

Artstate Wagga Wagga – Saturday 07/11/2020 – Plenary (9am-1pm) – unedited captions Transcript

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

Thank you and welcome to the second day of the conversation. I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting again on Wiradjuri and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We have been starting each day with CALL, music being streamed from Wagga Wagga from various car boot speakers. Opera singers and the cars have been supplied by Team Noxious audio. As you have been taking your seat early as requested, and I appreciate this, this morning's guitar recital was performed by Doctor Harold Gretton. Harold's work brings a diverse range of motion to pieces to life with an interpretive approach founded on raw passion and thorough research. Not only interested in discovering new repertoires, he is also at home rediscovering older classics. He teaches classical guitar, is head of strings at the Riverina Conservatorium of Music, performed at the Artstate launch here in August and I am so glad he was willing to come back today to share his music with you. I would like to actually have him permanently installed in my living room, a great fan of classical guitar.

I am sure you will agree with me that we are fortunate to enjoy music in all of its forms as recordings but seeing a live performance is something we have all missed. I was fortunate enough last night to see Riverina Dreaming and how nice it was to be in the theatre with a classical music, and for a complete change of pace across to Romano's for Peter Casey's clever cabaret performance.

I hope you all had a fantastic time yesterday and last night exploring the arts program. For the bits you have missed you will be able to watch them digitally as the live stream will be published next week.

Back to the program today. We're looking at what the future might look like. We were first thinking of this is a theme for the final day of Artstate. It was after the fires and how artists will arise and grow like our amazing bush, Phoenix-like from the ashes. Then we were all affected by the pandemic. How quickly we were able to pivot to digital and Zoom became ubiquitous to keep social and work connections alive.

Everyone was diving into this technical world with various degrees of success. One of the most common request for the first round of the RAF boost grants was small songs to update technology and allow artists to continue creating. As everybody was adjusting and experimenting and learning to create in this new medium, we thought it would be interesting to hear from some artists who are already well ahead in using some of the more advanced technologies in their works.

Our first keynote, Doctor Erica Seccombe, will discuss her practice in the context — and I have to lead this very carefully because the language is unfamiliar to me — collaboration and interdisciplinary practice exploring scientific methods of visualisation using 3D and 4D microcomputer X-ray tomography. A continuing theme arising in her work is hidden relationships with nature and our natural environments whether it is through social, technological factors. She will discuss her own experiences as an artist living at this time of uncertainty where human activity has a dominant influence on the climate. Please give a very warm welcome to Erika seek.

(Applause)

-- Erica Seccombe.

>> I am following on from 60,000 years of innovation in this country. Has everyone got glasses? I am just waiting for the slides. They are just loading. I just explained to you that not all of my... I cannot see... OK. Alright. See this image appear? This is a dahlia. You will need your glasses until we get to the end of the talk. This is a queue to show you. The images I show you are normally seen in 3-D but I do them in cinematic 3-D so it means you use polarised glasses but what you have got on R.N. cyan ones. It will not work (inaudible) but gives you an idea of the fun of seeing in a different way. -- Are red ones. I talk about my practice where I have visualised complexity through 3-D micro Tomography. I explained. First I show you a work I have created where I have used Tomography to visualise a garden's later. You might be familiar with the woodlouse. -- slater. It has been x-rayed in 3-D, not just one x-ray, one slice, all of the slices put together as a large, three-dimensional dataset. What I have done is because it has become a virtual object, has become data in a virtual space, I am able to manipulate all that complexity of its body to see beneath the skin so here is it transformed. You can see the characters peeling away. -- Carapace. This is what holds that creature together. They are terrestrial crustaceans server very much like prawns. -- So they are very much. When working with them, I used to get this craving for seafood more name. -- Mornay. You are seeing something really small. You know how tiny they are but when you project it and it is suddenly big in front of you and it becomes this enormous creature, it really changes the kind of scale and perspective we see things in and I'm interested in that scientific vision of how we understand the natural world through our extended vision, through computational vision or microscopes and through our imagination. You can see here... What I do is turn it into a 3-D stereoscopic projection the same as you might see in a slimmer so when you go into the gallery space, you wait glasses and it is hard to photograph because the camera does not show the three dimensions, so it comes off the screen, almost like a holograph, so you see the rotating space in front of you and people have demanded shares and beanbags. I got angry messages in some exhibitions that there was not enough infrastructure to sit on to gaze because there is this incredible sense of wonder as you look and the more you look, the more you see and I like this idea of collective observation as well. This is an audience in one of my shows at Canberra contemporary Art space weather audience is gazing at the work you just saw in

three dimensions and it was quite funny because it was the opening night and I was standing there and trying to take a photograph and they told me to get out of the way. "Wow! That is interesting. The artist is displaced." people were staying for a long time in this work. It was around this time I made this work. I had worked in this field since 2006 and come into it as an artist interested in x-ray but I did not know when I met the scientists what would actually be doing and what they introduced me to was this incredible instrument they had built and it is in the ANU Department of applied maths and I think they were looking at me thinking, they had this artist and what would that bring to them? I don't think they were impressed. The first time I went in, they were changing the filament. How many scientists does it take to change a lightbulb? I was trying to make it nice but then they were going, "We have to put up with this person!" I stuck with it and now I use these instruments and have a class and I can go in and I have extra things myself and I do a lot of work with them as well, with other scientists, so have trained myself to do this and become a consultant for a lot of people coming in from different sciences, so it shows artists can do this kind of thing, we are smart, and there is this ability to collaborate across the disciplines as well, so at the time of doing this when you saw that slater, that is a static object, one that was dead and still but what I was interested in is that idea of using the same technology to capture something kinetic and really thinking about what are those magical things that happen when something changes over time? The scientists were interested in this as well but what is interesting is scientist's, the guys I work with and women have a lot of fantastic, creative ideas. I think they are creative like artists that they are often driven by the sort of finances that make them have to come up with outcomes, so what they love about me is I go, "Let's do this thing," and they go, "I have always wanted to do that. That is so cool." I have been funded by arts ACT, recently moved to New South Wales from outside the border but it has been funded by them and it is about taking risks, so one of the things that arts ACT did was to call risk in me and when I started, this was new science and no one knew how to do it, they knew how it would happen but did not know how it would happen as well. There is a filament, a cone in front projecting the x-rays and a cone onto the back board which is an optical receiver so that receives all the information and you can see my test tube here because what I decided was I was growing seeds because they are those magical, in the things that grow, sprout and it is that mystery. I had wanted to do caterpillars turning into butterflies which is such a trope but I knew I would have to learn how to grow caterpillars and kill them and it was one of those things so I thought seeds, even though I find killing things because it is a lot of x-rays, very hard to make something grow in this environment. You can see here this is my plants growing in the test tube and under those extreme conditions because I cannot change anything the test you.

It is like creating this awful climate change inside a test tube and it made me realise how hard it is to grow things when it is so difficult, when it is high-temperature, there is pollution, heat, all these things, going against these plants and so it takes four days and four days of time on an x-ray machine is a lot to commit to and I had a lot of pushy scientists trying to get me off but you have to keep it there because it is time-lapse but you are actually x-raying it so it rotates and then you let it rest for a while so not like David Attenborough timeframe. Over 40 days and I got four of these captures and quite a few of them died in the early stages. You can see the beam starting to sprout and the little radiographs. This is what it looks like when sitting outside the x-ray room, looking at how they are changing and changing during this process as well.

