gasworks to gasworks

From an industrial complex
to an arts park
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to an arts park

Robert Grogan
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James McCaughey arrived with his wife Ellen and two daughters in Middle Park in 1985. From 1977 to 1984, he had lived in Geelong where he had set up The Mill Theatre, the first of Victoria’s community theatre companies. The Mill was dedicated to the extension of theatre activities in a range of different contexts in Geelong. This experience provided the background that led him to take an interest in Gasworks, as well as some of the skills required to help in its development.

In Middle Park he became involved with the local community through his association with Middle Park Primary School, which his children attended. Working with an organised and imaginative group of parents, including Sharon Mackenzie and Di Majewski, and drawing on his experience in Geelong, James ran a series of successful events for the school to mark the school’s centenary. These attracted large numbers of people from the local community, in particular an event called Richardson Street Romp, for which Richardson Street in Middle Park was closed off completely.

In 1987 James became a committee member of the Gasworks Community Liaison Committee, which had been established by the City of South Melbourne to co-ordinate efforts by Council, members of the community and the pre-existing Gasworks Community Arts Village, to develop Gasworks Arts Park. He served on that committee as a community representative.

In order to re-invigorate the park for the community and to badge it as a facility for the arts, the Council decided in 1989 to move the annual Mayor’s BBQ and Community Day, which had previously been held in the St Vincent’s Gardens, to the Gasworks Park. This was a bold move as the park was situated at the outer rim of the City boundaries, and had been rarely used for public activities. To attract residents to the first barbecue and locate the park in the imagination

The real key to the development of Gasworks as an arts space can be attributed directly to James McCaughey’s vision, drive and skill.

Frances Warren (Refer 2i)
of the City, James worked with the group of parents from the Middle Park School to create a geographic treasure hunt (Refer 3a). Members of the community played roles as characters, fully costumed and placed strategically in the streets leading to Gasworks. Their interaction with members of the public lead the participants through the streets of the surrounding suburbs so that they ended up at the Gasworks Park where, as well as a barbecue, there was a range of arts and community events on offer.

This event represented the Council’s first real engagement with the park. As a Council mostly concerned with social justice, it had no arts policy, no arts budget and no real history of involvement with the arts. Although there had been previous arts events at the park organised by the Gasworks Community Arts Village, at this time Gasworks was largely a group of old buildings, most of them without roofs.

James’ membership of the Gasworks Community Liaison Committee began his commitment to the development of the park as an arts precinct. In time that committee was wound up, and he became the Chair of the Gasworks Community Arts Village, and renamed it Gasworks Arts Inc., which to this day plays a key role in the administration of the park. During these early days he could always see its potential, and what it could offer the community. As James recalls, ‘It was an idea that gathered validity as it went, but the committee was never absolutely sure of the outcome – we just inched forward as best we could’.

The City of South Melbourne’s interest in Gasworks grew, and the potential of the site for a wider range of programming opportunities improved with a series of building works carried out on the existing buildings, culminating with the creation of the theatre from the old pump room – the vision for Gasworks was being realised.

Following the Kennett Government’s amalgamation of councils in 1994, the City of Port Phillip Council became responsible for the Gasworks Arts Park. In 1999 the Council took the important step of devolving management of the park to a community-based Board of Management. James was entrusted to be the first Chair, a position he held until 2018. During this time, James drew on the wide-ranging skills of community members to form a sequence of effective Boards to oversee the management of Gasworks Arts Park.

Thanks in part to his leadership and vision, combined with the skill and hard work of staff members, artists, Board members and and the support of successive councils, Gasworks Arts Park has evolved to be a valued Victorian arts hub, which nurtures performing and visual artists to develop and present their work publicly in its theatres and galleries. It has become a gathering place for people from the local and wider communities, enabling them to connect with each other as they experience shared creativity and involvement with the arts.
It could be said that the land on which Gasworks Arts Park is located has always provided for the people. For tens of thousands of years this area provided for the local Boon Wurrung people. In 1873 the South Melbourne Gasworks was built on the site, and became the biggest employer in the district. Its products provided domestic heating and fuel for cooking, as well as power for many local industries. In recent decades the Park has provided a community resource, and its artists and facilities have provided food for the senses.

This history begins with the story of the gasworks, and various appendices contain the history of gas, its manufacture and the reminiscences of men (and their wives) who worked there. The discovery of brown coal, and then natural gas, changed the nature of gas manufacture and the need for sites such as the South Melbourne Gasworks. The move from an industrial site to an arts park took several decades.

The gradual evolution of Gasworks Arts Park is described, including the move from Council control to devolved responsibility for the management of the buildings and the program of the park to a community-based Board of management. Starting out as one studio that housed six artists, it is now a precinct offering two theatres, three galleries, a cafe, theatre bar, 15 artists’ studios, workshop spaces, outdoor events, festivals, children’s activities and parklands – enjoyed by more than 180,000 people each year.
CHAPTER 1

The South Melbourne gasworks
The beginnings

In 1871 steps were taken towards the formation of the South Melbourne Gas Company. The impetus for its establishment was the need for the City of South Melbourne to provide street lights. Oil lamps were used, but gas was cheaper and provided brighter lighting. The City of Melbourne’s street lights had been fuelled by gas from the City of Melbourne Gas and Coke Company since 1859.

A meeting at the Myrtle Hotel (1854 - 1920) in Coventry Street, South Melbourne, elected six men from Emerald Hill (South Melbourne) and six from Sandridge (Port Melbourne) to form a provisional committee to oversee the project.

A 6-acre (2.4-hectare) site on the sandy wastes east of the Port Melbourne lagoon was secured in early 1871, and an engineer appointed. In February 1872 the provisional committee resigned to make way for elected directors.

Figure 1.1

The prospectus for the South Melbourne Gas Company, 1872
(Source: Proudley, Gas and Fuel Corporation archives)
Building commenced in 1872 and the gasworks became operational in 1873. The retort house was a substantial structure from which rose a 90-foot (27.4-metre) chimney stack. All parts of the plant were designed for easy duplication should the demand increase.

Black coal was shipped from Newcastle in New South Wales to Port Melbourne, where it was unloaded at Town Pier at the end of Bay Street. Light steam trams (Refer 1a) hauled the coal to the gasworks until the late 1930s, when the rail line was dismantled. The trams were replaced by horse-drawn drays and, later, lorries were used to haul the coal.

They’d (the lorries) be coming down Pickles Street and they (the drivers) would give the truck a bit of a swerve, and off’d go a great stack of coal. Well you never seen so many women with brooms and shovels and buckets come out in all your life. Roy Fisher, The Oral History Place-making Project (Refer 1b).

At the gasworks, the process (Refer 1c) began with the coal being crushed to a uniform size and fed into retorts from overhead hoppers. The coal was heated in the retorts where it carbonised, giving off coal gas and leaving coke at the bottom. The coal gas underwent further purifying processes; the coke was collected and used for other purposes at the plant, by industry and as household fuel.
On 22 March 1873 the company’s gas was used to illuminate various displays in what was said to be ‘the event of the age on Emerald Hill’, with some shops and hotels boasting crowns and stars lit by South Melbourne gas. In 1886 a banquet was held following the commissioning of a new gas holder.

The company was allowed to supply gas anywhere within an 8-mile (13-kilometre) radius of Princes Bridge.

In 1878 a merger of various gas companies, including South Melbourne, formed the Metropolitan Gas Company. The demand for gas rose, as gas prices were lowered. Gas was widely used by industries in the area, and gas cooking became available. By 1892, 50 gasworks had been constructed in Victoria, with 12 in Melbourne and its surrounds.

In 1903 the meter shop was transferred from West Melbourne to a site on Graham Street, opposite the South Melbourne gasworks.
Working conditions

The gasworks provided job opportunities in retort stoking, ironwork and engineering, as well as labouring and carting, but the working conditions were appalling. Those workers at the coal and coke stages of production were surrounded by black coal dust, and those in the retort houses had to deal with the extreme heat.

*I remember the foreman of the purifiers telling me that before the 1937 strike, there was only one tap at the works for the workmen to clean themselves ... he said, going home you got into a train, and no one else'd get in with you ... you were so smelly and filthy ... so the showers were quite an innovation for the workmen there.*

Bob Edwards, The Oral History Place-making Project *(Refer 1b).*

*I can remember even as a humble junior clerk being appalled at the working conditions there. ... Those around the retorts had to wear thick wooden clogs on their feet as ordinary boots didn't protect their feet from the heat. I recall going into the change room they had ... it was a very primitive arrangement: a row of showers, and the floor was dirty.*

Bob Edwards, The Oral History Place-making Project *(Refer 1b).*

The gasworks operated continuously, and the workers were on 8-hour shifts, with one weekend off a month.
The explosion

The most dramatic episode in the life of the gasworks occurred on Easter Sunday, 4 April 1920, when a large gas holder, situated in Pickles Street opposite the gasworks, exploded (Refer 1d). Originally it was thought that there had been some tampering with the equipment, but eventually the cause was found to be due to corrosion and a design fault in the gas holder. Given the size of the blast it was surprising that it resulted in only a few minor injuries.
The Strike

The gasworks closed for a few years in the early 1930s because of lower demand during the Depression. When it re-opened, the workers of the Metropolitan Gas Company staged a stay-in strike (Refer 1e) at the West Melbourne and South Melbourne plants for 15 days in August, 1937. They were wanting an increase above the basic wage, on the grounds that their working environment was more strenuous than that found in other occupations.

Some people, you know, sympathetic to us, supplied us with stuff and we had to cook it there, and it was pretty rough, believe me...we had to sleep on the job...sleeping amongst all that stuff...where all the sulphate of ammonia was bagged up and stacked. Charlie Rosewarne, The Oral History Place-making Project (Refer 1b).

The strike ended when the union accepted a pay increase and a service gratuity allowance.

Tough times

Jobs were hard to find in the years following the Depression. At the gasworks, there were around 200 men employed.

There was stokers and there was scurfers and there was salt-house men, and bag fillers, and power-house men, and yard men, and they all had a particular function...And they had what they call the tradesmen’s shops. There was a plumber’s shop and there was a carpenter’s shop and there was an electrician’s shop, a painter’s shop, and of course they were all skilled tradesmen...the blacksmiths with their anvils and the way they could shape iron and they’d make parts to repair breakages...the painter was kept busy just trying to keep metal work painted. Bob Edwards, The Oral History Place-making Project (Refer 1b).
And there were many others looking for work.

I remember at the gate, each day a small group of labourers would meet and, if they wanted more men on the coke heap, the foreman would just go to the gate and say, ‘Right Bill, and you John, come in’. And they might give them a day’s work. They might give them a week’s work and then say, ‘Sorry we’ve got enough done now, goodbye’ . . . And of course there weren’t welfare payments like there are today for unemployed people. They could go on the dole which was a very meagre amount. I wouldn’t say today’s welfare payments are generous by any means . . . but in those days, it was a very poor substitute. Bob Edwards, The Oral History Place-making Project (Refer 1b).

Pollution (Refer 1f) became of increasing concern to local residents from the late 1930s. Initially the residents accepted that the industry was there, largely because it was employing many of them. Thus they put up with the discomforts from the continuous noise and the fumes.

It wasn’t a steady, you know, terrific roar all the time, but it was a continuous noise, see, and according to the direction of the wind you got all the smoke and the leaking gas, and the grit and the dirt. Charlie Rosewarne, The Oral History Place-making Project (Refer 1b).

In 1943 the Metropolitan Gas Company was charged with causing, or allowing, the escape of fumes, gases, vapours, dirt and impurities so as to be a nuisance or offence. The magistrate found the charge was proved and the company was fined – but the gasworks kept operating.

**Final years**

During the 1940s, chronic coal shortages in Newcastle caused havoc in the Victorian gas industry, and the rationing of gas became necessary. In 1950 the Metropolitan Gas Company, along with the Brighton Gas Company, was absorbed into the newly formed Gas and Fuel Corporation of Victoria, a government body. The primary goals of the new corporation were to consolidate the fragmented Victorian gas industry, and to construct a brown-coal plant in Morwell. Brown coal, which had been found in Victoria in 1857, produced gas of an inferior quality to black coal. However, technical developments in Germany in the 1930s meant that the production of high quality gas from brown coal was feasible, although it required a different process.

The South Melbourne site operated until 1956, at which time the brown-coal plant in Morwell was opened. Ancillary workshops continued until 1970, and the meter shop remained in operation until 1985.
Gas reserves had been discovered at Roma in Queensland in 1960, and in Bass Strait in 1965. Gas appliances in Melbourne began to be converted to natural gas in 1968. The plants in Footscray and West Melbourne closed in 1970, bringing to an end the manufacturing of gas in Melbourne.
CHAPTER 2

What to do with
the site?
At the time of its closure, the South Melbourne Gasworks covered an area totaling 4.74 hectares, of which 3.19 hectares was in the City of South Melbourne and 1.55 hectares in the City of Port Melbourne. The Port Melbourne Council decided subsequently to use its portion for housing. The South Melbourne site remained unoccupied for many years.

Community and government involvement

Little transpired about the future of the South Melbourne site until 1974 when the Minister for Local Government, Rupert Hamer, suggested that these gasworks sites become parks and recreation areas. At the same time, there was a growing movement within the community to utilise the site. Some local residents campaigned to gain the site for the Albert Park High School. There were also discussions, within the South Melbourne Council and the State Government, on a proposal for the park to be developed with a role for the arts.
The State Government Cabinet formed a sub-committee (Refer 2a) to consider the use of the Gasworks site for ‘the purposes of regional open space’. The sub-committee consisted of the Minister for Planning and the Minister for Education. This sub-committee in turn formed a Committee of Officers, chaired by the Chairman of the Town and Country Planning Board. In September, the sub-committee recommended:

- the gasworks site should be acquired substantially for community purposes including recreation and education, and possibly for housing purposes to a limited extent;
- a steering committee be set up to identify the nature and extent of the site’s uses, and to oversee the development of the required professional skills; and
- the highest professional skills be employed to produce an integrated scheme with emphasis in the design on innovation.

South Melbourne Council had previously formed a Gasworks sub-committee, chaired by Councillor Tony White, and that sub-committee was requested to provide a report to the Committee of Officers. In December 1974 the Council conducted a survey to determine the aspirations of local residents for the site. The findings of the survey revealed community support for the site to be used for recreational and community purposes. The Council then passed a resolution to inform the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works that the Council wished the land to be rezoned from ‘special purposes’ to ‘public open space’.

The following year the State Government agreed to pay for two-thirds of the site, financed by the Metropolitan Improvement Fund. This area was to be reserved for public open space, while the remaining third, to be purchased by the City of South Melbourne, could be developed as the Council saw fit. The Council established a Gasworks Site Committee, comprised of Council officers, to oversee its plans for the site.

Many proposals from local residents and others were made for the use of the South Melbourne Council’s portion of the site. They included a swimming pool, community gardens, tennis courts, a hospital, restaurants and a nursing home. Many of the proposals were prohibited under the Melbourne and Metropolitan Planning Scheme, or were not appropriate for land purchased for the purpose of open space. The South Melbourne Council formed a Community Liaison Committee in July 1979 which reported to the Council Gasworks Site Committee.

This liaison committee was charged with the task of investigating recreational and community uses for the site. It consisted of representatives of organisations that had a broad-based interest (for example, schools, the Ratepayers’ Association and the Garden Club) and those with a particular interest (Scouts, Tennis Club and Nursing Home), as well as Council officers.
In November 1979 the Minister of Lands took vacant possession of the site, and the City of South Melbourne was appointed as the Committee of Management. The Council purchased its portion in December for $628,667. This was celebrated by a Fun Day and Fair held in the park in February 1980.

The Council Gasworks Committee prepared a report, Access 80 in July 1980, which aimed for immediate community access to the site without pre-empting Council opportunities for long-term development. The Community Liaison Committee and the Gasworks Site Committee were discontinued in June 1981, as a part of a streamlining of the Council’s sub-committee structure. The Council Gasworks Committee became responsible for all matters relating to the gasworks site.
Redevelopment of the site

The first stage of the redevelopment occurred in 1982 and involved the removal of numerous concrete slabs and underground services, and the addition of loads of soil. The majority of the site was then grassed and landscaped, so as to provide useable open space. The landscaping included the planting of many trees, undertaken by the Jaycees as part of the ‘Year of the Tree’. When completed, the Council constructed a BMX track along the Pickles Street boundary.

The Council decided to build a nursing home on 0.4 of a hectare in the north-east corner of the site. It was completed and occupied in November 1983. At the same time, a festival, Summer in South, was held in both the St Vincent Gardens (Albert Park) and at the gasworks, as a means of publicising the gasworks site. Other occupants of the site during the early 1980s were the South Port Unemployment Group (SPUG) located in one of the buildings (Building 6) (Refer 2e), and the Education Department which, until 1983, occupied a small area adjacent to the nursing home for its Transitional Education Advisory Committee (TEAC). The site was also used as a film set by many directors, including Paul Cox who made the television film The Paper Boy (Refer 2b).
The outstanding potential of the site, the decay of the existing buildings and the inability of the South Melbourne Council to reach a consensus in relation to the use of the site, led the Mayor, Anne Fahey to meet with the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, Rod McKenzie in November 1984. The result of this meeting was an agreement to prepare a concept plan that included the views of both the Department and the Council, and that a Redevelopment Steering Committee be formed (Refer 2c).

During the period the concept plan was being prepared, a fire destroyed a large part of the Gatehouse (Building 5) (Refer 2e), reinforcing the need to redevelop the whole site. The plan, Redevelopment of the Gasworks Site was completed in June 1985. It attempted to satisfy the principal community requirements.
for both unstructured active and passive recreation needs, and educational and community resource needs. The plan proposed a central open parkland surrounded by a pedestrian spine linking the various activity areas, and the development of a community activities village within the recycled industrial buildings. Overall, it was designed to encourage maximum community usage, and to be able to be implemented in stages over several years.

This proposal was influenced by current views about community cultural development, and one of the numerous ideas presented as to what the community usage could be was for – the arts. The State Government, under the leadership of Race Matthews, as Minister for the Arts, had established a Ministerial Committee for Local Government and the Arts. The committee was exploring the use of former industrial facilities in a number of locations, as bases of extension of the arts into new parts of the community. The Footscray Community Arts Centre had been established a decade before, and ideas of recycling industrial buildings for the arts were in the air. Sue Clarke, an officer of Arts Victoria, visited the South Melbourne Council to advise and explore the issue.

Figure 2.7
The concept plan (Source: South Melbourne City Council archives)
The plan was forwarded to both the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands and to the South Melbourne Council for approval, as well as the Department of Education, Ministry for the Arts, and the Department of Sport and Recreation for consideration. The plan was adopted by the City of South Melbourne in July 1985.

An arts village

The Gasworks site and its buildings have the potential to be an excellent and bustling, community arts facility, offering a unique and diverse range of activities and opportunities for our community. Jan Senbergs, artist and local resident.

It was in this context that, in February 1985, sculptor Anton Hasell (Refer 2d) approached the Council to express interest in using one of the disused buildings (Building 1) (Refer 2e) previously the Salthouse) as a sculpture studio. He was advised by Councillor Anne Fahey that a formal submission would be required. Anton organised a group of artists (Helen Butcher, Anneke Deutsch, Rob Giannini, Eamon O’Toole and Claudine Top) to write a proposal for the gasworks space. In late 1985 a community meeting was called to establish the Gasworks Community Arts Village Committee (Refer 2h). Anton was elected Chair of the committee which became incorporated as an Association in December 1986.

The initiative of Anton and his fellow artists was the first concrete attempt to develop the site around the practice of the arts. He worked in collaboration with Anne Fahey, who was also administering the South Port Unemployment Group (SPUG) in what is now the Angela Robarts-Bird Gallery.

The incorporated body created a constitution influenced by that of the Footscray Community Arts Centre, despite the fact that there were major differences between the two sites: Footscray Community Arts Centre was established with a commitment of funding from State and Federal governments. There was no such undertaking with Gasworks – and virtually no prospect of it. Funding and development would be locally based, and the development would be incremental – one step at a time.

A submission was made by the South Melbourne Council to the Ministry for Arts in June 1985 for a grant to renovate the Gatehouse (Building 5) (Refer 2e) in order to provide office and administrative space, a gallery and exhibition areas, studios and access workshops. In May 1986 the Council gave approval in principle for the Anthill Theatre to use Building 7 (Refer 2e) as a performance space.

The Council agreed in July 1986 that the Gasworks Community Arts Village Committee could lease Buildings 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10 and 11 (Refer 2e) for one year. The first buildings used were the Gatehouse (5), the Watchman’s Cottage (11) and the sculpture studio (1). The initial lease terms for the studios were a rent of $35 per week, a requirement for artists to provide their own equipment, and an agreement to be involved in community-service activities, such as the provision of classes or demonstrations. The Arts Village became a reality.
Anton Hassell’s project continued for a year or so. Some exhibitions and displays were mounted, and some activities for the public were organised, but in time most of the participants moved on to other locations and projects. Around this time, Frances Warren (Refer 2i) was appointed Manager of Community Services at South Melbourne Council, and found the park and its activities in her portfolio.

*My memory of the Gasworks site in the initial period was that it was going nowhere really. If a project such as this was to really take off, it needed skilled and enthusiastic community members, a sufficient number of sympathetic and cluey councillors, and a sufficient number of competent and sympathetic Council officers.*

Frances Warren, Manager of Community Services, South Melbourne Council.

The Council agreed to appoint a Community Arts Officer for a three-year period from September 1988. The first appointee was Greg Marginson (Refer 2f). The Gasworks Site Community Liaison Committee (Refer 2g) was established by the Council to be responsible for making recommendations regarding developments on the site. For a couple of years the Gasworks Site Community Liaison Committee co-existed with the Gasworks Community Arts Village Committee.

The liaison committee realised the importance of obtaining external professional advice for the development of the site and Council was persuaded to allocate funds for a conference of selected invitees. The conference, ‘Towards the Development of an Arts Policy for the Gasworks Site’ was held in November 1988. It concluded that:

- Gasworks was a part of South Melbourne in particular, and should be a hub for arts support throughout the area;
- its activities should reflect the strong commercial art presence in South Melbourne;
- it should be linked to some community or commercial venture;
- it was important to retain an overall arts focus; and
- the park should become part of an overall arts concept.
Slowly the vision started to come to fruition as both Council and members of the community swung behind the project. The Gasworks committee persuaded the Council to renovate the Sculpture Studio (Refer 2e), and organised a sculpture exhibition (Refer Chapter 6) in the park in which both resident artists and emerging sculptors from around Melbourne participated. The exhibition was a considerable success and helped to demonstrate that such activity could add value to the park and the surrounding community. The then Mayor of South Melbourne, Shane Dowling, chose one of the exhibits, Not without Chomley by Ann Ross, as his Mayor’s gift to the city – the first permanent acquisition for the park. The success of the exhibition created an environment within which Council was willing to further renovate the buildings, adding roofs to the remaining studios, one in each succeeding year.

The Council budgeted funds to renovate Buildings 1, 2, 3, 4, 9 and 11 (Refer 2e) within the 1988-1989 year. By the end of 1989, most of the buildings were renovated and occupied by artists ranging from sculptors and visual artists to jewellers.

This process culminated in the re-development of the former pump room (Building 7) (Refer 2e) of the gasworks as a theatre. The Council, faced by the impending amalgamation with St Kilda and Port Melbourne, decided to devote part of their remaining surplus to this project. When this was done, the renovation of the buildings at the park was complete.
In January 1989 the office bearers of the Gasworks Community Arts Village Committee were James McCaughey (Chair), Anton Hasell (Deputy Chair), Anne Fahey (Secretary), Carol Morton (Assistant Secretary), Edwin Relf (Treasurer), Zoe Hogg, Jan Senbergs, Sharon McKenzie, with Robbie Washusen and Des Bergen as co-opted members. The committee was supported by two officers from the City of South Melbourne: Greg Marginson (Community Arts Officer) (Refer 2f) and Frances Warren (Manager of Community Services) (Refer 2i).

As there was, as yet, no venue for major events on the site, the park itself became the focus for activities and events. Early events in the park were an Open Day in June 1987 and an Art in the Park day in April 1988. The program for 1989 included a children’s January holiday program, the Mayor’s Community Barbeque Day and Heritage Week, as well as classes in visual arts and crafts. The Inter-church Christmas Carols concert held prior to Christmas 1989 attracted a crowd of 500 people.
Figure 2.11
Activities in the late 1980s (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Figure 2.12
Aerial view of the park, late 1980s (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
Throughout the early life of Gasworks as an arts venue, Ann Fahey continued to run a program for unemployed youth, entitled SPUG (South Ports Unemployment Group, while playing a continuing role in the park’s governance. In June 1989, SPUG vacated Building 6 (Refer 2e) enabling the building to be used by the students of Hobson’s Bay School while their school was being rebuilt. The State Government had allocated the south-east corner of the site to the school, as well as $1.7 million for redevelopment.

During the late 1980s, preliminary concepts for a textile workshop were developed by Tori De Mestre and Anne Marie Power, and for a music centre (by Henry Vyhnal). In August 1989 a submission was also made for a ceramic studio to be located in Building 3 (Refer 2e) with a kiln situated alongside. The proposal intended that the studio would provide space for three artists, and also make available community access to the kiln and teaching expertise. A dark room for community use was established in the Gatehouse, Building 5, (Refer 2e) in February 1990.

Figure 2.13
Article in the Emerald Hill and Sandridge Times, 7 December 1989
At the Gasworks Community Arts Village Committee Annual General Meeting in September 1989, it was proposed that the Committee change its name to Gasworks Arts Inc., and this change formally occurred in November. The change of name was to acknowledge the next phase in the life of the organisation.
CHAPTER 3

Early events
In the early days of Gasworks Arts Inc., many of the buildings had not yet been renovated, thus the park itself was the focus of activities. Some of the events held included a Fun Day and Fair, organised by the South Melbourne Council in February 1980 to celebrate the purchase of their part of the gasworks site, an Open Day in June 1987, an Art in the Park Day in April 1988 and a Mayor’s BBQ and Community Day in March 1989; Get going to the Gasworks Game was part of this 1989 event.

My memory of this family event (the Mayor’s BBQ and Community Day in 1989) was that each family was given a list of clues which, when deciphered one by one, would progressively lead through the neighbourhood streets to the Gasworks site where James (McCaughey) had organised a family barbecue. David Grutzner (Refer 3a).
During the 1990s, Gasworks Arts Inc. collaborated with Council to organise various community days that usually revolved around a particular theme. These ‘theme’ events were Mayor’s Community Days, Spring into Summer, and Sundays at Gasworks. The Mayor’s Community Days pre-existed their reincarnation at Gasworks. They included information booths and stalls from many aspects of the city’s life and its various community groups. James McCaughey worked with a group of parents from Middle Park Primary School to create participatory events which gave an artistic and celebratory feel to the whole, while artists in the studios created workshops and other activities.

The Mayor’s Community Day

The Mayor’s Community Day at Gasworks in March 1990 was themed ‘Our Place in South Melbourne’. More than 30 community groups were involved and it was attended by 2000 people.
A major photographic exhibition, Sights of South, had its opening on the day. The exhibition was the result of a project designed to capture local photographic activity. The project involved individuals, groups, schools, a walking tour (conducted by Talbot and Les Hill), classes and workshops on how to mount pictures. The photographer Carolyn Lewens was employed to act as a catalyst. The exhibition included 280 images from 110 local photographers, as well as some archival material from the Gas and Fuel Corporation. During the two weeks it was on, it was seen by 1200 people.

Another highlight of the day was the Gasworks Serpent, a mural designed and executed by around 100 local residents, supported by ceramicist, Maggie McCormack. Today this remains in the park on the wall beside the Ceramics Studio (Refer 2e).

In March 1991 there was a second Mayor’s Community Day. Its theme was ‘Put Yourself on the Map’. David Curry from the Council’s Recreation Department co-ordinated a team of residents, staff from the Recreation Department and Gasworks artists to produce a map which located the sites of various schools, kindergartens, aged-care facilities, sporting clubs and churches in the municipality. In addition actors and dancers performed ‘A Journey through Time’.
In 1992 the theme was ‘Next Stop South Melbourne’, and in 1993 it was ‘Join your Neighbourhood Jigsaw’. The latter was the culmination of a four-month community development program conducted by the Council’s Recreation Department. More than 5000 people saw an exhibition involving the work of the resident artists and work displays by students from the classes program, and heard a tape from the Gasworks Listening Post that included interviews from the Oral History Place-making Project (Refer 1b).

‘Memorable Moments’ was the theme for the 1994 event and it attracted more than 7000 visitors. Themes for later days were: ‘Our Backyard’ in 1995, ‘For the Birds’ in 1996 and ‘Making Waves’ in 1997.
Figures 3.9 and 3.10
Community Day, 1995 (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Figures 3.11 and 3.12
Community Day, 1996 (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
The event in 1998 was themed ‘A Festival of Reconciliation and Unity’, a feature of which was ‘Walking the Path Together’, designed by Koori artist Ray Thomas, and created on the day. Today the remnants can be seen outside the artists’ studios. This was the last Mayor’s Community Day, as in 1999 the City of Port Phillip devolved responsibility for the arts program to Gasworks Arts Inc. Council moved the event to Alma Park in St Kilda in order to provide a geographic spread of major events in the newly enlarged city. After two years there, it was discontinued.

**Spring into Summer**

The first Spring into Summer festival was held in November 1991, and the highlight was the 180 kites which were constructed by children. Owing to this festival’s popularity, it was held annually until 1997. Visitors could wander around the various stalls, visit the sculpture studio and be entertained by local groups.
Sundays at Gasworks

Sundays at Gasworks commenced in May 1995. These events were designed to introduce, in a casual setting, the work of the resident artists and aspects of the artistic experience to the public. A theme was selected for each of the Sundays, and some of these themes were: ‘Gulliver in the South Seas’, ‘Hands On Sculpture’, ‘Koori Exchange’, ‘Children’s Book Week’ and ‘The Swinging Circus’.

Figures 3.15 and 3.16
Posters from two of the Spring into Summer festivals (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Figures 3.17 and 3.18
One Sundays at Gasworks’ theme in 1995 (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Figure 3.19
‘Art Olympics’ poster (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Figures 3.20 and 3.21 ‘Hands on Sculpture Day’ (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Figure 3.22
Poster for ‘Rosie’s Sunday’ (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
‘Koori Day’, the ‘A Capella Festival’ and ‘Dog Day’ were some of the themes in 1997.

Figure 3.23
Poster for ‘Koori Day’ (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Figure 3.24
‘Dog Day’ (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
Theme days for 1998 included ‘Dog Day’, ‘Koori Day’, ‘The Swinging Circus’ and ‘Sunday Stories’. After this, the decision was made to discontinue this event.

Figure 3.25
Poster for ‘Dog Day’ (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Figure 3.26
‘The Swinging Circus’ poster (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Figure 3.27
Entertainment at ‘The Swinging Circus’ (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
And finally

All the festivals and events mentioned previously were organised with varying forms of collaboration between the South Melbourne Council and Gasworks Arts Inc. After the council amalgamations in 1994, the Port Phillip Council took over the responsibilities for the park, and affirmed its role as a place for the practice and appreciation of the arts. In 1999 the Port Phillip Council decided to devolve the management of Gasworks from a direct Council operation to an independent, incorporated Board of Management made up of community members. Organising events in the park then became the responsibility of the Gasworks’ Chief Executive Officer/Director under the auspices of the Board of Management.
CHAPTER 4

Changes in the 1990s
During this decade Gasworks Arts was able to demonstrate the significance of the park as a community venue. Many of the buildings were renovated and made available for community use, artists occupied the renovated studios, the theatres became active and public events continued.

**Building renovations**

Prior to the renovations commencing, some of the buildings around the site were used by various artists and groups. Building 7 (Refer 2e) was used by the sculptor Cliff Burtt (Refer 6b) for his installation in the 1991 sculpture exhibition. Primary Source, an outdoor-performance art troupe, used the same building in the early 1990s to build four-metre-high letters, used to create Big Words installations at various locations around Melbourne and at festivals, including the Melbourne and Sydney festivals.

From January 1990, Building 11 (Refer 2e) was used as a rehearsal space. In February a design brief was completed for the use of Building 7 (Refer 2e) as a performance space for drama, music and dance. The possibility of a joint-venture partner for the development was included in the brief; the only
application came from Circus Oz. Their requests in terms of lease, rent and Council contribution were such that the South Melbourne Council eventually decided in 1991 to undertake the work itself. The theatre was opened by the Premier, Joan Kirner, on 14 July 1992. The first major productions held in the new theatre were produced by Gasworks and by Anthill. Gasworks produced *City of Voices*, a play that drew on the experiences of local residents – predominantly older women – and was performed by them, them, and *Vengeance*. Anthill produced *Life is a Dream* and *The School for Wives*. The theatre was also used at this time by Playback Theatre, an interactive theatre company.

Capital to renovate the sculpture studio, ceramics studio, textile studios and art and crafts workshop *(Refer 2e)* was gained mostly from the South Melbourne Council. When completed, the studios filled with artists, and classes in children’s art, drama, oil painting, teenage art and life drawing were held.

**Activities, projects and events**

It was proposed in September 1990 that those children enrolled in art classes paint a mural on the external wall of the park on the Pickles Street side, under the guidance of the artist, Lisa Kingman. The mural was completed in December.

Books Illustrated *(Refer 4b)*, established by Ann James and Ann Haddon, moved into the Gatehouse Building *(Refer 2e)* in May 1993. There was a specialist
children’s bookshop downstairs, and a gallery and Ann James’ open studio, upstairs. They mounted exhibitions of children’s book illustrations which changed monthly, and held book launches, seminars for illustrators and workshops in illustration, as well as actively participating in Gasworks events.

The Community Photography Project, Good Friends and Loved Ones: South Melbourne Album, was held between July and November 1993. Tutors were placed with disadvantaged groups, and the outreach strategy engaged individuals, schools and groups. More than 400 works were displayed, and these included hand-made albums, snapshots, framed and mounted works and 3D pieces.
The Ha Ha Gallery of comic art opened in Building 4 (Refer 2e) in August 1994. Run by Bev Aisbett, it featured the works of leading print, comic strip, advertising, editorial and animation cartoonists, as well as cartoon displays and activities.

Community events including Spring into Summer, Mayor’s Community Day and Sundays at Gasworks (Refer Chapter 3) continued throughout most of the 1990s. As well, public activities included craft markets, music and film nights, and outdoor sculpture exhibitions (Refer Chapter 6).

