives...”. At the end of my week’s sabbatical, the Friday programme ended on a cliffhanger. I became agitated, needing to know what happened next. My first snifter of

...but the memory that sticks in the throat was my first stumble: the “ch” block, where I mistakenly thought that ‘children’ was ‘cheese’

the addictive power of images... And so I started learning about soap operas, subscribing to foreign times, exotic programs from far-off lands... I even began writing my own version, using my extended family members as the characters. They would laugh in hysterics at the far-fetched plots I depicted them in, and the inaccurate ways they appeared back to themselves: "Look! He's made you pregnant!" they would guffaw, at my prescient psychic predictive powers (some years early, but the cycle of birth and death similarly eternal...). So I definitely earned the bumper sticker someone gifted me: "My Life Is A Soap Opera"!

Soap operas taught me valuable life lessons: men and women hate each other until they fall in love, bad boys all ways have a heart of gold and can be turned by a good woman, villains may die but they come back to life and surprise everybody, childhood can be accelerated by years in the blink of an eye and no one will even blink an eye, and family members can be replaced by a complete stranger who looks or sounds nothing like them and no one will even notice. Definitely good life lessons, that have held me in stead even in the lean years before genetic art came on the scene...

...subscribing to foreign times, exotic programs from far-off lands

The real inspiration,

the “kismet”,

the ‘this is what I want to do for
the rest of my life’ moment...

came when I was 11, and I was reading “Idols” magazine, which covered the golden years of Hollywood, amongst other things. They had an article on John Lennon and Yoko Ono, and the fascinating movies they were making, like “Fly”...we explored the territory of boredom, surveillance, and voyeurism, pushing audience’s limits of how long they can look at someone.

But that as much related to my early Super 8mm experiments, where I would go out and film and freeze frame moments in a constant collage of daily debris. An uncle had picked up a Super 8mm portable film camera via duty free on a trip to South East Asia, but, never one to read a manual or anything like that, it somehow descended into my eager beaver 13 yr old hands just in time for puberty. Much like that montaged scrap book video for Sonic Youth’s “Teenage Riot”, my manic hormonal view of the world exploded through the camera like mottled acne, when the projector wasn’t askew, that is. I even got a splicer so I could edit, using sticky tape. My art teacher gave access to a swish video camera that enabled infra-red negative/

...a constant collage
of daily debris

positive videoing, so my filming of the school sports carnival would have the athletes disappearing as they ran, or a local picturesque Mosque strobing and flashing in and out of infra-red negative/positivity with an alarming pulsating quality that perhaps foretold later events unfolding, in imagery...

That addictive quality of imagery, of the screen, pulsating, quickening the pulse...

Here in the waiting rooms of the hospital (where William S. Burroughs' sickening depictions of the junkie life, when I was thirteen, gave me the brave face to endure a blood test, which here are endless...), taking us back to the 19th Century ideal/idyll of the bucolic Tuberculosis Retreat, we aren't allowed our phones with their addictive pulsating screens, and only one "Big Brother"-esque screen like a "Pravda" of world consciousness watches over us in our numbness, perhaps the nice psych lady's encouragements back to childhood are like the flat lemonade of an old wife's tale cure. Maybe start over, re-process the imagery, sift through the sands remaining of adulthood edifices... Maybe not begin again... but retrace...

Who knows? Maybe I've finally discovered how to deep read...



WAITING ROOM WORDS

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Waiting Room Words
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Diane Macdonald	Karen Zwi
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FURTHER READINGS

If your interest has been sparked, these further readings will take you on a journey...