Once you have the data, it has been an incredible learning curve. When I started, I was one of three using the data and the only nonscientist and so I have had to learn how to understand my histograms, which are on the right. You can see there are these curves and understand what I was looking at through those histograms. It shows you the material density of the object and that is how you colour the object as well, so here you can see in the virtual screen three-dimensional space, there are the beams inside the test tube and you can see the condensation on the inside of the test tube captured through the x-ray process. And these are three test tubes to show you the difference in materiality the changes over time and to get this kind of smooth feeling you're watching something grow, I had to really understand how to use it and trans (unknown term) those datasets over each other so I had the smooth feeling of growing so you can see changes in its density underneath the plant as well in the material it is growing in but being an artist at the beginning of the 21st-century I still looked back at artists like Paul Clair with this work growth of plants because he was interested in trying to capture time, this idea of the fourth dimensional because I have the three dimensions and thinking about space as well through Cubism and thinking about all round space and I was really inspired by this painting but also acknowledging that at the turn of his century just after the First World War, the seasons were still a feeling of hope that even though there had been devastation and death in the world had gone through this traumatic thing, the seasons would still come and arrive and what I found distressing is at the turn of the 21st-century we are not so sure about that anymore but it is changing so much, so that really started to drive some of the ideas I had for this, this idea of really trying to grow plants at the threshold of life. It wasn't bringing something into life, it was pushing it to the very threshold and made me really think about seed conservation and the way we grow plants and it has led me on another avenue of really thinking about our environment and conservation and I stayed at the Millennial Seed Bank in the UK, thinking about what it is to face this global emergency, but what you can see with this data here is I have two monk beans, and you get to see them as you would never see them really, which is growing externally and internally at the same time. -- mung. Bubbles form inside the seed and this is never seen before by any biologist. Biologists had all of these ideas about vibrations and gas building up and they still do not know what it is but it has not been seen before.

Two tested, you would have to do and what of tests. I only had the opportunity to do one or two and we had to work out at the time. That led to a major body of work which you can see on my website and I show it as a stereoscopic installation occasionally so hopefully you get to see it one day.

This led me to want to find out about that idea... But I had also come to fall in with the forensic scientists at the Natural History Museum in London. Because I was becoming skilled in scientific visualisation, I often work with the natural history Museum in London because I have the skills that can help scientists and I have done quite a bit of visualising for them as well.

I love hanging out with them, so many amazing things. A big forensic group at work at the natural history museum and they work out, when you die, they worked out when the flies start sitting on you and this idea of being inhabited by maggots and how long you have been dead for. They worked out how long flies get into zipped up suitcases. I won't do a demonstration of a fly in a suitcase today.

They can also tell you which are the best suitcases to put a body in, as well. The best zips. What is kind of creepy about this is at the Natural History Museum they inhabited the towers at this top of the tower which is where the scientists used to live. You have to climb up all of these stairs, no lift. You get to the top and there is London, this billion-dollar view and you are in the natural history museum and they're a bit, there are dead pigs heads and there are test tubes with flies.

They asked me not to put this on Instagram because they knew it would be a terrible event if people knew there were things dead on the roof. I got to work with this fantastic guy Daniel and he is growing all of these flies in the tower and so I had my ready-made set up there. I did not have to grow all these caterpillars for killing.

I love the idea of flies, they are associated with death and death is another transformative state. We come into life but we also die as we age, we die. We transform from the life pointed to the death point. Really interested in that. One of the things Daniel was trying to work out was, because normally, to understand the growth of the fly, and at certain temperatures they grow differently, you have to cut them up.

What micro CT does is it allows you to X-ray something without destroying it. A lot of palaeontologists are into this because you do not have to grind down a fossil or cut up a fossil anymore, you can X-ray something and see what is inside of it. They have discovered all of these amazing things because of that. They have discovered fossilised fish and they have actually realised that embryonic both up and 20,000 years before they thought it had because of this micro-CT.

You can see in this photo all of the flies are in their little cribs. Daniel would collect the maggots at certain stages of their lives. It is quite funny, when I showed this work in Sydney I had to explain to a lot of Sydney people what a maggot was because they have not seen one. That is how far removed they have become.

I think all of us in rural Australia have seen a maggot before and know the lifestages of a fly. I could not believe I had to explain that they did not hatch out of eggs, they are like caterpillars. They are maggots that turn into flies.

I proposed to look at the metamorphosis of a pupating fly. They said it would be great and I thought, "Oh, God, I am just proposing this with no idea that it will work." I had to learn how to sex a fly. I know the sex of a fly now by looking at it.

I don't know how I did this, it was a bit of a miracle — not that I believe in miracles — but I had to align all of the maggots because they are not the same maggot. They have to die to do it at this resolution. This is what they look like inside their carapace. Over a 48-hour process it starts to really develop its shape. It is really extraordinary. You are unveiling this mystery by looking inside the carapace and it is incredible. That is what I love about this work.

It is weird being an artist revealing these things because it does not sit with mainstream contemporary art. I have had a lot of things, a lot of people say that it is not art but science. I have had a lot of scientists say, "It is not really science, is it Erica?" It's not science communication either. It's amazing how many different biologists and scientists have looked at this and really understood the transformation and felt that feeling of the transformation that what they were seeing was wondrous.

It is extraordinary to think that we come into being like this also. We change from the egg and sperm and turn into this multi-celled body and exist and transform over time as well. You are seeing the fly slowly transforming, you can see its legs starting to transform underneath.

You can see its abdomen is starting to show all of the internal workings of the inside as well. You can see the eyes are starting to really solidify at the back and it is starting to get this incredible shape.

Like I showed you with the earlier works, each one as it developed became much more... The materiality became more solid and defined. It was really hard to think about how to create that visual view to visualise the complexity

of all of these different changes. And then create this seamless vision of it where you are looking through the carapace.

It took a bit to decide on the aesthetic feel of it as well and how it would actually translate overtime for the viewer. It is really amazing when you see in stereoscopic view. I had it at a space in Sydney in a small room, you have to have a dark room to get that real beautiful colour and light.

A few people had a few accidents with their glass of wine where they tripped over the thing in the front because they are staring at it. A lot of wine, when I turned my lights on, red wine up and down the walls. A bit funny. Luckily nobody has been killed in the making of this.

So, what it is doing, it is coming out and really starting to... You can see the wings are starting to creep out, to really come into formation here. It is really looking a lot more like a complex insect, isn't it? Flies are amazing. They are incredible creatures. They are one of our greatest pollinators as well. We associate them with sitting on shit and ruining food, but they are a part of our ecosystem.

Even though they are a harbinger of death, it only takes them 30 minutes to find us when we drop dead. That is how amazing they are. Part of the life cycle, the cleaning up of the world. Creating our environments. And no, it does not hatch out at the end because it is dead. A lot of people have asked me that.

I am going to and with this dahlia. In a minute, you can put your glasses on now. This is to get you ready. It will change into red cyan. This dahlia, even though... It is an extraordinary shape. It has an incredible structure. I am interested in the structure in nature and thinking about what our intervention is, as well.

Dahlias were a single leaf flower and it is actually through gardening — can everybody see it in 3D, is it starting to work? — I am interested in the fact that they have been intervened with. We have this idea of perfection, always trying to intervene with nature and we have these ideals about what it is and how we grow it.

Paul Clay, whose work I showed you before, was really interested in human interaction with nature. He felt like attending to gardens was the highest form of art. This connection, interface between us and our plants. It has become really interesting for me because thinking about conservation and the environment and the future, really thought about how we have tried to intervene for our own use but we really need to start thinking about intervention for the good of everything.

Humans are not just the centre of the world. We really have to take on a perspective that we are part of this world and part of all the systems and that there is life and death and we are part of that cycle. To get back to that idea of what is real and what is true. Other than this intense idea of economy.