Film nights, part of the Music in the Parks program, were held each March between 1993 and 1995. One of the highlights was in 1993 when The Sundowners provided music, and short films made by Swinburne students were accompanied by music provided by the multicultural band, Shenanigans.

**Around the park**

In 1990 the South Melbourne Playground Committee wanted to build a ‘Leathers’ playground on the Gasworks site, but the South Melbourne Council preferred Albert Park Reserve. As a result of a public meeting on the issue of the playground’s location, the committee decided on Albert Park Reserve and, after a couple of years of planning, the playground was eventually constructed there in 1993.

![Poster advertising the film Garbo](Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

**A new governance structure**

As more studios were renovated and leased, it became necessary to develop a policy to clarify their occupancy. Initially each studio had its own sub-committee and its own policy for filling a studio vacancy. In mid-1990 a working party was established, and it proposed that studios have a balance between experienced artists (given a longer residence, with regular reviews) and younger artists (for non-renewable, two- to three-year periods).

In 1991 the South Melbourne Council decided to end the position of Community Arts Officer in its existing form, and to replace it with two, twenty-hour positions. As a result, Greg Marginson (*Refer 2f*) resigned, and was replaced in September 1991 by Diana Stewart, who was responsible for programming events, and Rosalie Hastwell, who was replaced by David Golightly in April 1992, responsible for the administration of the park. Diana’s position was Community Arts Officer, with a special responsibility for Gasworks. She came to the role with a distinguished background in events management and extensive experience in the extension of the arts into the community. She made a major contribution to the growth and reputation of Gasworks over the following years, bringing imagination and flair to the many different types of events that the park hosted.
From mid-1992 it was apparent that Gasworks Arts Inc. itself required a new governance structure. Over three years the organisation had grown from leasing one studio that supported six artists, to leasing five buildings that supported 17 artists. The previous governance structure included the Liaison Committee, Gasworks Arts Inc. Committee, sub-committees for each of the studios and sub-committees for other special purposes. Not only had the organisation gained maturity and complexity, it became difficult to service the committees. There were various other difficulties including arranging for the community and artist representatives to attend various forums, duplication of roles, potential conflicts of interest and changing functions of the committees. It was proposed that the Liaison Committee and the Gasworks Arts Inc. Committee be replaced by a Committee of Management (Refer 4c) that comprised four community representatives (to be members of Gasworks Arts Inc.), three
South Melbourne councillors and two on-site artists. This committee first met in November 1992. A sub-committee, the Gasworks Theatre Committee, was established to liaise with the Anthill Theatre.

... to my knowledge, the idea of a neighbourhood park, supported by a broadly based arts program which was conceived and managed by the local community, was a totally new concept in Melbourne ... David Grutzner (Refer 4a).

In 1994 the City of South Melbourne merged into the newly formed City of Port Phillip, which also included the former cities of St Kilda and Port Melbourne. The elected Councillors of the three cities were replaced by commissioners appointed by the State Government. The merged Council changed the administrative arrangements as key council staff moved to other positions, and Councillors Grieb, Johnson and Wilson were replaced on the Gasworks Committee of Management by Des Clark, one of the commissioners.

After two years of residency during which they managed the theatre and mounted their program in it, the Anthill Theatre Company closed its doors. The management of the theatre reverted to Council, and Council-appointed staff (Elisabeth Jones, Theatre Manager; and Russell Field, Technical Manager) ran the theatre, in consultation and collaboration with the Board of Gasworks Arts Inc.

In 1996 the City of Port Phillip appointed consultants to review the delivery of cultural services within the municipality, and in 1997 a master plan was developed for the southern end of the park, which was to include a cafe.

The decade ended with Gasworks being the recipient of two prizes: ‘Best Practice Management of a Cultural Program or Project’ from Arts 21 Local Government and Arts Leadership Awards of Arts Victoria; and the Tom Hills Memorial Prize from the Port Melbourne Historical Society to Anna Monea for the Gasworks History Education Kit that resulted from the Oral History Place-making Project (Refer 1b).
CHAPTER 5

The organisation since 1999
Devolution

In 1996 the City of Port Phillip appointed consultants to review the delivery of cultural services within the municipality. The consultants were Paul Clarkson (former Victorian Administrator of the Australian Opera and ex-Director of the Victorian Ministry for the Arts); Sue Nattrass (General Manager, Arts Centre, Melbourne) and Rachel Fensham (dance and theatre scholar). Their proposals included the establishment of a Cultural Programs Board to take responsibility for conducting the Council’s cultural policy. As well, they recommended that the Council’s cultural facilities be governed by community-based boards that would report to the Cultural Programs Board. The Council accepted these recommendations.

Gasworks was the first cultural facility in the municipality to be handed over to community-based management. In 1998 Gasworks Arts Inc. signed a three-year lease and service agreement with the Cultural Programs Board. From 1 July 1999 the City devolved management and program implementation to Gasworks Arts Inc. The City retained ownership of the buildings and maintained responsibility for the parkland on which Gasworks is sited, and provided significant funding to support the cost of delivering arts-related and community-based programs.

The new arrangements required the establishment of a self-sufficient management structure. The Board of Gasworks became responsible for the management of the organisation: its outward vision, longer-term direction setting, strategic leadership and overall financial management. It included community members selected on the basis of their professional expertise and experience, prior to devolution, augmented by four members appointed by the Council. The Chair was James McCaughey, Philip Hemstrich was Treasurer and Jenni Gilbert was Secretary. The board members were David Grutzner (Refer 4a), Jane Scott, Bradley Smith and Christine Ewing. Council appointed its own representatives: Janet Russell, Michael Brett-Young, Peter Cronin and John Ellis. The committee was served by Angela Wallace (Refer 8a), until the appointment of a General Manager. The artists’ representatives were Leigh Hobbs and Ann James (Refer 4b).

The responsibility for the day-to-day administration and program implementation at Gasworks required the appointment of a General Manager. In May 1999, Robert Hughes (Refer 5a) was appointed to this role. Robert had been founding director of the Footscray Community Arts Centre and of Metro Arts in Brisbane. New staff members were appointed, and other staff roles and responsibilities were restructured: Sue McClements was appointed Marketing and Development Manager and John Dutton, Technical Officer. They joined Diana Stewart, Events Manager; Shona Johnson, Theatre Manager; and James Robertson, Visual Arts Manager – who all now became employees of Gasworks Arts Inc.
Financial matters

Gasworks received a core grant from Council, the amount based on the best possible estimate of the previous cost to Council of running Gasworks. The only problem with this computation was that the Council officer, who had previously been responsible for programming at Gasworks, was not in a senior position and therefore did not command a large salary. This meant that Gasworks Arts Inc. could not advertise the position of General Manager with a salary commensurate with the responsibilities entailed. Fortunately Robert Hughes, with his ability and experience, accepted the position.

Independence offered the opportunity to find new sources of funding and support. The management team worked towards the building of new alliances and the extension of sponsorship support. During the first year of independence, funding applications to Arts Victoria, the Australia Council and other agencies raised $10,560, and $40,000 was raised by sponsorship. Donations also increased substantially and a fund-raising auction raised $15,000. The Council continued its strong support, with the Cultural Programs Board funding four projects to the value of $76,000.

With the advice and assistance of local community member and former City of South Melbourne Councillor, David Hunt supported by Gael Wilson, the Board established a philanthropic foundation, the Gasworks Foundation (Refer Chapter 14), in June 2000 to attract funds to further the work of Gasworks Arts. The inaugural Chair was Michael Brett-Young.

In 2000 and 2001, Gasworks undertook two major children’s festivals which were successful artistically but incurred financial losses that threatened the financial viability of the organisation. This was the result of overly ambitious programming and overly optimistic staff.

In 2002 the organisation traded well ahead of budget, and hosted and presented more activity than in any previous year. There was a new focus on the visual arts, enabled by the conversion of one room of the old office to function as a gallery. This was part of the first stage of a capital-works project developed by
both Gasworks and the Council. The first stage also included the development of
the remaining office rooms as a café, and the construction of new administrative
offices. The second stage was to include the redevelopment and relocation of
the children’s playground closer to the main complex, while the third stage
would deal with the renovation of the theatre foyer.

Around this time, Diana Stewart departed from the organisation after eight
years as Events Manager. Her involvement with Gasworks had contributed
greatly to the profile and vibrancy of the park.

**Artistic policy**

Under Robert Hughes’ leadership, a new artistic policy *(Refer 5b)* was written
in 2004. The policy embraced all the art forms and created a link between
the Gasworks’ objectives of serving the arts and the local community, and the
artistic projects that were to be undertaken. It enabled staff to negotiate projects
and artists’ studio residencies that supported the arts, which in turn supported
the community. To implement this policy, it was necessary to alter the staff
structure. The previous structure established by Council included individual
staff in control of specific aspects of the arts, and were to a certain extent in
competition with each other. This gave way to two organisational threads, one
dealing with administrative activities and headed by Centre Manager, Kirsty
Ross, with the second thread responsible for the artistic program activities under
the Program Director, Emily McClean. The two threads came together under the
General Manager, Robert Hughes, whose position was renamed Artistic Director.

**Buildings**

*On one occasion I stood in the wreckage of what was the original gasworks pump
room, a giant massive bombed-out looking interior space reminiscent of those
images of London in the Blitz. The light from above filtered through the shattered
roofing tiles, and hanging from the roof beams was a sculpture (by Cliff Burtt,
Refer 6b, an exhibit in the 1991 outdoor sculpture exhibition, Refer Chapter 6) representing a giant, gently swinging pendulum and ticking clock. At that time
the future of this building was seriously under threat and yet thanks to James
(McCaughey) it became the new Gasworks Theatre. David Grutzner (Refer 4a).*

The Gasworks Theatre *(Refer 2e)* opened in 1992 and was leased to Antill for
the next two years, then managed by Council from 1994 to 1999 when man-
agement of the site was devolved to Gasworks Arts Inc.

The art gallery was refurbished and renamed the Angela Robarts-Bird Gallery,
and was formally opened in early 2004. It was named for Angela Robarts-Bird
*(Refer 8a)*, whose vision contributed much to the development of Gasworks Arts
Park. Angela was an artist, a consultant and later an officer of the City of Port
Phillip. The gallery provided Gasworks with its first dedicated exhibition space.
Also part of stage 1 of the capital-works project was the conversion of the remaining offices to a café and the building of new administrative offices. The St Kilda architect, Grant Amon was appointed. The café opened in early 2005 and later the same year saw the opening of the administration building. Grant Amon won two awards for his work on the café and offices at Gasworks: Best Refurbishment to an Existing Building at the City of Port Phillip Design and Development Awards 2005; and the Best Building, Large Category at the Inaugural Architeam Awards 2005. The redevelopment was also profiled in the architecture magazine *Monument*.

Also in 2005, Gasworks underwent rebranding, with a new logo, signage and merchandise.
Changes at the top

In 2005 Robert Hughes (Refer 5a) resigned after six years as General Manager and, later, Artistic Director. The Annual Report noted:

Robert … joined us at a time that Council was devolving responsibility for the Park’s program. He undertook the major task of reshaping the organisation to deal with the new responsibilities, and led it into a new phase of infrastructure and program planning … In his time the Park moved from being on the margins of the city, producing occasional events, to the centre of new housing developments and a facility open for most of the year with an extensive and constantly developing program.

Robert’s last year was emblematic of his time with us – a time of new initiative and the strengthening of previous elements. The Discovery Art Show had its first airing. The Farmers’ Market was initiated. The Art of Difference took on a new role. A Taste for Living went from strength to strength; and there was the successful development of the wing of café and galleries … We look back on Robert’s time with gratitude. He has invigorated the Park, strengthened the organisation and left us with a vibrant and imaginative staff.

Crusader Hillis (Refer 5c) joined as Artistic Director in January 2006, bringing extensive experience in arts administration, events management and marketing to the position.

Crusader oversaw the changes required for Gasworks to conform to industry standards in technical delivery. Gasworks committed to the purchase of new equipment, technical staff were brought in to undertake some tasks previously undertaken by non-professional staff, and higher occupational health and safety measures were introduced. As well, the organisation joined the Victorian Association of Performing Arts Centres (VAPAC). About 170,000 people visited Gasworks during 2006, an increase of 40,000 from the previous year.
Crusader also expended considerable time and effort, in association with the City of Port Phillip Arts Access and other stakeholders, in the further development of The Art of Difference Festival (Refer Chapter 11), Gasworks’ festival celebrating art and disability. Under his watch the festival grew in scope and quality, and spread across Melbourne to other facilities and locations. It became a locus for the discussion of key policy issues, and was greatly enhanced by an emphasis on the professionalism and class of the performances, and visual arts exhibitions.

He also pursued his interest in vaudeville and cabaret, and introduced late night performances which spanned the facility as a whole. As well he was responsible for specially curated exhibitions in the theatre which showcased the work of all the on-site artists. At the beginning of 2010, Crusader Hillis’ period as Artistic Director ended, and the ensuing development of new full-length performance works that were presented as part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival or as part of the subscription theatre season.

In May 2010 Tamara Jungwirth (Refer 5d) joined the organisation as Artistic Director and CEO. She came with a background of management positions at the Melbourne Museum and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image.
With Tamara at the helm, Gasworks proceeded to forge a number of important arts-industry networks. It joined the Guarantee Against Loss (GAL) program with Arts Victoria, a program that underwrote the performing arts program to $12,000 in each financial year. It also joined the small venues network, a sub-committee of the Victorian Association of Performing Arts Centres. As well, work was undertaken to improve the facilities, including the renovation of the Garden Studio, which resulted in a New York loft-style activities room.

From a programming perspective, Tamara created for the theatre an annual season of programmed performances, entitled Moving Parts (Refer 7g). This initiative enhanced Gasworks’ profile and attracted audiences from the local community and beyond. She also developed Small Gems (Refer 7h), a program that aims to identify, develop and support new, performing-arts work, which can then be performed in a range of small to medium-sized venues in metropolitan Melbourne and surrounds. The program enables the commissioning of independent works that are of professional quality, contemporary interest and in the genres of drama, dance, hybrid theatre, circus and ground-based physical theatre. This helps to create new work, to support artists with a track record of high quality production output, and to contribute positively to the Australian theatre scene.

She also encouraged the development of programming in circus and physical theatre, for which the Gasworks theatre is especially suitable. This was largely achieved through the development of Circus Showdown (Refer 7f), a competitive series of performances for emerging circus artists. Inspired by travels in Switzerland, where each year parklands in Grindelwald are transformed into a living outdoor art gallery, Tamara created From Nature (Refer Chapter 6), an ephemeral, organic, sculpture exhibition. The first exhibition was in 2015, and since has been staged each year.

**Capital works**

The major focus in 2007 was capital-works planning. A study by Tony Youlden, commissioned by Gasworks, led to the re-establishment of the Joint Gasworks/ City of Port Phillip Capital Works Committee. This committee investigated Gasworks’ capital-works’ needs both for the present and future, as well as precinct development. Council allocated $100,000 to fund the scoping study of capital works. In early 2007 the Angela Robarts-Bird Gallery was renovated to provide more hanging space and, later in the year, air conditioning was installed in the theatres and foyer.

The year ended with the signing of a new Service Agreement with the City of Port Phillip for the three years to the end of 2011, and the sad news that, after 15 years, Books Illustrated (Refer 4b) were vacating the Gatehouse building, to be replaced by the Blue Door Gallery.
Other developments

The following year, across the road in Graham Street, the developer, Mirvac was proposing an apartment block to occupy the vacant land bounded by Graham, Pickles, Danks and Foote streets. The Gasworks Board objected to the proposed development because of concerns about traffic noise and street landscaping. These objections were withdrawn when Mirvac agreed to work with Gasworks and Council to landscape Graham Street.

Despite a strong artistic program, 2009 was a particularly challenging year. The organisation received less than the anticipated funding for the Art of Difference Festival (Refer Chapter 11), and lower than expected hirer and audience numbers for some key programs. The administration responded to the projected deficit by curbing expenditure, raising income, and attempting to attract additional funding and sponsorships.

During 2010 there were significant financial challenges. Ageing infrastructure, together with the carry-over losses from 2009, and the increasing costs of running the organisation, meant that Gasworks was struggling to survive. Discussions with the City of Port Phillip resulted in a grant to tide Gasworks over until a new funding agreement. The one-off grant provided a much needed injection of funds, thus assisting the organisation’s cash flow and solvency. It also provided funding upgrading of theatre equipment and a strategic study to review the capital-works program.

The Blue Door gallery relinquished its tenancy of the Gatehouse building (Refer 2e) in 2009. The building underwent major renovations, before being leased to Hub Productions in January 2012. The café changed hands and name; the Priscilla Jones Café opened in March 2010 and proved to be very popular, creating a warm and welcoming centre for the park, adjacent to the Angela Robarts-Bird Gallery.

Work to extend the liquor licence into the theatres progressed, with a planning permit being obtained from the City of Port Phillip, which allowed patrons to bring glasses of wine into the theatres. The extended liquor licence was finally obtained in 2013.

The year 2013 was a year of highlights. The subscription theatre season run by Gasworks, Moving Parts (Refer 7g) began in earnest with six performances across the year. Gasworks became the circus hub for the Melbourne Fringe Festival and participation in Gasworks Arts Park events continued to grow with attendances of 183,359, up 13 per cent from 2012. As well there were numerous improvements to customer-service mechanisms, including print-at-home ticketing, the purchase of bar-code scanners for use by the ushers and a new public address system for the foyer. In the theatre, equipment upgrades were undertaken, including a sound muffling curtain between the
seating bank and the foyer, and a new ceiling truss which supported the rigging for aerial circus performers more safely.

The year was also successful financially, the result of record ticket sales to a large number of shows that were part of the Fringe Festival, and above-budget income from commissions for visual arts sales and bar sales.

During 2014 a number of staff members, who had contributed from three to seven years of service, resigned to take up positions at high profile organisations in other spheres of arts, entertainment and journalism. Although it was pleasing to see these staff members leverage their Gasworks experience into career progression, it did result in decreased organisational capacity for the period of recruitment and training of new staff. Staff continue to come and go as with any organisation, but Gasworks has always attracted remarkable people who work so hard to run the organisation.

**Soil contamination**

In November 2012 the City of Port Phillip formed a Reference Group to consider the issue of the decontamination of the park and its implications for future landscaping. The committee was comprised of representatives of Council (officers and a councillor) and representatives of the local community: dog walkers, Albert Park College, local residents and Gasworks Arts Inc.

Results of soil testing performed in 2013 revealed that contamination with lead, heavy metals and liquid hydrocarbons (the legacy of the activities of the Gas and Fuel Corporation), although under the ground, was widespread across the park. There was also evidence of serious contamination in the ground water. It was recommended that a considerable part of the park would have to be capped with fresh soil, and this would require widespread removal of existing trees. A new landscape plan was foreshadowed.

A draft plan for treatment of the contaminated soil and a new, park plan, was put out for community consultation in February 2014, after it had been considered by Council. By June 2014 the ongoing community agitation about the park remediation precipitated a report by the ABC for the 7.30 Report. At its December meeting in 2014, the Council resolved to formally request that the State of Victoria, undertake the task and shoulder the cost of soil remediation. After some consideration, the State agreed. It will work under a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Port Phillip and has committed to further testing – the results of this are not yet known at the time of writing.
Council reviews, leases and funding

In late 2013 the City of Port Phillip began to re-examine its leasing arrangements across the municipality. As part of this review, the City wished to align the Gasworks Lease (a nine-year arrangement) and the Funding Deed (currently for five years). As the next Funding Deed did not commence until 1 July 2016 and the existing lease was to terminate at the end of May 2014, Council considered ‘holding over’ the present lease until the Funding Deed expired. Meetings were held with council officers to negotiate changes to the Lease Agreement and the development of four new lease and licence documents, funding-level options and key performance indicators. Agreement was eventually reached and was signed-off in August 2014.

In February 2015 the City of Port Phillip announced that there would be service reviews of all services provided by Council, partly in response to the State Government’s introduction of rate capping due to take effect in July 2016. The Arts Services Review was initiated in March, a review report was circulated in April and a final report was produced for Council in April 2016. Consultation was undertaken with all arts facilities across the municipality.

During 2015, approval was granted by Council for building works to improve the dressing rooms, renovate the foyer, create a sound barrier between the two theatres and upgrade the ageing sewage system. Funded by the Council, the works commenced in October 2016 and were completed in July 2017. Owing to the architectural changes to the dressing rooms, staff were moved from the administrative offices to the Gatehouse Building (Refer 2e). The upgrade has proved to be very successful, but it came at a financial cost. The loss of hirers for the two theatres, the impact the building works had on the visual-art galleries and the café, the loss of rental income from the Gatehouse, the cost of programming off-site – resulted in a deficit of nearly $151,000 in 2017.

In 2018 Gasworks Arts Inc. was offered by Council another interim funding agreement for two years, at the end of which Council would decide about the long-term future of the park.
CHAPTER 6

Sculpture in the park
Sculpture has played a significant role in the life of the park from the early days of Gasworks Arts. The sculpture studio, Building 1 (Refer 2e) was the first of the artist studios to be occupied, and the first sculptors in residence in 1989 included: Rhonda Baum, Francoise Cueff, Tim Horn, Bronwen Snow and David Waters. Bruce Armstrong (Refer 6a) was located in a temporary studio space in Building 6 (Refer 2e). Tim Horn was later replaced by Kathryn Savva, and Barbara Wulff also joined the group at this time. Two Bruce Armstrong (Refer 6a) sculptures were installed in the park on a temporary basis in March 1990, one near Building 2 and the other near Building 3 (Refer 2e).

**Outdoor exhibitions**

In October and November 1990 Gasworks Arts held an exhibition to complement and extend the Fourth Australian Sculpture Triennial. Each resident Gasworks sculptor was asked to contribute concepts, and to invite a sculptural peer to also make a submission. The Gasworks sculptors and their peers who exhibited are listed in Figure 6.1. One of the highlights was Tony Pacot’s installation, based on the Japanese Shinto ritual of purification, and consisting of a six-metre cypress tree, a large bird house, an offering altar, 20 large ceramic bowls and four major paintings.

![Figure 6.1](Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
In May 1991 the outdoor sculpture exhibition was titled GAS. For this exhibition Ann Ross created the sculpture *Not without Chomley*. The work, made of cement fondué and steel, was purchased as a gift to the city, from the Mayor of the City of South Melbourne, Shane Dowling and, in July 1991, it became the first permanent sculpture installed in the park. After some months, in a serious setback, the sculpture was vandalised beyond the point of repair. This gave rise to a sense of anger and loss in the surrounding community, such that Council decided to recast the sculpture in bronze, and re-install it at the park. Today, *Not without Chomley* is still a well-loved feature at the Richardson Street entrance to the park.

Another highlight of the 1991 exhibition was the sculptor Cliff Burtt’s ([Refer 6b](#)) installation in Building 7 ([Refer 2e](#)), titled *Time Double Weighted*, a huge, gently swinging pendulum and ticking clock which hung from the roof of the old pump house (now the theatre).

The third Gasworks sculpture exhibition was held in September 1992, and attracted a crowd of more than 5000 people.
One of the exhibits at the 1992 exhibition was *The Angel* by Sione Francis. It was chosen by the Mayor of the City of South Melbourne, Councillor Frank O’Connor as his gift to the city. It is located on the rear, outside wall of the theatre facing the park, and is regarded as the guardian angel of the park. (In 2017, the City of Port Phillip contributed the funds to restore *The Angel* for the 25th anniversary of its installation at Gasworks, and Sione returned to Gasworks for the celebration and to hold a solo exhibition, ‘A Place to Stand’, which used sculpture, drawing and mixed media.)

![The Angel, Sione Francis](Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

A grant from the Visual Arts/Craft Board of the Australia Council in 1992 funded a sculpture consultancy. Phillipa Burne was appointed to investigate the form and structure of the annual sculpture exhibition. She recommended a five-year program for its future development.

The fourth exhibition was held in September 1993, and was an associate event of the Fifth Australian Sculpture Triennial. It included 63 works by 53 artists, with pieces located at the Gasworks Arts Park, Southbank Promenade, and in the Southgate Arts and Leisure precinct.
In 1994 the sculpture exhibition attracted 61 artists and their works were sited both in the park and in the foyer of the Gasworks theatre.

In 1995 attention turned to the need to mark the principal entry to the park on the corner of Graham and Pickle streets. The City of Port Phillip, working in collaboration with Gasworks Arts Inc., held a competition to create a landmark sculpture for this position. The winner was Sandringham sculptor, Henry Smith, with his entry, *Man, Dog, Boat*. The sculpture was installed in October 1995 to coincide with the opening of the sixth sculpture exhibition. It is a much-loved presence in the precinct and has found its way into Gasworks’ letterhead.
During the seventh exhibition in October 1996, 20,000 visitors viewed 37 works. A feature of the exhibition was ‘Works for Windows’ whereby seven artists transformed the windows of seven shops in the Albert Park area.

Figure 6.7
Poster and two of the exhibits in the 1995 sculpture exhibition: Top: Untitled, David Murray; Underneath: Walks of Life, Trevor Wren (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Figure 6.8
Poster and Yvonne Kendall’s Mortify-Morpheus, 1996 exhibition (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
The arrangements for the outdoor exhibition were reviewed in 1997, resulting in biennial scheduling, a two-stage selection process and a maximum of 30 artists. In December 1997, 28 artists were selected for the exhibition in October 1998.

*Tour of the 'burbs* by Cliff Burtt *(Refer 6b)*, an exhibit in the 1998 exhibition, consists of three steel sculptures located in the parkland at Gasworks. The series represents the convergence of forest parkland in an historic setting and the contemporary artistic ventures that enable Gasworks to engage a diverse range of urban communities.

*Figure 6.9*

*Tour of the 'burbs*, Cliff Burtt. Left: *Doncaster Epic*, Middle: *Site*, Right: *Post Modern Triumph*  
(Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

*Figure 6.10*

Victoria Rowland’s sculpture, 1998 exhibition  
(Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
The outdoor sculpture exhibition became the Becton National Sculpture Exhibition in 2000, and the Becton Sculpture Biennial in 2002 – both attracting large crowds.

Another change was introduced in 2004: ARTworks@gasWORKS, a rolling program of exhibitions of one to three sculptures or installations for a period of about three months, three times a year. The intention was to create a consistent and changing presence of visual art in the park.
Unfortunately, in the year following this exhibition, it was decided to end outdoor sculpture exhibitions at Gasworks, owing to the high cost of providing security for the exhibitions, and competition from other sculpture venues. However the commitment remained to make sculpture a key part of the park’s visual landscape, and to introduce it as far as possible into the life of the park.

**From Nature**

In recent years there has been a return to outdoor sculpture activity, with the development of an organic sculpture exhibition, From Nature. It was first held in April 2015, following a call for expressions of interest from a wide range of artists. The exhibition presented a range of organic sculpture and mobiles – constructed from materials such as twigs, rocks, moss, living plants, pebbles, twine and flowers – scattered around the park. 27 works were on display, including some by Gasworks resident artists. The exhibition, held over a weekend, was accompanied by a public lecture, and in the galleries were two international photography exhibitions from renowned land artists, Cornelia Konrads (Germany) and Andrew Rogers (Australia).

There was a People’s Choice Award, for which almost 600 votes were received, and the panel of judges also awarded two professional development prizes. The exhibition was supported by the City of Port Phillip Cultural Development Fund and the Gasworks Foundation. The winner of the People’s Choice Award was *Another Earth* by Georgie Seccull, the Curators Choice Award was won by Tanja George (*Strange Fruit*), and a Creative Development Prize was awarded to Kim Simon and David Waters (*Man You Her*).
In 2016 the park again became an outdoor gallery. 31 site-specific organic artworks were created in the park by independent artists, including Gasworks resident artists and teams from Montague Continuing Education Centre, Albert Park Primary School and St Kilda Indigenous Nursery Co-Op. In 2017 the From Nature exhibition was on display for nine days, and 37 sculptures were scattered around the park. Visitors voted for their favourite artwork and a People’s Choice Prize was awarded.

Figure 6.15

**Resident sculptures**

The permanent sculptures that feature in the park include:

*Not without Chomley*, Ann Ross’ exhibit in the 1991 Outdoor Sculpture Exhibition, located at the Richardson Street entrance to the park; a gift from the City of South Melbourne (see Figure 6.2);

*Angel* by Sione Francis, a gift from the City of South Melbourne following the 1992 Outdoor Sculpture Exhibition, located on the rear wall of the theatre, facing the park (see Figure 6.4);

*Man, Dog, Boat* by Henry Smith, the winner of the competition held by the City of Port Phillip to create a Graham Street gateway to the Gasworks Arts Park in 1995 (see Figure 6.6);

*Tour of the ’burbs* by Cliff Burtt, an exhibit in the 1998 Outdoor Sculpture Exhibition, and a gift from the Gasworks Foundation; located near the Sculpture Studio (see Figure 6.9); and

*Midden* by Matthew Harding, located on the southern side of the park. In 2008 the Gasworks Foundation, working in collaboration with the City of Port Phillip, conducted a competition for a proposal for a sculpture that would relate to, and enhance, the visual environment of the park. The competition attracted a strong field of entries. A short list of three was selected, each of which was funded
for further development. The final selection was Matthew Harding’s *Midden*, the shapes of which reflect the industrial, cultural and ecological heritage of the park. The sculpture was carved in bluestone in the Gasworks sculpture studio, and was a gift of the Gasworks Foundation (*Refer Chapter 14*).

Figure 6.16
*Midden*, Matthew Harding, 2008 (Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

**And finally**

The resident sculptures form an integral part of the park landscape and this, together with the success of the From Nature exhibition, ensure that sculpture continues its significant role in the life of the park.
CHAPTER 7

Performing arts
The Gasworks Theatre was created by the City of South Melbourne out of the ruined building (Building 7) (Refer 2e) which used to house the pump room for the South Melbourne Gasworks. It was opened in July 1992 by the Premier Joan Kirner, and was managed by the South Melbourne Council. The Council called for expressions of interest from theatre companies interested in using the theatre as its home base, in return for taking on the responsibility of managing it for Council. They leased it to the Anthill Theatre Company (Refer 7a), an experimental theatre company, who had for some years presented a distinguished program of work in the former Temperance Hall, Napier Street, South Melbourne. The early productions in the theatre included those produced by Gasworks and/or by Anthill.
New life for the old gas powerhouse

First there was Anthill, a converted temperance hall in Napier Street which became the permanent home for Jean-Pierre Mignon’s Australian Nouveau Theatre.

Then came the Victorian Arts Centre with its three ultra-modern theatres. This was followed two years ago by the Malthouse, the Playbox Theatre Company’s smart new home in Sturt Street, which added another two to the growing collection of South Bank theatres.

Now to confirm South Melbourne’s reputation as the theatrical centre of Melbourne, there is the Gasworks Theatre off Pickles Street, Albert Park.

The Gasworks takes its title from the coal gasification plant that occupied the site until the advent of natural gas in the 1960s. For more than 20 years the site stood empty while the industrial buildings decayed or were vandalised.

In 1985 an approach was made by South Melbourne Council to the then Minister for Conservation, Forests and Land, Mrs Kirner, to have the contaminated site cleaned up and developed for community use. Mrs Kirner gave her ministerial blessing and work began the following year.

The whole site is known as the Gasworks Arts Park. The centre includes studios, resource workshops, meeting areas, community education facilities, and the multi-purpose Gasworks Theatre, which had its formal opening on Tuesday evening. Appropriately, it was Mrs Kirner, in her role as Premier, who performed this ceremony.

In its earlier incarnation the theatre building was the coal works’ powerhouse. As with the other industrial buildings on the site, it has been imaginatively restored. The new theatre is a performance space seating 250 people. It is in blond wood with its own dressing rooms, foyer, rehearsal space, storage areas and kitchen facilities.

At Tuesday’s opening the versatility of the space was demonstrated by a program put together by the former director of Geelong’s Mill Theatre, James McCaughy. It included performances by percussionist Graeme Leak, the Astra Choir, two members of Danceworks, two actors from Anthill, and illusionist Doug Tremlett and his company of four.

The Anthill pair, Julie Forsyth and Sergio Tell, did a levitation piece which was apt; after 11 years in the Napier Street Temperance Hall, Anthill is rising in the world, having been appointed company-in-residence to the larger and better appointed Gasworks.

As Mrs Kirner said, the move was appropriate. For Anthill had been part of Melbourne’s theatrical rejuvenation, consistently doing works other companies had not dared to do.

Anthill will stage three or four productions there each year. As well, it will run a program of workshops and classes for the benefit of local groups and individuals. The company will also initiate community theatre projects, contribute to local celebrations and festivals and, next year, hopes to participate in an oral history project relating to the site.

The theatre will be available for eight weeks a year to other groups serving the South Melbourne community. For the rest of the time it will be available for general leasing. The first outside production to be staged there will be ‘Tokyo Two’, a romantic thriller about an Australian couple in Japan. It comes from Sydney’s Performing Lines Company and opens on Wednesday.

For that production the audience will have to settle for makeshift seating borrowed from the Anthill Theatre. The new flexible seating is not due to arrive until early in September, just in time for Anthill’s opening production — the Spanish classic ‘A Vida Es Sueno’ (‘Life is a Dream’), which is the company’s contribution to the Melbourne International Festival. If theatre-goers haven’t discovered the Gasworks theatre by then, the festival will assuredly put it on the map.

Figure 7.2 The Age, 16 July 1992
Early days

In 1992, before Anthill took up residence, two productions were staged in the theatre to show its scope and aspiration, in particular to serve as a community, as well as an artistic, facility. The first major production in the new theatre was *City of Voices* (Refer 7b), a community theatre/music production, produced by Gasworks. It involved a broad range of residents and workers from South Melbourne and Port Melbourne, particularly those who were disenfranchised and disadvantaged, and reflected the diversity of lifestyles in the area. The reviews were excellent: ‘the best community piece I’ve seen’, Geoffrey Milne, 3LO (ABC 774). The response from the public was also very good. The scheduled six performances were booked out by the second night, and extra performances were also sold out.

Figure 7.3
Flyer for *City of Voices* (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
Whistling in the Theatre was engaged to mount a production of *Vengeance*. The production was developed from workshops in which the actors devised characters and action around the theme of vengeance. A writer, E.P. Watts, was asked to write the play using improvised material as a starting point. Watts then placed the characters in a basement during the Spanish Civil War. The actors were Angela Campbell, Eugenia Fragos and Tom Gutteridge; Richard Murphey was the director, and the designer was Peter Corrigan. It was performed between 7 and 29 August 1992.

