
DIVERSITY ARTS AUSTRALIA
ANNUAL REPORT

2017

**LISTENING TO
THE SECTOR**



Diversity Arts
Australia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Diversity Arts Australia acknowledges the traditional owners of Australia from over 500 Indigenous nations and language groups and pays respect to the Elders past and present.

In 2017, Diversity Arts Australia's national office was in Casula in the Liverpool local government area. We acknowledge the Cabrogal Clan of the Darug Nation as the traditional custodians of the land and acknowledge that this land was also accessed by peoples of the Dhurawal and Dharuk Nations.

Now based in Parramatta, we acknowledge the Burramattagal of the Darug Nation as the traditional owners of the land and pay our respects to elders past and present and to members of the local Aboriginal communities.



Photo top

*Artwork by Peter Waples Crowe,
interviewed as part of Creative Lives*



Photo bottom

*Artwork by Gawaa Lundaa,
interviewed as part of Creative Lives*

ABOUT DIVERSITY ARTS AUSTRALIA

Arts that look like Australia

Diversity Arts Australia (DARTS) is Australia's key organisation promoting cultural diversity in the arts and screen sectors, and across all creative forms in Australia.

DARTS supports artists, audiences and organisations to benefit from the enormous cultural opportunities available in our cosmopolitan nation.

We provide evidence about the value of diversity in the arts. We measure cultural diversity and concentrate our programs on breaking down barriers in our creative industries. One powerful way to do this is to encourage connection and collaboration, and we also act as a conduit between artists, industry, educators and governments.

Diversity Arts Australia

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LISTENING TO THE SECTOR



Photo above

Philip Kane stars in Maria Tran's film The Subtractor, part of Diverse Screens.

In 2017, Diversity Arts Australia (DARTS) embarked on a strategic mission – to tap into the knowledge of the Australian arts and screen sectors.

After our restructure, relocation and rebrand in 2016, we wanted to 'take the temperature' of cultural diversity and inclusion in the creative sector. We needed to find out what was working and what wasn't, the barriers to inclusion and the stories of success. We set out to learn what the key stakeholders in the arts – artists, funding bodies, policymakers, arts organisations, educators, and audiences – needed from us.

Through symposia, interviews, commissioned films, research and targeted outreach to the sector, DARTS gathered a priceless harvest of information in 2017. This collection of stories, best practice, data, analysis and collaborative networks will form the foundation of our ongoing work.

IN 2017 DARTS DELIVERED

- 26 short films and mini films
- 9 panel discussions, workshops and consultations
- 24 artists and creatives employed
- 2 major events
- 1 new website
- 40+ artists profiled in-depth
- 1200 newsletter subscribers
- 4000 social media followers
- Thousands of screenings of DARTS-commissioned films on public screens and events nationally and internationally
- 850 direct audiences for our events and forums
- 419,495 people reached via our social media, website and live streams
- 5 commissioned articles published in journals and mainstream media outlets



DIVERSITY ARTS AUSTRALIA

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Professor James Arvanitakis

It is with great pleasure that, on behalf of the Board and staff of Diversity Arts Australia, I present to you the 2017 Annual Report.

This year, we have focussed on the theme 'listening to the sector' – something evident in our many panel discussions, events, projects and programs, including our Beyond Tick Boxes symposium.

While our country has never been more prosperous, it is not an understatement to say that we also appear increasingly divided – politically, economically and socially. Over the last few years, we have witnessed a rising populism, both in Australia and internationally, where we see some trying to increase divisions for their own political ends.

It is during these times that the role we play as Diversity Arts in creating a more inclusive and diverse creative sector has never been more important.

In order for us to achieve our aims of a more inclusive sector that reflects Australia, we continue to work closely and collaboratively with the arts and screen sectors to understand the status quo and then develop strategies to address identified gaps. This year 2017 was a year of consultation, discussions, panels and engagement which informed our own longer term planning.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank our partners, sponsors, and funding bodies (listed on page 10), without whom our work would not be possible.

Personally, I would like to also thank my fellow Board Members and our committed staff for their pursuit of an inclusive sector. I would also like to convey my deepest gratitude to Lena Nahlous for her outstanding job as Executive Director.



DIVERSITY ARTS AUSTRALIA

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lena Nahlous

Following our move from Melbourne to Western Sydney and rebrand in 2016, we spent 2017 listening carefully to the sector, making links, facilitating discussions and symposia, and meeting with artists and arts workers.

We took the temperature of the sector and found out what was going well, what needed work and where our resources would best be placed to facilitate positive change in the area of cultural diversity in the arts and screen sectors.