It has been really interesting, this journey I have been on. Thinking about all of these ideas through a scientific point of view. I am not subverting the science but trying to bring it into fruition in a different kind of way. Scientists ask questions, using this technology to really make us think about our own cells in the world today.

This has all happened because funding organisations have taken the risk to fund me when it was all just speculation. When I think about all of the amazing things I see today, I see a lot of my colleagues younger than me doing extraordinary things and trying to get funding and losing out on funding.

That is what is so important about being part of the arts community. Giving it other opportunities to think about all of those things that could happen in the future that we do not know about now. And to give people opportunities to really consider how to test things and push those boundaries and make networks within other disciplines to make everybody understand there are so many great things and new ways of looking and thinking.

So, thank you for this opportunity today. It has been an incredible experience being with you in Wagga Wagga. I hope you have enjoyed my work and if you want to have a look at it, it is online. Always ready to be emailed. I work at the ANU School of Art and you can find me there with questions. Hopefully you will have a great day. Thank you.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

That was just amazing. I am gobsmacked. One of the great things about new technology is we're live streaming this and this is the first ever conference I have been able to see it from backstage. I did not have the opportunity of looking through the glasses...

Thank you so much for coming down, particularly at the last minute. COVID-19 has made a very challenging year and I think it is so fascinating, seeing how you have been able to work with scientific tools and toys with a very low-tech appreciation for you coming down. Everyone, a big thanks.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

We will continue with this theme of multidisciplinary co-creation. For artists working in more traditional mediums, those science blokes will have really good toys to play with if they will let you in.

New technology – we read about it, hear about it and what is it mean for artists and audiences? Three amazing academics and cross disciplinary practitioners, Eleanor Gates-Stuart, Andrew Hagan and Bernard Higgins (inaudible) and how these technologies help us blend virtual and real worlds moving from storytelling and real-world (inaudible) to create tomorrow's world. This panel will be moderated by Tracey Callinan, the executive director (inaudible) and she worked in the UK in the creative partnerships programme, has also worked in Sydney Conservatorium of Music, the Roland Corporation and future music and has written teaching kits for music schools and the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. She has written musical theatre works, worked as a music educator in a variety of settings and she has also worked as a silversmith assistant in Jerusalem. Very much a typical artist's path where they go with the work is. But Tracey also runs a community choir in Bathurst and appears as a harpsichordist with ensembles and orchestras so I have asked her to moderate this conversation and she will introduce the panellists in more detail so please welcome our panel and Tracey, who will moderate.

(Applause)

TRACEY CALLINAN:

I have three academics really and are based in Wagga Wagga at CSU. And I think it is really interesting because we have really three different areas of the academic life and we have a professor, and academic and practitioner and a student, so I think that gives us a really nice range. We are going to run through a number of things today, starting with trying to understand maybe what Extended Reality is and then look at what that means in practice.

Just to give you a little background about each of these, I would like to start with Eleanor. You can probably guess which one is Eleanor. She is a professor at CSU, has a background in working in science. Her PhD was in science communication done through ANU's national centre for the public awareness of science supported by CSIRO and has been a scholar visiting at both of those. She is also an alumnus of the National Academic this Future Initiative, a clue for us about the things she has worked on because what that indicates is she has been working with really innovative programs. She joined CSU as a professor of creative industries, coming from a professorship in Taiwan.

Please welcome Professor Eleanor Gates-Stuart. Andrew here, Andrew Hagan, has over 20 years experience as an academic and practitioner, additional artist, visual effects producer and supervisor, co-director of the Australian International animation Festival, an Adobe certified expert and a whole list of things so I think we can understand he has a really great background as a practitioner but has also worked really strongly within the academic field, has two BAs, one in television production and one in fine arts and established a first undergraduate university degree dedicated to the artistry of animation and visual effects and has worked in Wagga Wagga with big scale projection work and over here we have Bernard Higgins. Bernard is a proud Wiradjuri man and born here in Wagga Wagga.

This year, in 2020, he has worked on his honours project, co-designing and educational animation for remote communities in far north Queensland to help educate those communities in how to manage their horses in a case of Hendra virus. He has also worked with the Wiradjuri community on animations and working with Elders to support heritage and culture.

I think we are in for an interesting time with some questions so I start with questions for Andrew. Today's discussion is all about Extended Reality and I have a sneaking suspicion some of you in the audience are going, what do they mean? Andrew, what is Extended Reality and how can it be used across different sectors?

ANDREW HAGEN:

Thank you, Tracey, and thank you for turning up on a Saturday morning. We will try to make it engaging. Can you hear me at the back? Eleanor, you have the clicker. I play a couple of the deer so you don't have to see my face first thing in the morning. A great distraction. Are we ready to go? We would just hit the click. We will just play. It is all good.

What we are seeing hopefully here is a demo I did in 25 minutes last night. What I originally planned was a history of Extended Reality because I was in lecture mode and I went, you will be bored silly, so dumped it and decided to put a cat and dog in there, low hanging fruit entertain people and the reason I decided to rather talk about the Sword of Damocles rather, let's decide to deal with what is going on. Keep them rolling. When it comes to Extended Reality people usually go virtual reality world here we have examples of how it is depicted in movies. Everyone has a sense of what it means but everyone, I do not exactly know what Extended Reality is, one of those sort of terms that is in flux but I do know what the situation make up is so we have some serious examples here and some joke once.

We will pay the next one, examples of how this all comes together. Extended Reality is virtual reality world is computer synthesised environments, augmented reality, overlaying graphics onto the real world and the next reality where you combine those two and the ways that we look at this is when you play an oculus quest you would be in your own little world but you know it is a game but if you watch the matrix and you believe you are in animus of world, that is a whole different level so it is really good if you don't pigeonhole what it is but get an idea that it is a new way of communication, immersive communication, very exciting and the videos you are seeing here the moment are demonstrations of the cutting-edge technology. The example above me is the Lion King, done in unity, so John, a famous director decided to recreate it virtually. It has been brought to the for and this is great because you are set scaling in Africa virtually and here, this is a virtual light. What is astonishing is this is Hollywood to or three years ago but now you can go into a game engine and have your own studio.

If you are a graphic designer, you can put clothes on your models and walk around. Even stranger things. You are seeing final render creatures that would normally take months to render in real-time in the engine. That is just a demo but it shows you what is happening and has everyone heard of the 'The Mandalorian'? The child baby yoda. That is old technology, a real projection, live on stage. An exciting time. The students at CSU, which I'm very fortunate to work with have given me permission to show you some of the work, so he is using (inaudible) and this would take weeks and weeks for the computer to render. I have spent this up to. It is not like he doesn't know how to animate. He is super quick. That is a traditional animation workflow but in real time.

This is Samuel Davies who is a second-year student and has created wake-up Sam, a room where there is virtual sand and you are trying to wake him up to go to uni or work and an entirely different thing because in movies you work off a script but in games, gameplay is Kendall point, so thinking about how this technology can be used creatively is very exciting. Now I go to how that opening demo was made in about 25 minutes and walk through the whole thing and want to say to every single person this technology is available to you today. You can go to the right website, the big ones, Unity and Unreal and if you download you can create whatever you want. Everything you are seeing here, I could do that in about 25 minutes and render the whole animation out in about a minute.

Three years ago that would have taken possibly three days. I want to share all of this with you. A really exciting industry. Ending with a cat and dog as a cheap shot. My apologies. I stopped talking now and go over to the next person.

SPEAKER:

I suspect that gives you a flavour of where we are going. Your work has involved in cross sector partnerships and working in science, with organisations such as the CSIRO and exploring various teams, so could you give the audience a sense of your work as an artist and what you have been able to explore with your themes?