Anthill then undertook to present the program of the theatre. Among the productions was: *Life is a Dream*, part of the Melbourne International Festival of the Arts. The play, by Calderon dela Barca, is a 17th century tale of a prince imprisoned at birth by his father, because the stars indicate he will be a barbaric ruler. The play looks at disguise, deceit, duty, destiny, the divine right of kings and honour. It starred Humphrey Bower, Julie Forsyth and John F. Howard, was directed by Jean-Pierre Mignon and was performed between 11 and 26 September 1992.

*The School for Wives*, by Jean-Baptiste Poquelin-Moliere, was the next Anthill production, and it ran from 18 November until 20 December 1992. The play traces the efforts of a bourgeois bachelor, Arnolphe, to raise a young girl to be the perfect wife. It starred Humphrey Bower, Peter Finlay, Julie Forsyth and Nadine Garner, and was directed by Jean-Pierre Mignon.

In 1993, Anthill produced a range of shows including: *Punch Me in the Stomach* (March), *The Force of Habit* (September) and *Kids’ Stuff* (November). One of the highlights was *Mother Courage* by Bertolt Brecht, set in the 30-year war (1618-1648). This very strong, anti-war play follows the fortune of Anna Fielding (nicknamed Mother Courage), as she tries to earn a living from the war, but loses her three children to the very war from which she tried to profit.

Anthill employed many creative personnel, including Humphrey Bower, Julie Forsyth, Ben Cobham, Nadine Garner and Ernie Gray. Unfortunately the company was beset by financial difficulties and wound up in 1994. The Council engaged Elisabeth Jones as Theatre Manager, and she programmed and administered the theatre for a number of years, mostly out of events and productions by external hirers (Refer 7c). Regular users were the Victorian Youth Theatre, the VCA School of Dance, the Astra Choir, Playback Theatre, Holmesglen TAFE and co.motion.

In 1994, as part of the Community Music project, composer Natasha Moszenin and production manager Henry Vyhnal worked with the community to use music to celebrate the working experience at the old gasworks when it was operational. The result was *Music Explosion*.
The dance company, Candoco from the United Kingdom, held a wonderful season at Gasworks the following year. Performed by disabled dancers, it was a highlight, both artistically and because it set some of the directions the theatre was to take in succeeding years, particularly in relation to the nurturing of The Art of Difference festival (Refer Chapter 11).

A highlight in 1996 was a production of *Thumbul* which ran for a three-week season after premiering on 15 November. A one-man play, Tom E. Lewis developed a dynamic exploration of his life crossing between aboriginal and white cultures. A blend of intimate storytelling, traditional Dreamtime chanting, modern music and improvisation, Tom took his audience on a journey through his childhood at the Roper River Settlement, his sudden fame as the star of *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* and his constant struggle with his inner duality. [Tom E. Lewis] affirms a simple shared humanity, and his candid, humorous, ironic story … brought his appreciative first night audience to its feet.

Helen Thomson, *The Age*. 
In August 1998 the City of Port Phillip sponsored a 16-day program by the Gyuto Monks of Tibet (Refer 7d), renowned for their tradition of overtone singing, or chordal chanting. Other activities in the theatre during that year included the Children’s Book Week Fair; an *a capella* musical, *Vincent*, about the life of Vincent van Gogh; *Sweet Flowers* by the Timorese Performance Group; and the Antipodes Festival’s production of *The Skau-bryn Project*. 
The theatre was also used by production companies to film commercials and children’s television series, including ’round the twist and Thunderstone.

During this time, the room that had been designated as a rehearsal room for the resident company came to be used as a studio theatre, and it has become a popular and frequently used space for Gasworks productions, festival programs and general hirers. From time to time both the Studio Theatre and the main theatre were used as rehearsal venues by performing arts companies, such as Theatre Works, Lucy Guerin, Strange Fruit and Dance Works.

**After devolution – performance highlights**

In 1999 responsibility for the management and program for Gasworks was devolved to Gasworks Arts Inc. and the Council staff responsible for the theatre became employees of Gasworks.

In May 2000 the theatre was hired by the Next Wave Festival to produce Innate, a work by Viviana Sacchero. The calendar also included a Gasworks-produced cabaret season, with Santha Press in Song for a Siren; Yumi Umiumare’s Tokyo DasSHOKU Girl; a production of Antony and Cleopatra, directed by James McCaughey; and Emma Celebrazione! written by Graham Pitts. In October, Gasworks produced Tour of Duty, also written by Graham Pitts. The play explored Australian and East Timorese relations, and included a cast of actors and musicians from East Timor and Australia.

During 2001 Gasworks produced or co-produced activities occupied around 75 per cent of the available time in the theatre. In February, Gasworks and Petty Traffickers Inc. co-produced The Sentimental Bloke. The next co-production, Hanging onto the Tail of a Goat, told the story of a Tibetan man’s life in exile. Gasworks also produced Hoofers, a show about show business, starring the Tivoli Lovelies and local seniors groups, including The Share and Care Tappers, and City of Voices *(Refer 7b).*
In March and April of 2002, Gasworks and Buxton Walker/Production Line co-produced a season of *Runt*, an autobiographical play by Michael Phillip Edwards, about his relationship with his father. It starred an American actor, Wilson Bell. Gasworks sponsored Earthdance, a youth-oriented, international event which aimed to promote peace, harmony and care for the environment. The event utilised all of Gasworks’ spaces, including the theatre, the foyer, rehearsal room (now the Studio Theatre) and the park, and attracted an audience of around 3500 people. The day was opened by the Gyuto Monks (Refer 7d) and later featured healing and dance workshops, live music performances, market stalls, a children’s play area and an outdoor DJ stage. Two Geodesic Domes, marquees and an Indian Tipi were erected in the park.

Highlights of 2003 included *The Gas Connection*, co-written by Jude Anderson and Emilie Collye, which followed Jude’s discovery of a postcard with a scene of Victoria’s first stay-in strike (Refer 1e) that occurred at the South Melbourne Gasworks in 1937. It combined French performance style with documentary theatre, using workers’ recollections of the original gasworks and an ambulatory style of theatre. The East Timorese Comedy Project, originally titled *A Crocodile Bit My Lip*, was a series of 12 skills-development workshops, which included four East Timorese performers, writer Graham Pitts, and co-writer and director Robin Laurie. The project attempted to develop comic performance skills in a supportive workshop environment, where the performers could contribute to

![Figure 7.9](Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
the development of their script. The project culminated in three public showings in what is now the Studio Theatre.

In 2004 performances in the theatre included: *Kiss Them all Soundly*, which used nursery rhymes as a springboard for three contemporary tragedies; *Light and Shade*, a dance performance by Tadsdance; *Crash.com*, presented by Blue Chain Theatre; and *Gorgeous Girls*, in which three stories of prostitution were told from the points of view of working women.

The main theatre was home to a diverse range of performances through 2005. Shenpen Australia booked Gasworks for the Melbourne section of their international Cham Tour in September. The performance was a combination of Indigenous Australian dance and Cham dance, the latter being performed by the monks of the Dzogchen Monastery in India. Verve Studios, an organisation that provides training to young artists, put together a two-week season in the Gasworks Theatre. The first week was a performance week for their students, and the second was an experimental week to showcase new works from emerging artists. Concrete Cloud Theatre Company presented an interesting ‘trans-global theatre experiment’ in the Studio Theatre at the beginning of December, called *have/hold*. It involved live music, interactive installation and short plays by Taavo Smith. The performance was linked online with a theatre in Chicago, and spectators were encouraged to blog before, during and after the performance.

Winter Works, a performing arts season, ran in the Gasworks Theatre and Studio Theatre. The shows were curated to produce a deliberately varied program, designed as an experiment to test what kinds of shows worked in the complex. The season contained opera-singer Peter Brocklehurst as headline performer; cabaret performer Fleur Millar (*Viva La Dival*); street performer Justin Sane (*A Minor Dilemma*); short theatre pieces (*Provocation* presented by Underwire Theatre and *Falling to Perfect* presented by 9 Minds) and *The Real Sherlock Holmes*; as well as music, poetry and an open-mic night.

A number of companies, many of them dance companies, hired the Gasworks facilities on a regular basis over this period. These included the VCA School of Dance, Dance Works, Dance Elixir, Anna Smith’s company co.motion and Tadsdance. Devenesen Productions were also regular users.

A highlight of the 2006 theatre season was *The Borough*, a play about the changes in Port Melbourne over the last 100 years. Other significant events included the Art of Difference Festival (*Refer Chapter 11*) and the inaugural Melbourne Cabaret Festival (*Refer Chapter 10*), which included the Naughty Night-time Cabaret Festival, where the theatre foyer was the main performance locus.

Productions in 2007 included *The Greeks: The War* by PMD Productions, and *The Perfume Garden* by Elephanta Theatre Co. The same year, the VCA School
of Dance presented their successful, annual Dancescapes, and the Melbourne Ballet Co. presented a triple bill of new dance performances, titled Project One.

The Scoundrel that You Need (AKA Too Clever By Half) (Refer 7e), an 1868 play by Alexander Ostrovsky, was directed by James McCaughey in 2008 and had a cast which included Evelyn Krape, Olgo Makaeva, Elizabeth Thomson, Steve Gome, Grant Mouldy, Ben Pfeiffer and Miria Kostiuk.

The year 2009 was a busy one for the theatres. As well as being a hub for some of Melbourne’s festivals, including Fringe, Comedy, Midsumma and Cabaret (Refer Chapter 10), audiences were treated to a variety of performances, from theatre and dance to melodies and documentaries. They included: Touch Compass, Just us – Forest of Gongs, Rag Theatre, Rollercoaster, Block Party, Rhythm & Runners, D-Lite variety night, Liz Carr: It Hasn’t Happened Yet, Asphyxia, and Roundangle’s In the Dark, Feature Set – Tribute to the Beatles. In May and June the theatre was used for matinee melodies. Intended for an older audience, the first program starred Benn Bennett and Wes Snelling. The theatre was also used for the screening of two documentaries about Tibet, complementing the visual arts exhibition by the Tibet Council in the theatre foyer. The Story Festival used the glade area, the foyer and the Studio Theatre. As part of Fringe at Gasworks, four shows (Spare Change, Miki Ross, Egg and Velvet Cabaret) were performed in the Studio Theatre, concurrently.

Recent years – performance highlights

In 2010 there were 61 theatre shows comprising 208 performances across a range of genres, including dance, circus, comedy, theatre, music and children’s programs. These performances were a mix of Gasworks co-productions and shows by companies hiring the theatre venues.
In 2010 Tamara Jungwirth became the Director and CEO of Gasworks, and ushered in a number of strategic directions in the use of the theatre complex. Gasworks focused on becoming a hub for a number of Melbourne-wide arts festivals, including Fringe, Comedy, Midsumma and Cabaret (Refer Chapter 10).

The year 2011 saw the introduction of the Morning Music program, a series of daytime, musical-theatre concerts complete with a complimentary morning tea. Ovation by La Prima Opera launched the program on 13 September. During the year, efforts were made to increase the quality of the presentation of the children’s theatre component of the Gasworks program. Two highlights were Grease 2: The Musical and The Gruffalo, which was part of the Kids Holiday Program (Refer Chapter 9). The year also saw the signing of a new funding deed for Gasworks, in which Council significantly increased the annual base of funding.

One of the highlights of 2012 was the commencement of Circus Showdown (Refer 7f), an important and productive occasion designed as an opportunity for emerging circus performers to showcase their work, and to take it to new stages of development. Circus Showdown has proved to be very popular, as well as encouraging and serving the circus-skills community of Melbourne. The Gasworks theatre revealed itself to be an excellent space for physical theatre, due to its expansive width and height, without compromising on intimacy. The first winner was Three High Acrobatics; both the winner and the runner-up received cash prizes and offers for professional development.

Also in 2012, Tamara initiated a new programming format: a subscription season of contemporary drama, Moving Parts (Refer 7g). The first season featured three works: Diving for Pearls by Katherine Thomson, The Baby Show by Donna Jackson, and Knock Off by Three High Acrobatics, whose show was a further development of their performance at Circus Showdown earlier in the year.
Gasworks established programs continued in 2013, such as the school-holiday programs (Refer Chapter 9), Morning Music, and the Midsumma and Fringe festivals (Refer Chapter 10). Throughout this time, the theatres continued to be hired by long-standing clients, including St Michaels Grammar School, The King David School, The Space Dance and Arts Centre from Prahran, APO Arts Academy from South Melbourne, and Nice Productions who presented their third Fringe Festival season at Gasworks. Comedian Nathan Valvo was back again with a sell-out Midsumma Festival show. The year also saw an international client hire the theatre, the New Caledonia Circus School, for a high-quality circus show performed by young people.

New clients that year were the choreographer Michael Ralph, who held a season of sell-out shows in the theatre in March, and a group of doctors who mounted GP The Musical for the Melbourne International Comedy Festival and sold out their season. As well, the dance/acting schools Stagemasters and Patrick Studios were new hirers.

Long Answers to Simple Questions were the winners of the 2013 Circus Showdown. The group was entitled to 20 hours free use of the venue as a part of their Showdown prize, and Gasworks contributed considerable support, encouragement and assistance to them.

The 2013 season of Gasworks’ Moving Parts season included Boxman, a play by Daniel Keene about a homeowner and survivor, who made a new life in the local park, after being displaced from his African homeland; Drowning in Veronica Lake, based on the 1940s Hollywood star, Veronica Lake; Chet Baker: Like Someone in Love, the music and life of jazz maestro Chet Baker; and the choreography of the Shaun Parker Dance Company’s Happy as Larry.

Figure 7.12
A scene from Drowning in Veronica Lake (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
Ignite at Gasworks was a performing-arts development program, designed to provide four independent artists or companies with the opportunity and support to develop new drama, dance, musical theatre or circus at a professional venue. After each performance, the director was offered exposure to industry mentors, including John Ellis from the Gasworks Board of Management.

The 2014 season of Moving Parts presented Red Stitch Theatre’s blue-collar domestic drama, *The Kitchen Sink*; Lisa Wilson’s water-filled production, *Lake*; the acrobatic Circa’s *S*; anger management in *Unpack This*, Ursula Yovich’s exploration of Grimm’s fairy-tales in *The Magic Hour*; the adult fairytale *The Harbinger*; and Belvoir Theatre’s *Food*.

The fruitful inter-relationship between Circus Showdown and the wider program in the theatres continued. Long Answers to Simple Questions, the winners of the 2013 Circus Showdown, returned in June 2014 with *LEFT* to further develop this show and present it in a finished form as part of the Moving Parts season. *LEFT* was invited to perform at the Melba Spiegeltent for the 2014 Fringe Festival. Shirley Jensen wrote in *Stage Whispers*:

*LEFT* is a wonderful circus work that explores community, relationships, loss and recovery while leaping, tumbling, balancing and juggling. The use of real life anecdotes of mishaps while the cast re-enacted the event was a lovely touch, and overall the balance between actions and words was excellent . . . This performance was a delight and I look forward to seeing future work from this talented group.
Other key programming strands continued in 2014, including Gasworks Circus Showdown (Refer 7f) and the Spring Music Festival (Refer Chapter 12). Unfortunately that year it was decided to discontinue the Morning Music program.

The Moving Parts season in 2015 featured: First Things First, Kelly, Mother, Finding Centre, Flak, Carmen Sweet and Drowning in Veronica Lake. Nonie Hazelhurst starred in Mother, a one-woman play written by Daniel Keene. Cameron Woodhead from The Age wrote:

Audiences around the country should jump at the chance to see Hazelhurst perform in this haunted, confronting work.

Gasworks Circus Showdown finalists in 2015 were: The Amazing Hazel, Odds and Ends, Gravity Dolls, Black Carnation Productions, Dave Coombs, John and Alicia Duo Trapeze, Fava Productions, and Jugg Life.
The 2016 the Moving Parts series featured the following performances: *If These Walls Could Talk …?*, *This is Not a Love Song*, *The Adventures of Alvin Sputnik: Deep Sea Explorer*, *Never Did Me Any Harm*, *My Life in Boxes* and *Boredom Protection*.

The Circus Showdown winner in 2016 was *The Element of Consequence*, and the runner-up was *By a Thread*. Both groups performed in The Boardwalk Republic at Gasworks, as part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival *(Refer Chapter 10)*.

October 2016 saw the start of a major building upgrade to the theatres, funded by the City of Port Phillip. The upgrade included new dressing rooms, updates to the main foyer, renovations and repairs to the toilets, and sound insulation for the Studio Theatre. The theatres were out of action from October to July 2017, resulting in a significant financial impact for Gasworks. During this time, performances were held offsite and within the park.

The first half of 2017, dominated by construction work onsite, saw performances held in various venues in the community, including Albert Park College Bay Street Campus, the Port Melbourne Town Hall and the Vincent Hotel in Albert Park. The second half of the year saw the re-opening of the theatre building and the resumption of the Gasworks program.

One of the highlights of the year was part of the Moving Parts season, *Hello Beautiful* by Hannie Rayson and Matthew Lutton which toured around Victoria. Other performances in the season included: *Greek Goddess* by Terence O’Connell, *By a Thread* by One Fell Swoop, *The Crow Family* by the Pidd-Davey family, *Bakersfield Mist* by Stephen Sachs, *The Exotic Lives of Lola Montez* by Finucane & Smith, *A Prudent Man* by Lab Kelpie and an international artist, Joe Sellman-Leava came from London to perform his Edinburgh Fringe award-winning show *Labels*. 

Figure 7.16
A scene from *My Life in Boxes*  
(Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
The year also saw the launch of Script Nights, a series of monthly readings of new works, in partnership with Key Conspirators, an actors’ training studio. It is a free public event which fosters and tests un-staged works. The first three readings presented were: *Quite Drunk. Very Jesus-y* by Grace De Morgan, *Resilient Lotus* by Tony Avard and *Whale* by Fleur Kilpatrick.

Companies hiring the theatre venues during these years have included the Australian Pops Choir, Christine Dunstan Productions, Dance Arts United, Essential Theatre, Indonesian Australian Association, King David School, Melbourne Playback Theatre, St Michaels Grammar, The Red Box, The Space Dance and Arts Centre, TV Live on Stage, the Women’s Circus, comedian Nathan Valvo, APO Arts Academy, Frank Theatre and The Artisan Collective. Rehearsal and audition producers have included Hit Productions, Playing with Snails, The Malthouse Theatre, and Manilla Street Productions. Missy Higgins filmed her new video *Unashamed Desire* in the theatre. Gasworks has also partnered with Albert Park College, offering the theatre at a reduced rate of hire for their end of term assemblies. Relationships with other arts bodies were strengthened through programming partnerships with Regional Arts Victoria, and also La Mama who have established a touring arm.
And finally

Since 1992 the Gasworks theatres have been home to a wide variety of performances (Refer AusStage website), witnessed many successes, launched many careers and catered to wide-ranging audiences, many from the local community. In more recent years the guiding ethos has been to provide independent and emerging artists with professional development opportunities. This has been realised through programs such as the Small Gems Program (Refer 7h), Circus Showdown (Refer 7f), and Playtime, held in collaboration with the Midsumma Festival (Refer Chapter 10).
CHAPTER 7

Visual arts
The visual arts were the first artistic endeavour to move towards making the park into an arts space. They have continued to give the park a distinctive tone and atmosphere: the artists working in their studios (Refer 8a) around its periphery and contributing in other ways, including conducting classes, operating an access kiln and opening studios to members of the public.

Galleries have been developed in the theatre building. There are three exhibition spaces: the Angela Robarts-Bird Gallery, the Foyer Gallery and the Heritage Hallway Gallery. They provide a welcoming space for both artists and the general public, and are open every day. Entry to all exhibitions and gallery spaces is free. Each year the galleries host around 40 exhibitions, a significant number of which feature local artists.

The Angela Robarts-Bird Gallery hosts mainly solo exhibitions by both established and emerging artists. The walls of the Gasworks Theatre foyer form the Foyer Gallery, and usually feature community-based exhibitions. Prior to the opening of the Angela Robarts-Bird Gallery, the Foyer Gallery also hosted solo exhibitions. The passageway linking the café to the theatre foyer is the location of the Heritage Hallway Gallery, frequently used to exhibit artworks by young people, particularly those from schools, community groups and charities. On occasion, the theatre itself has been transformed into an exhibition space, including being the venue for displays of all the resident artists’ work.

**The Angela Robarts-Bird Gallery**

The Angela Robarts-Bird Gallery opened in 2004 and is the main focus for exhibiting visual art. The launch to celebrate its opening was followed by an impressive exhibition, Colour My World, featuring artists David Va, Jila Wood and Anita Beelinski. The next exhibition to be held was People and Place, a group exhibition with more than 40 artists exploring man’s place in the universe.
The Discovery Art Show (Refer 8c), held in 2005, was a partnership between Gasworks Arts Park and the Rotary Club of Melbourne South. It provided local commercial galleries with a space in which to expose works by their stable of artists to new audiences at a low cost, and for those artists to compete for $24,000 prize money. The exhibition enabled independent artists to promote their work to a wider audience and to make career connections.

In the following year, Gasworks put on Landed, a selected exhibition of works previously entered in the Discovery Art Show.
Hardcopy: Digital Art was an exhibition held in 2006 that showcased contemporary digital-art practice by artists, photographers, designers and graphic artists. The exhibition derived its name from the fact that once works were selected, they were submitted in printed hardcopy for exhibiting.

Also in 2006 the gallery was transformed during the exhibition, Murmurous, by the addition of a long bar on which sculptured silk objects were exhibited. Four artists – Kris Dent, Cheryl Clark Thornton, Katie Scott and Laura Mar – presented a strong and moving exhibition about contemplation. The title of the exhibition came from the translation of a verse by Tosui, a 17th century Japanese monk:

Content with chipped bowl and tattered robes,
My life moves on serenely,
Indifferent to the murmurous world.

Gasworks resident artists, Ann James and Arthur Powell, exhibited during 2007. Ann’s exhibition was titled Kids Antarctic Art Project: A creative collaboration (Refer Chapter 9). Arthur Powell’s exhibition was of portrait paintings, for whom the residents of the South Port Community Nursing Home were the subjects. Sophia Legoe also had an exhibition that year.
In 2008 resident artist Ursula Dutkiewitzt joined forces with Fern Smith to create The Art of Suff-Rageart installation, which celebrated the Centenary of Women’s Suffrage in Victoria. Ursula created one hundred, ceramic, suffragist sculptures around 30 centimetres in height. Fern painted ten commemorative banners to honour the legacy of women campaigning for equality.

Figure 8.6
Poster and sculptures, the Art of Suff-Rageart installation (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
Other exhibitions and artists who exhibited in 2008 included: Stencil artists, Arthur Powell, Journeylines, Craig Barrett and Mel Simpson.


In 2012 during NAIDOC week, there were three successful exhibitions with an indigenous focus: Rynelle Walker’s show for Midsumma, The Decision is Yours; Ngarleyekwerleng – My Grandfather’s Country by Raymond Walters Japanangka; and Catherine Van Wilgenburg’s The Treaty. Other exhibitors in 2012 included Helen Cornell and Janet Marnell Brown.

Figure 8.7
Exhibit from Raymond Walters Japanangka’s Ngarleyekwerleng – My Grandfather’s Country exhibition, 2012
(Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Figure 8.8
One of Helen Cornell’s exhibits in her Life and Earth exhibition, 2012
(Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
Fiona Crawford’s exhibition, Anastasia – Woman of Eureka, was mounted in November 2013. Fiona is a direct descendent of Anastasia Withers, who is credited with sewing the original Eureka Stockade flag. The exhibition generated significant media interest, and attracted a higher than average daily number of visitors to the venue.

Another exhibition in November 2013 was Written from My Body by Kay Gravell. This exhibition included both poetry and sculpture, and formed a narrative in colours of the healing journey of one woman’s experience of breast cancer.
An interesting pop-up exhibition created by the Visual Arts Manager, Tracey McIrvine for the 2013 Fringe Festival was The Hobo Code. Twelve large symbols from the code were laser cut in black vinyl and adhered to the walls. The narrative of this exhibition was about homelessness.

RAWCUS Theatre (Refer 11a) is an ensemble of artists with and without disabilities. In December, after a series of development workshops in November, The Portraits Project was exhibited. It was a collaborative effort between RAWCUS and Gasworks and, because of complex and innovative multimedia, work spread across two galleries and the Studio Theatre.

The range of forms exhibited in 2013 was extremely diverse, encompassing sculpture, collage and ikebana. Exhibitors included Andrew Mattock, Craig Barrett, Mark Clough, Peter King, Janette McGregor, David Wood, Darin Frankpitt and Pat Jarrett.
One of the highlights in 2014 was Hypnogogia, a beautiful and very successful solo exhibition by Amanda Krantz, one of the artists from Midsumma 2014. Amanda used organic methods of painting, in pours and overlapping layers of materials to explore what is real verses dream, familiar verses alien, and old versus new.

![An exhibit from Amanda Krantz’s exhibition](Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Other exhibitors and exhibitions in 2014 included: Allison Young (Liquid Stage Play), Amber Trevisiol (Collection 37), the Museum of Indonesian Arts Inc., Darin Frankpitt (Constant Motion), John Knap, Liz Bartlett (Ripe), Carmel Louise, Catherine Forsayeth, Jess McCaughey, Jon McPhie (Scape of Change), Kath Mears, Smiley Williams (Silent Colour), Arthur Powell (Grid), University of the Third Age, Kate Gorringe, Jamie Daddo, Nicola Hoyle (Thou art Mum), Diana Gyngell Taylor and Jasper Margaritis.

![From Smiley Williams’ exhibition, Silent Colour](Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Those exhibiting in 2015 included: Dianne Gameson (Figurative Musing), Adrienne McMahon and Malcolm Drysdale (Travelling from Darkness to Light), Robert Lee Davis (The Life Landscape), Michal Anela (Primitive State), Gasworks produced group show (Home Free), Frank Mwamba, Cornelia Konrads, Andrew Rogers, Chris Headley, Renee Gross Life Drawing and Sculpture Class, Inner
South Community Health Service, St Kilda Community Housing, Lesley Thomson, Caroline Kellaghan, Karen Collage Collective, Calligraphy Society of Victoria, Andrew Mattock, Arthur Powell, Port Phillip Housing Association, Russell Annear, Berendale School, Kilvington Grammar, City of Port Phillip, Launch Housing, Prahran Mission – St Kilda 101 Drop In, The Enchanted Collective, Carolyn Menzies, Box Hill TAFE, Eli Jones-Resnick and David Atkins.

In 2016 exhibitions, artists and artist groups that exhibited were: Peace Process by Andrew Pearson (part of the Midsumma festival), Wonder Women (produced by Gasworks and part of the Midsumma Festival), Elegy (produced by Bradley Secker and Gasworks), Susie Hansen, Renee Gross Life Drawing Group, Wen Shobbrook, Chelle De Stefano, Cristal Cachia, Justine Jones, Francois Merlet, Karl Slotboom, Emerald Hill Art Group (Seniors Group), Adrian Bradbury, Arthur Powell, Marte Newcombe, Ursula Dutkiewcz, Rosaria Crane, Georgie Seccull, Port Painters Group, Joshua Wruu, St Kilda Housing and Andrew Mattock.
Exhibitions, artists and artist groups exhibiting in 2017 were: Wayne Griffin (Elisabeth Taylor Exhibition), Andrew Foster (Both Ends of the Leash), Louis Cagalj (The Unknown Artist), Star Health (Creatures of the Bay), Gasworks Arts Park Resident Artists group show (Behind the Scenes), Port Phillip Housing Association (Art Me Up), Andrew Pearson (Crystal Grid), Arthur Powell (Australia Rocks), Sione Francis (A Place to Stand), Tatiana Temnikova (One Step at a Time), Kim Simon (The Grace of Stain), Caroline Menzies (Embedded), Michelle Seelig (Rainbows in the Roof), Tanja George (Journey // Zehn), Will Dickerson (Nailed It) and Paul Borg (Fertile Land).

The Foyer Gallery

Groups that have regularly exhibited in the Foyer Gallery include the Southern Indigenous Artists, the Gasworks Life Drawing classes, the residents of South Port Community Housing Association and Port Art’s. The Emerald Hill Art Group are regular exhibitors at Gasworks, and some of their members have gone on to stage solo exhibitions.
Albert Park College held a photography exhibition in 2004 which showed the results of an artist-in-residency program run by photojournalist, Michael Coyne.

Home, an innovative exhibition held in 2005, was a compilation of a community’s heritage and a record of winter in 2005. Disposable cameras were distributed with instructions to take a picture of something that represented ‘home’.
A notable exhibition in November 2011 was the Ron Arnott Retrospective held in the Foyer Gallery and the Heritage Hallway Gallery. This exhibition showcased a variety of Ron’s work, as well as historical records that documented more than 30 years of his social, political and community contributions. It brought local art and history together in a way that ignited much interest.

The Melbourne Chapter of the Ikebana International Festival also held Ikebana workshops for Gasworks stakeholders during the week of the festival in 2013.

Other exhibitors included the Transport Accident Commission who hold annual exhibitions, which provide people affected by road trauma the opportunity to share their experiences through artistic expression. The Cancer Council Victoria held an Arts Awards exhibition in which a variety of work was exhibited, with each entrant sharing their own personal experience with cancer.
The exhibition Between the Lines in 2014 enabled the residents of South Port Community Housing Group and St Kilda Community Housing to provide a visual insight into the experiences and personalities of those living in community housing.

In the same year, students from the Montague Continuing Education Centre, individually and collaboratively, compiled a variety of works dealing with the topics of self-interest and industry. Gasworks provided weekly, creative-development help to the students for five weeks, and a free kiln-firing for one of the major pieces.

In November 2014 Pamela Horsley and the Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society celebrated the 175th anniversary of Wilbraham Liardet’s arrival in what is now known as Port Melbourne. Recognised as being the first European settler here, Liardet went on to build the Pier Hotel (in Beach Street), painted watercolours and was involved with numerous activities in the colony. Pamela Horsley, a descendant, staged a mixed-media exhibition, accompanied by a display of historical artefacts and information.
Solo exhibitions held in the Foyer Gallery include: Poh Sum Wong’s Birds on a Wire, 2012; Pat Jarrett’s Coasts and Contour, 2013; Edan Chapman’s A Small Perspective, 2013; Andrew Mattock’s Concrete Atlantis, 2014; Andrew Pearson’s Dream Gardens, 2014; Darrin Frankpitt’s and Tim Lane’s Along the River, 2014; Karen Hopkins’ Connections, 2014; and the Congolese artist, Frank Mwamba’s Frank’s World, 2015.

The Foyer Gallery was closed during the building works. Two highlight exhibitions that were held prior to, and after, were The Presidents Exhibition: From JFK to Obama and Creatures of the Bay. The Presidents Exhibition, held in June 2016, was a series of fascinating and intimate images, taken by the American photo-journalist, David Burnett. The other was Creatures of the Bay, held in June and early July 2017. Five local schools joined together to raise awareness of the impact of plastics on the marine environment. The students collected various plastic items from around the bay and used them to create sculptures representing marine animals threatened by plastic pollution.
The Heritage Hallway Gallery

This gallery is in fact a passageway that links the café to the theatre foyer, and is frequently used to exhibit artworks by young people, particularly those from schools, community groups and charities. As well, many of the exhibitions in the Foyer Gallery overflow into the hallway and are displayed on its historic brick walls. Recently, there has been a permanent exhibition of historic photos of the South Melbourne Gasworks on one section of the wall.

Another highlight

Gasworks, in association with artist and producer Richard Thomas, administered and selected 12 of Australia’s most adventurous and respected emerging artists to form the Australian contingent in the international team to exhibit in Satellite, an independent art project in Shanghai, China. The project took place in the gardens and architecturally diverse spaces of Shanghai along the Yangpu River, and was timed to coincide with the 2006 Shanghai Biennale. It included sculpture, video, film screenings, performance, installation, painting and video. Conceptually divided into pavilions, the theme of the Australian Pavilion was Growth and Decay. Two of the Australian contingent were Lisa Roet and Julie Squires, both resident artists at Gasworks.

And finally

Visual artists occupy some of the resident artists’ studios (Refer 8b), enabling the public, on open days, to meet professional artists, gain an insight into their creative processes and purchase works direct.

The three galleries constantly display artworks: exhibitions by community groups, resident artists, outside artists, local schools and many others. While the main gallery space is the purpose-built Angela Robarts-Bird gallery, theatre-goers are treated to art displays on the theatre-foyer walls, and still more awaits on the walls of the walkway between the theatre foyer and the café.
CHAPTER 9

Children’s programs
Gasworks throughout its life has focused on programs for children. These programs have encompassed festivals, school-holiday programs, workshops and classes. Central to its reputation as a place appealing to children was the presence at the park from 1993 to 2008 of Books Illustrated (Refer 4b), a resource centre for illustrators of children’s books, a gallery and a bookshop. Its two directors, Ann Hadden and Ann James, contributed tirelessly and with great imagination to many of the programs of the park.

**Festivals**

Gasworks has mounted two major children’s festivals: Wickid and Once upon a Story. In 2000 the Wickid festival was presented in association with the City of Port Phillip and the Children’s Book Council. The program included performances for young people, arts workshops, special guests and exhibitions, and a Wicked Stories Project, with Ann James and Ann Haddon of Books Illustrated (Refer 4b). This project encouraged writing and illustration in local schools. In 2001 the festival featured Andy Griffith reading from his own works and the Little Kids Activity Area, which comprised separately programmed areas including: Toddlers Play and Sandpit, Hair and Make-up Studio, Fairyland and Costume Marquee. For financial reasons the Wickid festival was discontinued.

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**Love your wicked ways**

Melbourne’s first arts festival for primary school children – the Wicked Festival – was launched at the Gasworks Arts Park in Albert Park recently. The festival’s launch included children from a local childcare centre and primary schools who participated in a rocketship fashion countdown. The Wicked Festival will feature performances by Australia’s leading youth theatre companies and talks by children’s authors and illustrators, as well as a variety of other events. The festival will take place from 19-27 August at Planet ART in the Gasworks Art Park, Albert Park.