These activities formed the foundation for our new strategic plan, marketing plan, website, and future advocacy and research directions and projects. We also generated new income streams and strategic partnerships, providing greater sustainability and continuity for our future.

Our work was enabled and strengthened by our funders and partners, and we thank them sincerely for their important support.

We could not have achieved all that we did without our dedicated and hardworking staff and contractors, particularly Sonia Mehrmand, Monique Choy and Kevin Bathman. I would also like to acknowledge the important work of our Board members and make special mention of our Chair Professor James Arvanitakis for his leadership and unwavering support.

DIVERSE SCREENS SOUTH WEST SYDNEY

Launched in 2017, DARTS' Diverse Screens project takes an 'arts as advocacy' approach to convey artists' insights into the state of cultural diversity in the arts.

Films by Maria Tran (*The Subtractor*), Roxie Vuong (*Act Now*), Thuy Nguyen (*Against the Grain*) and Ali Mousawi (*Beyond Christmas Island*) were commissioned in 2017 and investigated heavy-hitting themes including the trauma of refugee artists, "performing" your identity and the invisibility of diverse artists. The films are specifically designed to provoke, inspire and generate discussion. Roxie Vuong's film *Act Now* was a finalist in the *Made in the West* film festival 2018.

Find out more:

diversityarts.org.au/project/diverse-screens

DIVERSE SCREENS SOUTH WEST SYDNEY SCREENINGS:

- Launched at Beyond Tick Boxes Symposium, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre to an audience of 340 people
- Fairfield on Film exhibition, Fairfield City Museum and Gallery
- Perth, Western Australia
- Ipswich, Brisbane
- Federation Square, Harmony Square and Bunjil Place, Melbourne
- Vancouver, Canada
- Made in the West Film Festival
- Macquarie Mall, Liverpool

'I got to raise the issues of whitewashing, cultural appropriation and tokenism.'

– Maria Tran

The barriers to inclusion in the Australian creative sector can appear invisible because most of it is internalised. From a young age we accept that people who look like us don't belong on screen.

– Roxie Vuong

'They are calling me illegal, you came here illegally, but I didn't give up. I started to make arts here in Australia and I think there are many Australians who know me as an artist from Afghanistan, as a director of cinema and theatre.'

– Mahdi Mohammadi

In *Beyond Christmas Island* by Ali Mousawi

'One day there will be no more islands in the Pacific and our culture and everything will be washed away.'

– Bayvick Lawrence

In *Against the Grain* by Thuy Nguyen



Photo above

Filmmaker Thuy Nguyen



Photo top right

Dr. Tim Soutphommasane, Race Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission, speaking at Beyond Tick Boxes. Photo Chris Woe.



Photo bottom right

Breakout session at Beyond Tick Boxes. Photo Chris Woe.



IDENTIFYING THE KEY ISSUES IN THE SECTOR

BEYOND TICK BOXES (BTB)

On 29 June 2017, DARTS brought together artists, producers, arts organisations, policy makers and arts bodies to discuss issues of cultural diversity and inclusion in the arts. The event was delivered through a series of plenaries, interactive breakout sessions and presentations of commissioned films (as provocations) and performances.

Powerful discussions resulted in wide media coverage, online streaming and the #DiversityArtsAu hashtag trending on Twitter. The issues raised at BTB laid down the key themes that resonate most in the sector around cultural diversity in the arts. These issues have formed the bedrock of our ongoing work. A report on the symposium will be launched in 2018.

Find out more: diversityarts.org.au/event/beyond-tick-boxes



Live-streaming Beyond Tick Boxes. Photo Chris Woe.

ATTENDANCE: 340

- 140 in-person for symposium
- 100 live-streamers online
- 100 extra in-person for the Diverse Screens launch which took place as part of the symposium

CITIZEN JOURNALIST ARTICLES ABOUT BEYOND TICK BOXES PUBLISHED:

- Sunil Badami (The Guardian)
- Tanya Ali (Peril Magazine)
- Roanna Gonsalves (Southern Crossings)
- Felicity Castagna (ArtsHub)
- Kiriaki Koubaroulis (Loud Mouth)

Where a group in society is invisible or demeaned, the message is clear. Those in that group are outsiders, second-class members, or even an 'other' against whom society defines itself.

– Dr Tim Soutphommasane, Australian Race Discrimination Commissioner

If you make funding conditional it does make a difference.

We've seen it in the film sector.

– Grainne Brunson, Create NSW

It's about making safe spaces for people – right down to the minute detail of how we teach.

– Neil Peplow, AFTRS

Don't get the Asian kid to make a film about Asian people...

let them make whatever film they want!