DR ELEANOR GATES-STUART:

Can we have the slides? My first slide is me. Most of us have a self enquiry to my work. I come from a fairly traditional arts background and having worked with a lot of technology but I suppose what my main interest is is working with other people, as an artist in a team working to find out, physically the title of our talk all about co-creation is how do you manage that, how do you work with others from different disciplines? I call myself an interdisciplinary artist, so I try to get through the slides. It is showing the work so we can explore those themes. As Tracey mentioned, I was with the National Academy of in America and a good opportunity to go there and applies an artist to work with all the oceanographers about the deep blue sea. As with any relationship when you start working together, (inaudible) about the ocean and would you like to play with them? I have ideas of my own as an artist that I can bring to my work.

You negotiate in that space of you not being the person that is (inaudible) their work but what you bring to their work is your ideas as an artist. What spun out of that was the info lab and we were working as a team but this was with theatre directors, scriptwriters, lighting produces and scientists because we wanted to develop a workshop where the scientist themselves could experience their own data because that does not often happen. They have the scientific experiments, try to get the facts over but experiencing that work is another interesting and exciting opportunity. As well as artists we were trying to give that experience to the audience here in this work we have lots of things happening, trying to explain how do animals exist in the deep blue sea, where does the data fit in? This is where I entered having my PhD and it was happening while doing my PhD because I was successful in the tender. How do we explain 100 years of wheat innovation? What are the issues, what do we explore?

As the artist, how do you explore them? Particularly thinking about how we engage with artworks today. We might go to a gallery and experience it there. If we are looking at an intergenerational audience, I was looking at children to grandparents. You try to bring them aboard and that is crucial. In those stories, often somebody will come in to a piece that is supposed to be interactive with buttons and how do you bring the communication element into the work?

It's a great communication tool. Being an artist, bringing the stories out. These works of all to do lots of works and out holograms, display projections and if you want to know more, you can go to the website. Fortunately for me I

was able to go to Taiwan and there I was placed in the architecture and design school. I was also working with postgraduate students who had not done art before but had applied to come to this course because they wanted to be creative.

A challenge for the academic saying, "What is your background?" And somebody else had a different background. They would say, "I am an engineer." The first idea for me was to go to the Orchid Research Centre and pair people up. A mentor in science, talk about what they are doing and be creative through that. How do you create a piece of art about perfume and molecular science?

It is really exciting as an artist working with scientists and bringing those things out. You can see some of the clues to what was exciting for me, working with petals and structure and form. Also thinking about doing my own experience. What makes that plant excited? Sounds weird, but art can be with.

I was looking at the DNA of the plants and the DNA of humans. When I came home to Australia, I want to do work in my own lab and get back to what was important to me, working with the soil. How do I impart my ideas? You can see some rather unusual works where I was trying to recreate portraiture but also thinking about the science because I am working with the structures of plants.

How do we keep a structure which is a human head but still have the ability to grow things through it? It sounds simple but it was actually complicated. When we ask questions about our identity and use ourselves in our work it uses quite a lot of technology to bring these stories out.

Andrew said, "I will scan your head." Sounds simple. But it was complicated. We have fun with technology, creating with it and being scientific. Removing the face was quite an important element to the work. This is a result of one of the scanners that we have at CSU — and not that you need to see my face close up — but to see the detail you can get. This is not a photograph, a 3D object that can become part of your work.

I know it is really scary, and the people on the nose, how about is that? You can see the eyes. This is fairly crude. As you have seen what Andrew has shown, it can be sophisticated. I like the broken bit, the structures that unwind and how you break through them and use them in other artworks.

Going back to the science, for me it is interesting to look at that system, and having that analogy with science for me again is going back to the plants and the roots. Working at CSU is fantastic because we have all of these different disciplines and for me, working with the crop scientists, particularly with Doctor Sergio who looks at important aspects of our crops in Australia and ways we should be sowing seeds that are short-term or long-term, it really resonated with me in terms of the human system, nervous systems and how do we work emotionally?

You can see the slide at CSU is much about looking at the roots of the plants but also using that science in my own work. I have been growing heads. I am still growing heads. This is the latest one. I don't know if you can see but what is really important is the root system. I don't know if you can see it, this has not been published yet, you are the first to see it. I am growing a root matrix that will hopefully define those characteristics of human.

A close-up of the seed is growing. This is canola. Then, again, it is being face on or face off. This is a video work that is in an exhibition out of Washington and it is really about what is behind the face. Hopefully you get to see it. It is not just the visual side, it is the sounds. The breath you take and the response to that.

Then there is damage control. After two years these nats get in and eat all of my work. We have those biological things that you have to go with. But use it, create a piece of art with it. This is me developing portraits on my website, The Portrait Institute.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

Can I hand over to you Bernard, to talk about your work?

BERNARD HIGGINS:

I have put together showreel of work I have done recently. In third year, one of our assignments was working with Unreal engine. The story is told in Wiradjuri language. That was an experience for me, learning culture and language. I was also learning software I had not used before. That was my first real collaborative experience.

Not just collaborating with Wiradjuri language subjects but acting students and sound design students. My next assignment was another Wiradjuri story told in Wiradjuri language also using Unreal. This one had... I took some of the stuff I had learned from the first project and started working with some Wiradjuri people recording voices and instruments to include in the soundscape.

I worked with a local business run by an Indigenous lady Leanne Sanders which was launching an app on mental health and ways to address that as an Indigenous person in regards to connection to country and each other. That was a one minute long animation I put together in 15 hours, including animating.

This was a collaboration between the School of medicine and creative industries at CSU where we worked to create the environment with the research driven information from the School of medicine. We created the script to address dementia patients, how do we make them comfortable wearing VR headsets?

This is my honours project, working with people in far North Queensland. Using reference photos and map data trying to create the environment in Unreal so that the community get a sense that it is set in their location so that while we are talking about healthcare for horses and Hendra virus, and infectious disease, we want to do educate them on how to manage things like that. To demonstrate that it can happen here.

We have taken your unique location and experiences into account. These are projects I have in the works. The first one is taking cultural walks with Elders and recreating the environment in virtual reality so people who are not living on country or due to disability, can still experience these things. And using augmented reality to take Indigenous artwork and animate the story behind it so we can get the impression of what the storytelling is.

I worked on this one with (unknown term), it ended up looking quite beautiful. That is what I have been working on in the last couple of years.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

I think we have a bit of a taste now of all three. I was wondering if we could have the lights up a bit because it is nice to have a sense of our audience out there. You have all talked about collaborations, but how do people know you are here and how do you even start of this collaboration is when you are coming from such diverse areas? Do you want to start, Andrew?

ANDREW HAGAN:

I think it is word-of-mouth. Those in the Riverina will note there is a really good network of support and I think that is where it starts. You are all able to contribute something incredible through the creative industries, it is an undervalued asset and when all know what it contributes to the GDP.

Artists appreciate artists and know how much of a toil it is. My story was, I always thought globally but acted locally. I was thought to the distance between what was going on in Hollywood and what could be happening in the region is a lot shorter now, an internet connection away. You meet people and start being nice to people. Treating others with respect. That karma kicks off.

I don't advertise or commission, it is word-of-mouth. Eleanor coming on board was a great time because Deakin was looking at wanting to get across Australia all people interested in this work, that amount has been huge.

SPEAKER:

You are saying word-of-mouth, but Eleanor, you have come from a very formal background?

DR ELEANOR GATES-STUART:

I would agree with Andrew. But one of the first things when I joined CSU was maybe not running around in my own school but chasing the other faculties. I found out that we had agriculture over here and veterinary science over here. Meeting those people and going to do things.