Figure 9.1
Newspaper article describing the Wickid festival, but misspelling the festival’s name
(Source: The Emerald Hill Times, 9 August 2000)
The Once upon a Story festival, for children aged between four and ten, was first held in 2005. This one-day event saw the park packed with participatory activities, performance opportunities and storytelling. Children shared their stories, listened to those of others, read stories by acclaimed children’s authors, and explored the magical spaces and gardens of the park. The theme for the festival was Folklores and Fables, Stories from our lives, our families and our community.

The 2006 festival built on the success of the 2005 event, and the ‘meet the author’ session attracted 1500 attendees.
The Once upon a Story Festival in 2007 was a great success, achieving twice the number of children as the previous year. After the 2007 festival, Ursula Dutkiewitz, a Gasworks resident artist, commented:

*I ran a play-with-clay activity outside my studio where children could come and let their imaginations run wild creating clay creatures that live at the bottom of the garden. Over the course of the day about three hundred little clay creations were made and the crowd spilled out into the park.*

Figure 9.5
Children at work, 2007 festival
(Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Figure 9.6
The poster for the 2007 festival (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
In 2008, the theme for the festival was Kids Antarctic Art Project: A creative collaboration. This project, with inspirational paintings, was created by Ann James, from Books Illustrated (Refer 4b), Alison Lester, the popular children’s author and illustrator, and children from around Australia.

In 2009 the festival used the glade area, the foyer and the Studio Theatre to tell stories from around the world. The 2010 festival was the sixth year of creative story-telling and illustration. The festival featured a village fair with vintage caravans and carnival tents, plenty of art, craft and story reading, and the opportunity to meet authors and illustrators, including Ann James, Meredith Thomas and Hazel Edwards.

Books Illustrated (Refer 4b) partnered with Gasworks in November 2011 to produce the Man Dog Boat art show, which was held in the Gatehouse building. Children were invited to write and/or illustrate the story behind the mysterious characters in the Man Dog Boat sculpture at the corner of Graham Street and Pickles Street. The 2011 festival was the last of the Once upon a Story festivals.
School-holiday programs

The school-holiday classes and performances are an important part of Gasworks’ programming. Art and craft-style classes started in the early 1990s, and the formal holiday programs commenced in the early 2000s. Held every school holidays, the program offers creative and entertaining experiences for children aged between four and 14 years.

In the 2004 June school holidays, Gasworks produced a children’s show called *Land of Chocolate*, which starred Fairy Trina, aka Katrina Bayliss. It was such a success that Fairy Trina returned in September with *The Bottomless Lolly Jar*. Shows for children in 2005 included Alpha Theatre Company’s *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Great Big Story Book* which charmed all ages with the tales of Tiddalik the Frog, and Splash Theatre presented *Ticklish Allsorts* and *A King’s New Suit*. 
In addition Cath Jamison (Refer 9a) ran magic workshops, performing artist Lana Scwarcz ran hula hooping workshops and Drumclub ran workshops. Other workshops included circus skills, hip hop, art classes conducted by Rebecca Eames (Refer 13f3), and puppet making.

Theatre productions (Refer AusStage website) have been an important and successful part of the holiday program. Popular productions in recent years have included *The Kazoos* (2010, 2013); *James and the Giant Peach* and *Treasure Island* (2012); *Possum Magic* and *Kapow* (2013); *The Famous Maurice Flea Circus, Tashi* and *Wombat Stew* (2014); *Bubblewrap and Boxes, Swamp Juice, Stripey* and *The Sand Dragon’s Tail* and *Test Dummies* (2015); *The Owl’s Apprentice, Loose Ends, Little Feet Music Concert, Tasty Tunes; Out of this World, Mr Shot Bottoms’s*
Stinky Silly Show (2016); and Super Amazing Giant Girl, The Wind in the Willows, Spookmaster and Le Petit Circus (2017). Also in 2017 two children’s performances Fizzy Kids and Escape from Trash Mountain, were presented by hirers as part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival.

The play Kapow (Refer 9b), a 2013 production and part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival, told the story of a child in her backyard fantasising about, and pretending to be, a super hero, but learning that ordinary people can also have super powers. The show took place in a ‘typical’ suburban environment, and featured a hills hoist, double-bunk bed, kitchen table and back fence. Using these simple devices, the circus team created a series of breathtaking and entertaining circus manoeuvres, and a charming and engaging story. In October 2013, Nick Pilgrim, from Theatrepeople, wrote:

Told from a child’s perspective, Kapow is an action-packed story that taps into the fascination with super heroes and self-made adventures. By using simple household items like red string, inflatable balls and umbrella frames as props, the show encourages youngsters to harness their imaginations in a multitude of unusual and inspired ways.

And from a 12-year-old who attended:

I would love to thank you guys for putting on a fantastic and funny show for me and the others. It was one of the best shows I have ever been to.
Wombat Stew, written by Marcia K. Vaughan and illustrated by Pamela Lofts, has sold more than 400,000 copies since it was first published in 1984. The simple story of a dingo who catches a wombat and decides to make wombat stew, was later developed into a ‘true-blue, dinky-di, big-aussie musical’ performed by a cast of six performers and complete with blobs of mud, very fine feathers, creepy crawlies, flies, gum-nuts and a big bubbling billy-can. It was a hit with children when it was performed as part of the 2014 holiday program.

Workshops have played an important role in the school-holiday program. Classes offered have included: School of Magic, Dance like Michael Jackson, Shadow Puppets, Junk Mail Origami, Van Gogh’s Starry Night Painting, Clay Creatures from the Deep, Paper Planes and the Science of Flight, Tutu Making, Create your own Story, Coppersmithing, African Drumming, super hero training, fencing and cooking lessons.
Workshops and classes

In addition to the holiday programs, workshops and classes are available to children during school terms. In the early years, Gasworks Arts Park employed tutors and ran a program of classes for children directly. In more recent times, the available space has been rented out to tutors and Gasworks now manages this community facility. Creative workshops in dance, music, drawing, painting, yoga and crafts are offered. The Age reported on 14 February 2005:

Budding young artists can start honing their brushstrokes at the Gasworks Arts Park in Albert Park today, when Gasworks’ 2005 Kids Art classes kick off. The classes, for children aged six to 12, are run by sculptor and resident artist Rebecca Eames (Refer 13f3), who teaches children a range of art forms, including pottery, painting, sketching and drawing, sculpting and printmaking, in an environment Eames describes as more intimate and nurturing than a school classroom. Eames has been running the classes at Gasworks for eight years . . . ‘We try to treat the kids like young artists and foster a love of art . . . There’s the social aspect, too, of meeting other children with similar interests. They tend to talk about art and learn off each other. And it also teaches them some self-worth. A lot of kids lack confidence in their own skills, and we try to build some of that confidence.’

Over the years highlights have been: Gasworks, JCAA (Joint Councils Access for All Abilities) and Melbourne Playback Theatre working together to produce a high quality after-school drama program for children of all abilities; and Alex Machin’s Stop Motion Animation workshops, such a popular feature at the school-holiday program that classes were made available during the school term. Held over eight weeks, the classes allow budding young animators, aged between nine and 12, to develop an idea for a short film, make clay models and animate a sequence to make their own movie.
And finally

Gasworks continues to offer a variety of programs for children. While the children’s festivals have been discontinued, the school-holiday program flourishes and, in between school holidays, various workshops are available for children after school.
CHAPTER 10

Festivals
Gasworks has been a venue for a number of Melbourne-wide arts festivals, including the International Comedy, Melbourne Fringe, Midsumma and Melbourne Cabaret festivals. Initially festival organisers hired the facilities at Gasworks, but progressively Gasworks has initiated events or been a partner, helping to shape their program and administration. In the 2000s Gasworks staged the Art of Difference Festival (Refer Chapter 11), an arts and disability festival, which became a major festival within the disability, health and arts communities in Melbourne.

The Melbourne International Comedy Festival

Gasworks was one of the venues for this festival from 2005 to 2014 (Refer AusStage website). The festival was launched in 1987 and has grown to be Australia’s largest cultural event, with yearly attendances of more than 630,000. The Festival ran each autumn for three-and-a-half weeks with a program of stand-up comedy, cabaret, theatre, street performance, film, television, radio and visual arts.

A highlight of the International Comedy Festival performances at Gasworks over the years was 10 Unspeakable@@@Unspeakable, which combined Gasworks interest in comedy and disability arts. It featured deaf performers Asphyxia and Rob Roy performing alongside stars such as The Birdmann, Sammy J & Heath McIvor, The Boy with Tape on His Face, Justin McGinley, Nadia Baradi – Melbourne’s first deaf drag king – as ‘Kewl Rap’, and Asher Treleaven. Adam Hills (from the television show Spicks and Specks) was the MC. This event performed at the festival in 2009 and 2010. Another highlight was mime artist and comedian Rod Lara’s performance in Last Mime Standing, performed in 2014.
Melbourne Fringe Festival

This is an annual, independent, arts festival that runs for three weeks from late September to early October, usually overlapping with the beginning of the Melbourne International Arts Festival. It includes a wide variety of art forms, including theatre, comedy, music, performance art, film, cabaret, digital art and circus performance. Since 1982 the festival has presented at many venues across Melbourne and Victoria, including Gasworks. Fringe Festival events were held at the park in 1993, and since 2005 have been held at Gasworks yearly. Gasworks has twice been awarded the prize for Best Venue for the festival.

The 2010 festival saw *Kapow* (Refer 9b) win the award for the Best Family Show. Gasworks used the context of the festival to host a symposium, The Social Agenda of Public Art, organised by Sarah Rainbird, Gasworks’ Visual Arts Manager. Other highlights in 2010 included winning two Fringe awards:
Best Children’s Show and Best Indigenous Performer; and doubling the ticket sales for the Fringe Festival compared with the previous year. The 2011 festival was also a success.

Gasworks was the circus hub for the Fringe Festival in 2012, and staged 64 performances. Ticket sales increased by 12 per cent from the previous year. Gasworks in 2013 became a key satellite venue for the festival. It was the circus hub again, and also showcased 12 independent theatre productions, with more than 60 scheduled performances. In collaboration with After Dark Theatre, Gasworks presented Circus after Dark (Refer 10a), a selection of eight circus productions, including Blindscape, Asoré (A Series of Rare Events) and Lacrima. The performances ranged across trapeze, foot juggling, aerial hoops, acrobatics, corde lisse, hula hoops and clowning. Three of the Fringe Festival shows performed at Gasworks won awards. Winner of Best Circus was: We Should Quit; Winner of Original New Circus was: At the Last Gasp; and Winner of Best Emerging Circus Performer was: Morgan, from We Should Quit.

For the 2014 festival, Gasworks collaborated with After Dark Theatre to shape its contribution to the Fringe Hub around the concept of the Boardwalk Republic, inspired by the two famous American Boardwalks: the Atlantic City Boardwalk and the family-friendly Coney Island Boardwalk. The hub presented 80 shows, including circus, film, theatre, cabaret, magic, art and jazz, as well as free nightly entertainment, food trucks, and art and craft stalls. One of the Point and Flex circus performers won the Fringe Award for Best Emerging Circus Performer for 3 Steps Ahead.
In 2015, Gasworks Arts Park partnered with After Dark Theatre again to create the Boardwalk Republic, this time with a 1920s theme. More than 60 performances were held, and patrons were able to enjoy a show or simply soak in the festival atmosphere and free entertainment in the garden areas. A third performance area was created by using the outdoor environment of the Glade, which also featured an outdoor bar and food outlets, and market stalls. Performances included: *Phantasmagoria*, *Rock You Like a Cabaret*, *Punk Rock Poet*, *Grow Thumbs or Die*, *Oculus*, *Luminous*, *They Say She’s Different*, *Barbaroi*, *A Bee’s Dick Away*, *Destroy Solzhenitsyn*, *Mr Gorski*, and *Love, Loss and Lattes*.

The Boardwalk Republic was the only south-side arts and theatre precinct running during the Melbourne Fringe Festival in 2016. Events included: *The Element of Consequence*, *An Intimate Evening of True Love Songs*, *Otto & Astrid in SUPERMUSICIAN*, *The Writer*, *Tasty Tunes*, *Hypnotic! Area 51*, *Mr Snot Bottom’s Stinky Silly Show* (part of the Children’s Holiday Program), *An Evening with Madame Elbac*, *Sediment*, *Out of This World*, *By a Thread*, *Pedal.Peddle*, *Castles*, and *Deus Ex Machina or: God from the Machine*. 
In 2017 there were 75 Fringe performances presented at Gasworks, a major undertaking. Events included: *Papillon Unplugged*, *The Man in the Mail*, *Prayers to Broken Stone*, *4.48 Psychosis*, *Katie’s 80s*, *The Last Journalist on Earth*, *Left Too Soon*, *Michael & Phillip are Getting Married in the Morning*, *Escape from Trash Mountain*, *Fizzy Kids!* and *Sounds of Soul*. Two awards were presented to the Gasworks shows, Best Circus Show: *Man in the Mail*, and Best Emerging Indigenous Performer: *Prayers to Broken Stone*. 

![Figure 10.9](source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

![Figure 10.10](source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

*Papillon Unplugged* (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
Midsumma Festival

Midsumma Festival is an annual celebration of queer, intersex, trans-sexual, transgender, bisexual, lesbian and gay culture, held during January and February. The festival began as a one-week celebration of gay pride in 1989, and has now expanded to be a three-week event. Midsumma events were held at Gasworks in 1998 and 2003, and then each year from 2007.

The 2007 Midsumma Festival at Gasworks attracted an audience of more than 2500 people. Highlights included performances of *Weddings*, about a wedding which turns into a trial; *Wetness*, a thematically-linked series of vignettes about water, women, sensuality and mermaids; *Car Maintenance, Explosives and Love: The Paris End with Lola on Collins*; and *Where’s my Girlfriend?*.

In 2008 the festival featured in the Gasworks Theatre *Love, Valour, Compassion*, a play by the American playwright Terence McNally, about eight gay friends spending three long weekends at a lakeside holiday house. Other performances included: *Pink Shorts, 25 Frames: Beyond the Porn Legen’*, *Tranzlesbian Gendermash, Tiwi Islands Gay and Sista Girls, Your Life as a Dyke, Rockstrip and Domestic Bliss*.

The highlights of Midsumma 2009 at Gasworks included: *Upstart Alley*, a vaudeville-style show revealing the seedy side of the entertainment scene; *Feast*, a series of four plays; and *Jerker (Refer 10b)*, written by the American Robert Chesley and one of the signature plays to emerge from the AIDS epidemic.

Gasworks’ box-office sales exceeded expectations for the Midsumma Festival in 2010, though costs were also above expectation. The program included *Gendermash, Constantina Bush, Yana Alana, Nexus*, performers Jacob Boeme and Carlee Mellow, *Bird on Fence* and *The Billing Method with Slit*. 
The festival’s program was smaller in 2011, in an attempt to curtail costs following concerns regarding expenses from the previous year’s festival. The program featured *Fag Hag*, *Suzy vs Samantha: Fur Will Fly*, and *Grease 2 – Live in Concert*.

The festival in 2012 featured Spontaneous Broadway and the Melbourne Ballet, which has a unique style of ballet, both innovative and exciting, while giving due respect to classical technique.

Roller Derby saved my Soul, a visual arts exhibition, was given premier-event status for the 2013 festival. Gasworks Arts Park and the Victorian Roller Derby League joined forces to support this exhibition of action images. Ukraine-born photographer Zina Sofer spent months shooting thousands of images at games of roller derby. The final selection captured the essence of the sport, depicting the elation, determination, whimsy and passion of derby devotees.

In 2014 Gasworks hosted 17 events across a range of genres, including outdoor cinema, storytelling, musical theatre, choral performance, circus and mind-reading. Gasworks was accorded ‘premier-event’ status for the stage show, *Carousel* (*Refer 10c*), and the visual arts group show, The Comfort Zone. *Carousel*, a circus-cum-burlesque double act received high praise from its audience as did...
The Comfort Zone, in which 21 GLTBIQ artists had work selected for the show. In addition an interactive Wall of Sound was designed for visitors to ‘post’ notes of support for GLBTIQ equality on a wall in the Angela Robarts-Bird Gallery. Midsumma 2014 also featured sold-out showings of the Dusty Springfield musical, *Queen Bee*, written and directed by Tracy Margieson and Tony Smith, and presented by Purplestage Arts and Entertainment.

The 2015 festival delivered the highest sales of any Gasworks Midsumma season. Highlights of the 26 performances being the Premier Event, *Black Faggot* *(Refer 10d)* from New Zealand, the sold-out sessions of *PS I’m Fabulous* and the group visual-arts show, *Home Free*. 
Another highlight of the 2015 festival was the play-development evening, Playtime, a new initiative undertaken in a partnership between Gasworks Arts Park and Midsumma. It aimed to encourage the development of new scripts and involved four playwrights presenting a 15-minute, staged reading. One of the four, Dion Teasdale’s Gone, was selected by an industry panel and audience feedback to receive support to develop it into a full-scale work for presentation at Midsumma 2016. The play is a black comedy that follows single gay writer Alex Riley, who wakes up on his 40th birthday to find his penis gone.

The group visual-arts show, Home Free, showcased what made the artists glad to be living in Australia, receiving positive feedback from the artists and the community at large.

Midsumma 2016 performances featured: Gender Spanner, Beyond Priscilla: The Play (shortlisted in Playtime 2015), The Measure of a Man, Gasworks Backyard Cinema (Hairspray and Cry Baby, produced in partnership with the Melbourne Queer Film Festival), Uncovered, P.S. She Nurses!, Elegy (Premier Event), and Gone (Premier Event). Playtime Entries included: Dark Victory, Todd in Venice and Out of the Bars. Visual art exhibitions were Peace Process, Wonder Women and Elegy Photographic Exhibition.
In 2017, a multicoloured circus tent village was installed in the park with a symbolic giant inflatable rainbow at the entrance. With the building works impacting on the theatres, the tent and the park were used for the performances, encompassing various drag, cabaret and burlesque styles. Performances featured were: Midsumma at Gasworks Village Festival, Playtime Staged Readings, Priscilla Queen of the Desert, So You Think You Can Interpretative Dance, Out To Win, The Dog Theatre presents Variety, Auto Bio Queen, The Desperettes: A Guide to being a Wingman, Freaky Sexy Weird and Summer Treats: a YUMMY production. There was also a bar, lolly shop, chillout tent with cushions, and a ten-minute dance-party caravan.
Melbourne Cabaret Festival

The inaugural Melbourne Cabaret Festival in 2006 was brought into being by a sprawling, eclectic and unlikely collective of local venues (the Butterfly Club, Kingston Arts Centre, Gasworks, Glen Eira Town Hall, Crown Casino, Chapel off Chapel, the Malthouse and the Cardinia Cultural Centre). Gasworks took the opportunity to create a Kabaret Knightrider bus trip and branded its late-night foyer shows ‘Naughty Nighttime’. Lily Bragg wrote in The Age:

_The 2006 Melbourne Cabaret Festival was not for the faint-hearted or conservative, as it was a cavalcade of risque, subversive, silly, bizarre and ‘out there’ cabaret offerings. The entertainment included a specially chartered bus, the Knightrider, with various pick-up points around the city including Collingwood, Northcote and St Kilda. Hosted by comic Jules Wilkinson, the Knightrider’s final destination is at Gasworks where punters can also choose from a ‘sing-a-long-a-sound of musicals’ with Amanda Hodder or the drag king show, Sex in the Studio. Performers include Shirley Billing and the My Life as a Dyke girls Nik Wilmott and Rachel Forgasz._

Gasworks involvement with the Cabaret Festival ended, and David Read and Neville Sice from the Butterfly Club went on to produce a six-night cabaret festival in 2010 that has since evolved into the Melbourne Cabaret Festival.
And finally

Gasworks continues to build on its success as a hub for two of Melbourne’s major festivals, Midsumma and Fringe. By doing so, it provides opportunities for emerging and established artists to showcase their creative efforts across the theatres and exhibition spaces. Gasworks plays a valuable role as an incubator and facilitator for artists, enabling diverse independent art to become an integral part of the community.

A new event occurred at Gasworks in July 2018. Open House Melbourne, a public architecture organisation, has an Open House Weekend each year, when more than 200 significant buildings and sites across Melbourne are open to the public. Gasworks participated for the first time in this very popular event, and visitors to the park were able to explore the theatres and the resident artists’ studios.
CHAPTER 11

The Art of Difference Festival
The Art of Difference Festival, an arts and disability festival, was held at Gasworks in 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006 and 2009. (The 2009 festival was held in collaboration with other venues.) Each festival typically incorporated a series of participatory workshops, an industry-development seminar, an arts festival, the commissioning of new works, and a range of training and development opportunities. The festival grew in scope, depth and innovation each time it was held, and became a major festival within the disability, health and arts communities in Melbourne.

**Origins and aims**

The idea for the Art of Difference Festival came from a forum held in 2001, which discussed increasing the involvement of people with disabilities at Gasworks, and was led by the City of Port Phillip and Gasworks Arts Park. The idea for an arts festival came from the CEO of Gasworks at the time, Robert Hughes (Refer 5a), who wanted the festival to utilise all the facilities of the park: theatres, exhibition spaces, art studios and parkland, as well as a large, outdoor stage inside a marquee.

The aims of the festival were to:

- Create a major arts event that showcases the work of people with disabilities;
- Facilitate the development of new work, and create opportunities for those who had limited avenues for exhibition or performance;
- Highlight the role of the arts as a means of promoting a more inclusive and accepting community;
- Inspire partnerships and collaboration between government, disability and arts organisations for the development of ongoing arts-participation opportunities for people with disabilities;
- Provide a forum for critical debate about arts participation by people with disabilities; and
- Create networking, training and development opportunities for people with disabilities, artists and workers in disability, local government, and the arts and recreation sectors.
The 2001 festival

The first Art of Difference Festival was held in 2001, and was initially planned as a one-day festival, but extra government funding enabled the event to be expanded to three days. A Festival Committee was established which included representatives from the City of Port Phillip, VICSRAPID, Arts Access, Scope (formerly Spastic Society)/Leisure Action, Joint Council’s Access for All Abilities, Community Music Victoria and Club Wild. The festival, held between 31 May and 2 June, consisted of a workshop program, with participatory workshops in drama, dance and visual arts; an industry-training seminar that explored avenues for the inclusion of people with disabilities in the cultural life of the community; and a smorgasbord of performance, music and visual art by people with disabilities. It was the winner of the inaugural Victorian Government Celebration of Ability, Art and Culture Award.

The 2003 festival

The 2003 festival, held between 12 and 24 May, was co-ordinated by Jacque Robinson from the Rawcus theatre company (Refer 11a). Leading up to the festival there were arts workshops, a backstage-training program for people with disabilities, and an industry seminar, A Different Edge. The last two days of the festival showcased new works in music, dance, drama and visual arts. The highlight was the Gala event, which included The Secret life of Us starring Dan Spielman, and featuring writer Michael Crane and dancer Marc Brew; Back to Back Theatre company (Refer 11a); and a performance of Born Rawcus, a collaborative project between Born in a Taxi and Rawcus theatre companies (Refer 11a) that had been commissioned by the festival. Other performers included BiPolar Bears, Rag Theatre (Refer 11a) and a spoken word event Words without Speech.

Gasworks took the lead role in the planning, resourcing, co-ordination, promotion and staging of the festival, in collaboration with the Council, particularly Cathy Horsely. The Festival Committee were active in supporting and advising the Co-ordinator in planning and developing the festival. The expertise and contacts of the Committee members (including Arts Access, City of Port Phillip Special Needs Arts and Recreation, VICSRAPID, Scope/Leisure Action and the Joint Council Access for All Abilities) brought a breadth of knowledge and connections to advise, inform and position the development of a professional, inclusive and accessible arts festival. The Festival Committee was complemented by a series of consultations, a Disability Consultative Forum and an Arts Consultative Forum, in the lead up to the festival.

The organisations involved in performing, exhibiting or screening their work during the festival included 13 adult, training-support services, six community arts organisations, three disability organisations, three art programs, 11 theatre groups and theatre companies, six community music programs and bands,
six mental-health support services, three TAFE courses, four literature groups, six community film projects, one neighbourhood learning centre and 103 individual artists and performers. The festival was highly successful and attracted an audience of more than 1000 people.

We performed our show at the Art of Difference festival. People cried and clapped. My class felt unbreakable. James Chee (Ignition Theatre (Refer 11a) student)

Other festival events included using a funding program to commission works from artists and groups; a workshop program for people new to the arts which included animation, theatre, physical theatre, writing, badge-making and flag-making; professional development workshops for people with and without disabilities, including a dance workshop for people working with people with disabilities; a MC mentorship where Clare Bartholomew, a Melbourne-based actor, writer director and teacher of clown master-classes, worked with Kerryn Poke, an emerging artist with a disability, to create the clown characters that introduced the festival performance program; a festival film and multi-media
program; visual arts exhibitions of painting, drawing, ceramics and sculpture; roving performers with and without disabilities; and the book launch of *Freedom to Move*, about dance for people with intellectual disabilities.

A major success for the festival was the development of a structure that provided arts participation at every level. There were three levels of performance structured within the performance program: Enter, Emerge and Establish. Newcomers to the arts were provided a forum to perform their works within the Enter level, artists who had more experience performed in the Emerge level, and professional or semi-professional artists held the floor in Establish. This tiered system created a pathway for individuals to follow should they wish to pursue higher levels of artistic endeavour.

The wind-up process for the festival continued until September, and involved a feedback, brainstorming and networking process for artists, organisations and volunteers, focussing on ideas and opportunities for the future of the festival. A CD Rom documenting the festival was prepared.

**The 2004 festival**

![Figure 11.4](image)

*Figure 11.4  
Poster (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)*
The focus of the first two festivals, held in 2001 and 2003, had been to build networks and strong, arts programming for people with disabilities, as well as to provide a forum for those working in the disability sector. The 2004 festival focussed on community inclusion. The intention was to broaden the festival audience by encouraging more active involvement of the wider community. It was held from 2 to 4 December, and included a gala evening, fringe events, visual-arts events and performances. As well, the Department of Human Services announced the recipients of the State Disability Plan Innovation Grants.

The program included a range of work from established artists, including those from Drama teens (a group formed by the Joint Councils Access for All Abilities – JCAAAD) and One Voice Theatre Company (Refer 11a) to emerging artists such as Gerard Langridge and Phil Chalker. Gasworks showcased Brrr Theatre’s performance of You Are Here, renamed Traversing the Western Highway, supported by Arts Victoria. It was a collaborative performance between Ballarat’s Brrr Theatre Company (Refer 11a) and the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE’s (NMIT) Ignition Theatre (Refer 11a). The themes explored were regional and metropolitan living, largely determined by the actors themselves.
The visual arts included photography, mixed media and installation. Many works were on display at the St Kilda and Malvern town halls. The Identity was installed in the Garden Studio at Gasworks and was a collaborative exploration of female cultural identity by Meredith Whiting and Heather Clugston. The Voices exhibition at Gasworks was very popular and contained a vast array of pieces.

![Image of visual arts works](source)

The festival, directed by Freda Watkin, assisted by Siofra Cunningham, was a great success both on a personal level for those involved and at a strategic level for disability arts. An audience member described her visit as follows:

*So glad I came today . . . got goose bumps and nearly cried. Privileged to be exposed to such courage and vulnerability. Thank you.*

### The 2006 festival

Work continued through 2005 to revise and reform the festival model, with many meetings and feedback forums scheduled with industry stakeholders. As a result, it was decided to continue the critical discourse/symposium structure, and to further embrace emerging and established local and national artists. Many funding submissions were made, and many were successful.

The 2006 festival was held between 18 and 20 May to full houses. There were lively and heated discussions, and inspiring visual and performing-arts events and workshops. Four conference sessions engaged with the theme of disability and arts practice. Public performances included the English performer, Julie McNamara in *Pig Tales*, and Singaporean physical-theatre artist, Ramesh Meyyappan in *This Side Up*. Spoken-word performances, a closing night of stand-up comedy and a recital by Sydney-based musician, Louis Tillett were also popular. Visual and sound arts exhibitions included a colourful exhibition by the Colour Gang artists group (*Refer 11a*), a sound and text installation by Queensland artist, Ross Barber and a performance from Weave Movement Theatre (*Refer 11a*) and Restless Dance Company.
The final years

In 2007 the Angela Robarts-Bird Gallery was the site for Art of Difference exhibitions by Sharon Flanagan and a photographic exhibition from the Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS).

The 2009 festival, held between 10 and 21 March, aimed at attracting a wider audience, and was held at Gasworks, Federation Square, Northcote Town Hall, Frankston Arts Centre, Brunswick Arts Space and the Bundoora Homestead Arts Centre. Accessibility again was a priority, with marketing materials being produced in numerous formats, and the measures installed in the venues helped make them more accessible to people with disabilities.

Participants came from the United Kingdom, New Zealand and the United States, as well as from interstate and regional Victoria. The symposium program engaged 229 delegates from the arts disability and community cultural development sectors. It featured professional creative projects by artists who were deaf or had a disability, and panels and discussions which centred on important contemporary issues in the fields of art and disability. As well there were performing-arts events, visual-arts exhibitions and a major, multi-arts performance gathering, Block Party.

The program was an unqualified success, particularly the symposium, the international guests (including the very entertaining D-Lite Variety Night), and the inaugural Block Party.
A fundamental conclusion I came away with from Art of Difference was the need to have more serious discussion within the Disability Arts movement about how and where we position ourselves in terms of identity. More importantly though this stance needs to look at our work in terms of how we see what we produce in relation to the history of Art and the place of disability within that history.

Colin Hambrook, editor of Disability Arts Online (dao)

And an audience member commented:

I was impressed by the sheer professionalism and wit displayed by the comedians, both the Australian and the international. . . . The symposiums, while lengthy at times, held me spellbound, especially the ‘round-table discussion’ format of the forum . . . And so, together with all those others I spoke to regarding the quality of this festival and the performances therein, I congratulate Gasworks on a job well done.

Despite the success, the festival ran at a loss; the funding that was received was less than had been budgeted. The global financial crisis occurred in the lead-up to the festival, and many foundations who had committed to support the festival experienced a reduction in available funds. Wishing to continue the festival, discussions were subsequently held with other stakeholders, but it proved difficult to find a financially secure pathway to continue the festival. The 2009 festival was to be the last Art of Difference Festival.
CHAPTER 12

Around the park
Gasworks’ program is predominantly presented in the theatres and the gallery spaces, but has also been, whenever possible, extended to utilise the park itself. Outdoor programs include the monthly Farmers’ Market, live music performances, theatre performances, cinema and sculpture exhibitions. This outdoor program has enhanced the use of the park by the community, and facilitated the park’s use as ‘the community’s backyard’. The park is used also for a variety of private functions, including workshops, weddings, conferences, wakes, Christmas parties and product launches; it has also been used as a film set.

Food and wine festivals were held in the park from 2000 to 2006. The Taste of a Nation Festival in 2000 involved 72 food and wine stalls, as well as a stage with guest chefs and entertainment. In 2003, on the initiative of Simon Abrahams (Refer 14a), this became the Taste for Living festival, which ran yearly until 2006. The 2003 event raised funds for the South Port Community Residential Home, and included arts activities for children, tours of Gasworks’ artists’ studios and theatre performances.

![Figure 12.1](image)

A poster for the 2003 Taste for Living festival (Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

The festival took a new direction in 2004, with artists and participating schools identifying and responding to personal and diverse tastes of individuals of different ages and cultures. In 2005, the festival received a grant from Arts Victoria and the festival transitioned to a genuine arts festival with food at its centre, and again supported South Port. The Ardoch Youth Foundation was supported in the 2006 festival, which featured a celebration of a range of cultures with a greater focus on live music.
Farmers’ Market

A monthly Farmers’ Market, another initiative of Simon Abrahams (Refer 14a), commenced in January 2006, and is held on the third Saturday of each month between 8.30am and 1pm. There are an average of 70 stallholders and the market attracts more than 1000 visitors each month. During 2007, Gasworks became a member of the Victoria Farmers’ Market Association (VFMA) and has been involved in the ongoing development of an accreditation process for markets and stallholders. In 2012 the Gasworks Market was the winner of the ABC Taste award for the most outstanding Farmers’ Market in Australia.

The Spring Music Festival

Figure 12.2
Gasworks Farmers’ Market
(Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Figure 12.3
Music perfect for lazy Sunday afternoons (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
The festival provides a means for the community to gather and bond. My children attend Albert Park Primary School and they ran into friends from school . . . the ages (of people in the audience) ranged from babies to 70 year olds. Audience member.

The Spring Music Festival began in 2011 and consisted of a selection of free springtime concerts held over three consecutive Sundays in November. The program aimed to have diverse artists support headline acts. In 2012 the performers included singer-songwriter Jen Cloher, experimental-pop duo The Twoks and Jenny Morris, the pop-rock, singer-songwriter. Legendary indigenous performer, Archie Roach, Rebecca Barnard of Rebecca’s Empire fame and solo singer-songwriter Rav Thomas, performed in 2013. Archie Roach received a standing ovation after his concert.

The 2014 line-up of artists included singer-songwriter Mick Thomas, the former frontman of Weddings Parties Anything, supported by Kenyan funk-soul singer and songwriter, Louis Majiwa, and Melbourne’s premier jazz and swing band, Steve Purcell and the Pearly Shells, supported by the Afro-Colombian rock and roots group, the Oscar Jimenez Trio.

The outdoor concert series in 2015 was funded through Council’s Local Festivals Fund. The concert was headlined by Mick Thomas from Weddings Parties Anything and the event was scheduled to take place at the same time as the new Gasworks Open Day event in November. Support acts were programmed in partnership with Multicultural Arts Victoria.

The year 2016 brought together the Gasworks Spring Music Festival and the Gasworks Day Out into a festival called Spring Sundays, which took place over three Sundays in November. The park was enlivened through musical activity and free yoga classes started each festival day. Gasworks partnered with circus performers, eco-friendly puppeteers and local business to offer a range of craft workshops for children. The resident artists opened their studio doors and offered free workshops to visitors young and not-so-young.
Spring Sundays changed its name in 2017 to Summer Nights and extended its reach across the park. Food and wine accompanied by musical entertainment were on offer, and there were activities for young and old being provided by the resident artists in the studios.

**Backyard Cinema**

From time to time the park has staged seasons of outdoor cinema. This has taken a number of forms over the years, sometimes being directly run by Gasworks, sometimes in partnership with other organisations, and sometimes through direct hire by an external body. The screenings, while often dependant on the weather, attract many people, and a few dogs too.