– Patrick Abboud, SBS

Lazy acronyms like CALD make me angry...
It's a technicolour tomorrow.

– Craig Donarski, Casula Powerhouse

It's really important for us to be framing ourselves rather than other people framing us.

– Paschal Daantos Berry, Blacktown Arts Centre

CONNECTING WITH THE SECTOR

NETWORKS

An important part of Diversity Arts Australia's work is in maintaining strong links with the sector to keep us informed about current debates, issues and success stories. We aim to be a conduit for collaboration and best practice, to ensure that our push for increased cultural diversity is deeply rooted in the Australian arts community.

Diversity Arts Australia regularly collaborates with other organisations on events, through consulting and providing resources and advice, cross-promoting events through our networks and presenting at conferences and symposia. Our website, newsletter and social media channels on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Vimeo and Instagram provide daily updates and connections with the sector.

Find out more: diversityarts.org.au/events

PANELS AND PARTICIPATION IN 2017

- Tropfest TropTalks, Western Sydney University
- Refugee Alternatives Conference, University of NSW
- Diversity is a White Word, CAAP, Carriageworks
- Cause + Effect talk, VIVID Sydney
- APACA/ PAC Australia Conference, Chatswood
- Arts Diversity Panel, ALP for the Arts launch
- Harnessing the Arts panel, SAMAG, Australia Council
- Facilitated British Council key stakeholder and planning gathering in partnership

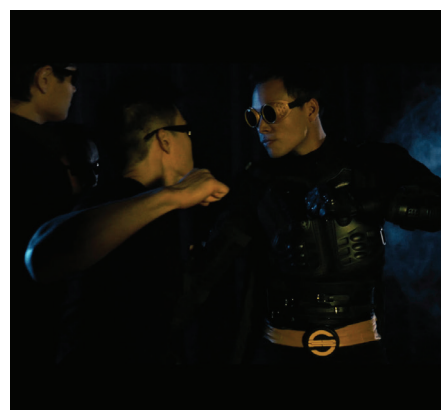


Photo top

Zainab Syed and Maria Trần speak at the PAC Australia Conference

Photo top

Still from 'The Subtractor' a film by Maria Tran as part of Diverse Screens South West Sydney.

BENCHMARKING ARTS DIVERSITY RESEARCH

DARTS is committed to building an arts and creative sector that reflects the cultural diversity of Australia. In order to fully understand the status quo, we need baseline data against which we can measure our progress. The Benchmarking Arts Diversity research project seeks to measure cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD) within leadership and executive roles of Australia's major arts and screen organisations and bodies, as well as within sector awards.

This project commenced in 2017 and will be launched in 2018. Diversity Arts Australia (DARTS) worked with BYP Group, a specialist cultural research consultancy, to conduct this research. We received financial support from the Australian National Commission for UNESCO.

TAPPING THE VIEWS OF DIVERSE ARTISTS



Photo top

Visual artist Gawaa Lundaa in his studio. Photo Monique Choy

Photo top

Filmmaker Maria Tran

CREATIVE LIVES

Creative Lives is a treasure trove of interviews, portfolios, insights and inspiration drawing on the professional practice of culturally diverse creatives around Australia. It aims to showcase these working filmmakers, visual artists, musicians, performers, writers and multimedia artists, and also to gather information on the experiences of artists and artists organisations to help inform our own practice and strategies.

Find out more:

diversityarts.org.au/project/creative-lives

CREATIVE LIVES ARTISTS PROFILED IN 2017

- UB Topia
- Sista Zai Zanda
- Mahla Karimian
- Azizeh Astaneh
- Layla MKH
- Gawaa Lundaa
- Loribelle Spirovksi
- Benjamin Law
- Zainab Zahra Syed
- Sunil Badami
- Jackie Bailey
- Aruna Gandhi
- Blak Douglas
- Ali Kadhim

'My identity is political, and therefore my art is political. So in terms of what I write in poetry, a lot of the poetry is centred around the fact that I am an Arab Muslim woman.'

– Layla MKH

'I feel like my heart is turned around, just to fit into this country... I feel like I'm stuck between two cultures now. But I'm Mongolian. I was born in Mongolia.'

– Gawaa Lundaa

'A lot of our African books were written as a way of preserving our oral traditions, so you know...you can't limit it to the just the written word, you also have to include the spoken word.'