Sometimes we wait for people to come to us. I was jumping in and going to a symposium and not understanding a word of it which often I don't, but just participating. Having a website helps because they know it is there but also applying for things. A lot of things I have are through winning a tender or trying for this. You have to put yourselves out there. Today we wanted to be with Bernard. (Inaudible) science school. You tell your story.

BERNARD HIGGINS:

With regard to collaboration, I feel like I have been lucky. The honours through to science faculty were set up for me by Eleanor and Jane Quinn from the science faculty and the response from academics in the science faculty has always been quite positive. My supervisor, Victoria Brooks (inaudible) and that kind of support is quite common, I have found, when I talk from industry days I have participated in. There are so many ideas and projects (inaudible) and it is about meeting people.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

I'm interested in how you develop the partnerships and how much is your work a genuine partnership where you are really integrating the work because I think it can be possible (inaudible) or are you the add-on at the end?

BERNARD HIGGINS:

I feel like I have been a partner. With the and's at launch with regard to mental health, I was included in discussions because I have lived experience with mental health. With the dementia project, working with the nursing school and creative industries I brought in my experience as a volunteer at nursing homes and was included in the discussion on what environments to create. I was not just told, "Do this. Let's have a discussion." I felt included.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

Andrew, with your partnerships, do you feel you're working closely...

ANDREW HAGEN:

I must have sounded arrogant. Here is my message. Communicate. Don't be an arse when you meet people. If you go in as a service person as opposed to creator, there is a different dynamic. I say stop apologising to people. Go in as an equal contributor. And with the business, say, the new technologies (inaudible) is there is a term, we fix it in preproduction rather than postproduction and we get the end of production pipeline. It is always politer to involve people earlier.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

Eleanor, I like to use that question but also segue into the SRC set up in Wagga Wagga and I get you to talk about what it actually is, but this is a centre here that is based around Extended Reality and it is working out of here in Wagga Wagga. I am interested to know... I know you have international aspirations, the sort of reach for this work based here in Wagga Wagga and connecting with a lot of people that are regionally based here.

Do you really have that potential to have international reach? Can you connect with the right people from working in a base that is not only regional but largely rural where you're working from? Do you have enough strength in the skills to be really able to offer something that has international possibilities?

DR ELEANOR GATES-STUART:

Good question. Thank you for that, Tracey. For me, and I have travelled a lot, it is probably why I wanted to be at CSU and Wagga Wagga because a lot of big cities do not have what we have and we are operating from the ground, the richness here of being rural and that has so many assets in itself. Often people don't understand that. I have lived in it and it is vibrant and I'm not saying it is not vibrant here but we are bringing out the communities in different knowledges in these communities is something we can really put forward. With our technology it does not matter if we are in Wagga Wagga or New York but we have our own original stories to tell which are different to others and that is where we can share that.

We have all had to work with the internet at the moment, working on Zoom, but I think it is important we get our stories out there and if we can do that through the Extended Reality collaborative and we use the word collaborative because we want to work together, want to work with scientists, share that knowledge but also with community, and I think here in Wagga Wagga, we have so much rich history, all the culture. When you start looking at someone else's counted is interesting how you could put these things together, so we are at the cusp of this, developing this and with all the assets we have and building the assets both physically, artistically and with skills, that this will be huge, may be the beginning and why not think global?

Why not have those partnerships. When we start flying again, we can meet partners in different places. For me, this is the richest place to be.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

For both of you, you are born and bred around here. Eleanor, I don't know where you are from. But you are regional people, so what does it mean to be able to work in a regional place but in something that has got that global reach?

BERNARD HIGGINS:

Our Indigenous culture was not really taught growing up and being able to use the skills I have learnt and create ways to express culture and share culture and then being able to share it globally... Not just regionally but globally, that can be important, and there is a demand for that kind of stuff.

There is very rich local history that should be heard, and there is a global demand for showing Indigenous culture, so it is exciting to be able to do these kinds of projects as a local Leeton, Wagga person and share the beautiful cultural environment that we live in.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

Staying with you, Bernard, you are clearly really interested in a scientific collaboration and as you have mentioned, you have now gone on to studying now your next agree, is actually with science, but what drew you when you may be potentially could have gone into a scientific field originally, what drew you to actually become part of the creative industries?

BERNARD HIGGINS:

To shorten a long story it is because I had experience working in labs and I have done part of a science degree prior to switching to the animation degree, and I have found... the draw to it is I was able to find satisfaction, but by creating beautiful work... The first animation I showed, I showed it to Uncle Stan Grant Senior and I could see the emotion in his face. That kind of satisfaction either forgot from working in a lab, so that is what draws me to this field.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

I ask a political question – if a younger you was about to enrol and had to choose next year between enrolling in a science degree or a humanities degree, which way would you go? One will cost more than the other.

BERNARD HIGGINS:

I would still enrolling animation, if I gave advice to myself, because we could have different political opinions, but just because the federal government may not appear to consider arts or humanities important, does not mean we are not smart.

(Applause)

BERNARD HIGGINS:

So...

TRACEY CALLINAN:

A bit of a byproduct with talking about the whole idea of science and art, what label do you actually give yourself because all of you are crossing across those fields? Do you call yourself an artist? What do you call yourselves?

DR ELEANOR GATES-STUART:

I have been asked that a few times. You work inside an arts and what label do you use? I say artist. That is what I wanted to be when I was five. It looks when you are sitting here and you say you are a professor at the University, but I had a childhood that was not easy, the wrong shape in the family and you wanted to go to art school and for family to say, "You don't want to work in an office like the rest of your friends?" "I want to be an artist." I family never understood that. I heard there were things like art schools and that was a dream and it all sounds easy but if you are the first in the family, it is really hard.

Also with fees, you are working your way through and I did all that, had jobs all the way through from a first-degree right through to my PhD and I think they help shape you. It is not easy, working in that shop or bar and hearing people's stories have all informed who I am as an artist.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

What do you call yourself, Andrew?

ANDREW HAGEN:

I have a lot of friends asking what I am still doing in Wagga. When I was younger, I was bored out of my brain but there is a sense of belonging and pride that you have whether people who you love and the community you may not appreciate at the time but you learn to appreciate how lucky you were, so there is this (inaudible) and how do I define myself? I have had a problem with categorisation and that is something that... I know we want to avoid this but US politics is very binary right now, you are this or that and I think that is a real disservice because we define ourselves by our differences and not our commonality because it makes it easier to differentiate and this is something about the arts/science definition. The site is can be an artist and an artist a scientist but because of mixed easier to categorise job descriptors and so forth, we can be more future thinking and how we define people's contribution.

(Applause)

TRACEY CALLINAN:

Is there any stigma attached to being an artist when you are working in a scientific field?

DR ELEANOR GATES-STUART:

I don't know why I'm laughing. It is all the stories when you are doing. I was in Kalgoorlie working on a mining project and the guy who had to pick me up was working, very important chap, in charge of looking at how minerals flow underground so mining is about that industry, where we know it is going to be and I turned up and we sat down for a coffee before I went over to the pit and he said, "You are an artist, then, are you?" "Would you like to see my brochure, my catalogue?" "No." "Are you going to use PowerPoint?" "If only I could." I had to be not rude so much but when we talked about what paper have you published recently and he had published his paper and I said, "How many reads did you get?" He said about 60. I said I had been in Canberra with 200,000 people going through. That is what we can do as artists – bring the audience and work together in showing what we do.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

Are there any languages you use to communicate?

DR ELEANOR GATES-STUART:

It is the same for the partner as well. It is not that easy working with an artist. It is just finding that common ground to work with. Andrew, you have a lot of industry connections?