**Other uses of the park**

*By artists.* Scattered around the perimeter of the park are artists’ studios *(Refer 8b)*, rented to professional local artists, including sculptors, visual artists and ceramicists.
Studio for hire. The Garden Studio, under Gasworks management, is used for a variety of purposes, including for classes and workshops, and as a rehearsal space. It has been hired by various community support groups, as well as by private individuals for events such as small parties and christenings.

There are 13 regular hirers, some local residents, using the Garden Studio and the Art and Craft room. The classes on offer span a range of interests, including candle-making, painting, yoga, first aid, pilates, aromatherapy, travel sketching and basket weaving. Each week almost 400 people enjoy the classes on offer.

In 2006 the Garden Studio was the venue for Writers@Gasworks. This involved 12 workshops and 12 panel discussions or readings with authors, including Christos Tsiolkas, Tara Moss and Sophie Cunningham, as well as emerging writers.
As the location for a cafe. The cafe has had several tenants since its opening in early 2005, but has become very popular since Emma Binks and Bronwyn Stuart took over in 2012, and renamed it the Priscilla Jones Café. The café offers healthy, homemade, seasonal and traditional food with a twist.

To display sculpture. One of the key extensions of activity in the park has been done by presenting outdoor sculpture exhibitions (Refer Chapter 6). These exhibitions started in the 1990s and continued most years until 2004, when the high cost of providing security for the exhibits resulted in discontinuation. However, in recent years there has been a return to outdoor sculpture activity, with the development of the popular and distinctive organic sculpture exhibition, From Nature. It has been held each year since 2015, and presents a range of sculpture and mobiles – constructed from materials such as twigs, rocks, moss, living plants, pebbles, twine and flowers – scattered around the park. As well, the park is home to five permanent sculptures (as described at the end of Chapter 6), and the occasional installation.

For dogs. The park is popular with the local dogs and their owners as it is an off-the-leash park. Formal dog-training classes are a permanent feature of the park throughout the year.

For fundraising and auditions. In 2005 the Blue Horizon Charitable Foundation staged a concert featuring Kate Ceberano, in order to raise funds for tsunami victims in Sri Lanka, and later that year the organisers of the 2006 Commonwealth Games used Gasworks for their opening-ceremony auditions. This involved 6000 people over a period of three weeks.

![Image](image1.png)

**Figure 12.11**
Filming Geoffrey Robertson’s television program, *Hypothetical*  
(Source: Gaswork Arts Inc. archives)

For a bush trail. The trail *(Refer 12a)* wound around the perimeter of the park and featured Australian native plants used by indigenous people and, later, the early settlers. It was devised by Meyer Eidelsson, on behalf of the City of Port Phillip. The local Boon Wurrung people provided advice for this project. Unfortunately, the ravages of drought and problems with replanting caused by soil contamination has resulted in its decline.

As inspiration for a song. In 2004 Charles Jenkins recalled that at the time he wrote the song, *Gasworks Park* *(Refer 12b)*, he and his wife, Deb were living nearby. She was pregnant with their first baby, and they would go for lots of walks. ‘With the song I tried to capture the feeling of the Gasworks Park at night – windswept and cold. There’s a tension there because you don’t always feel safe walking through an open space at night.’

![Image](image2.png)

**Figure 12.12**
Charles Jenkins, the singer-song writer for the power pop band, Icecream Hands
CHAPTER 13

Resident artists
The Gasworks precinct has studios for 15 artists, who over the years have covered the disciplines of Ceramics, Jewellery, Textiles, Sculpture and Visual Arts. As a requirement of their tenancy, Gasworks’ resident artists are, each year, required to commit at least 30 hours to promote community engagement with the park. Current community activities include attendance at the Farmers Market to promote visitors, providing tours for seniors’ groups and, at one stage, a selection of artists working with Albert Park College to provide a work-experience program for six year-10 students. The ceramics kiln is open to the public, and a firing service is offered by one of the resident ceramicists.

The resident artists open their studios at the Farmers’ Market and various open days throughout the year, enabling members of the local community and others to meet Gasworks’ resident professional artists and gain an insight into their creative processes. Visitors can also purchase works direct from the artists.
Resident artists’ exhibitions

In mid-2000, the Deputy Premier and Member for Albert Park, John Thwaites extended an invitation to local galleries and arts organisations to devise a program of launches to showcase the exciting variety of visual artists in the City of Port Phillip. Gasworks at Treasury Place opened in the Deputy Premier’s office in September. The exhibitions continued for some years, and were titled, Southside Arts at Treasury Place.

At Gasworks, the resident artists regularly hold individual and group exhibitions. In 2007 and 2009 group exhibitions were held which utilised the whole space of the theatre. The 2007 exhibition was entitled Contamination; a response to the fact that the artists were working on a contaminated site. It was a remarkable exhibition showcasing a diversity of artistic practice. At the same time there was another exhibition in the theatre foyer, which presented the history of the Gasworks site through archival photographs, words, forums and video, and explained the planning process for the site’s decontamination in the future.
A shock-free approach

SOUTHSIDE ARTS
Venue: Treasury Place / East Melbourne
Previous Clay Lucus

The last time Albert Park MLA John Thwaites put on the Southside Arts program at his Treasury Place office, it ended up all over the newspapers. The exhibition, which changes every six months, invites artists from one of 20 galleries in the City of Port Phillip to display their works in his offices. However, St Kilda's Linden Gallery artist Mary Lou Pavlovic's time in the spotlight was short lived. In April she was told that two of her pieces had been moved because they were an occupational health and safety risk - not because they were physical dangers, but because they were considered to be so confrontational they were capable of traumatising.

One image portrayed an artist's battered face and the other of Pavlovic as an amputee war veteran. Pavlovic was eventually told her work could stay on public display until the official opening of the project. The pieces would then be moved to a "more suitable" location for the duration of the two-month exhibition.

This time round, Albert Park's Gasworks Arts Park will be exhibiting and curator Sarah Rainbird isn't expecting the same sort of controversy. "You never know - you can't predict these things. But probably no, there won't be the same sort of controversy for this show. The works are very beautiful, and less likely to shock."

The artists on show include Oleh Witter (pictured), Kris Coad, Ursula Dutkiewicz, Anne Ronjat, Gali Weiss, Tricia Sabey and Jeff Wassmann.

To view the works, phone Sarah Rainbird on 8308 4203.

Figure 13.5
A review of Southside Arts at Treasury Place (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Figure 13.6
Poster and some of the exhibits, 2007 Gasworks studio artists’ exhibition, Contamination
(Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

(Top) From left: Julie Squires, Kris Coad, Tricia Sabey
(Bottom) From left: Tricia Sabey, Ursula Dutkiewitz
In 2009 the group exhibition was entitled Aqueous Bloom, curated by Rebecca Coates. She noted in the catalogue: ‘We in this country have a particular relationship to water. … (this exhibition) presents a range of responses to ideas of liquid states, watery and vaporous forms, and the mutating and altering ecologies and organisms that exist within these shifting environments. … From the minute and the microscopic to the universal and other worldly, each artist has evolved a concept of liquid form specific to their own practice and concerns.’

The next resident artists’ group exhibition was in November 2013. Called Structure, it utilised both the Foyer and the Angela Robarts-Bird galleries.
Revolving displays

Two port-hole style display cases, one on the exterior wall of the Sculpture Studio (Refer 2e) and the other on the exterior wall of the Ceramic Studio (Refer 2e) contain a revolving exhibition of works by the resident artists. Designed and installed by resident artist, Michael Sibel, they were donated by the Gasworks Foundation (Refer Chapter 14) and provide a glimpse of the talent of the resident artists.

Resident artists

1. Ceramacists

Knobby Allen (1992-1995) Refer 13a1
Michal Anela (2014-2016) Refer 13a1
Kellie Barnes (2011-2012) Refer 13b1
Dani Bryant (2012-2014) Refer 13c1
Kris Coad (1995-) Refer 13d1
Ursula Dutkiewicz (1994) Refer 13e1
Kay Goldfinch (2010-2011) Refer 13f1
Deborah Griffiths (1998-1999)
Sally (Kent) Hyatt (1995-2005)
Leah Jackson (2016-2017) Refer 13g1
Sophia Legoe (2006-2007)
Liz Low (2010-2014) Refer 13h1
Andrea Evans McCall (1991) Refer 13i1
Rocky Marallo (1990)
Carole Morton (1990-1991)
David Pottinger (1997-1999) Refer 13k1
Angela Ratten (1995-1998)
Anne Ronjat (2002-2007) Refer 13l1
Jill Symes (1991) Refer 13m1
Gilly Thorne (2016-) Refer 13n1
Sharon Wessels (2005-2006) Refer 13o1

2. Jeweller

3. Sculptors

Bruce Armstrong (1989-1991) Refer 13a3
Craig Barrett (1998-2015) Refer 13b3
Rhonda Baum (1989-1990)
Francoise Cueff (1989-1993)
Annette Douglass (1993-1994)
Rebecca Eames (1994-2006) Refer 13f3
Tanja George (2013) Refer 13g3
Benjamin Gilbert (2011-2013) Refer 13h3
Matthew Harding (2005-2014) Refer 13i3
Tim Horn (1989) Refer 13j3
Danoush Lachman (1993-1995)
Jonathan Leahey (2016)
Barbara McLean (1989-1990)
John Meade (2010) Refer 13m3
Jamieson Miller (1994-2012) Refer 13n3
Lilian O’Neil (2016)
Peter Randall (1993-1995)
Lisa Roet (2006-2011) Refer 13p3
Anne Ross (1990-1994) Refer 13q3
Kathryn Savva (1989-1991)
Scott Selkirk (2016) Refer 13r3
Michael Sibel (2006-2011) Refer 13s3
Bronwyn Snow (1989-1991) Refer 13t3
Julie Squires (2003-2011) Refer 13u3
Benjamin Storch (2011) Refer 13v3
Kerrie Tate (1989-1994)
David Waters (1989-1990) Refer 13w3
Barbara Wulff (1989-1991) Refer 13x3

4. Textile Artists

Georgie Archer (1989)
Annie Gore (1989-1990)
Mandy Gunn (1989-1990) Refer 13a4
David Harris (1989)
Wendy Hutchinson (1989-1995)
Sue Trytell (1989-1990)
Catherine Walters (1989-1990)
Jude Kenny (1990-1991) Refer 13b4

5. Visual Artists

Brook Andrew (2013-2015) Refer 13a5
Oliver Ashworth-Martin (2017- )
David Band (1995-1999) Refer 13b5
Angela Buckle (1987-1988)
Irene Crusca (1987-1989) Refer13c5
Georgina Hilditch (mid 1980s)
Heidi Knoepfli (2005) Refer13e5
Helen Leitch (1990-1991)
Ngaio Lenz (2016)
Jan McLellan Rizzo (1980s)
Paul Meehan (2012-2015) Refer13h5
Elizabeth Milsom (2015- ) Refer13i5
Arthur Powell (2005- ) Refer13k5
Tricia Sabey (2000- ) Refer13l5
Wen Shobbrook (2015- ) Refer13n5
Jeff Wassman (1994-1999) Refer13o5
Gary Willis (2010-2012) Refer13q5
Oleh Witer (1995-2014) Refer13r5

6. Showcase Studio

Robert Lee Davis (2017- ) Refer13a6
I was lucky to work at Gasworks with a great team (Simon, Kirsty and Robert, then Crusader). There was a feeling that, on the smell of an oily rag, we could try things out and see how we could drive it forward. We cared deeply about Gasworks and worked hilariously hard, for example running the barbecue at the Farmers’ Market on weekends (and convincing our partners to do so too). We joked that often our only asset was ‘the power of nice’ – we had no money, sometimes the venue (and toilets) leaked on people – but we were friendly and ‘can-do’, and that tipped the balance. Certainly it was a moment in my career I look back on with happiness and from which I have made life-long friends.

Helen Renwick was the Acting Visual Arts Manager in 2005-2006, and the New Programs Producer in 2007. She is now the Managing Director for the Association of Illustrators, London.

After the closure of the gasworks, South Melbourne Council was responsible for the Gasworks Park until council amalgamation occurred, and Port Phillip Council became responsible. Devolution to community management occurred in 1999 (Refer Chapter 2) and (Refer Chapter 3).

The responsible governance body was variously known as the Gasworks Community Artist’s Village Committee (from late 1985), Gasworks Arts Inc. Committee (from 1989), Gasworks Arts Inc. Committee of Management (from 1992), and Gasworks Arts Inc. Board of Management (from 1999). The Board is elected annually from the membership and also includes two resident-artists representatives and one City of Port Phillip representative.

**Gasworks management**

The office bearers involved with the management of Gasworks have included:

*Chairman*

*Deputy Chair*

*Secretary*

*Treasurer*
**Members**

Chryssie Demetriou (1990-1992), Tiffany Feron (1989-1990),
Chris Fitzpatrick (2003-2006), Jacque Robinson (2003),
Russell Annear (2006-2013), Julie Kimber (2012- ),
Melanie Collett (2016- ), Leanne Edwards (2017- ), Kirstin McIntosh (2018- )

**Artists nominees**

Tricia Sabey (2003-2004, 2016- ), Benjamin Storch (mid 2010s),
Oliver Ashworth-Martin (2017- )

**South Melbourne City Councillors**


**City of Port Phillip Councillors**


**City of Port Phillip delegates**


Between 2003 and 2012, the City of Port Phillip was not represented on the Gasworks Board.

**South Melbourne Council staff responsible for Gasworks (pre-devolution)**

**Administrative Officer**


**Theatre Manager**


**Technical Manager**

Gasworks staff (post-devolution)

The number of staff, the positions occupied and the hours worked fluctuate according to need and the financial situation of the organisation. As well there have been numerous volunteers, too many to list, over the years who have played a vital role in the life of Gasworks.

General Manager/CEO/Director

Creative Producer
Robin Birrell (2010-2011), Tony Smith (2011-2016)

Programming Co-ordinator
Marisa Cesario (2016- )

Events Manager

New Programs Producer

Marketing and Development Manager

Performing Arts Manager

Visual Arts Manager

Visual Arts Assistant
Mary Hughes (2016- )

Centre Manager

Operations Manager

Finance and Personnel Manager

Finance Officer
Kristine Andrew (2009- )

Events and Hospitality Manager
Front of House Manager

Venue Co-ordinator
David Horne (2016- )

Development and Partnerships Co-ordinator
Eugenia Tishkina (2014-2016), Nicola Franklin (2016- )

Farmers Market Manager

Technical Officer

Operations Officer
Ken Wong (2001-2002)

Technician Operations (Manager)

Technical Manager
Benjamin Morris (2009- )

Technical Support
Noel Lloyd (2003-2006)

Projects Officer
Paula Philip (1999-2002)

Theatre Manager

Venue and Ticketing Co-ordinator
David Horne (2015- )

Receptionist
Chelsea Denny (2016- )

Festivals and Events Co-ordinator
Simon Abrahams (2005-2006)

Communications and Volunteers Co-ordinator
Erena Norgard (2005)

Exhibitions and Events
Erena Norgard (2006-2009)
Gasworks Foundation

The Board established a philanthropic foundation in June 2000 to attract funds for projects which have a positive, lasting impact on the Gasworks Arts Park and the local community. The inaugural Chair of the Gasworks Foundation was Michael Brett-Young, and the board members were James McCaughey, Christine Ewing and Robert Hughes.

Since its establishment, the Foundation has provided an opportunity for members of the community to support the Gasworks Arts Park. Their donations have supported many key events in the park, facilitated the establishment of new program, funded the creation of public sculpture in the park and, as the occasion demanded, contributed to the cost of certain infrastructure improvements.

Figure 14.1
The porthole-style display case outside the Sculpture Studio was funded by the Foundation in 2010.
1a Transporting the coal

In the early years of the gasworks, light steam trams transported the coal from Town Pier, Hobson’s Bay, at the end of Bay Street to the gasworks along the tram route shown in Figure 1.1a.

![Figure 1.1a: Tram route to the gasworks (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)](image)

From the late 1930s, horse-drawn drays, and later, lorries were used.

*I can remember . . . the coal ships coming in to the Town Pier . . . the coal would be unloaded into horse-drawn drays . . . and every now and then along the route to the gasworks, a piece of coal would fall off . . . and there’d always be somebody . . . usually kids . . . around to pick it up.* Roy Fisher, The Oral History Place-making Project *(Refer 1b).*

Hoppers filled with coal were loaded on to the lorries:

*I’d get on the back of it and we’d throw the coal out . . . we were poor in them days . . . we got chased many a time.* Alice Rosewarne, The Oral History Place-making Project *(Refer 1b).*

*The hopper was filled right to the top and then with the rumble of it going along, it’d fall off. The old women and kids would come along with their baskets.* Charlie Rosewarne, The Oral History Place-making Project *(Refer 1b).*
1b The Oral History Place-making Project

This project, funded by the City of South Melbourne, was conducted in partnership with the Museum of Victoria and the Trades Hall Council in the 1990s. The project was managed by Angela Wallace (Refer 8a), the Arts co-ordinator for the City of St Kilda. Duncan King-Smith interviewed 10 former employees of the Gas and Fuel Corporation who had worked at the South Melbourne Gasworks between 1920 and 1957. In 1994 Anna Monea, a Melbourne-based artist and producer, developed an associated educational kit for school children.

The ten former employees of the Gas and Fuel Corporation interviewed were:

**Ollie Anderson** started work at West Melbourne Gasworks in 1940 as a shift chemist, and transferred to South Melbourne in 1941. Ollie became something of an expert at tracking down gas leaks, worked at various company laboratories, and was involved with the development of refinery gas. Ollie was in charge of the chemical section of the Gas and Fuel Corporation’s Highett laboratory when he retired in 1984.

**Leo Benjamin** got a job shovelling coke at the South Melbourne Gasworks in the late 1930s, after being unemployed for 10 years. He worked mainly as a fireman and stoker, but was something of an all-rounder and often assisted the tradesmen. Leo took part in the 1937 stay-in strike. He was also a musician and singer, and he regularly performed at the Metropolitan Gas Company’s Christmas parties. Leo was retrenched when South Melbourne Gasworks closed in 1957.

**Bob Edwards** left school to start work as a junior clerk at South Melbourne Gasworks in 1940. In those first few years he worked on the wages sheets, shift rosters and gas-production charts. After serving in the Second World War, he returned to his old job. He studied accountancy and was soon transferred to Head Office in the city. Bob later became the chief accountant of the Gas and Fuel Corporation.
Roy Fisher was offered a job for the day driving a horse and dray at South Melbourne Gasworks in the late 1930s. He almost turned it down, but ended up spending the rest of his working life there. Roy did various jobs – shovelling coke, working on the purifiers – until his seniority earned him a place as a stoker. Roy later got his boiler’s ticket and became a works’ foreman. He was transferred to West Melbourne Gasworks in 1957, and later at the Gas and Fuel Corporation’s Altona depot. He retired in 1971. His wife, Sadie used to hang her washing out in pillow cases to keep the coal dust off it. Like most women, she never set foot in the gasworks, but she helped her husband study for his boiler’s ticket, and believes she would have passed the exam herself.

Philip Jones’ father was the advertising manager for the Metropolitan Gas Company, which helped Phil get a job there. Phil started working as a junior laboratory assistant at South Melbourne Gasworks in 1938 at the age of 17 and became a shift chemist within a fortnight. Shift chemists had to analyse the quality of the gas every hour. Phil was transferred to the Prahran appliance-testing laboratory in 1944 and became more involved in the engineering side of things. He retired in 1982.

John Meath started working at South Melbourne Gasworks in 1939 at the age of 23. He had already spent four-and-a-half years in the Navy and had a number of trade qualifications. John did all sorts of jobs at the gasworks – stoking, shovelling coke, weighbridge, assisting tradesmen – but became an engine driver when he got his engine driver’s and boiler’s tickets. When the gasworks closed, John was offered a job on the rigs at Sale. He turned it down because he felt he was too old (55) for the further two years of study that were required.

Charlie Rosewarne lived near the South Melbourne Gasworks as a child because his father worked there as an engine driver from 1918. During the Depression, Charlie used to wait at the main gate of the gasworks every morning, hoping to get a job. Finally, he got a job shovelling coke in 1935, aged 27. Charlie quickly got his boiler’s ticket, but both he and his father lost their jobs after the 1937 strike. Charlie returned to work at South Melbourne Gasworks later, alongside his father and two of his brothers.

Alice Rosewarne grew up near the South Melbourne Gasworks. She used to steal coal from the coal trucks because she came from a large working-class family (10 children), and they could not afford to buy fuel. When she married Charlie, she helped him study for his boiler’s certificate. When Charlie was working night shift, Alice would take their children to her mother’s place, so that he could get enough sleep.

Harry Sealey started working as an apprentice in the meter shop at the South Melbourne Gasworks in 1926, aged 15. These apprenticeships were highly sought after and he got one through a family friend. Harry learnt how to build, repair and test meters during his five-year apprenticeship, and became a fully qualified ‘improver’. He participated in the 1937 stay-in strike. Harry later worked as a foreman in the test laboratories, and retired in 1976 at the age of 65.
Hugh Ward started working on the weighbridge at West Melbourne Gasworks in 1935. He joined the Army for six years and, after the war, he studied mechanical engineering and became a cadet engineer at West Melbourne. He was appointed Superintendent of South Melbourne Gasworks six months before its closure, and managed the technical side of the closure.

1c The history and process of manufacturing gas

The history

In the 18th century an understanding of analytical and pneumatic chemistry developed, allowing the possibility of producing synthetic fuel gases. The first attempts to manufacture fuel gas commercially were made in the late 18th century and the early 19th century in France and in England. In the 1820s the rest of Europe and North America followed. The technology increased in scale and the business model developed whereby a single company provided gas in a given zone. The ownership of the companies varied from municipal ownership to private corporations. Gas companies thrived during the 19th century, returning good profits to the shareholders of the private companies.

In the second half of the 19th century, the manufactured gas industry diversified from providing the means for lighting to offering gas for heating and cooking. This trend was driven by the threat of competition from electric light. The gas industry did not cede the gas-lighting market to electricity immediately, as the invention of the Welsbach mantle in the late 1880s dramatically increased the luminosity – thus, for the time, gas remained competitive with electricity.

The first recorded use of gas in Australia was in 1826 in Sydney. In 1844 George Smith, a blacksmith, was the first person to produce gas in the Port Phillip district, which he marketed in containers for household use. The Port Phillip newspapers argued for the establishment of a gas company, similar to the one in Sydney, to light the streets of Melbourne. In 1850 the City of Melbourne Gas and Coke Company was formed; the South Melbourne Gasworks was built in 1872 and operational in 1873.

The process

The manufacturing process consisted of the gasification of combustible materials, usually coal, but also wood and oil. The coal was gasified by heating the coal in enclosed ovens (retorts) with an oxygen-poor atmosphere. The gases generated were mixtures of many chemical substances, including hydrogen, methane, carbon monoxide and ethylene, and could be burnt for heating and lighting purposes. Those manufactured by using coal, also contained significant quantities of unwanted sulphur and ammonia compounds, as well as heavy hydrocarbons – these gases had to be purified before they could be used.
The most picturesque effect was obtained at the retorts. Imagine a number of tunnels lined with fireclay, in what appeared a huge wall, some closed and giving no indication of the evolution of gas within; others thrown open, and stalwart and begrimed men raking at the red-hot and gas-exhausted coke into dull glowing heaps – the heat so intense that the visitor invariably took the path furthest from the mouths of the retorts; and imagine all this in a huge smoke-begrimed chamber, where among heaps of glowing coke and as yet unburnt coal, stood the workmen, looking like the demons of Pluto. (Source: Port Melbourne and St Kilda Recorder, 24 April 1886)
At the South Melbourne works, black coal was used to manufacture the gas. The waste product from the coal burnt in the retorts was coke, some of which was used at the plant, the rest was used by households for heating, and by industry.

I used to take the horse around to the coke heap, and there were men there working with shovels, and they’d shovel the coke up and load the dray up. Then I’d take it around to another part of the works, to what they called a conveyor, and I’d back my horse in and tip the dray up and tip the coke out, and there were men there shovelling that onto this conveyor taking it up into the bunkers, what they called the coke bunkers . . . all I had to do was just take the horse backwards and forwards, empty the dray and then tip it back up again and take it back to get filled again. Roy Fisher, The Oral History Place-making Project (Refer 1b).

1d The explosion, 4 April 1920

Without warning other than a rumbling like distant thunder, one of the largest gas holders of the Metropolitan Gas Company, that at Port Melbourne, burst at half-past 10 o’clock yesterday morning, and a column of flame 130 feet (40 metres) in diameter leapt fully 400 feet (122 metres) into the air. The holder had contained 2,000,000 cubic feet (56,634 cubic metres) of gas and, while this was burning, the noise, people living in the neighbourhood say, resembled the roar of steam escaping from a thousand engines. There was little or no wind at the time, but the flames seemed momentarily to envelop the yards, sending out heat so intense that many people living in the vicinity were scorched, fortunately not seriously. The steel plating shown in Figure 1.1d was a comparatively small part of the sides of the gas holder. The top of the holder appeared to have been fused, and the metal was distributed over a wide area in the form of iron pellets resembling duck shot and swan shot.

Figure 1.1d
The damaged gas holder (Source: Proudley, p.144)

As the flame shot upwards the serious damage was confined to the gasholder. Had the force been outwards there would have been loss of life and extensive damage to the buildings in the vicinity. The holder was enclosed by a brick wall, which is surrounded by Graham, Pickles, Danks and Johnson streets. On the eastern side there is a retort
in which gas was being manufactured at the time of the burst. This gas was being let into a second and smaller holder on the other side of Graham Street. Workmen had attended to minor jobs at the larger gasholder earlier in the morning and when they left about an hour before the occurrence, everything seemed to be as it should: there was no fire near the place, and no one could get near the gasholder without climbing over the high brick wall. The works of the company are so arranged that all are connected and one may assist the other in the maintenance of gas supplies.

cause of burst unknown

The holder which burst has a capacity of 3,000,000 cubic feet (84,951 cubic metres) of gas, and yesterday morning supplies were being replenished from West Melbourne, the inlet pipe being operated from the northern corner. Here, also, was an outlet pipe and it was at this spot that it is believed the trouble originated. What caused the gas to ignite is a matter for conjecture. Even the company’s engineers can only say that fire somehow came in contact with gas that was exposed to the air, but as to what caused this they will not even hazard a guess. The 2,000,000 cubic feet (56,634 cubic metres) of gas contained in the holder was non inflammable unless mixed with air.

(source: the argus, monday 5 april 1920)

1e  the stay-in strike, 11-27 August 1937

In 1922 gas workers had been granted three shillings ($13) above the basic wage. During 1937, stay-in strikes in Sydney and Adelaide gasworks had resulted in offers of six shillings ($26) and 4 shillings ($17) respectively above the basic wage. The Gas Workers Union presented a log of claims for Victorian workers to the Arbitration Court based on the Sydney outcome. The Court proposed an award with particular conditions for those employees whose working environment was more strenuous than those found in other occupations, but with no additional
payments. In further conferences the Gas Company offered an extra three
shillings ($13) per week in accordance with the 1922 agreement. The Gas Workers
Union regarded this as unsatisfactory, and on 11 August the retort house night
shifts at South and West Melbourne, which had commenced at 10pm, ceased
work at 11.30pm. Employees in key positions ceased work the next day at
2pm, as did the workers in the meter shop. On 14 August members of kindred
unions made ‘common cause’ with the gas workers, and so carters and drivers
were instructed to refuse to cart coal and oil to the works.

A skeleton staff of non-union employees were able to maintain gas production
to the city and suburbs at about 50 per cent of normal capacity. Supply was
rationed, although full supply was provided on Sundays between 11.30am and
1.30pm to enable housewives to cook their Sunday dinners.

Ample supplies of foodstuffs were provided for the 1000 strikers by relatives,
neighbours and the union. Straw was delivered and bunks constructed, to obviate
the need for the men to sleep on floors and benches. The men occupied their
time by playing games, and the monotony was relieved by the musicians amongst
the strikers, and community singing.

![Image](image1.jpg)

**Figure 1.1e**
Song and dance in the meter shop (Source: Gas and Fuel Corporation archives)

The strike ended on 27 August when the union accepted a pay increase for the
men of three shillings ($13) a week, and a service gratuity allowance.
Pollution

During the 1940s, the pollution from the gasworks was causing concern in the neighbourhood. Local residents’ complaints ranged from being unable to hang their washing outside as it would be black by the time it had dried, to their roofs being ruined by the chemicals being emitted from the chimneys – and there was the noise and the stench.

On the conveyor belt, well it was made of iron, you know, big iron links – it’d have to be for the red hot coke – and then the big wheels that run over, they were continuously grinding. . . it would send a noise, a steady noise you know, not such a roar or anything, but a steady noise. And then you get the low-water alarms, high-water alarms on the boilers, see. They’d start screaming out. And then the rumble of the coke discharging … but those close to the gasworks, always complaints about the smoke and the dust and everything else, you see, it’d all depend on which way the wind was blowing. Charlie Rosewarne, The Oral History Place-making Project (Refer 1b).

The fumes from the oil plant, and it used to come out in little balls of fluff. And it used to fall on your car. In fact I’ve still got the cover there. They (the Metropolitan Gas Company) gave us covers. They used to give us stuff to clean it off with, and they’d duco your car. I only had my car ducoed once. I said, ‘What’s the good of getting it … doing it, it gets crook the next day?’ John Meath, The Oral History Place-making Project (Refer 1b).

In 1943 the South Melbourne Council took the gasworks to Court, as reported in The Record on Saturday, 13 February.

At the South Melbourne Court on Wednesday the Metropolitan Gas Company was charged that between 19 August and 13 December 1942, being occupiers of premises situated on Richardson, Foote, Graham and Pickles streets, used as a gasworks, it did cause, or permit to suffer to exist on such premises, a nuisance within the meaning of Section 32 of the Health Act 1928, in that it did permit to escape from the said gasworks, fumes, gases, vapours, dirt and impurities so as to be a nuisance or offence.

Mr P. D. Phillips (prosecuting for the South Melbourne Council) said that evidence would be called to show that smoke, grit and smell issued from the gasworks, causing discomfort to residents in the vicinity and damage to property. These people were being asked to stand more than a reasonable amount of discomfort by the discharge from the retorts, coke and chimneys. The escape occurred in periods, reduced, and then started again. Residents were affected when the wind was in the north, the west, or north-west, and movable property was injured. The gas company was an enterprise conducted for profit, and that they had taken steps to abate the nuisance did not count if the nuisance had not been abated.

John W. Ellie, motor driver, of 1 Little Graham Street, said that he had resided there two years. Smoke passed over the house in periods of ten minutes about every two hours from the gasworks, from the retorts and stacks, depositing black specks on the ground and roof, tending to dirty everything. Windows and doors had to be shut. Then there was a grit and a vile smelling yellow deposit that rotted blinds, towels, etc., and spoilt the furniture. Every week he had to hose the outside walls, and use a broom on them.
Andrew Davey, engineer, 13 Foote Street, said that he had lived there in discomfort for 11 months. The smudgy smoke and grit got over the bedclothes and floors. The smell, he declared, was like rotten eggs with a gassy flavour. It came in whiffs and hung about all the time. The grit got in everywhere and irritated one’s eyes.

At this stage the case was adjourned for seven days.

(Source: The Record, 13 February 1943)

There were letters published in The Record:

Saturday 8 July 1944

**Black Snow, Soot and Smoke Alleged**

To the Editor

Sir – Tonight, Wednesday, 5 July, at 10.30, as I walk up Little Graham Street to my home in Foote Street, trying to see through the smoke screen with half-closed eyes (one is afraid to open one’s eyes for fear they will be filled with coke, grit and soot that is pouring out from the South Melbourne Gasworks), my feelings are beyond words. At last I reach my door, open it, and am greeted by the smell of gas – not from my stove. I close the door, sit down to have a cup of coffee in the quiet of my nest, but no, there is no peaceful quietness for me. Across the road there is a buzzing sound which penetrates right through the house, and my head. Tomorrow, when I rise, there will be black snow all over the front of the house, also in some of the rooms, my brass step will be anything but brass, and the clothes I have to hang out on the line will be sprinkled with black. I am not the only victim of this outrage, nor is it only the folks on my street who are suffering. Some time ago we were told that when the new plant started to work in June, no smoke would come from the Company’s two stacks, but it comes in one big haze from all around the plant, and other stacks nearby are going full smoke ahead. We have waited, the promised relief from the new plant has not come to pass, and conditions are worse than ever.

Yours, etc

‘Smoke, Grit and Stink Bound’

Saturday 1 June 1946

**Gasworks Nuisance**

To the Editor

Sir – It makes one wonder how the South Melbourne Gasworks can get away with the discomfort it causes to people living around the area. The coke dust lies everywhere, black soot comes over like clouds, the noise is terrific, even on Sundays. The smell makes one feel sick, and the ammonial fumes cause us to fight for air. Often there is a blue-black haze all day. Recently a friend stood on my verandah for a few minutes, and she had to wash the soot-streaks from her face before leaving. We are told it is healthy; but facts put this down as an old fashioned idea of keeping the people quiet and encouraging them to put up with these inconveniences. Facts are that at present scarlet fever and whooping cough are all around this area, to say nothing of other sicknesses which the children seem to be getting. The housewife is weary trying to
keep her home clean; she has become a slave to her house. The gutters are now under repair; up till now they have been filthy with tar and discharge from the gasworks. Our houses are stained blue-grey; silverware, black; furniture, sticky and blue. Three months ago or more we asked the help of our local MLA, but nothing came of it but a couple of letters. The Health authorities have no interest. We are wondering where we go from here. The situation has become a desperate one.

Yours, etc.
Aileen Kennedy

An article in *The Record*, Saturday 9 August 1947

**Nuisance from Gasworks**

**Council and Department combine for Remedy**

Trouble for a section of residents has broken out again at the old address, the gas company’s works in Foote Street. This and means proposed for its abatement were topics of discussion at South Melbourne Council’s meeting this week.

It was reported by the Social Services Committee that in correspondence Mrs A. Kennedy of Foote Street, had complained of the discharge of grit, coke, smoke and fumes from the gasworks. Observations made by the City inspector had revealed that during calm weather there was little about which to complain, but when a high wind was blowing dust and grit caused a nuisance, especially when coke hoppers were discharging from the overhead crane. This machine went high into the air, and wind carried dust and grit some distance when it was in operation. The complaint had been referred to the Department of Health, especially in the light of the reply by the Minister of Health to a deputation from the Council regarding nuisances emanating from the gasworks in last August, and the department had advised that repeated inspections by its officers over several months had confirmed the claim that a nuisance from smoke and grit persisted and that an examination of the plant would shortly be made to ascertain whether any practical solution, other than removal, would abate the nuisance.