1. Key research studies on arts and health. Institute for Creative Health.
2. The Arts Ripple Effect: Valuing the arts in communities.
3. Overview of the Arts and Health Sector in Australia. 2009.
4. Arts in health and arts therapies - A statement of Principles, L.A.i.H. Forum, Editor. 2010.
5. Reflecting upon the Value of Arts & Health & a new approach for the East Midlands 2011-2013, D.C.H. Services, L.C.P.C.N. Trust, and L.P.N.F. Trust, Editors. 2013.
6. Wellbeing in four policy areas: Report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Wellbeing Economics, T.A.P.P.G.o.W. Economics, Editor. 2014, The All Party Parliamentary Group on Wellbeing Economics.
7. A Summary: NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework & The National Arts and Health Framework, N.M.o. Health, Editor. 2014.
8. NSW Health and the Arts Framework, N.M.o. Health, Editor. 2016.
9. The Path forward: Partnering Arts to Health, in Report of the NSW Ministerial Taskforce on Health and the Arts. 2016, NSW Ministry of Health.
10. Community-Based Healthcare: The search for mindful dialogues. Community-Based Healthcare, ed. D. Tasker, J. Higgs, and S. Loftus. Vol. 12. 2017.
11. Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing, in All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing. 2017, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing.

12. Charles, A., et al., Reimagining community services: Making the most of our assets. The Kings Fund, 2018.
13. Davies, C.R., et al., Defining arts engagement for population-based health research: Art forms, activities and level of engagement. *Arts & Health*, 2012. 4(3): p. 203-216.
14. Daykin, N. and T. Joss, Arts for health and wellbeing: an evaluative framework, in *Public Health England*. 2016: London.
15. Fenner, P., et al., Is there compelling evidence for using the arts in health care?, in *Health Policy Research Institute Evidence Brief*. 2012.
16. Gordon-Nesbitt, R., Exploring the Longitudinal Relationship Between Arts Engagement and Health. *Arts for Health*, 2015.
17. Lith, T.v., et al., *The Role of Art Making in Mental Health Recovery*. 2009, La Trobe University.
18. Owen, J.W., *Arts, Health and Wellbeing Beyond the Millennium: How far have we come and where do we want to go?* 2013, Royal society for public health, UK.
19. Parkinson, C. and G. Windle, *Dementia & Imagination: Research informed approaches to visual arts programmes*. 2017.
20. Shishkova, V., *General Mapping of Types of Impact Research in the Performing Arts Sector*. IETM - International network for contemporary performing arts, 2015.

INSPIRATIONS & RESOURCES

Key contacts for finding out more about Arts in Health

International

London Arts and Health Forum

Resources: <http://www.lahf.org.uk/resources>

All Party Parliamentary Group for Arts,
Health and Wellbeing (APPG)

Home page with links to resources:

<http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/APPG>

Arts for Health at Manchester Metropolitan University

Home page with links to resources:

<http://www.artsforhealth.org/>

Arts Health Network Canada

Home page, with links to resources:

<https://artshealthnetwork.ca>

Artsandhealth.ie

Resources: <http://www.artsandhealth.ie/>

[resource/research-evaluation/](http://www.artsandhealth.ie/resource/research-evaluation/)

In Australia

Institute for Creative Health

Resources:

www.instituteforcreativehealth.org.au/resources

National Arts and Health Framework 2014

NSW Health and Arts Framework 2016

NSW Health and Arts Framework hosted by

The Agency for Clinical Innovation

Health and The Arts Resources & Contacts.

Innovations Exchange

www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au

Accessible Arts NSW

www.aarts.net.au

Australian Centre for Arts and Health |

Annual conferences

www.artsandhealth.org.au

VicHealth

Research and Projects

www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

Arts and Health at La Trobe University

Blog: [arts-and-health.blogs.latrobe.edu.](http://arts-and-health.blogs.latrobe.edu.au)

[au/News & Events](http://arts-and-health.blogs.latrobe.edu.au/News%20&%20Events)

www.instituteforcreativehealth.org.au/

[news-events](http://www.instituteforcreativehealth.org.au/news-events)

New Arts and Health Consortium W.A.

Examination of the use of the Arts to improve health and healing in Western Australian Hospitals.

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