ANDREW HAGAN:

There is the commercial aspect and then the artistry. Talking to the choir here because everybody appreciates the creative process. Sometimes people who are economically minded can understand... The difference between money and value. I am sure everybody here has had that contrast. I'm interested in how we can be sustainable, financed, without selling ourselves.

An artist does not want to work for someone but create, can you do both? I believe you can. There are different models to look at. I would like to think that for instance, Bernard is a talented upcoming star and he will be able to choose projects that are driven purely from his desire to create and those that will fund it.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

Talking about funding and things like that, maybe it Elizabeth Rogers
Erica Seccombe
Eleanor Gates-Stuart
Bernard Higgins

ANU

Young Volunteer of the Year
slater
Speaking non-English
Artstate
Wagga Wagga

Lisette Bolton

Clare Brassill
Errol 'Ezz' Kemp
Team Noxious
Harold Gretton
Riverina Conservatorium of Music
Erica Seccombe
Tomography
'Metamorphosis' - metamorphosis mac***
Inaugural Paramor Prize
Casula Powerhouse Art Centre
Eleanor Gates-Stuart
Andrew Hagan
Bernard Higgins
Tracey Callinan
Arts OutWest

ELIZABETH PhD students wanting to focus on various disciplines.

The XRC is not just a technical place but where we want to collaborate to get those projects over the line. We have some really interesting ones and Andrew can talk about the work that we have been working on in terms of with industry, but everything from working with veterinary to pathology – I suppose those things come together for dead dogs — Bernard working with dogs. Maybe you want to talk about that?

ANDREW HAGAN:

Those projects are work in progress. I feel guilty about the dead dog so I have resurrected them in animation. The XRC has opened up something, we have had 200 people wanting to work collaboratively. We got overwhelmed by the response and artist trying to get the framework together. Having said that, if anyone was to join it, email XRC@CSU.EDU.AU.

I am mindful of the time so I could and is it at length but I want to...

SPEAKER:

You said it could be available for people here?

TRACEY CALLINAN:

We would love for this to be more of a discussion with people here but without any roving microphones I don't think we can easily open it up. This team would be very open to having further conversation. When we do come to morning tea which is fast approaching, if you have an interest in this, we encourage you to come and approach these three and talk about that.

I will put my hand up and admit a personal interest in this. I am now affiliated with XRC myself. What we're doing in Bathurst, there is possibilities for Arts OutWest and potential linking to XRC. We are both working with dementia and have possible projects that could have relevance. So many ways this could happen.

DR ELEANOR GATES-STUART:

I would like to congratulate Tracey on submitting her PhD thesis.

(Applause)

There are lots of different ways and as Bernard mentioned with the dementia project, that was a great project to bring together different people. Also, what is the problem we are trying to approach? With that project it is the next step. How do we get that innovative idea to the next step? We would be very pleased to receive your emails.

ANDREW HAGAN:

So people don't work away with a sense of, "What can I do?" There are free gaming engines. The one I use is Unreal. They give away free games as well. They are networked with all of these other companies that allow you to download Hollywood assets so you can have a digital prop, make your own game, sell it online. There is a thing called 'Hour of Code' you can learn to code in an hour.

Email me and I will do... ahagan@csu.edu.au... I think, whatever. I will do a one hour introduction of Unreal engine, how you get started, exported to a website, whatever. HMD. We just want to enable everyone. We know this is a payoff that the more people have access, the better we will be.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

As we draw this to a close, I think, hopefully, you are going to come away with a sense of what extended reality is and what it can do. I think the sense of connection across different sectors, working together... I love the fact that we have everything from crop science to Hendra virus to working with culture. So many more possibilities.

I think, also, the fact that it is not just for an academic trio based in a university. This is actually reaching out of the university sector to link much more broadly. I would like you to thank our panel. Andrew Hagan, Bernard Higgins, Eleanor Gates-Stuart. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

And a huge thanks for Tracy who had the knowledge and untangled to be able to so beautifully moderate this conversation. I would like to add my thank you to the panel. A generous offer from Andrew. We might see if we can get that on the website to save him being bombarded with emails.

A few things I have to say to you before morning tea. If you want one of the few remaining Artstate T-shirts, never to be repeated again, they are \$15 and available from registration. There is one ticket left for one of the 'Conversations in Clay' this afternoon. If you want to get hands-on, there is enough for one person.

I would like as many people to take up tickets for the Artstate focus groups and there are few left from registration. We want to hear from you. If you are happy to spend an hour talking about your experiences, if this is your first Artstate or your fourth. We really want to hear from you. They are available from registration. There are only four tickets left for (unknown term) tonight if you are thinking what you are going to do in the arts program. This is out of the blacksmith shop. You don't even have to drive. You don't have to negotiate the Bunnings roundabout. That was an in joke. We have a bus that will take you out and bring you back for this extraordinary 45 minute performance.

Morning tea. Bear with me. Artstate is a COVID-19 safe conference. I have to thank everybody for understanding what we have to do around this. And being sensible with your social distancing when you are actually outside the building.

Your breaks will work differently this year. A staggered exit to collect morning tea to avoid overcrowding in the foyers. You will be instructed to exit via the front door, please follow directions of the staff. As you go down the ramp, there are bathrooms available on the right, you can collect your morning tea. You will need to go upstairs and back to the auditorium.

The foyer will be open for anybody who wants to purchase a drink. No mingling. Please allow 1.5m distancing as you flow through and queue. Those waiting in the house, please remain in your seats until invited to exit. We look forward to seeing you after morning tea for the final section of this particular Artstate. Enjoy your break.

RAFAEL BONACHELA:

There may not seem to be big link between me and arts New South Wales, but it was very very much like a country town. As a boy I loved dancing, but my only exposure to it was influences like Michael Jackson, and similar movies. It made me realise that you could become a dancer. You could go to school and train to maybe one day get a job. I so wanted to do that.

I did not have any dance lessons because there was no dance school in my school. I'm talking about the 1970s and 80s. So went to three dance schools and made some progress. My parents rode several hours to take me to the big city for lessons. I only started ago when I was 15 years. I had to take a train by myself. I had a teacher that allowed me to do classes every day and then after a couple of years I auditioned for a contemporary dance company and I did not know what contemporary dance was but she said that I should do it. I did do that and I got my first job at age 17.

Within a year of working for this company I realised that contemporary dance was what I wanted to do. I knew that I needed to spread my wings, so my mother went and was able to get the town council to pay for the flights. The state government provided for my expenses.

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

Good morning. I hope you're all refreshed and refilled and ready for our final Keynote and panel for Arts State. It is appropriate that with the rediscovered meaning of Wagga Wagga is the city of dance and celebration that our final Keynote should come from one of our leading dancers and choreographers. COVID-19 has forced us all to reconsider how this works, the stories be tell and most importantly how we connect to our audiences. Rafael Bonachela is going to talk about his own experiences and his journey to the Sydney Dance Company and he will talk about some of the interesting outcomes that have happened.

He has said disruption has its upside. Rafael is a choreographer, artistic director and curator whose career has successfully spanned high art and culture, working across a range of settings including pop concerts, art installation, commercial — he is a Renaissance man. He has directed for the Sydney Dance Company since 2009, made international headlines and done some Australian contemporary dance.

His vision for the company embraces a guiding principle for international and Australian choreographers for his acclaimed creations. His work is strong, sober and sharp. The expiration of pure movement has been described as an unmistakable art. It has resulted in an incandescent art in which energy, muscle, strength is combined with a great emotional effort. He has collaborated with companies worldwide, including the Paris Opera, Dresden Frankfurt dance company, Danza Contemporanea de Cuba, the Ballet Boyz and Candoco, among others. He and his ensemble are the recipients of multiple awards, most notably in February 2013 when he was honoured with in offices across of the order of civil merit by his Majesty, the King of Spain.