The Council adopted the Committee’s recommendation: ‘That the gas company’s attention be directed to the observations of the Council and the Health Department with a request that some remedial action be taken to abate the nuisance, that observations be made of adjoining industries as possible sources of similar nuisances, and that the complainant be advised in terms of the recommendation’.

Cr Jamieson said that trouble was still being experienced because of the overloading of coke wagons. One could be traced from the Works as far as Kerferd Road because of the materials spilled on the roadway. Carters and sweepers employed by the Council could testify to the facts.
2a  The State Government sub-committee

The sub-committee consisted of the Minister for Planning and the Minister for Education. This sub-committee in turn formed a Committee of Officers, chaired by the Chairman of the Town and Country Planning Board, consisting of representatives of the City of South Melbourne, Education Department, Department of Youth Sport and Recreation, Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, Treasury, and the Commonwealth Departments of Tourism and Recreation, and Urban and Regional Development. The City of Port Melbourne, Country Roads Board and the Gas and Fuel Corporation were also invited to attend.

2b  The site as a film set

In 1985 the acclaimed director Paul Cox used the site to film *The Paper Boy*, a television film made as part of the Winners, an eight-episode series of television short films dealing with issues of friendship, independence, competition, decision-making and conflict. His film was described as ‘a beautifully shot period film that captures the era and gives realistic insight into the lives of struggling people in the Depression’.

2c  The Redevelopment Steering Committee

This Steering Committee was chaired by Councillor Anne Fahey, and was to determine the future use of the site and to submit its findings to the Council, and subsequently to the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands. The plan was developed by a Gasworks Site Working Party that consisted of officers from both the City of South Melbourne, the Department of Conservation, Forests and...
Lands, the Department of Education, and the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation. In April 1985 a representative of the Ministry for the Arts was added to the Steering Committee, and in May Council officers visited the Footscray Community Arts Centre.

**Anton Hasell**

Anton taught briefly in secondary schools before undertaking a Bachelor of Fine Arts at RMIT and becoming a post-graduate student in sculpture at the Victorian College of the Arts. He was also a tutor in bronze casting and mould-making at Prahran TAFE and the Footscray Community Arts Centre. During this time he exhibited widely, was the winner of several sculpture prizes and gained many private commissions. His PhD thesis, completed in 2002, argued for a new kind of public art experience, one that engaged community members in creative playfulness with one another. His Federation Bell Installation located in Birrarung Marr, Melbourne, was designed within this research paradigm.

In the early 1980s while living in Pickles Street and working at the Meridian Sculpture Foundry in South Melbourne, he was one of the first to recognise the potential of the gasworks site as an arts village. He was the first chair of the Gasworks Community Arts Village Committee, and was also responsible for the design and setting up of the sculpture studio.

Anton described his philosophy for the site:

*In the beginning I used to refer to the gasworks site as ‘the Gasworks Artists’ Village’! I still see the project in this light, as a place where professional artists undertake their professional practices within the context of community engagement. While Gasworks Arts has become multilayered in its programs and attractions to the citizens of Melbourne, the structure underlying its development should retain the principle of providing working spaces for practising artists, and developing interesting ways that these artists and wider community members can engage with one another.*

*This is not only because artists of all kinds of practice require suitable working space desperately, but also because the community’s vitality and its own sense of the quality of its ‘liveability’ benefit tremendously when it encourages and supports the vitality and innovative energies of artists within its domain. Culture is the name*
we use to describe the complicated communications, subliminal and overt, that connect individuals in a community to one another. It is cultural understanding that binds communities together ... Cultural practices, their performance and productions, are never an end in themselves. They are the portals through which we make connections to the people around us (and across time).

In 1989 Anton moved to central Victoria, where he still lives. He maintains his professional practice across a range of media, including sculpture, sound-sculpture and printmaking.

2e The location and use of buildings on site in 1989

![Map of Gasworks Arts Park, with numbered buildings and areas labeled. Building 1 is noted as a sculpture studio used initially after the Arts Village gained a three-year lease. Buildings 2 and 3 are described with their uses.]

**Building 1** (Sculpture) Used as a sculpture studio initially after the Arts Village gained a three-year lease to run the building. Those in residence were Rhonda Baum, Francoise Cueff, Tim Horn (until October 1989), Bronwen Snow, David Waters, later joined by Kathryn Savva and Barbara Wulff.

**Building 2** (Arts and Crafts Studio) Used as a venue for classes, workshops and hire.

**Building 3** (Ceramics) Use of this building was delayed due to EPA intervention. In the interim a Raku workshop was held (Jill Symes), and a Gasworks Serpent created on the exterior wall at the Mayor’s Community Day, 1990.
Building 4 (Textile Studio) The completion of this building was also delayed, and so Wendy Hutchinson, Georgie Archer, Sue Trytell and Mandy Gunn established temporary studios in Building 6 and the Gatehouse. One room in Building 4 was occupied by Di Majewski.

Building 5 (Gatehouse) The Gatehouse building housed Zoe Hogg, Irene Crusca, Moira Playne, Michael Durkin, Angela Buckle and Wendy Warner at the beginning of the year, and Annie Gore and Catherine Walters (jewellers), Barbara McLean (figurative sculptor) and Michael Durkin (painter) at the end of the year. Catherine Walters and Annie Gore then moved to Building 6 to allow Sue Trytell and Mandy Gunn to establish a textile studio. The downstairs area was used by the Community Arts Officer, an office for Danceworks, a water-colour class, and Tunari, a South American folk group.

Building 6 (now housing the café and gallery) This building provided temporary studio space for six artists in three studios – Bruce Armstrong (sculptor); Catherine Walters, Annie Gore and David Harris; Wendy Hutchinson (textiles) and painter Georgie Archer; another room was used as the access dark room.

Building 7 (the theatre) The cost of renovating this building (more than $650,000) was considered beyond the Council’s means, and it was expected that a joint venturer would be sought.

Building 8 This building was demolished.

Building 9 (now housing the meeting room and dressing rooms) This building was unrenovated.

Building 10 (The Watchman’s Cabin) An artist’s studio occupied by Barbara McLean (a figurative sculptor).

Building 11 (Studio Theatre) Used as a performance studio.

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2f Greg Marginson

Greg was the first Community Arts Officer appointed by the South Melbourne Council. He had studied Economics and Commerce at Monash University, before gaining experience in arts administration at the Alexander Theatre, Theatreworks and the Bicentennial Authority.
The Gasworks Site Community Liaison Committee

This committee first met in October 1988 and its membership comprised the Mayor (Roger Bodinnar), two councillors (Shane Dowling and Peter Vasila), two Council officers (Frances Warren and Greg Marginson), two representatives from the Gasworks Community Arts Village (Solly Ellenberg and Zoe Hog), two community representatives (Yvonne Stewart and James McCaughey), a South Port Community Nursing Home representative (Caroline MacLeod) and the Council’s Technical Services Manager (Ian Robins).

The Council had determined that the functions and responsibilities of the Committee were to:

- consider and recommend on applications for those community facilities not under control of the Gasworks Community Arts Village Inc.,
- enforce conditions determined by the Gasworks Community Arts Village Committee,
- ensure that the facilities and surrounds were kept in a clean condition, and
- advise on maintenance works that needed to be carried out.

Gasworks Community Arts Village Committee Arts Statement

The aim of Gasworks Arts is to make art public.

The resources of Gasworks Arts are:

- the studios and buildings that it leases from the City of South Melbourne,
- the park in which those buildings are situated,
- the financial backing of the City of South Melbourne,
- the professional support of its Community Arts Officer, and
- the support of members of the local community.

The beliefs of Gasworks Arts are:

- that the presence of the practice of the arts can enhance the life of a community,
- that the arts themselves can be revitalised by finding their form again in the context of a particular community,
- that the best arts practised in a public fashion with a determination to communicate can address and bring enjoyment to people regardless of their background or education, and
- that the arts can be well nurtured in a setting supported by members of the community.

The strategies of Gasworks Arts are:

- to lease space to artists who share its ideals;
- to foster the life of the studios in the park;
- to develop a program for the park both in collaboration with artists and, where appropriate, by its own initiative;
- to organise classes, events and workshops which can involve members of the community;
- to liaise between the South Melbourne community and the program of the Gasworks Park; and
- to represent the arts element in the park to the South Melbourne City Council.
In 1987 Frances Annal (Warren) was employed by the City of South Melbourne and served on the Gasworks Site Community Liaison Committee.

**The roles of the committee were manifold and developed over time as the gasworks site developed, and the Committee developed clout and expertise. During my time the roles included:**

- taking the lead in trying to further develop the site as an integrated arts and passive recreation site, promoting this to Council and then progressively seeking to implement it;
- providing feedback and making recommendations to Council on proposed renovations for the buildings and for amenities for the park, including barbeques, play equipment, toilets, signage and sculpture;
- making recommendations to Council on appropriate leases for the buildings; and
- developing proposals to encourage appropriate community usage and ownership of the site. These included the Mayor’s Barbeque and Community Days (first one held in March 1989) and a Christmas event was held in December 1989, (jointly sponsored by Inter-Church Council and the committee).

Initially there were only two people with an interest in the arts on the committee but, over time, those interested in the arts formed the majority. This was the result of the Gasworks Site Community Liaison Committee becoming less relevant when the renovations were completed, and Gasworks Arts Inc. growing and gaining expertise.

**Working with the Council**

*In common with many other councils, South Melbourne Council consisted of councillors with varying development agendas and priorities. Some councillors were interested in the arts, some not and some thought that the money could be best spent elsewhere. The same diversity of views applied to senior and middle managers in Council. Those councillors on the Committee also had varying views on the importance of the site versus other Council commitments or proposals.*

**Need for an appreciation of the project in an uncertain environment**

*My memory of the Gasworks site in the initial period was that it was going nowhere really. If a project such as this was to really take off, it needed skilled and enthusiastic community members, a sufficient number of sympathetic and cluey councillors and a sufficient number of competent and sympathetic council officers. If James McCaughey (a local resident) had not become involved, I believe the Gasworks site would not have succeeded. He had a strong understanding and appreciation of various art forms (as well as specialist expertise in theatre), and excellent contacts in the arts. As well, he had a strong sense of community and very good community links, together with excellent leadership skills and political nous.*

*My overwhelming memory of that time was that the Gasworks Community Arts Village Committee (Gasworks Arts) and the Gasworks Site Community Liaison Committee (Liaison Committee) were in a constant state of uncertainty about:*
• if and when there would be budgetary allocation by Council for the various buildings to be renovated or partly renovated, and
• who would get the long-term use of those buildings when renovated. (Gasworks Arts definitely could not assume that the leases would go to them.)

It could best be summed up as an ongoing need for both Gasworks Arts and, in turn, the Liaison Committee, to prove their legitimacy and the legitimacy of their vision to Council. They did this through many mechanisms including ensuring:
• excellence in programs offered;
• the arts and passive recreation interests were acknowledged, respected and blended where possible;
• artists using buildings ‘gave back’ enough to the community; and
• the broader community got to know and got involved with the Gasworks site via the school-holiday programs, Mayor’s days, Christmas carols, etc.

Need to consult

There was also the need to periodically remind Council of the need to consult with the Liaison Committee on any developments planned for the site. For example, a number of councillors had met with the Southport Playgrounds Association (sometimes also referred to in various reports as the Southport Community Playground Committee and the Southport Playground Committee) regarding the development of a Robert Ledders playground at the site and had recommended to that organisation that their next step was to apply for a planning permit. The Liaison Committee needed to remind Council of the importance of it being involved in such considerations. It had always been understood by Gasworks Arts that a formal consultation would occur prior to any planning application. The Liaison Committee decided to write to Council and request that a formal referral to the Liaison Committee, Gasworks Arts and Southport Nursing Home for consideration and response; and that local residents living near the park be invited to a residents’ meeting to provide a response.

Unsuitable proposals

There was also the need to argue strenuously against certain proposals where they were deemed more obviously unsuitable by Gasworks Arts and the Liaison Committee. The clearest example of this was probably the proposal by one or more parties in the municipality to build tennis courts on the Gasworks site. Because of the limited site options in the municipality, and the pressure for more courts, Council was keen to support a proposal for tennis courts on the site. It adopted a motion in July 1988 for the erection of three courts on the corner of Foote and Graham streets, with costing to be referred to the 1988-1989 estimates. They did so without consideration of the negative impact on future arts development at the site, particularly in relation to the potential use of the Building 7 which later was developed as a theatre. It was helpful that David Curry, the Recreation Co-ordinator, was against the proposal as well, arguing that the development would conflict with the passive recreation concept for Gasworks.
Cost pressures

The other pressure that the Gasworks Arts and the Liaison Committee faced was the constant pressure to keep costs under control due to various and varying Council and councillors’ priorities. James McCaughey had a good appreciation of this and I recollect it was he who proposed the possibility of some sort of joint venture for the development of the theatre space and associated buildings. This idea was picked up by Council and eventually expressions of interest were called for by Council. However, only one application came in (from Circus Oz) which was so clearly not in the interest of Council and the community that it was clear that the proposal should not be adopted. However, if a half decent proposal had been received, my guess is that Council could have adopted it for reasons of cost control, even if it had not been a wise decision from an arts perspective.

Cultural policy

The other problem that Gasworks Arts and the Liaison Committee faced was Council’s early attempts to develop the site had preceded the development of a cultural policy for the City of South Melbourne in general and for the Gasworks site in particular. James McCaughey understood this well and it was through his representations to the Liaison Committee on the importance of getting external professional advice about development of the site, that Council agreed to allocate funding for a conference of well-credentialled individuals in the arts, who came together and identified key issues and proposed some directions for the future.

While this was only one early step, I believe it was an important one. However, the real key to the development of the Gasworks as an arts space can be attributed directly to James McCaughey’s vision, drive and skill. He devoted a lot of time to the cause, necessary as Gasworks Arts was very poorly resourced. For example, submissions applying for building leases had to be written, and they had to be first rate. They were mostly prepared by volunteers, especially James. The Liaison Committee, by contrast, was better resourced, as this was serviced by Council officers.
3a David Grutzner’s memories of the 1989 event

‘I have an idea for a family day at the Gasworks site. I’ll send you some details if you and the family would like to come.’ It was probably some 30 years ago as I now recall this conversation with James McCaughey. The occasion was a function at Middle Park Primary School where we were both parents. James and I had known each other from our student days at Melbourne Uni. There were about 300 kids at the local school and the families were a close and formidable group of residents in those times of proactive participation in local affairs.

It seemed entirely appropriate that James would now be suggesting to us all that it was time for another community function at Gasworks. At this time James was the well-respected President of the Parents’ Association at Middle Park Primary School and Chair of the new Committee of Management at Gasworks Arts.

The family day which James had planned turned out to be a bit like a community treasure hunt or paper chase. My memory of this event was that each family, on the night before the function, was to receive individual and detailed instructions which we were to follow implicitly, and without disclosure to anyone. These mysterious instructions turned out to be a list of clues which when deciphered one by one would progressively lead us through our neighbourhood streets to the Gasworks site. Driving would not be permitted except to reach our respective starting points as located on each of our street maps. Participating families must walk from that point on. From memory children under a certain age would be permitted to cycle or roller skate and babies must be well provisioned and taken in pushers or prams.

I seem to remember that children’s prizes would be awarded and fancy dress was encouraged. Balloons to inflate had been placed at each point where our clues had been hidden. Imagine the scene around the streets as we all searched for our next clues. What we discovered was that our individual paper trails all led to a sunny corner of the park which was the site of the new playground installation and where James had organised a family BBQ. James’ vision and message to one and all would always be that the park was there to serve, support and encourage the growth and development of our local neighbourhood, supported by an adventurous and broadly-based arts programme. This vision remained and guided us through thick and thin as the park gradually evolved and developed. To my knowledge it was a relatively new concept in those days and one totally conceived by James.

David Grutzner (Refer 4a), ex Board member of Gasworks Arts Inc.
David Grutzner is a distinguished architect and was a member of the local community. He worked generously to resource the Gasworks Committee of Management as it engaged with the Cities of South Melbourne and Port Phillip in the physical development of the site. As such he was one of a long series of highly qualified local residents who gave of their time and expertise to work on the committee.

David recollects his involvement with Gasworks between 1989 and 2003:

Proposals about the redevelopment of the disused Gasworks site had been starting to make the front page of the Emerald Hill Times. James (McCaughey) had already convinced the Council that his vision of an arts-based community park was worth pursuing and a management committee for the site was formed. Things were getting serious with master plans and staged building projects. At his request I had agreed to join the new committee and provide honorary, professional architectural advice about the up and coming redevelopment projects.

I have many happy memories of my time at Gasworks and am still amazed at how James managed to keep it all going. He was always polite, professional and forward thinking. The true quiet achiever and our leader, constantly keeping us on track. He worked tirelessly behind the scenes and there was always something inspirational happening at the Park. I remember particularly the outdoor sculpture exhibitions . . .

The brief for the theatre, which was essentially driven by unbelievably limited funding, was basically to convert the existing large open area into a flat-floor auditorium which could be used or hired out for a variety of functions such as art exhibitions, dance or stage productions, rehearsals, school events, etc. Consequently – along with a frighteningly large list of other associated requirements such as lighting and sound systems, an elevated biobox, change rooms, brand spanking new regulatory toilets and a new kitchen/ticket box – there was a need for moveable tiered seating for about 170 people. It soon became apparent that there were great challenges in making the space truly flexible. All proprietary systems available in those days, and there weren’t many, were way beyond our financial reach. So with the help and advice of many people we designed our own system based on a ‘collapsible’ seating arrangement and what is now commonly known as rolling scaffold.

Other happy memories over the years include working with many teams of professionals on such development projects as the ‘signpost’ sculpture at the corner of Pickles Street, successful structural stabilisation of the existing boundary walls, new offices and café, particularly the adjacent courtyard, and restoration of the Gatehouse building (Refer 2e) and the subsequent arrival and long association with Books
Illustrated (Refer 4b). One of the last projects I was involved with was planning for an improved streetscape along our frontage as part of the redevelopment of the vacant land opposite in Graham Street. We watched and waited over the years as this large vacant block was the subject of a number of failed attempts at redevelopment.

My overriding memories of my time at Gasworks are all happy ones associated with a very strong sense of conviction that what we did there was something special. In those days, to my knowledge, the idea of a neighbourhood park, supported by a broadly based arts program which is conceived and managed by the local community, was a totally new concept in Melbourne. To James we must all be grateful, not only for creating the vision when he did, but also for ensuring its successful implementation against the odds and, furthermore, for continuing to lead and manage the project throughout all these years.

David Grutzner

4b Books Illustrated

Ann James and Ann Haddon established Books Illustrated in 1988. Ann James was an art teacher who moved into designing and illustrating educational publications, while establishing herself as a children’s book illustrator. She represents illustrators on the Committee of Management of The Australian Society of Authors, and manages their website, The Style File: an online showcase of Australian book illustrators. Some of the books she has illustrated include The Penny Pollard series, the Hannah series, The Midnight Gang, Shutting the Chooks In, Little Humpty, The Way I Love You, Lucy Goosey, Sadie & Ratz, the Audrey of the Outback series and Chester and Gil.
Ann Haddon was a teacher librarian in primary schools for 18 years. She established the Junior School Library at Yarra Valley Grammar School before collaborating with Ann James to establish Books Illustrated. She is actively involved in children’s literature, including having served as an executive member on both the National Children’s Book Council of Australia and its Victorian branch.

For more than 15 years Books Illustrated was involved in Gasworks Arts activities, integrating children’s literature and arts into the programs. They developed their own education and workshop programs, enabling the audience for Australian books and illustration to widen. Exhibitions promoting Australian picture books and their creators were shown in Australian regional galleries and overseas venues, including South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and China.

Books Illustrated moved to Beaconsfield Parade, Middle Park in May 2008, to enable further extension and expansion of their travelling exhibition program, then to 74 Mills Street, Albert Park, in 2016.

**4c Committee of Management**

Formed in 1992, the Committee comprised James McCaughey (Chairman), Annette Wregg (Deputy Chair), Jenni Gilbert (Secretary), Rosalie Logsdon (Treasurer), David Grutzner (Community Member), Kerrie Tate and Noelene Jenkins (Artists representatives), and Councillors Elizabeth Grieb, Julie Johnson, and Ray Wilson (South Melbourne Council). The South Melbourne Council officers supporting this committee were Diana Stewart (Community Arts Officer) and David Golightly (Administrative Officer).
Robert Hughes is a poet, writer, publisher and arts administrator. Prior to his tenure at Gasworks, he was the Director of the Footscray Community Arts Centre (1976 - 1982); Director, Australian Craft Gallery, Southport, Queensland (1982 - 1984); Executive Officer Queensland Community Arts Network (1985 - 1987) and General Manager Metro Arts Brisbane (1988 - 1997), and he spent some time fishing.

In recent years he has been the Executive Officer for the Foundation for Research into Injury and Illness in the Workplace (2006 - 2009) and the publisher of Return To Work Matters, an on-line resource (2007 - 2010). He was the publisher and editor for Foundation Press and Metro Community Press that published 30 poetry titles between 1975 and 1992. His poetry collections include ‘Dreamer’ (1978), ‘Chinderah Bay’ (1988) and ‘Highgate Hill’ (1995).

Robert’s memories of his time at Gasworks:

Arts centres are unusual work environments, very personal. All work places are of course, but the arts attracts people who operate from their inner most thoughts and feelings as a matter of course. Money is not the focus, vision and passion are. Additionally, different art forms attract people with distinctly different personalities, characteristics and objectives. Visual artists and crafts people work alone and figure things out as individuals. On the other hand performing artists work in groups and figure out problems in a more collective way. And then there are the administrators who are focused on bringing people together.

While state and national arts institutions are devoted to a particular form of practice, for example a gallery or a theatre, community-arts centres tend to deal with all art forms in one place. Goodwill usually creates harmony and progress, but failure and conflict are always on the menu. I became involved in community arts as a volunteer in late 1974 and was employed as a full-time worker in early 1976. Prior to Gasworks my experience was essentially in green-field developments, that is creating places and functions that previously did not exist.

Gasworks was different. When I arrived, the City of Port Phillip had been operating the park as an arts centre for a number of years. The Council’s decision to devolve management of the centre to a community-based committee led to my appointment as the first CEO of the independent entity.

Gasworks was therefore unique in my experience. The City of Port Phillip, as the owner and principal funder, considered Gasworks to be an established part of the Council’s bureaucratic and policy framework. The facility was already populated by performing-arts groups and studio artists, the majority of whom saw themselves as fine artists rather than community practitioners.
At Gasworks I had for the first time an opportunity to work for and with peers who had similar experience to my own. Principal among these were James McCaughey, Chair of Gasworks and Angela Robarts-Bird (Refer 8a) (nee Wallace), the responsible Council officer. Though not always coming from the same perspective, both James and Angela were passionately committed to the development of Gasworks as a leading, local, arts centre.

As a consequence of work by Angela, James and others, my role in the significant developments achieved during my time at Gasworks, for example the construction of the café and the administrative offices, was at best secretarial. Similarly, the Gasworks Board enjoyed the services of architect David Grutzner (Refer 4a), a gentleman of remarkable tact and ability, who oversaw all of the building projects during my time.

Diana Stewart, who was responsible for participative activities at Gasworks for some years prior to and during the early years of my appointment, did a remarkable job of organising a number of festivals, activities and exhibitions in the park itself. Yet it was apparent to me that from both a community participation and access perspective, Gasworks existed more in potential than it did in reality. Indeed at the time the park’s designation as a leash-free, dog playground was its most used, community function. The centre did have two small tuition spaces, but the dozen or so artist studios were rarely open to the public. There was no gallery and the extensive theatre facilities, when not in rehearsal, presented performances to relatively small audiences on only some nights of the week. In effect there was little for the local community to do or see at Gasworks on any given day. Hence a primary driver during my time was to improve community access.

In an attempt to create a flagship event for Gasworks I agreed to the production of a children’s arts festival. This event aimed to amplify the excellent work on children’s literature already being done by Ann James and Ann Haddon at Books Illustrated (Refer 4b), an outstanding children’s bookshop and gallery then housed in the Gatehouse building (Refer 2e).

All available financial and staff resources were invested in the Wickid Festival (Refer Chapter 9). The staff did an extraordinary job, and the first festival proved to be a significant artistic success, but a dismal financial failure (a loss in the order of $120,000). Daunted, but determined, I advocated at following Board meetings that we should try again; the Board – with significant reservations – agreed. The following year the second Wickid Festival was again an artistic success, but only a marginally less dismal financial disaster (down another $90,000). A disaster.

The Gasworks Board of Management had always been a coherent and supportive resource for the staff. To my great surprise and gratitude, when faced with the repeated trauma of unsustainable losses, the Board members proved their metal beyond anything that could reasonably be expected of them. Despite their support the organisation was not in a position to continue trading. Gasworks was only saved by a substantial loan from the Brett-Young family.

To create greater access to the arts at Gasworks, I argued that the café already approved by the City of Port Phillip to be built facing the park, should instead be
placed in the Gatehouse building. James McCaughey advocated that it should be in the main building. The latter placement was agreed after lengthy and intense debate with Council.

Adjacent to the café, we created the Angela Robarts-Bird Gallery in what had been an office. We also fitted out the main-building corridor and theatre foyer as galleries and operated them on a policy of youth art in the corridor, developing artists to show in the foyer, resident and established artists in the small dedicated gallery.

An annual Gasworks Artists’ Exhibition was mounted in the theatre, which with its extensive lighting equipment, proved to be an outstanding gallery. A policy was adopted that required tenant artists to contribute a certain amount of hours each year to the public program. I also attempted to impose a limit on the duration of any one artist’s tenancy in the highly sought after studios. The latter point, perhaps understandably, inspired virulent and personally uncomfortable objection from some of the artists.

The hardest task I found as CEO in any arts organisation was the employment of skilled people who worked well together. There were good people at Gasworks when I arrived – Dianna Stewart and Shona Johnston, who were soon joined by Sue McClements. However, the original staffing structure under the City of Port Phillip placed individuals in control of specific contexts that were to some degree in competition with each other. During the second half of my tenure, cultural change enabled an employee group that gelled into a single creative and administrative unit.

Outstanding leadership and policy development came from the Board chaired by James McCaughey. Angela Robarts-Bird (Refer 8a), until her passing, was a fierce and passionate advocate for Gasworks within the City of Port Phillip. At the staff level Emily McLean, Kirsty Ross, Simon Abraham and Shane Luther were an excellent team to work with.

5b Artistic Policy, 2004

Introduction

Gasworks Artistic Policy is founded in our desire to make the best use of the precinct from the perspective of the public, artists and other stakeholders. Reasons for it include:

- To make clear the aspiration that underlies arts programming at Gasworks and create a framework on which to build consistency and quality in process and product.
- To give increased levels of enjoyment, participation and ownership to residents and visitors.
- To reflect the values and objectives expressed in the City of Port Phillip’s adoption of ‘Cultural Vitality’ as one of the four pillars of the city’s planning framework, the other pillars being: Economic Viability, Environmental Responsibility and Social Equity.
- To develop new programs and funding paths for Gasworks.
Mission, Vision, Values and Priorities

Mission
Gasworks Arts Park: a place of art, ideas and events, where people meet, explore and create

Vision
To be widely recognised for the interplay between the arts, public space and the community

Values
Quality, Creativity, Participation, Diversity, Community, Sustainability

Priorities
• To establish Gasworks as a place where its patrons are comfortable, enjoy a feeling of ownership and want to return to meet new people, or bring friends.
• To create a place made unique, as much by the creative and open spirit underlying innovative artistic programs and events, as by its environment.
• An arts precinct that can serve particular sectors e.g. children, the disabled, professional groups, youth, middle and mature aged patrons.
• To fulfill a role in service of the community by utilising the precinct for good causes that may be outside of the scope of the arts, e.g. as a venue for community fundraising.

Artistic Policy Objectives
1. To bring people together through arts and non-arts experiences at Gasworks to foster participation, sharing and ownership of Gasworks.
2. To produce and host events and programs which celebrate and encourage inclusion and diversity.
3. To celebrate local identity and aspiration through participation and interaction with the arts.
4. To enrich people through the arts by engaging, inspiring and creating dialogue.
5. To develop partnerships with other organisations in pursuit of these objectives including the extension of the program beyond the park’s boundaries.

Six Questions
These are the questions staff ask themselves to evaluate a program, activity or event. ‘Yes’ to a minimum of four questions is required.

1. Is the project or activity true to Gasworks aspiration?
2. Does the project or activity fit Gasworks objectives?
3. Will the project actively create discussion and engagement?
4. Will the arts outcome be professional and of good quality?
5. Does it fulfill a responsibility we have to our stakeholders?
6. Is it financially possible/viable? (mandatory yes)
The Art of Relationship

‘The art of relationship’ is a term that appears in the words of some artists and animateurs in different parts of the world, who have worked for decades at the local level. Practitioners who come from a range of disciplines to forms of practice that actively engage other people. These artists are painters, musicians, actors, writers and teachers. Their projects have a common thread, a conversation between the artist and the public. These conversations often begin with the artwork at hand, however, within their scope is an active listening, characterised by empathy and appreciation of the individuals that the project engages. A listening that results in participation and sharing a broader discussion of place, context, relationships, and experience, creating a larger outcome, one that is the project’s real objective. ‘The art of relationship’ is not a title, or a form of practice. It is not a movement. Rather it is an attitude to the work that has, for some artists, begun to describe their motive. It enables work that uses the arts as a means to discussion and commonality. The project threads are often derived from the artists’ lives in contexts of the profound and the deeply personal. The small realities we all inhabit, but are rarely able to share. In a way it is a response to contemporary social and economic structures, to technologies and lifestyles that bring people to a physical proximity, yet confine our minds to small often isolated boxes of place and time. It is a response to the repetitively negative songs of the daily news. Sometimes the projects are derived from the personal, sometimes the locality or a community of interest. Sometimes these are the subject, at others they are the object. ‘The art of relationship’ determines why, and to a degree how something is done, rather than what is done. It can be used in any art form. Drama, dance, music, writing, visual arts and crafts, cross art forms and multimedia are all effective vehicles. The determinants for validity do not reside in the venue, or the media, but in the presence of an artist or artists in personal discussion with individual members of the audience on whatever subject is relevant or arises. The capacity of the artist to engage in conversation with her/his audience in a way that values the exchange and encourages ownership and the confidence of participants is fundamental. The discussion itself often becomes the work, the experience, an exploration and sharing of self, in which the participants often own the outcome as fully as the artist. There are available examples of projects undertaken from this perspective, however, to quote them may limit opportunities at Gasworks to existing models and practitioners. Gasworks approach is to consider possibilities and contexts that do not yet exist here and may not have been considered elsewhere. It should be noted that our intention in describing this approach is to suggest ways forward and patterns of thinking rather than to define an existing program of activity that we can import to Gasworks.

Summary

Gasworks policy aims to create ownership and participation through innovation and an open approach to the development of arts. ‘The art of relationship’ is one approach. It is an attitude, a style rather than a form, one that can be used to create projects in any art form and give a participative and positive quality to them. Equally the same attitude can be used to comprehend a role for the
precinct in facilitating people to gather here for non arts purposes, e.g. at the Bar, or Café for purely social reasons, a philosophy club that may meet in the Garden Studio, a venue for a local playgroup. Gasworks has and will continue to hold a responsibility for mainstream arts practice. In the future Gasworks theatres and studios may house artists working on projects with outcomes that foster and create relationships, but we will continue to have a role in providing a place for established and emerging artists to produce quality mainstream work.

5c Crusader Hillis

Crusader is a writer, editor, curator and producer. He co-founded the Hares and Hyenas bookshop in 1991. Crusader’s fiction and non-fiction has been published in magazines and newspapers both here and in the United Kingdom. He has had a distinguished career in the arts, having also been marketing and communications manager at the Melbourne Festival, and a member of the Melbourne Writers Festival Programming Committee. He has served on several boards of arts organisations, and is currently chair of the City of Yarra Arts Advisory Committee.

5d Tamara Jungwirth

Tamara has been the Director and CEO of Gasworks Arts Park since May 2010. She is passionate about giving opportunities to artists to find their audiences and giving audiences the opportunity to discover new artists. This is underpinned by providing a developmental pathway at Gasworks Arts Park so that artists can be supported and mentored while presenting their work professionally, and being given the opportunity to generate income to support their projects through ticket and artwork sales. She believes the nexus between artist and audience, and the shifting roles between each, is where ideas can be exchanged, inspiration sparked, and conversations commenced.

Tamara lobbied City of Port Phillip councillors and the Mayor for a number of years to secure funding for a major upgrade of the theatre buildings. From 2015-2016 she worked with Tony Green from Gregory Burgess Architects, playing a major role in advising on design and advocating for a style of finish in keeping with an elegant cultural venue rather than a standard council building. The building work was completed in 2017.

As an Australian of Dutch heritage, Tamara has been influenced by the development of the larger Gasworks Culture Park in Amsterdam (Westergasfabriek), which is located a similar distance from the city centre, and comprises the same combination of parkland and red brick buildings which have been restored and converted from factories to arts spaces.

In her personal time she attempts to speak a little French and plays international tennis tournaments on the Masters’ circuit.
6a Bruce Armstrong

This article appeared in the *Emerald Hill Times*, 14 June 1990.

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*Take a log and a chainsaw and hey presto! A sculpture*

GIGANTIC timbers and chainsaws are two of St Kilda sculptor Bruce Armstrong’s favourite things.

With them he creates larger-than-life stoneoliths, animal heads and anonymous primal figures that although they may weigh several tonnes, have an almost bountiful, sometimes playful quality about them.

His new studio at the Gas Works Art Park in South Melbourne is strewn with wood sawdust and wood chips and stuffed with strange figures huge as well as tiny.

A four-centimetre toy

**GIGANTIC!**

By MARY-ANNE TOY

bird sits perched on the massive shoulder of a statue standing nearly four metres tall that weighs two or three tonnes.

In another corner a small, child-like figure about a metre high wears a pair of Bruce’s spare goggles.

The protective eye wear and ear plugs are essential for work, leaving the basics from the trunks of reclining and a chainsaw.