– Sista Zai Zanda

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

Our partners and supporters strengthen us. Without their support, we would not be able to deliver all that we do, nor to create the same level of impact and sustainability. We would like to gratefully acknowledge our funders, sponsors and supporters:

OUR FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS

Australia Council for the Arts
Create NSW
Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre
Liverpool City Council
Fairfield City Council
Australian National Commission for UNESCO

PARTNERS, COLLABORATORS AND PEOPLE TO THANK

APACA/ PAC Australia
BYP Group
Claudia Chidiac
Carnival of the Bold
Deena Shiff Diversity in Media
Feral Arts / Arts Front
Craig Donarski, Director, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre and team for providing us with a home and venue
Mia Zahra, NSW Family and Community Services for support of the Beyond Tick Boxes symposium
Esther Anatolitis for in-kind consultancy and planning services
Moogahlin Performing Arts
Adam Porter

Photo right

Artwork by
Peter Waples Crowe



Fadia Abboud
Nikita Karvounis
Nicole Clark and Yasmin Dandachi (Auslan Stage Left)
Augusta Supple, Create NSW
Tiffany Lee-Shoy, Fairfield City Council
University of Technology Sydney
Urban Theatre Projects
Western Sydney University

From 2018, and at the time of writing this report, Diversity Arts receives organisational support from Information and Cultural Exchange

OUR PEOPLE BOARD MEMBERS

Chair, Professor James Arvanitakis
Pro Vice Chancellor (Research and Graduate Studies) at Western Sydney University. Lecturer in Humanities and winner of the Prime Minister's University Teacher of the Year Award (2012).

Co-Deputy Chair, Pilar Kasat
Former Managing Director of CANWA, who led the organisation to become nationally recognised for its work in community arts. On the Board of the Chamber of Arts and Culture of WA.

Co-Deputy Chair, Joanne Pratt
General Manager at Vulcana Women's Circus, and owner/operator of artist management company Sage Music, specialising in Indigenous and world music.

Treasurer, Louise Dunn
Executive Director of Nexus Multicultural Arts Centre in Adelaide, who led the organisation through a challenging financial and artistic recovery over the past five years.

Magdalena Moreno
Executive Director of the International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies in Sydney. Former Head, International Division, Chilean National Council for Culture and the Arts.



Photo left

*Printmaker and community artist
UB Topia*

Photo Right

Visual Artist Azizeh Astaneh

Suellen Maunder

Artistic Director and CEO of multi-award winning JUTE Theatre Company in Cairns. A director, actor and a key player in the development of the Centre of Contemporary Arts in Cairns.

Seb Chan

Chief Experience Officer at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne. Formerly with Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in NY and Sydney's Powerhouse Museum.

Jade Lillie

A passionate and experienced practitioner, arts executive and community facilitator. Former Director and CEO of Footscray Community Arts Centre in Melbourne.

Gambhir Watts OAM

CEO of Gambhir Watts & Co and Taxation Guru Pty Ltd. Formerly worked for top national banks in managerial positions helping and developing small and medium businesses.

Find out more:

<http://diversityarts.org.au/about/meet-our-board>

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lena Nahlous

Over 20 years' experience in arts, cultural and media organisations, and managing arts initiatives engaging thousands of people, particularly women, refugees, migrants and youth.

STAFF

Kevin Nelson

Finance Officer and Accountant

Kevin Bathman

Producer, Events and Projects, DARTS

Sonia Mehrmand

Admin and Communications Officer, DARTS

Monique Choy

Strategic Initiatives and Content Producer, DARTS

Dr Paula Abood

Creative Consultant

Gary Paramanathan

Associate Producer, Beyond Tick Boxes symposium

VOLUNTEERS & INTERNS

Gabriela Ellicott, Student Intern, UTS

Nickin Alexander, Student intern, UTS and Volunteer

Vir Kaula, Student Intern, UTS and Volunteer

CONTRACTORS AND COMMISSIONED ARTISTS

Mariam Abboud, Event Assistant

Patrick Abboud, Emcee, Beyond Tick Boxes

Greg Appel, Film documentation, Beyond Tick Boxes

Jackie Bailey, Researcher, BYP Group

Rosemary Fung, Illustrator

Vicki Gutierrez, Event Assistant

Margaret Mayhew, Writer/ Researcher

Rani Haywood, Marketing Consultant

Maylei Hunt, Filmmaker

Andy Ko, Event Assistant

Fiorinda Koch, Research Assistant

Jennifer Macey, Podcast Producer

Ali Mousawi, Filmmaker

Thuy Nguyen, Filmmaker

Benythyn Oldfield, Publicist, Beyond Tick Boxes

Loribelle Spirovski, Live Illustrator

Meiying Saw, Graphic Designer

Nexhjme Shala, Consultant

Maria Tran, Filmmaker

Roxie Vuong, Filmmaker

Christopher Woe, Photographer



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