He also has told us in another presentation that he also was born in a country town in rural Spain, and his story about his career would really resonate with people that we work within our region here today. However, his Keynote today is entitled The Ultimate Disruption. Please give him a warm welcome. Welcome to Rafael Bonachela.

(Applause)

RAFAEL BONACHELA:

Thank you, Elizabeth, and good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is so exciting to get up this morning to be here. It has been that year. Before I begin I like to take a moment to pay my respect to the Wiradjuri people, the

Traditional Owners of the country that we gather on. I would pay my respective future custodians. I would also like to acknowledge and pay my respects to all first nations people with us today. We thank you for the knowledge that you bring and share. Thank you to the regional arts New South Wales team, the city of Wagga Wagga, and Create New South Wales for bringing us together.

This morning, so many of us have arrived by road. We will take a little bit more time to take a different path. A little change, a lot by 2020. Before I get into the Keynote, I would just like to take a moment to go back to the story that Elizabeth mentioned as telling a little bit about me.

At first glance there might not seem to be a big link between a Spanish born choreographer running a Sydney-based choreography company being here in regional New South Wales. However, I was born 40km outside of Barcelona. That may not seem like a long way away, but trust, it was. As a boy, I always liked dancing. My own exposure to it was through videos of Michael Jackson and other pop videos. We are in that age bracket. The old black and white movies.

Watching them made me realise that you can go to school and learn to dance and maybe become a professional dancer. I so wanted to be that. I used to make dances in the school program, but I did not have any dance lessons because there was no school in my town. This was in the 1970s and 80s, so it was early. I am told that there are now three schools in my town, so there has been some progress. It was difficult for my parents to take me to the big city for dance lessons.

When I was 15 years old I got on a train and went to my first dance classes in the city. I wanted to take classes every day, and my teacher told me that I should audition. I had never been to in addition, and I did not know what contemporary dance was. That was my first job at the age of 17. Within a year of working with this contemporary dance company over those that contemporary dance was it. I really needed to spread my wings.

I went to the mayor, who was the first female mayor of the town, and she was able to get the state government to provide some funding for my expenditure. I studied the dance in London. I was 18 and I had a dream. I could speak English because I had studied it at school, but I had never practised it. It took a while. I spent the next 20 years dancing and pursuing my dreams as a choreographer.

That childhood game of making a dance has never left me. The help I received along the way and the encouragement from a family and community who believed in me even when I did not know what I was capable of, each moment of support, I think that yesterday someone talked about decluttering the pathway.

We can fast forward a few years from here and I will pick up the story when in 2008 I moved to the Sydney Dance Company. There you go. I came to Australia to make one work. I think it was the interview and three months later I moved to Australia and I was offered a position as assistant director. I knew that my early experiences would always be with me. I was drawn to the possibility of this company that already did so much, and the exposure would be great for country towns. It was what I had so desperately wished for.

This included my first visit to Wagga Wagga. The program has continued to work since to strengthen this. Eight years ago we were able to initiate the workshops alongside the artist processes. We have seen young dancers, including one from Cootamundra, to come into train with us and to have a job within the company as a professional dancer. They all went on to international careers.

That is a little bit of background for you about how I personally connect with this incredible space. Really this whole company shows the personal connection. It continues to inspire me and all of us really, especially this year.

So before I begin, what a year. What a year it has been. The ultimate disruption. March 2020 we were in the theatre doing technical rehearsals of the new working permanence. If that is not the best title, I do not know what is. As a welder started to shut down, we could see that things were going to get rough. We tried to hang on and to get as much work as we could. Looking back, it seems so crazy now.

We did the technical work so that once it was back in business, we could be ready to go. I do not think that we were prepared to wait for so long. We did not know what was happening to us and everybody went home in a state of shock. The anxiety levels were pretty heightened. My brother was in hospital with COVID-19. It was very frightening. The studios were shut and we were a company of artist where we were looking for a full-time job. COVID-19 broke us in this dramatic moment in time when the industry was shut down.

We all have the biological stress response to trauma, the flight or fight. For Sydney Dance Company we had a collective fight response. Maybe it is because dance is known for stress and lowering mental health benefits, but we thought that we would find a way to get through this. Work had already begun on creating a virtual studio. The Sydney Dance Company had first identified this as a risk mitigatant in theory, and we started to put this in place in March before we had this happen. We needed to find a way to keep our people employed and to stay safe.

We needed to solve the unsolvable. Things were moving so fast that we were already saying that it felt like 20 years ago. Local businesses, it felt like a catastrophic moment for the performing arts. It would be fundamentally changed as a landscape. I have never been confident with the notion that art and business are linked. I was moved between the corporate world to choreograph for the beautiful Kylie.

I moved through to the high art of working on the ballet and we want to make artists able to still have jobs and all hands on deck went towards creating online classes and the virtual studios were born.

It moves. The next one. There you go. The dancers were teaching classes online from their homes. We did a crash course on something called Zoom and people together the world's quickest marketing campaign and we held our breath.

Would customers move from the studio to online with us? Would they pay for online classes? Could we continue to connect with audiences and the community?

We have had over 65,000 attendances so far to our virtual classes and currently we are delivering 120 classes between virtual and face-to-face.

That is one of her dancers teaching and that used to be my office. It became the virtual studio.

There is no excuse. Let's get dancing. I am telling you, there is a class that is right for you. I will share this with you. These are some virtual studio members across Australia.

The virtual studio classes program has won a Timeout award and most importantly given employment to the full-time dancers and a 23 casual dance teachers at a time when all the world had tried up.

Many of them were able to access JobKeeper and without that things would look very different.

Once we had the virtual studio up and running, we turned our attention to converting training programs to a virtual offering as well. We move the school programs online and we have so far reached over 1500 students across Australia.

Most of them in regional centres. We are focusing attention on those that were most isolated. It has not all been smooth. Everyone has been on reduced hours and pay since April and the stress has been incredible at times for us all.

The dancers were getting remote supplies and rehearsals at home and there has been a huge amount of uncertainty but we have at all times chosen to keep moving.

Personally, I am someone who never gives up and so we have kept pushing. Most of all, I am an artist. My first response to the crisis was to work closely with our amazing executive director in the theatre setting different pathways and solutions.

We need an artistic response. That is when it was conceived. Quattro was conceived and this was originally conceived we had four walls closing in on us and it is four dancers, four musicians, creating something in isolation.

The incredible artists have not met in person and we designed the project online and they rehearsed online and it was filmed and recorded separately at the Sydney Dance Studios and the studios were closed to the public initially.

There was never more than three people in the studio. The filmmaker, me, the musician.

As artist, to respond to this world in which we find herself is our reason for being and you have the opportunity to express ourselves and to reflect on how you feel and how we feel and how the world is feeling as a reason for being.

Quattro was launched in early June and it felt important to create a thing of beauty and give it to the world at this time. For Sydney Dance Company, it is a moment of principles.

We are a company that creates new work and the pathway felt like a better response for us than streaming archives. Those sessions were a nightmare. I am always someone who thrives on collaboration and social distancing and locked was not going to stop me.

As we slowly emerge from lockdown, the theatres were still closed. We had the dancers back in the studio and film as our friend and began a conversation with the Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Environment about public spaces and the role the arts sector could play.

We were invited to be part of the first round of plays. We were out in the parks and working tracks and trying to take art to those parks as well.

With the support of the Department, we created a series of four short films in incredible public spaces around greater Sydney.

We had a show on Maroubra Beach and we filmed in the city and in the Olympic Park.

We were completely COVIDSafe and the dancers do not touch any of the films and we had the COVID marshal with us everywhere and I could see a whole new industry developing.