His best-known work are the giant pair of hippopotamus-like figures outside the entrance to the National Gallery.

He has exhibited in Melbourne and is preparing a new show in Sydney. Mr Armstrong has also been selected as part of the Australian contingent of the sculpture triumvirate being held as part of the Melbourne International Arts Festival in September.

The move to the gasworks came earlier this year. When EIFT spoke to him he was getting used to the relative solitude after years of sharing studios with other artists.

Since graduating from RMIT art school in 1981, Bruce moved to a studio in the legal end of Little Booke Street, a “scrappy, money operation” where he shared a ground floor with an electrical goods shop and a logo of other artists.

It was here that he discovered chainsaws, which “made small work happen much faster and made large work possible.”

After that he helped set up the Caravan in Richmond, a studio of mainly sculptors who shared a warehouse near the Cubit truck depot.

Timber is his preferred medium. His father and grandfather were both woodworkers.

“It has a life of its own before you start work on it... Clay is a very anonymous sort of material.”

“I like the bigness of it, there’s something very primal about it,” he said.

Wood also satisfies an environmental ethos that he has.

Bruce is a self-confessed boorier of wood. Off-cuts may become smaller works but if he doesn’t like a sculpture, he has been known to chop it up for firewood.

he rescues most of the raw material from helpful tree surgeons around town who now call him when a big tree is going free.

The beauty of his work is that the felled tree “would’ve been chopped up and burnt but now it’s something lasting that reminds you of the tree.”

The work cites memories of Egyptian sarcophagi and ancient idols such as the monoliths from Easter Island or the ancient Aztec, but while he likes to think they share some of the culture’s bravura of those images, they are not mere derivatives, he says.

“Beauty without tyranny” is a phrase that he uses to describe the process whereby these antique symbols have lost the appurtenance of death and extreme religion and political power.

Bruce Armstrong at work: sculptures are weighed in tonnes.
6b  Cliff Burtt

Cliff is a sculptor who has exhibited in Australia and internationally over the past 30 years. He has also been an active arts writer and reviewer for a range of publications. Trained in Victoria, he has received numerous awards and has public commissions on display throughout Australia. He lives and maintains a studio in Melbourne.

My involvement with the Gasworks Park was mostly limited to participating in the exhibitions. I’m not even sure how many – three or four. Tour of the ‘burbs was in one and several pieces from it were acquired; a piece called America, an open steel framework of a tilting obelisk was in another. I also made some signage for one of the shows, I think, from recycled materials.

Another installation in the old refractory/boiler room (Building 7, now the theatre) consisted of two pendulums. Pieces like the pendulums, Time Double Weighted, convinced me that more satisfaction could be found in making static work, although it led a couple of years later to a public art commission that to my knowledge is still working. Simple as this arrangement (for Time Double Weighted) was, I could not get it to work the way I wanted . . . A number of nights were spent hanging off the roof trusses of the space trying countless adjustments. Occupational health and safety, and insurance were different beasts back then, and all this was done without an elevated work platform or even a safety harness. In the end, I just had to live with the pendulums drifting in and out of synch.

As for the rest of it, well . . . a lot of conversations were had in the wee small hours about art in general, and sculpture in particular, and trying to live a life such that it can be done.

Cliff Burtt
7a Anthill Theatre Company

The company was also known as the Australian Nouveau Theatre, Anthill and ANT. It was an alternative theatre company founded in 1981 by Bruce Keller, known for his commitment to theatre as a means of holding communities together, and Jean-Pierre Mignon, a French professional actor and director, who moved to Australia in 1978.

The company used a theatre in Napier Street, South Melbourne, which was known as the Anthill Theatre, until it moved to Gasworks in 1992. Their repertoire fell into three categories: European classics, 20th century drama and some Australian works.

Despite its deservedly lofty reputation, the company was beset by difficulties after 1989. The Theatre Board of the Australia Council and the Victorian Ministry for the Arts withheld annual grants for 1990, concluding that ‘the company’s current structure is not successful in terms of current planning, the delegation of managerial responsibility and clear viability given the level of funding the Board could responsibly provide’. In 1990 the company was forced to rely on project funding. Its theatre only seated one hundred, which was barely viable without heavy subsidies, and potential profits from transferring to larger venues could not always be counted on. A scaled-down program was undertaken for several years, and administrative and Board structures were implemented. Funding was reintroduced from 1991, but not to the same level as enjoyed previously. The company wound up in 1994.

7b City of Voices

The City of Voices project was a major endeavour for Gasworks Arts, the Recreation Department of the City of South Melbourne and the South Port Community Health Centre. The project began in June 1991 and aimed to produce a community
theatre/music production that reflected the diversity of lifestyles in the area. It involved a broad range of residents and workers from South and Port Melbourne, particularly disenfranchised and disadvantaged individuals.

Artistic Director, Noelle Curry ran workshops with senior citizens, local residents and people with psychiatric and physical disabilities. Rap workshops for young people, tap-dance workshops for senior citizens, and music and art/craft workshops for people with psychiatric and physical disabilities, were also held. These workshops drew together more than 250 people from a variety of backgrounds, and the stories and improvisations recorded during this period reflected their lives and experiences, and provided the raw material for the City of Voices scripts.

The production involved a cast of seventy, ranging in age from fourteen to eighty years, led by Valentina Levkowicz and Phil Summer, with music performed by the Bayside Boomers. The evening was divided into three acts, each of which contained several sketches. Some characters, such as the parking inspector, were ongoing, others appear only once. As the night progressed a definite picture of the community was created – from Council officers to psychiatric hospitals. Noelle Curry was the playwright and director, and the music and lyrics were by Felix Meagher and Jerri Mann.

The bonding created within the group was such that they have since continued to meet, plan and workshop future projects. The group is still in existence at the time of writing.

7c External hirers of the theatres

Regular users of the theatre included the VCA School of Dance who, over a number of years, staged their end-of-year performance in the theatre; Playback Theatre Company, who for many years held regular public sessions of their interactive show every Sunday night; Somebody’s Daughter Theatre Company; Astra Chamber Music Society, who used the capacity of the Gasworks theatre as a flexible space to present their concerts in a number of different configurations; St Michael’s Grammar School; and the Kage Physical Theatre Inc.

Other hirers include: ABC TV, Albert Park College, APO Arts Academy, Artisan Collective, Astra Chamber Music Society, Australian Pops Choir, Australian Theatre of the Deaf, Christine Dunstan Productions, co.motion, Company Eleven, Dance

Figure 1.7c
Melbourne Playback Theatre Company (Source: Melbourne Playback Theatre website)

Figure 2.7c
The Astra Chamber Music Society
(Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Figure 3.7c
Sandra Parker, current
Choreographer and Artistic Director,
Dance Works (Source: Dance Works website)
The Gyuto Monks

Gyuto was founded in 1475, and is one of the main tantric colleges of the Gelug tradition. Their monastery was in Lhasa, Tibet and, at the time of the Chinese invasion in 1950, about 1000 monks were part of the monastery. Sixty Gyuto monks fled to India in 1959. The monastery is now based in Sidhbara, near Dharamsala, India. Today, there are nearly 500 monks in the entire order.

Gyuto’s monks are known for their tradition of overtone singing, also described as ‘chordal chanting’, which is said to have been transmitted by their founder. It achieved renown in the West following the release of recordings made in 1974 and 1986. The Gyuto Monks started visiting Australia in 1994. Their visits have given Australians the chance to experience the monks’ ancient and unique rituals, and traditions. Along with their cultural activities, the monks have also conducted group workshops and retreats in hospice, palliative care, cancer-care centres, Aboriginal communities, drug and alcohol and sexual-assault clinics, community houses and schools.

Scoundrel steps in from Russia’s wild side

Robin Usher from The Age, wrote in the 7 May 2008 edition:

The first name to come to mind from the world of 19th-century Russian literature is probably not Alexander Ostrovsky. But a veteran of Melbourne theatre, James McCaughey, believes there is much to be gained from his work. The director has selected eight actors to present the Melbourne premiere of the 1868 play The Scoundrel that You Need.

‘Ostrovsky is tremendously entertaining as you would expect from a first-class playwright,’ McCaughey says. ‘But he is still surprisingly relevant with his interest in the difference between high and low-paid workers, and various management reforms.’ But the Russian writer remains interesting mainly because of the demands he makes on actors. ‘We have to work in new ways as actors and director,’ McCaughey says. ‘He can seem very strange when you first read him.’

McCaughey, who has been involved in Melbourne theatre for more than 40 years, believes meeting such challenges can release new capacities in actors, much as happened with the development of Australian theatre around the Pram Factory in the 1960s. ‘What was happening in Melbourne was comparable to what was happening in Russia at the time of Ostrovsky – a commitment to remaking theatre stemming from the society of which it was part, and powered by the energy of vernacular
speech.’ McCaughey directed Aeschylus’ Oresteian Trilogy, the second play to be staged at the Pram Factory. He went on to found one of Victoria’s first community theatre companies, the Mill Theatre, and establish the performing arts program at Deakin University. This production reunites him with another Pram Factory veteran, Evelyn Krape.

The play, a comedy, follows the fortunes of a con-artist social climber (Ben Pfeiffer), who scorns an older woman (played by several actors, including Krape) for a younger girl (Miria Kostiuk). But the abandoned woman seeks her own moral justice from her former lover. McCaughey says Ostrovsky preceded Chekhov in his interest in women. ‘He was unusual for his times in that his male protagonist gets a powerful female antagonist who has the final line.’ The cast includes a Russian actor, Olga Makeeva. ‘She was enormously helpful with the text, which we have put together from a number of different versions,’ McCaughey says.

Ostrovsky is still much performed in Russia, and McCaughey says the lead character’s name, Glumov, has entered Russian speech as a word meaning ‘to deceive’. But the playwright is little known in the West. Of his estimated 50 plays, only about eight have been translated. ‘I think Westerners select the bits of Russia that we can accept,’ McCaughey says. ‘We are easily disconcerted by Russia’s wild side and Ostrovsky is really wild.’ McCaughey says staging his work answers the question of what is the point of live theatre in the age of cinema. ‘It allows people to see actors present a creative reality, which justifies live performance and explains why it is still precious.’

7f Circus Showdown

Gasworks Circus Showdown, a professional development program for artists, commenced in 2012. The Showdown enables circus performers to develop innovative acts for presentation to a live audience and specialist judges, while honing their craft and learning new business skills. The program culminates in an on-stage circus and physical theatre, gala competition which consists of two heats and a grand final. The Circus Showdown Champion and runner-up win cash prizes as well as free rehearsal time (up to 20 hours) in the Studio Theatre, and a three-hour, professional, marketing consultancy.

Figure 1.7f
Three High Acrobatics, the winner of the 2012 event (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)
The 2012 event was hosted by comedian Nathan Valvo. The finalists, who specialised in a range of circus skills that included trapeze, ropes, contortion, clowning and hoops, were Three High Acrobatics, Stuart Orr, Dancus Collective, Women’s Circus, Jamie Breitman, Judith Lanigan, Pants Down Circus, Mr Gørski, Teame Ersie, Thomas Gorham and John Henry.

Sarah Somers from theatrepeople.com.au wrote in May 2012:

**Three High Acrobatics – Triumph at Gasworks Circus Showdown**

After three awe-inspiring nights showcasing the physical skill and imagination of contemporary Australian circus, the winner of the Circus Showdown was Three High Acrobatics. The boys won the crowd over with their hilarious and physically astounding act ‘Knock Off’, a contemporary, creative and convincing deconstruction of reality TV show, ‘The Block’. Their performance incorporated a blend of nail-biting acrobatics, dare-defying stunt work and a healthy dose of mischievous Aussie humour, with their blokey personas accentuated by a soundtrack of classic pub rock anthems. . . . The second prize . . . was awarded to John Henry for their piece, ‘The Legend of John Henry’s Hammer’. Sharon Gruenert and Ruby Rowart engrossed and amazed the audience with their trapeze mastery and sexual ambiguous undertones. The duo was awarded the Gasworks Foundation award for best female director.

The 2013 competition was described by Ruth Richter, from Stage Whispers, as follows: Spectacular, seriously skilled and sensational circus competition. All of the performers demonstrated skills only acquired by hard work, commitment and the spirit of circus that is all daring do, courage and joy. . . . The judges, Anni Davey and Matt Wilson, who both have impeccable credentials in circus and physical theatre, brought enthusiasm and grace to the evening. . . . The final five acts were Big Foot Little Foot who did clever things in Velcro suits and a robust risley act (one on their back supporting the other doing acrobatic moves). Madhouse Circus did a slapstick version of the tea party from Alice in Wonderland. The A4 Circus Ensemble presented their satisfying blend of dialogue, high ring, tight risley act and foot juggling of umbrellas and mats. Trent Baumann showed off his miming talent and the nine-person Long Answers to Simple Questions presented their generous ensemble piece that includes just about everything. There were clear indications of preferences from the audience and the judges concurred: first prize to Long Answers . . . and second prize . . . to A4 Circus Ensemble.
In 2014 the Grand Final sold out the Friday before, and the full house served as a third judge – cheering, stamping their feet and applauding the finalists. Trash Test Dummies were crowned Circus Showdown Champions for 2014, and ‘Feet2Feat’ took out second place.

![Trash Test Dummies](Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

In 2015 the finalists were Undertone (Carnation Productions), My Life in Boxes (Gravity Dolls), The Amazing Hazel (Hazel Bock) and Jugg Life (Byron and Richard Juggling). The winners of the Grand Final were Byron and Richard Juggling’s Jugg Life, about two friends that loved one thing – juggling! The runner up was Gravity Dolls’ My Life In Boxes, which unpacked the story of a pathological hoarder on the brink of being uprooted from her carefully constructed existence and placed into palliative care.

![Prize winners of the 2015 Circus Showdown Dolls](Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

Gasworks Circus Showdown 2016 performances were: Karl Laczko, Long Answers to Simple Questions, Hannah Cryle, The Element of Consequence, By a Thread, Madhouse Circus, The Flying Xamels and The Fumbling Bumblers. The winner was The Element of Consequence and the runner-up, By a Thread. The Element of Consequence and By a Thread went on to perform at the 2016 Boardwalk
Republic, part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival. In addition, Gasworks Arts Park supported By a Thread’s application for funding to Creative Victoria to support the ongoing development of the work.

In 2017 the Circus Showdown featured Out of this World (Four or More Circus), Tandem (Gravity Dolls), Untied (Adica Arts), HoopDogg (Hayley Hoopla), My Sight – Their Sight (Blindful), Circus Habesha, and Social Staples. Social Staples was the 2017 Circus Showdown winner.

Moving Parts

In 2012 Gasworks introduced a subscription season of contemporary drama, Moving Parts. The first season featured three works: Diving for Pearls by Katherine Thomson, set in an industrialised coastal city on the cusp of change, and the effect of this on a working class couple; The Baby Show by Donna Jackson in which the themes of love, law, charity and shame that lie at the bottom of many a birth, are investigated by an expert, a deliberately barren spinster accompanied by her dog love-child; and Knock Off by Three High Acrobatics in which a blonde, a brunette and a Japanese guy walk on to a building site – their mission is to construct a contemporary circus show.
In 2013, the performances were:

**Boxman** which opened the season. The play depicted the life of Ringo, a homeowner and survivor, who has established a new life in the local park after being displaced from his African homeland.

**Drowning in Veronica Lake**, in which Veronica Lake, 70 years having been a star and now trapped somewhere between Paramount and Purgatory, wrestles with stardom, booze, men and her spectacular decline into obscurity. This production was repeated in 2015.

**Chet Baker: Like Someone in Love**, where audiences experienced the music and life of jazz maestro, Chet Baker.

**Art**, a comedy built around the mayhem that resulted from a spontaneous art purchase which turned friendships on their head.

**Happy as Larry**, performed by the Parker Dance Company, entertained the audience with its intoxicating, free-flowing mix of ballet, break-dance, acrobatics and highly physical contemporary dance.

In 2014 the performances were:

**The Kitchen Sink**, a Red Stitch Theatre production of a blue-collar domestic drama.

**Lake**, Lisa Wilson’s water-filled production, provided a huge technical challenge for Gasworks as a lake had to be installed on stage with three tonnes of water in only one day. The set arrived a day late on the *Spirit of Tasmania*, so a double technical crew was rostered to be able to bump-in on time for the show to go ahead.

‘S’, Circa’s acrobatic explosion inspired by the shape, grammatical functions and sound of the 19th letter of the alphabet.

**Unpack This**, which explored the funnier side of anger management, was written by actor Geoff Paine. It is based on the true story of Paine’s violent altercation with an annoying neighbour, and his subsequent court-ordered attendance at an anger-management workshop.

**The Magic Hour**, delivered by Ursula Yovich, a funny, one-woman exploration of Grimm’s fairy tales.
The Harbinger, an adult fairytale featuring puppetry and animation in a classic tale of heroes and villains, and centred on a little girl and an old man thrown together in the aftermath of civil war.

Food, a Belvoir Theatre Production, involving two sisters who run a take-away café, while quietly waging war with their past and wrangling with each other about how to map out their future, until a young traveller arrives and turns their world around.

In 2015, the season consisted of:

First Things First, in which Joseph Simons explored the art of ‘getting used to it’: the first time it’s memorable, but after the second or third time, it becomes second nature.

Kelly, a play about a brutal confrontation between two titans of Australian history, Ned Kelly who is about to hang, and his brother Dan who wants Ned’s forgiveness having tried to kill him.

Mother, which was written specifically by Daniel Keene for Noni Hazlehurst. This one-woman play follows Christy, a homeless woman living on the fringe of the world.

Flak exposed Michael Veitch’s life-long obsession with World War II aircraft and their aircrew. With most of these veterans in their eighties, he knew that it was a matter of urgency to find them, before their personal stories disappear forever.

Carmen Sweet, a dance interpretation of the legendary Carmen story. Produced by Expressions Dance Company, Natalie Weir’s Carmen was volatile and vulnerable, and used three dancers to play her different states of mind and alter egos.

Finding Centre, performed by Tasmanian dancer Trisha Dunn, explored the notion of ‘finding centre’ in a deeply personal work that launched her solo career.

Performances featured in the Moving Parts 2016 season were:

If These Walls Could Talk…?,
This is Not a Love Song,
The Adventures of Alvin Sputnik: Deep Sea Explorer,
Never Did Me Any Harm,
My Life in Boxes, and
Boredom Protection.
A review of *If These Walls Could Talk …?*, by Myron My in *Theatre Press*, included:

Good circus is obvious when the tricks are good, the audience is interested and there are a few gasps, but great circus is when there is a story we can follow and we become emotionally invested in the characters we see. *If These Walls Could Talk …?* goes beyond even that, and creates a poignant reminder that while we should embrace life and all there is to it, we should not forget the ones that have come before us.

In 2017 the season saw the inclusion of an international artist, Joe SellmanLeava, who came from London to perform his widely-acclaimed and award-winning show *Labels*. Other performances were:

- **Hello, Beautiful!** by Hannie Rayson and Matthew Lutton,
- **Greek Goddess** by Terence O’Connell,
- **By A Thread** by One Fell Swoop,
- **The Crow** Family by the Pidd-Davey Family,
- **Bakersfield Mist** by Stephen Sachs,
- **The Exotic Lives of Lola Montez** by Finucane & Smith, and
- **A Prudent Man** by Lab Kelpie.
7h Small Gems program

This program aims to identify, develop and support new, performing-arts work for small to medium-sized venues in metropolitan Melbourne and beyond. It commissions independent works that are of professional quality, contemporary interest and in the genre of drama, dance, hybrid theatre, circus and ground-based physical theatre, to help create new work, support artists with a track record of high quality production output, and contribute positively to the Australian theatre scene. This program produced *Greek Goddess* and the *Crow Family*, both part of the Moving Parts 2017 season.
Angela worked for the City of St Kilda and then the City of Port Phillip for ten years in the arts unit. She wrote the first, local-government arts plan in Australia which won a number of awards, and worked by the name of Angela Wallace.

Born Angela Robarts, she grew up in Port Melbourne, and attended local Catholic schools. A gifted pianist, she first performed at the South Melbourne Town Hall. Angela studied teaching, and was widowed with a young child at 20. Working at the Shepparton special education unit, she developed a reading readiness/maturity scale which was later implemented state-wide.

A long-time St Kilda resident, one of the strengths she brought to local government was her own background as an artist (stained glass) and community activist. Angela had been the Chairperson of the St Kilda Festival Parade, and the treasurer of Friends of Linden Gallery.

In one of a number of letters to her friends, mentors and supporters, after she was diagnosed with cancer in July, 2003, she said her proudest career achievement was the establishment of a Koori Arts Unit, another first for local government: Why was St Kilda [Council] so brave in 1994 when I was able to secure $60,000 funding to establish a part-time Koori Arts Officer and a number of projects that were included in the arts program, the festival program and NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance) Week. The word ‘reconciliation’ had not been coined or spoken of in the national agenda. We were the first to work with ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) and, as a local government, the first to gain
access to Aboriginal dollars to work within the context of non-Aboriginal cultural awareness. The establishment of the unit meant we worked with over thirty federal, state and other Aboriginal agencies.

Angela rebuilt the St Kilda Film Festival at a time when state and federal funding agencies were unhappy with its performance. She implemented the Cultural Advisory Board, a community-based board which governed cultural policy at the City of Port Phillip. She was also instrumental in implementing a new vision for Gasworks Arts Park, which included devolving management of the park to the community.

In another of her recent open letters, Angela said:

I smile as I think of the grand plan that I once had when I first accepted the job offer as Community Arts Officer at the City of St Kilda in May 1993. At that time I ran a consultancy practice managing arts projects, writing arts policy as well as designing and constructing flat, stained and warm glass. I had at that time meant to stay in the job for two years and learn what it was to sit on the other side of the bureaucratic desk. That desk which at the time was located at Linden opened up a world of action that enticed and seduced me – public art programs, festivals, community arts projects, arts policy development and work within the context of a large organisation that seeks to serve and be innovative. There was no better way I believe to become a wage slave . . . The work over the ten years has afforded so much growth I cannot express how fortunate I feel to have been so blessed to have partaken. I have been many things at Port Phillip in that ten years, Community Arts Officer for 18 months until amalgamation, Arts Officer, Cultural Planner, Cultural Development Officer, Services Coordinator, Coordinator Cultural Development Unit and currently known as Major Projects Coordinator. That, my friends, is seven changes of title in ten years; no wonder I stayed on.

In September 2003, Angela married her partner of eighteen years, Philip Bird, in the St Kilda Botanical Gardens, after which she was known as Angela Robarts-Bird.

Angela played a crucial role in forming and cultivating the relationship between the Gasworks Arts Park and the City of Port Phillip, and was an architect of the process of devolution. It was because of this that Gasworks requested permission from the Council to name a gallery after her.

### 8b Artists’ studios

The precinct currently has 15 studio artists in residence, covering the disciplines of Visual Arts, Sculpture and Ceramics. The studios are available for two-year terms that can be renewed at the discretion of management, subject to satisfactory performance of collaborative public-access projects to benefit the community. Preference is given to artists based in the City of Port Phillip.

Artists must be prepared to contribute 30 voluntary hours per year to Gasworks’ public-engagement program which includes, but is not limited to, studio open days, studio tours, educational talks, fundraising activities and events, classes, workshops and exhibitions.
The Discovery Art Show

There was a huge number of applications for this show, from which only a portion could be hung, despite the fact that the exhibition was not confined to the Angela Robarts-Bird Gallery, but spread throughout the building including both the theatres. It was a highly ambitious undertaking and had its problems. Because of the huge number of applications from a significant swathe of the arts community, it was not possible to hang all the works that were submitted, despite an entrance fee being charged, thus causing some discontent. It was decided the following year to stage another exhibition for the remaining works in an exhibition called Landed. While there were problems with this show, many works were purchased, some by Michael Buxton, a property developer, for his contemporary art collection.
9a Cath Jamison

Cath Jamison is a leading female magician and mentalist. Cath utilises her trademark sass, style and mind manipulation to captivate audiences until the very end. She offers a feminine approach to the world of intrigue, and is recognised for her skills in the fields of magic and mindreading. Her signature style and charismatic demeanour has seen her become the recipient of multiple awards, including Australian Rainbow Award, Australia’s Best Busker and the prestigious Professional Stage Magician award at the International/Australian Magic Convention. Cath is a very popular female magician and mind-reader, working for corporate companies, major events and venues, and making many television appearances.

At Gasworks, Cath has performed in many of the school-holiday programs, the Comedy, Midsumma and Fringe festivals, and the children’s festival, Once upon a Story. Cath writes:

I started my wonderful relationship with Gasworks in 2006 when I was hired to teach Magic at their kids festival. From there they have asked me back with my Australian School of Magic, teaching every school holidays with successful class sizes each term.

Gasworks have been an amazing support for myself as a performer and my Australian School of Magic. Everyone is so gorgeous and I love being part of the Gasworks family. It is such a joy and honour to be asked back each holidays, and to work in such an amazing creative and culturally interesting environment.

9b Kapow

Nick Pilgrim wrote the following review in Theatrepeople (October 2013):

The talented trio of Christy Flaws, Luke O’Connor and Alisa Wild, have performed together since 2008. Together, they created a touring troupe called Asking for Trouble. Between the three of them, Flaws, O’Connor and Wild share an impressive list of stagecraft skills, including movement, circus arts, choreography, writing, visual design, stage design and puppetry.

In its debut season three years ago, Kapow won a Melbourne Fringe Festival Award for Best Family Show. Returning to the Gasworks Theatre for 2013, it was immediately clear why their collaboration is so popular with small kids and grown-ups alike.

Told from a child’s perspective, Kapow is an action-packed story that taps into the fascination with super heroes and self-made adventures. By using simple household items like red string, inflatable balls and umbrella frames as props, the show encourages youngsters to harness their imaginations in a multitude of unusual and inspired ways.
Structured more like an interactive book than a theatrical piece, Kapow reminded me of iconic stories such as Ezra Jack Keats’ Hi, Cat! and Maurice Sendak’s Where The Wild Things Are. In both instances, adults are either peripheral to, or completely absent from, the action.

It is this approach that places younger audience members on the same level as the actors. Drawing viewers in on this basis, allows them to feel like a key part of the narrative.

Flaws (as Scout) and O’Connor (as Scout’s best friend, Terry) absolutely nail how children talk and interact with one another. Both speak with wide-eyed awe. Constantly discovering new things to do, each is amazed by the world around them.

As Scout’s pet dog, Natalie, Wild’s character is the moral centre of the show. Like the cartoon animals Snoopy or Garfield, her dialogue cleverly graduates from barks, woofs and growls to reams of complex introspections and observations. Parents and other adults in attendance were certainly in on the joke.

The simple story moves quickly. When Scout loses her beloved fluffy toy over a neighbour’s fence, the three of them plot a handful of clever ways to get it back.

Kapow is also filled with entertaining dance breaks and complex gymnastic sequences woven around a clothesline and a bunk bed. At 45 minutes, the show is the right length to keep young audience members focused on stage.

A humorous disclaimer closes the show. Breaking character, the three actors reiterate to kids (and grown-ups) in the audience to please leave the acrobatics to the trained professionals. Don’t try this on your own at home, folks.
10a  Circus after Dark

At the 2013 Fringe Festival, After Dark Theatre and Gasworks presented Circus After Dark. The festival showcased 12 independent theatre productions. The circus acts included Blindscape, A4 Circus, Asoré (A Series of Rare Events), Lacrima, Tales of a Magical Circus, Kapow! (Refer 9b), Elixir and … We Should Quit. As the audience entered the theatre for Blindscape, they were provided with an iTouch, loaded with the Blindscape App: a 3D, audio, virtual-reality simulator. Perception and reality overlapped as audiences wound through virtual corridors, landscapes and doorways, while Blindscape performers emerged from the dark and infiltrated the virtual world.

A4 Circus Ensemble asked and explored ‘What series of rare events leads someone to a life in the circus?’. Asoré (A Series of Rare Events) merged dialogue, music, aerials, foot-juggling, hula, and took the audience behind the curtain where nothing is as glamorous as it seems; and Risley took them into a sensual and human narrative.

Lacrima invited the audience into the world of a 1950s circus family to see the happy family façade of a contortionist wife, her clown of a husband, and a new baby, unravel to reveal a darker reality. Accompanied by a selection of evocative 1950s inspired songs, Lacrima used captivating circus, physical theatre and clowning to explore themes of love and loss.

At the Last Gasp was a provocative blend of circus and physical theatre that explored our fascination with the forbidden and unknown. Through a series of quirky and touching vignettes, the show delved into the various ways death reveals itself to different people.
Tales of a Magical Circus was a collaboration between circus artist Emma Shepherd and magician Lee Cohen. The show overflowed with hula hoops, bunny rabbits and stunning displays of magic.

Head First Acrobatics debuted their new acrobatic extravaganza, Elixir. The duo mixed a blend of high intensity acrobatics, live music and strong images to share the story of two enthusiastic scientists attempting to create the elixir of life.

... We Should Quit told the story of two cogs stuck in the daily routine of life, using a union of traditional circus and contemporary clowning. The show incorporated Chinese pole, corde lisse and acrobatics.

The theatre productions included reinterpretations of celebrated plays, an award winning kids production, and a dramatic tale of sibling rivalry. The plays were Domestic Warfare, Another Point of View, The Importance of Being Earnest, At the Last Gasp, and True West.

Nice Production’s play, Domestic Warfare was set in the 1970s, and told the story of a dysfunctional family, and their attempts to survive an abusive home life, whilst battling their personal demons ... and each other.

Revolving around the whimsical existence of two sisters living a toy box life of solitude, Another Point of View presented the curious turn of events that occurred when an unexpected phone call came through from a phone that never rang.

Oscar Wilde’s The Importance of Being Earnest, was re-imagined in a light-hearted production brimming with 21st century humour. The show came with a tasty treat: audiences were invited to sample the food and beverages mentioned in the play.

True West told the tale of a bitter sibling rivalry between two brothers.

10b Jerker

Alison Croggan’s description of Jerker in Theatre Notes: Consisting entirely of phone dialogues between two men, JR (Gary Abrahams) and Bert (Russ Pirie), it records the arc of a relationship which begins with phone sex and evolves to some surprisingly tender moments without their ever meeting in the flesh, foreshadowing the curious intimacy of cyber relationships in the 21st century. It was originally aired in 1986 as a radio play and its frank sexual language stirred up considerable controversy, culminating in the Federal Communications Commission rewriting its rules. Yet for all its history as a hot political potato, this is a play with a light touch, deftly and often comically humane, shamelessly erotic and, ultimately, deeply moving. It survives its genre as an AIDS play and it’s aged surprisingly well: although Gary Abrahams wisely directs it as a period piece, with dial telephones and so on.
Carousel

Andrew Fuhrmann, Timeout, January 2014, wrote:

Carousel is a small but endearing circus-cum-burlesque double act presented by One Trick Pony. Performers Johanna Fairley and Christy Flaws show off an array of acrobatic standards – mostly balancing and contortion – in a characterful and sometimes very funny ‘battle’. Among the routines, there’s a fantastic genderbending riff on the circus strong man, a neat piece of clowning involving extravagant tumbling and a grotesque Moira Finnucane-style hula hoop bit.

Where One Trick really add value, however, is in the darker themes at the edges of their act. There’s a persistent undernote of tragedy and struggle which ties the disparate cross-format performance together. Ideas around disease and discomfort or competition and collaboration are never really given concrete narrative form, but you nevertheless get a strong feeling of unity in the piece.

But if Carousel is circus with a serious dramatic ambition, in this remount it is perhaps a little faltering in execution. This has much to do with the venue. The Gasworks theatre can be a rather gloomy and cavernous black box: difficult to fill for a small show. The audience always seems a long way from the action, and scene changes seem to take just that little bit longer with the extra on-stage space that needs to be traversed. It’s a challenge to sustain a strong and energised relationship with the audience. Here, most of the acrobatics still impress, but the theatrical content seems strained and awkward in all that distance and emptiness.

Still, this is an innovative blend of the ye olde sideshow circus aesthetic and provocative physical theatre that will stimulate and entertain in equal measure.

Black Faggot

The following article appeared in the Melbourne Arts Fashion column, Toorak Times, 15 February 2015:

Black Faggot is an awesome piece of theatre. This two hander performed by Iaheto Ah Hi and Taofia Pelesasa dives head first into some challenging subject matter, much like the show’s title would have you assume. It courses its way through the same scenarios and situation that so many performances also choose to tackle, however here in Black Faggot, this stimulus finds itself reinvented with these tired subjects now new, challenging and perceptive.

Script writer Victor Rodger has done an exceptional job with Black Faggot; the back stories are filled in scene by scene, successfully keeping audiences hooked from start to finish, whilst simultaneously drawing audiences closer to the action and made them connect with and feel for the challenges faced here by the characters. Scenes dramatically shifted between time and location – from a somewhat tragic gay nightclub to the home environment, even the bedroom where some particularly raucous scenes take place, surrounding ejaculation, stains and drapery – each of the scenes pivoted from the highest of highs to the lowest of the lows in such perfect order that you were unable to jump off the emotional roller coaster once it took off. The most touching scenes involved those where Taofia Pelesasa prayed for God to
make him straight, which really spoke of the struggles some men face with sexuality and faith. As the performance continued, these particular scenes became more telling, with words to the effect of ‘if God hates gays, why did you make me this way?’ leaving the strongest memory post performance.

The only criticism to put forward with this production is the running time, at just over one hour the final few scenes tended to drag out a little. perhaps if ten minutes where to be shaved off, Black Faggot would have been just that bit tighter. This show is a crowd pleaser, and judging by the audience who attended at Gasworks, it has successfully made the jump from being for a predominantly queer audience to one which exhibits a wide reach and appeal in the public realm, it is easy to understand why this show has gained such critical acclaim.

In essence, it’s one of those rare shows that will continue to, and quite rightly so, attract attention and be treasured by those lucky enough to see it. A heart warming piece of theatre, with its tongue placed firmly in its cheek, be sure to catch this if it does make a return visit to Melbourne.
11a Artists and companies

The following artists and companies were among those involved with the Art of Difference festivals at Gasworks.

**Back to Back Theatre Company**
This award-winning contemporary theatre company, based in Geelong, includes an ensemble of actors perceived to have intellectual disabilities. The ensemble creates all their own work through a process of research, improvisation and scripting in collaboration with the Artistic Director and guest artists.

**The BiPolar Bears Band**
The BiPolar Bears Band are Victoria’s best known band of musicians living with mental illness. The band plays a range of classic rock covers and has a repertoire of original material. The Bears are a serious creative and working band doing up to 60 gigs per year, performing regularly at festivals and events in the City of Port Phillip and beyond. The band was the subject of a three-part documentary screened on SBS in 2009.

**Born in a Taxi**
Born in a Taxi is a highly regarded physical theatre ensemble. Their award-winning performances centre on the investigation of the relationship between performer and audience, through the medium of dance, theatre, visual art, improvisation, mime, clowning and music.

**Brr Theatre Company**
Based in Ballarat, the company works with disabled people many of whom have Down Syndrome. It gives people with disabilities the opportunity to experience theatre and drama.
The Colour Gang
The Colour Gang have been operating from Noweyung (a disability services and support organisation in Bairnsdale) since 1989 when Jill Noble, a local artist, began working with a number of people who attended Noweyung and had expressed an interest in art. The first project was a mural on the walls of Noweyung’s art room, after which several of the participants expressed a strong interest in continuing their painting. With the assistance of other artists, the group have continued to work and expand their talents. Their work has been loosely categorised as ‘Art Brut’ or ‘Outsider Art’.

Ignition Theatre
Ignition Theatre is part of a TAFE program which offers formal theatre training for people with intellectual disabilities and special-learning needs.

JustUs
Formed in 1991, the JustUs drama group is a high quality, performance-based arts program that caters for people with an intellectual disability. Performing regularly at seminars, conferences and festivals, JustUs provides company members with additional experiences through links to other drama groups, and connections with other activities in the City of Port Phillip and the broader community.

Figure 2.11a
JustUs (Source: Gasworks Arts Inc. archives)

KickstART
KickstART is an innovative, visual, art program inclusive of people with mental illness. KickstART artists exhibit regularly, and often use the group to prepare a folio for entry to join mainstream art schools. It is a partnership between Learn For Yourself, a community education organisation, and the City of Port Phillip.

The Music Network
The Music Network (for mental health) is an initiative to link people interested in the positive value of music making for mental health. The network coordinates music, song writing and professional development workshops for musicians who live with mental illness.
One Voice Theatre Company
The company’s program concentrates on providing acceptance through performance.

RAG Theatre
This theatre group devise theatre based on the casts’ experience of living with mental illness. The company travelled to Toronto for the 2003 Madness and Arts Festival creating *In the Room*, later performed at Theatreworks for Melbourne Fringe and Mental Health Week. The group were winners of a 2003 Eli Lilly Partnerships in Wellbeing Award.

Rawcus
Rawcus is an ensemble of performers with and without disabilities. It draws on dance, theatre and visual art disciplines to give a voice to the imaginative world of the ensemble. The company began as an initiative of Leisure Action, the leisure service of the Spastic Society of Victoria, in partnership with the City of Port Phillip’s Special Needs Arts and Recreation Service. Under the direction of Kate Sulan, the group’s first performance, *Flight* opened the Australian Cerebral Palsy Conference in November 2000 with live music and sound collages by the City of Port Phillip’s Great Escape Drama, a group of people with multiple disabilities, working with musical director, Phil Heuzenroeder. *Flight* was also performed at Theatreworks for the Melbourne Fringe Festival Something on Sundays program with an additional season of three performances for International Disability Awareness Day.

SPARC Theatre
SPARC Theatre is a company inclusive of people who live in supported accommodation in the City of Port Phillip. Formed in 2005 through a philanthropic grant, the company was co-winner (with RAG Theatre) of the inaugural Melbourne Fringe Festival VicHealth Community Cultural Development Award for Crisis & Rhapsody. In 2008 SPARC Theatre’s show *A Cup of Tea With Aunty Marge* received an Honourable Mention in the same category. SPARC Theatre is supported by a partnership between the City of Port Phillip and arbias (a specialist support service for people with substance-related brain injury).
Weave Movement Theatre
Weave Movement Theatre is a Melbourne-based hybrid dance and theatre performance company. Weave formed in 1997 through an Arts Access project and continues to develop high quality performances under the artistic direction of Janice Florence, a dance artist who is paraplegic. A mixture of people with and without physical disabilities, the company’s members bring a wealth of varying experience to the ensemble. Some are from a dance background, others are drama based. Some have a blend of both. They play with varying degrees of improvisation and structure. The troupe currently consists of 11 people, five with physical disabilities, six without. So far, the group has wanted to avoid the historic tendency towards the segregation of people with disability, so it enjoys its integrated nature – integration of abilities and of theatrical forms.
12a  The bush trail

Information provided by indigenous people throughout Victoria shows that more than 1050 different species of native plants were used for all the daily necessities of life. These uses included food, canoes, homes, tools, ornaments and treating sickness. Newly arrived settlers also found many of these plants essential for everyday living. There were many aboriginal language groups living along the Victorian coastline who utilised the plants for food and medicinal purposes.

The bush trail was planted with the purpose of commemorating plants used by the local indigenous groups, the Boon Wurrong people. The following species were planted along the trail and elsewhere in the park.

1. Kummeree or Pigface. This plant was squeezed for its water, which was used as a painkiller for stings and burns. The summer fruit was also eaten.
2. **Warrigal Spinach.** The convicts and settlers at Botany Bay ate this spinach raw or cooked.

3. **Native bulb bed.** This bed contains Murnong (Yam Daisies), Pike (Leek Lilies) and Chocolate Lilies. The Yalukit Willam clan and people of the Kulin Nation ate these bulbs raw or cooked.

4. **Lilly Pilly.** Women settlers made lilly-pilly jam from these berries.

5. **Kabin or Running Postman.** The long tough stems were used for rope and the nectar was sucked from the flowers.

6. **Kurwan or Bursaria.** The flowers of this plant were used for their sweet nectar, and the timber was used to make tools. Sunscreen is made from a chemical called ‘aesculin’ which is found in the leaves of this plant. The flowers were also beneficial for their sweet nectar and the timber used for tools.

7. **Kuungurrun or Wedge Leaf Hop Bush.** Early settlers brewed ale with this plant instead of using traditional hops.

8. **Bowat or Poa Grass.** The grass blades of this plant were used to weave string baskets and nets for fishing.

9. **Reeds and rushes.** This common reed was used to make shafts for spears. They were also cut into sections and used as jewellery, including necklaces and nose ornaments. Bulrush, Club Rush and ‘Polango’ (Water Ribbons) provided an excellent food source from their underground stems and bulbs that were ground and baked.

10. **Austral Indigo.** This plant was used as a source of blue dye and also as a fish poison. Blue dye was made from Flax Lily and its leaves were also used for basket making and string.

11. **Eucalyptus.** The leaves are commonly known as beneficial for colds, coughs, dysentery, rheumatism, disinfectant and insect repellent. Canoes, shields and roofing were also made from the bark. The tree’s gum was used to help cure dysentery and to treat burns.

12. **Swamp Paperbark.** The bark sheets were used for roofing, blankets and bandages. The flowers yield sugar and the wood was used for digging sticks, clubs and spears. The leaves were crushed in water to treat colds.

13. **White Correa.** Early settlers used the leaves to make tea.

14. **Seaberry and Ruby Saltbush.** The Ruby Saltbush berries were eaten. Berries from the Seaberry Saltbush provided ink for steel nib pens for the early settlers.

15. **Kangaroo Apple.** The berries are only edible when fully ripe (deep orange). They were also used for contraception.

16. **Karawun or Mat Rush.** The leaves were used for making baskets and eel traps. The base of the flowers and young leaves were eaten.

17. **Coast Ti Tree.** The name comes from the settlers’ use of the leaves for tea. The oil is still widely used for the treatment of acne. The wood made boomerangs and spears. The flowers provided sugar.
18. **Worike or Banksia.** The flowers were used to filter and sweeten water. Settlers used the stem cores of the dead flower for cleaning pipes and for candle-making.

19. **Burn-Na-Look or Blackwood.** The wood was used to make spears, boomerangs and shields. The bark was soaked and used to treat rheumatism.

20. **Coast Wattle.** The seeds were roasted and used as a food source.

21. **Wurun or Coast Manna Gum.** The sugary deposits on the leaves were ‘manna from heaven’ for settlers and indigenous people. The leaves were used to smoke out fevers or make a wash for sores.

22. **Wayetuck or Black She-Oak.** The wood was used for boomerangs, shields and clubs. The dripping leaves directed rainwater into bowls or ‘tarnuks’.

Today there are only remnant species that can be found along the trail. Maintaining and replanting was a problem due to soil contamination.

### 12b Charles Jenkins’ song

**Gasworks Park**

at night in gasworks park let the cool breeze blow  
at night in gasworks park no one needs to know  
at night in gasworks park let the cool breeze blow  
at night in gasworks park anywhere you want to go  
feels like you’re always leaving town feels like you’re always leaving town  
did you ever know the place you always loved the chase  
but you never were around feels like you’re always leaving town  
if we can only get through this before the telephone rings and little birds sing  
at night in gasworks park let the cool breeze blow  
at night in gasworks park no one needs to know

(From the album, Sweeter than the Radio, by Icecream Hands, 1999)
13a1 Michel Anela
Michel was born in 1978 in Warsaw and came to Australia in 2010 in order to study.

13b1 Kellie Barnes
Kellie is a practicing sculptural ceramic artist and craftswoman with more than six years’ experience working with clay and a Fine Art [Ceramics] degree from Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

13c1 Dani Bryant
Dani’s current work explores the potential for a continuum between fragile installation pieces created from slip-dipped items, such as leaves, feathers and paper; and hand-built, carved stoneware vessels. On one hand, the delicate installation work speaks of fragility of life; the translucent nature of the material can create a sense of the ethereal. This is contrasted by the heavier, dense hand-built vessels of stoneware. Carved with flowing designs that suggest a certain rhythm; they become personal relics that display an emotional and intuitive symbolism.

13d1 Kris Coad
Kris has been a practicing ceramicist for more than 20 years, dividing her time between her studio practice and being an educator. Kris produces ceramic pieces for exhibition, a translucent porcelain tableware range for selected retail and pieces for commission. In 2002 Kris was awarded a Masters of Fine Art by Research from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Kris has exhibited in more than 70 exhibitions.

13e1 Ursula Dutkiewicz
Ursula produces sculptures and murals for community art projects and for commissioned works. She is a passionate facilitator of creativity and has extensive experience working, teaching and running workshops in communities, schools and with people of all ages and abilities.

13f1 Kay Goldfinch
Kay mainly works with porcelain or stoneware clays, and uses glazes, stains and various oxides to highlight the fine detail of each piece.

13g1 Leah Jackson
Leah completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Hons) with a major in Ceramics at the Australian National University’s School of Art in 2003. Recent solo exhibitions include: Interiors, Mr Kitly Gallery, Melbourne and An Epic Romance, Craft, Melbourne. Select recent group exhibitions include: Aesthetics Room, curated by Kim Brockett at Mr Kitly Gallery, Melbourne; Chinatown: the sequel, curated by Liv Barrett at ltd los angeles, Los Angeles; and Rock Solid, curated by Meredith Turnbull at Pieces of Eight Gallery, Melbourne. Leah’s practice encompasses both
the functional and the sculptural, and includes a bespoke range of work produced in her Melbourne-based studio available from independent retailers. The domestic space is a continuing influence in her work.

**13h1 Liz Low**

Liz is a ceramic artist who uses porcelain to create her fine, thin forms. This allows her to shape them in a way that mirrors the movement of water.

**13i1 Andrea Evans McCall**

Andrea’s work is whimsical and colourful, and mainly consists of a range of wall plaques, magnets and some jewellery made by hand from clay. Andrea has had a life-long passion for art and formalised her passion with a degree in Art at Latrobe University, and later moved into education. A 14-year stint living and working in New Zealand increased her love for hand-made and unique art.

**13j1 Sarah Parker**

Sarah’s work consists of handmade ceramic designs and artworks from buttons to jewellery to sculptural works, and is inspired by colours, shapes, textures and patterns found in the built form and the natural environment. Her current passion is developing a body of work exploring porcelain jewellery.

**13k1 David Pottinger**

David was born in Dalby, Queensland, and lives and works in Melbourne. In 1987, he received an Associate Diploma in Ceramics which then led to an Honours Degree at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 2002, and a Masters Degree from the same institution in 2004. His vessels have firmly established him as one of Australia’s foremost ceramic artists. He is well known for the intricate, striated surfaces of his cylindrical forms which invoke woven textiles as much as the ceramic medium. David’s technique is known as *Nerikomi*, a Japanese term that refers to the layering, cutting and fusing of different coloured clays.

**13l1 Anne Ronjat**

Anne was born in Paris in 1968 where her mother was a textile designer. In her early twenties, she started working with clay and completed a ceramics diploma in 1990 through the CNIFOP (a school of ceramics in Nevers, south of Paris). In 1994 Anne moved to Australia and started working as a thrower/decorator until creating her own range of fine functional ceramics in 1997.

**13m1 Jill Symes**

Jill works variously in terracotta, high-fired white earthenware and sculpture clays. She produces mainly one-off pieces for galleries, as well as limited editions in production pieces for Craft Victoria. In more than 30 years of studio practice, she continues to develop a personal ceramic language which expresses her empathy with the organic processes of the natural world.

**13n1 Gilly Thorne**

Gilly is a textile and ceramic artist. Having completed her BA (hons) in Textiles in the UK, she worked as a textile designer in the commercial realm for a number of years, losing touch with the ‘making’ process. She now works in both ceramics and textiles, and is inspired by the natural world. Her work shows a fascination and love of surface, pattern and textiles. She produces both functional ceramics and textiles, commissions and works for exhibitions.
13o1 Sharon Wessels
Sharon received a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Ceramics) from the Canberra School of Art, Australian National University in 2002. She also received a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Ceramics) from Sungshin Women’s University in Seoul, South Korea in 2002, and an Advanced Diploma of Electrical Engineering from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 1999. Sharon makes individually wheel-thrown porcelain and terracotta vessels.

13a2 Janet Marnell-Brown
Janet is an award winning object/jewellery designer and maker. She has been a studio jewellery artist for more than 10 years and her work has been exhibited widely in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. In her pieces, Janet attempts to make the ‘non-precious’ precious by virtue of the act of creation. Her work is not concerned with the value of precious metals and stones, but rather by the creative process itself. Janet’s work is underpinned by extensive research in art history, cultural history and genres, pattern formation and design, and suitability of materials, in order to arrive at the right visual resolution for each piece.

13a3 Bruce Armstrong
Bruce was born in 1957 and trained in fine art at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, graduating in 1981. He is best known for his monumental animal sculptures found in public spaces in Melbourne, including Eagle, which stands 23 metres tall in the Docklands precinct. His work is also represented in the collections of the National Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra, and in the New South Wales and Victorian State art galleries. In 2011 the Ray Hughes Gallery published Bruce Armstrong, Now and Then, a survey of the artist’s works between 1982 and 2011.

13b3 Craig Barrett
(Change of studio from sculpture to painting in 2005). Craig has a career in the visual arts spanning three decades. Throughout this period he has employed a diverse range of media, including painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, tapestry design and photography. Barrett’s works are represented in private, corporate and public collections – including a major opus ‘EVERYMAN’, an installation based on the works of First World War poets, now in the collection of the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. His drawings are represented in the National Gallery of Victoria as part of the Ian Brown Collection of works on paper.

13c3 Robert Bridgewater
Robert obtained a Bachelor of Fine Art from Monash University in 1992 and won the National Gallery of Victoria Trustees Award. He went on to complete a Graduate Diploma of Fine Art at the Victorian College of the Arts in 1995 and also received their Post Graduate Encouragement Award.

13d3 Robert Delves
Robert has been practising for more than 20 years in a variety of media. He holds Fine Art degrees from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and the Victorian College of the Arts. His sculptures are included in high-profile public, corporate and private collections in Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, United Kingdom and the United States.
Konstantin Dimopoulos

Konstantin is a conceptual artist who creates social and environmental public artworks, as well as permanent sculptures and temporary installations. He was born in Egypt and moved with his family to New Zealand in the early 1960s. His parents were both master tailors and it is this background of creativity and a traditional Greek home that infuses his conceptual thinking. With a first degree in sociology, his humanist philosophy continues to underpin his works. One of his public art installations, *Purple Rain* focuses on bringing individual identities to the amorphous term of the ‘homeless’. His environmental art installation, *The Blue Trees*, which addresses global deforestation, has gained him international recognition.

Rebecca Eames

Rebecca was the winner of the Rupert Bunny Foundation Artists Assistance Award in 1997. She used the award to develop two environments in a 20-foot long shipping container, which travelled to different sites within the Port Phillip municipality. The first interior responded to the National Trust of Victoria’s three portable 19th century iron houses in Coventry Street, South Melbourne. The second explored space as a cultural artefact sustaining memories and identities through the accumulation of objects, initially taken from the social history of the Brothers Vale, hoarders who lived most of their lives in Inkerman Street, St Kilda.

Tanja George

Tanja was born in Vienna, Austria and grew up in Germany where she worked as a journalist for Esquire magazine. In 1989 she moved to Australia where she studied Fine Art, encompassing various subjects from photography and film-making to painting and sculpture. In addition, she completed a Bachelor of Film and Television at the Victorian College of the Arts film school in 1995. In recent years, Tanja’s creativity has returned to sculpture. In the fabrication of her sculptures she uses a vast variety of materials from bronze to industrial/mechanical components, and from photographs to packaging material. She likes to misappropriate everyday functional objects and put them into a new context and an aesthetic, creative realm that is challenging to her and the viewer.

Benjamin Gilbert

After gaining his Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2003, Benjamin travelled to Scandinavia where he began his experience with ice sculpture. After five years away, Benjamin returned to Australia and began serious work on ‘play’ sculptures from his workshop in Yackandandah, Victoria.

Matthew Harding (1964-2018)

In a career spanning almost three decades Matthew produced a substantial body of work across a wide range of artistic disciplines. Although he began his career in the 2D mediums of painting, drawing and printmaking, his practice then focused on large-scale public artworks, sculptural exhibition pieces, craft objects and furniture design. Integral to Matthew’s practice were the processes of conceptualisation, design and fabrication of his work. He was noted for his stainless steel forms, both mirror polished and exo-skeletal; however Matthew was equally at home carving figurative works from granite and wood, or weaving delicate monofilament.
**13j3  Tim Horn**

Tim was born in Melbourne and studied sculpture at the Victorian College of the Arts, and glass at the Australian National University. A Samstag Scholarship took him to the United States in 2002, where he completed graduate study at Massachusetts College of Art. His work straddles several disciplines and draws from a broad bank of skills, including blown glass, cast lead crystal and various metals. The focus of Horn’s work is the meeting point between the natural and constructed worlds, where he attempts to locate the area of slippage between the organic and artificial.

**13k3  Jess Hutchison**

Jess was born in Guam and now lives in the United States. Her works, often in wool, sometimes explore consumerism and the increasing lack of brain activity in the general populace.

**13l3  Yvonne Kendall**

Born in 1965 in Birmingham, UK, Yvonne studied sculpture at Victoria College, Prahran campus. Her work explores encasement and wrapping of familiar objects, such as toys and dolls. Examples of her work reside in the National Gallery of Victoria and Artbank.

**13m3  John Meade**

Born in Ballarat in 1956, John is one of Australia’s leading artists and has held regular individual and group exhibitions with galleries and museums since 1995. He holds two degrees from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology: Master of Fine Art (Sculpture) and Honours (Sculpture), as well as a Bachelor of Fine Art (Sculpture) completed at the Victorian College of the Arts.

**13n3  Jamieson Miller**

Jamieson specialises in steel and wood, and his works appear in various collections.

**13o3  Ivana Perkins**

Born in Cairo, Egypt, to an Italian father and a French mother, Ivana arrived in Melbourne as a small child. After spending most of her early working years in advertising, film and television productions, Ivana began to develop her passion for sculpture by working after hours with a sculptor and attending evening classes in Ceramics. Initially her work was making clay sculptures, eventually she graduated to metal lost wax castings. As well as sculpture commissions and exhibitions, Ivana has worked with her partner, designer/artist Robert Perkins, to produce unique architectural door furniture for Studioworks Design.

**13p3  Lisa Roet**

Born in Melbourne in 1967, Lisa graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 1987. Over the past ten years, she has also supplemented her studies with residencies at ape research centres and major international zoos in Berlin and Atlanta, as well as field observation of apes in the forests of Borneo, Malaysia.

**13q3  Anne Ross**

Anne first completed a Drawing Degree and worked as a freelance illustrator, completing numerous children’s books. She then undertook a sculpture degree and became very involved with the foundry process. Her works range in scale from very small, intimate pieces, through to major, large, outdoor, public sculptures.
Scott Selkirk

Scott is a sculptor working in both traditional techniques and new technology. He applies the insights and approaches gathered from over a decade of carving timber to resin, clay and 3D printing in order to extend and evolve his investigation and captivation of flow in form. Similar to the natural processes that forge the landscapes, his process is iterative, continually working the elements and convergences of a piece until they settle comfortably into place, blending and synchronising into a convincing sense of flow.

Michael Sibel

Michael holds a Bachelor of Fine Art Honours (Monash University, 1998) and a Graduate Diploma of Education (University of Melbourne, 2006). His work is represented in a variety of collections including Artbank, Monash University, and various private and public collections.

Bronwyn Snow

Bronwyn has worked in steel for three decades. She has created public art for Swanston Street, Brunswick Street, Kings Way and the Collingwood Children’s Farm.

Julie Squires

Julie has worked as a professional sculptor since graduating with a Bachelor Degree in Visual Arts from Newcastle University in 1995. Julie moved to Melbourne in 2002 and was a resident artist at the Gasworks Arts Park for eight years, before returning to New South Wales. Her work is held in collections in Australia, Europe, China and the United Kingdom, and she has more than 20 public-art commissions in Australia, including a life-size bronze portrait of St Mary McKillop, a seven-metre high sculpture standing as a gateway to Mordialloc, and the Eagle sculpture at the entrance to Healesville Sanctuary.

Benjamin Storch

Benjamin’s work stems from a fascination with fluid and dynamic motion, whether witnessed in nature, human motion or computer-aided visualisations in the sciences. Plottings of the behaviour of pendulums, imagery of surfaces being drawn into ‘fields of attraction’, strange attractor point clouds and fluid dynamics are all major influences on his sculptural work.

David Waters

David combines a wide range of materials, ideas and processes to create both site-specific installations, and art that lends itself to a gallery environment. Based in Redesdale, central Victoria, his work as a restoration stone mason in Melbourne is an influence on his imagery and ideas.

Barbara Wulff

Barbara was influenced at Art School in the early 1980s by Neo Expressionism and Punk. During her post-graduate studies in Melbourne, she started a body of work based on the image of a microscope. Rodin’s the Schrinker, a large microscope made of plywood, steel and glass was shown on the steps of the Art Gallery of NSW. In 1992 she went to Paris on a Visual Arts Scholarship given by the Australia Council.
13a4 Mandy Gunn
Mandy works mainly with sculpture, assemblage and installation materials often constructed with textile-linked techniques. Monoprints and collages also form part of her work. She has shown widely in Australia and her work is held in a number of public and private collections.

13b4 Jude Kenny
Jude works with silk-screen printing processes to produce a range of vibrant designs which reflect the rich tones of the Australian landscape.

13a5 Brook Andrew
Brook is a conceptually driven artist who challenges cultural and historical perception, using installation, text and image to comment on local and global issues regarding race, consumerism and history. Apart from drawing inspiration from public media and archival collections, he travels nationally and internationally to work with communities, and museum collections and displays, to comment and create new work reflecting objects, concepts and local thought.

13b5 David Band
David (1959-2011) was born in Glasgow, trained at the Glasgow Art School, and worked in London before moving to Australia in 1986, where he worked as a graphic artist.

13c5 Irene Crusca
Irene was awarded an Italian Government Scholarship to pursue study in Fine Art at L’Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera, Milan. Her painting is influenced by her Italian background which includes a love of Italian opera.

13d5 Leigh Hobbs
Leigh is best known for his humorous children’s books that feature his characters Old Tom, Horrible Harriet, Fiona the Pig, Mr Badger and Mr Chicken. He was born in Williamstown and grew up in Bairnsdale. After graduating from Caulfield Institute of Technology in 1973, his first job was as an artist at Sydney’s Luna Park. For a major part of his working life (1978-2002) Hobbs worked as a secondary-school art teacher. Between 1985 and 2010 Hobbs was a freelance, contributing cartoonist for The Age newspaper.

13e5 Heidi Knoepfli
Heidi works intuitively, layering, eliminating, veiling and excavating, continuing until she reaches a satisfying resolution. As a result her drawings fluctuate with rhythms and vibrancy. Her work invokes her internal realities giving them an intangible, yet palpable, quality that is sensed rather than defined.

13f5 Diane Majewski
Diane resigned as a tutor for Kids’ Art in 1997, having made a significant contribution to Gasworks, particularly in the areas of public programs, and the classes and workshops programs. Much of her community arts contribution had been in the form of school residencies, which produced arts displays for the Mayor’s Community Days, and at St Peter and Paul’s School.

13g5 Jennifer Marshall
Jennifer studied printmaking at the South Australia School of Art. She was head of printmaking at the Sydney College of the Arts from 1977 to 1989, before moving
to Victoria where she taught at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, and at Monash, Ballarat and La Trobe universities. Since 1994 she has maintained a productive relationship with the printmaking department at the Tasmanian School of Art in Hobart. Her annual pilgrimages to Tasmania resulted in her becoming increasingly pre-occupied with the sea and its tempestuous nature. She has produced significant bodies of work based on carved figureheads in maritime museums, as well as their earlier prototypes from ancient Rome.

13h5 Paul Meehan

Paul was an art director in communication, and between 2012 and 2016 he worked as a resident artist at Gasworks to focus on his fine-art skills. Works on paper are part of his continuing study into one of his favourite subjects, 17th century Sicilian Baroque. Meehan’s geographic, cultural and historic content is based on research into religion, family and ethnic structure.

13i5 Elizabeth Milsom

Elizabeth was born on King Island where she spent her first five years on a Soldier Settlement sheep farm before moving with the family to Melbourne. She studied Printmaking at the Victorian College of the Arts and in 1987 was awarded a project grant from The Visual Arts Board, Australia Council to produce a hand-printed book of etchings titled Maiknoen. Elizabeth changed her medium and developed a transfer printing method using a hot iron, synthetic transfer paint and the actual plant to print on to canvas. Elizabeth has worked over 30 years as a practicing artist, exhibiting in solo and group shows around Australia and internationally. She also teaches art in the community, facilitating classes in centres around the City of Port Phillip.

13j5 Moira Playne

Moira is an artist and printmaker. Her art education began informally at the Glasgow School of Art in Scotland. She moved to Australia in 1978, and completed a Bachelor of Arts at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Since then she has exhibited artwork in solo and group exhibitions, focussing on her interest in art history, history and anthropology.

13k5 Arthur Powell

Arthur studied Fine Art at Ealing College of Art, London, before embarking on a career in advertising. Painting, while set aside for many years, was always his first love. In 1989 a trip to the Kimberley Ranges in Western Australia with Clifton Pugh re-ignited the flame. Under the tutelage of Pugh, Arthur began to explore the full extent of his artistic potential in the unique landscapes of outback Australia and later the cityscapes of Australia.

13l5 Tricia Sabey

Tricia is a visual artist whose work reflects her interest in the abstract qualities of the land and the sea, in relation to the horizon line. She likes to use plywood because of its timber grain and its reference back to the land.

13m5 Jan Senbergs

Born in Latvia in 1939, Jan arrived in Australia in 1950. Jan completed an apprenticeship in silk-screen printing and began exhibiting in the early 1960s. In 1966 he held his first exhibition, and later that year was awarded the Helena Rubinstein Travelling Art Scholarship. In 1973 he represented Australia at the
Sao Paulo Biennale in Brazil, the first of many honours in an illustrious career, which included a special commission for a large-scale relief-mural for the High Court of Australia in Canberra in 1980, holding the position of member of the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council from 1984 to 1987, Trustee of the National Gallery of Victoria from 1984 to 1989 and in 1989 he was appointed the Visiting Professor – Chair of Australian Studies at Harvard University, Boston, United States. His work is represented at the National Gallery of Australia and in all State galleries, as well as many international collections. The book *Voyage and Landfall* by Patrick McCaughey, published by Melbourne University Press, is the story of Jan Senbergs life and artistic career.

13n5 Wen Shobbrook

Wen is an artist motivated by a love of materials. Inspired by traditional painting techniques, she works to better understand the interplay of light and pigment in order to achieve luminous paint surfaces and harmony of colour. With an eye for detail, Wen recently began making paintbrushes from individual cat whiskers because she found that commercial varieties were all too thick to paint a single human hair. Wen first exhibited as a teenager as part of a Gasworks youth art competition and has gone on to have exhibits in various galleries in Melbourne and its suburbs. In 2015 she completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours at RMIT University.

13o5 Jeff Wassmann

Jeff is an American artist, writer and theorist, living in Melbourne. His art work incorporates assemblage, photography, web-based new media and aspects of culture jamming. As an artist, he works under the *nom de plume* of the pioneering German modernist, Johann Dieter Wassmann. He is the creator of two fictitious institutions, The Wassmann Foundation, Washington, D.C. and Museum Zeitraum Leipzig.

13p5 Galil Weiss

Galil is a visual artist whose research and creative interests comprise aspects of diasporic visual culture, which was the focus of the creative practice-based PhD she was awarded in 2009 from Victoria University, Melbourne. Her arts practice predominantly takes the form of works on paper and artists’ books.

13q5 Gary Willis

Gary began exhibiting in the 1970s, working in a variety of media: painting, photography, performance and video art. He has a Masters degree from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and a PhD from Melbourne University.

13r5 Oleh Witer

Oleh is a still-life painter who draws his subject matter both from nature and from man-made objects. He uses various process devices and pictorial elements to create evocative oil paintings, which explore the divide between narrative and descriptive, representational and abstract.

13a6 Robert Lee Davis

Robert creates cinematic paintings reminiscent of early colonial coastal-cartographic surveys, but with miniscule precision. Working across painting and collage, he combines formal techniques with newsprint and images from journals and magazines. His work is influenced by the stories and conversations he has encountered and the experiences he had during his travels across the continents.
14a Simon Abrahams

Simon Abrahams is a strategic arts and cultural leader, dynamic programmer and experienced producer, whose work has been recognised nationally and internationally. He is now Head of Programming at The Wheeler Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas, Chair of Theatre Network Victoria, and a freelance arts consultant and performer. Previously, Simon also served as Executive Producer at Polyglot Theatre, and Artistic Development Program Manager at Arts Centre Melbourne. In 2010, Simon was named amongst Arts Hub’s Top Ten Australian Arts Leaders.

Simon was Gasworks Festivals and Events Producer from 2004-2006, and Marketing and Development Manager from 2006-2007. His recollections follow:

*Overall I would describe this as a period of much ambition. We created and imagined festivals and events for the park with limited budgets, but filled with big ideas. We worked ourselves to the bone and we weren’t interested in standard programming. Some succeeded and some failed, but this was a very exciting period to be at Gasworks.*

*The first Wickid festival was before my time, but the resonances of it lived on. . . . The organisation was continuing to pay off the debt from Wickid which was substantial, and this affected the risk appetite of the Board at the time. My understanding was that the Wickid project was doomed in many ways: fencing the park off created negative community backlash, ticket sales were much lower than anticipated and there were long delays and huge queues. Had the budgeted number of people come along, the results would have been disastrous. As I say all whispers from the walls as I wasn’t there.*
The Art of Difference program had a deeply problematic steering committee structure, resulting in power struggles between its funders (the City of Port Phillip and the Department of Human services) and Gasworks. The event had some successes, but my view is that it lacked focus. The 2006 event was a really key event for Gasworks. We made the decision to shift this event from a participatory festival to a professional event. Thus it became an international conference and arts program for professional artists with disabilities, and featured artists from Singapore, New Zealand and the UK, and from across Australia. It was overseen by a steering group made up of artists with disabilities, rather than the funding bodies which had plagued previous events. I served as its director, and we had a film made about the festival, and the entire conference was documented and published. The event was very well funded by the Australia Council and many trusts and foundations, and ultimately was written up as a case study, and delivered by the Department of Human Services through its networks as a best practice case. It also delivered a significant profit to the organisation.

There were three Taste for Living events – the first happened in 2004 before I arrived. I can’t really speak to this event except to say it was designed as a fine-dining affair with some add-on activities. It was intended as a fundraiser for the South Port nursing home, but it lost money. Gasworks not only bore the loss of the event, but also wrote a cheque (which they couldn’t afford!) for $5000 to South Port, as they felt they had an ethical obligation. I ran the festival twice – in 2005 and 2006. We successfully received Arts Victoria funding in 2005 and we transitioned to make the event a genuine arts festival, with food at its centre, and included a range of local businesses, not simply fine-dining establishments, and worked with local schools. We again supported South Port and this event was profitable I’m pleased to say. We again ran the event in 2006 developing the artistic vision to celebrate a range of cultures, and this event placed a greater focus on live music. It supported the Ardoch Youth Foundation and again was profitable. A fourth Taste for Living event was planned for 2007 – I was still working at Gasworks, but no longer working on the festival. I’m sad to say my replacement was unable to convince enough restaurants to be part of the event and so it was cancelled, despite having already been announced. It was not revived.

The Once upon a Story festival was also conceived and delivered during this time a partnership with the bookshop, Readings. This was a children’s storytelling festival which featured live performances, exhibitions, school involvement, art activities, etc. It ran three times I think.

The Discovery Art show was the Wickid-style disaster of my time. There were more entries than could be hung and this hadn’t been considered – artists believed that their work would be hung and had paid a non-refundable fee. As a result Gasworks hired temporary walls in very possible space and hung as many of the works as physically possible. There were terrible sight lines and still a lot of work was not hung.

I was responsible for starting the Farmers’ Market – a unique Gasworks event. When I came to work at Gasworks, I was given the task of raising enough money to fund my own salary – the Farmers’ Market was a key strategy in this!! It continues to reap profits for Gasworks I believe.
Acknowledgements

Gasworks Arts Inc. is profoundly in debt to the author, Robert Grogan who voluntarily compiled this history. Robert, a resident of Port Phillip, is a retired general practitioner with an interest in local history – and in Gasworks. He studiously researched the history of the gasworks and Gasworks Arts Park, using numerous resources including archival material, and interviewed many of those involved with the park from its early days through to the present.

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