We began our own outdoor film production company and the tech team pushed things and the programming team became film producers and the dancers were happy to be working and it was all hands on deck on budget issues.

As we were shooting, I heard this story about the true meaning of Wagga being a true place of dance in celebration and not a gathering of crows.

The story was shared in more detail and I was so inspired as a dance maker to think about this place where dance and ceremony has been central for thousands of years and the true spirit of the place was gaining recognition.

We wanted to contribute to the recognition and spread the knowledge of the centrality of dance to this place.

We came to Wagga and sat down with Aunty Isabel Reid and I told her my ideas and Uncle Peter Ingram who did the smoking ceremony took us to the incredible dance grounds and for two days we prepare the space and thought.

We wondered if the sun would come out so we could film and Peter built a fire and Aunty Isabel Reid welcomed us to the beautiful country and we were immersed in the space.

Jonathan told me a beautiful phrase that Uncle Stan had said, "A good dancer is a dancer that kicks up the dust," and as Aunty Isabel Keane from under the tree, the rain stopped and the sun came from behind the clouds and we filmed the male solo in one shot. I am getting goosebumps thinking about it.

I will show that film with you now. It is eight minutes long and I am an artist, not a talker. Dance is better when you watch it and not talk about it. Let's watch the film.

(Music plays)

(Music plays)

(Music plays)

(Music plays)

(Music plays)

(Music plays)

(Music plays)

(Music plays)

(Music plays)

(Music plays)

(Applause)

RAFAEL BONACHELA:

Thank you. Thank you. A beautiful, beautiful place. I will not take too much of your time now, but I guess I want to finish that on another day, shaping tomorrow. Of this space, yes, I want to drive artists to keep creating, regardless of the circumstances. It is in our DNA. In this installation, it has been one of my most rewarding experiences with collaborating from other artists. Continue to find ways to help that happening. We need to facilitate these conversations.

That is a way that we will all continue to deal with these big shifts in our industry. Thank you.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

That was just amazing. How gorgeous is that film. Seeing those beautiful dancers on the sand at the Wagga Wagga Beach, the ninth best beach in New South Wales... Seeing all the water going through after the low levels that we have experienced in the previous 12 months.

One of the things that we have taken on board from all the feedback that we have had over the last three years is that people want to hear from artists. So with our final panel Limits, I had the luxury of bringing three regional artists together for a conversation, whose work I really personally like. We have brought together Heath Cullen, from Candelo, Harrie Fasher, from the south-west area, and Sarah Last, a local from the area. This panel is moderated by Sally Bryant, and it is part of our ABC partnership that we have had going for a number of years. I just want to say that I really, really appreciate this partnership and the commitment that ABC Riverina has had in helping us get the message out about this event across this region.

Being regionally based has not deterred these artists in pursuit of excellence in their practice and achieving national recognition for their work. They will discuss their artistic journeys and the advantages of a regional base. Sally, our moderator, presents breakfast across broad riches of Riverina. She is enjoying exploring all the region has to offer, the culture, the stories and the rich diversity of the community.

Sally came to the ABC a decade ago after serving three years on the Australian classification board. She has a background in journalism and community development, but has also worked on fine art options in the bloodstock industry and in the retail. Like all of us, a diverse background. She grew up in a sheep station in Far West of New South Wales, getting her early education through correspondence school at the kitchen table. How technology has made remote education completely changed for young people these days!

Please give a really warm welcome to Sally Bryant, and she will introduce the panel.

(Applause)

SALLY BRYANT:

Good morning. I would like to introduce starting from the left in the magnificent hat, Heath Cullen, Sarah Last, and Harrie Fasher. Talking in the green room before we came out here about the journey that takes you to working in the regions, and I would like these guys to be able to explain to you why it is that they are practising their practice in the regions rather than doing it in the cities.

I was always told that if you are going to make it big, you need to go to the city. You've got to go to Sydney, London, Paris and Tokyo. Describe to me where you live and work and do your practice.

HEATH CULLEN:

I work in the south-east, not far from here. It is about 96km out of town. It is where I grew up. Further out of town. It has always been a strong community there. There are a lot of artists and a lot of musicians.

SALLY BRYANT:

You said to me that at the age of 18 he became the president of the local arts Society. So there is a strong base there.

HEATH CULLEN:

I do not know if the county has been done but we seem to have the highest per capita musician population in the country. I do not know if that is true. In the village of Candelo... When I finished high school the options were then there was no university, so you could work at the big cheese factory and that was pretty much what the option was at the time. I stuck around for a little while and was thrust into this position of being the president of the local arts society, which is a wonderful volunteer organisation that has been going since 1986.

I recognised pretty quickly that at that point the Candelo Arts Society was presented with a community theatre and a concert and a regular, monthly or open mic night. That is where I cut my teeth.

SALLY BRYANT:

There was a rich field there?

HEATH CULLEN:

That was. Music was... I always knew I was going that way.

SALLY BRYANT:

It was possible to grow and do what you wanted to do there, rather than go to Sydney. I will come to you, Sarah, because your trajectory is different. You went to university and college.

SARAH LAST:

It was the formative taste of the arts. I did not deliberately set out to become an artist, but thankfully I was able to intuitively follow what was interesting at the time. When I finished art school I knew I wanted to be an artist. I had not worked out how to do it yet, and luckily I got a job with a curator at a gallery across the way. They thought that I was very urban and really coming back. It was good that I had had that experience and was able to look at the collective Wagga Wagga space. Or not.

And then I just... For me, I never thought that having my regional background was significant until I had gone to art school and came back to the regional area. I realise that it gave me a significant voice. I did not evaluate until then. That is it.

SALLY BRYANT:

And Harrie, when did it start and where did you realise?

HARRIE FASHER:

We have country roots, but I grew up in both worlds. I cannot breathe in the city. I find it a difficult place to be, with combined space. I also studied at the national arts school most recently at the College of Fine Arts. I was riding horses full-time as opposed to making art in my spare time. I suppose I always knew that I wanted to be in the arts. It took a long time to say the word artist.

(Laughter)

Slowly you begin to expect but that is a viable option and that you can be an artist and you can survive as a creative voice. It is extraordinary to be sitting in front of these people today. A sculptor, an artist, practising...

SALLY BRYANT:

Someone who exhibits on a national level, but chooses to live in the regions.

HARRIE FASHER:

I do not think it is a choice. Firstly, I need physical space and secondly I need the mental space. The landscape provides that. I do not sit well in the city.

SALLY BRYANT:

I find it interesting as a journalist and as a radio presenter when you meet people, and maybe when I'm not doing journalism and radio in Wagga Wagga, I am a rural journalist. When I hear people talk to rural and regional people, I hear them say, "Hello. How are you?". Do you find that amongst people that come into the city to see you? What do you think? Does it ring a bell?

HEATH CULLEN:

Yes. I was always... When I go to the city, people look puzzled at me. That attitude is...

SARAH LAST:

I feel like I'm part of the community and that can be very metro centric but I get that less now as an established artist, I suppose, but that can be a barrier and also quite motivational, too.

SALLY BRYANT:

The sort of 'I will show them' attitude.

SARAH LAST:

It is very self-referential. There is a place for it. Community is my medium. Our art is collaborative. It is very much a mutual thing that we create together.

I try to collaborate with the people I work with. I am not affected by it. When I was younger, it was a confidence thing and it allowed me to impact me but I know it is not now.

I wonder if we get more support, not necessarily financially as original artist, but a lot of people have supported my practice including Arts OutWest and Tracey is here, Adam, and I did work with Debra Franklin which was extraordinary experience and Gillian Sammon and local farmers get so excited about what you're doing and I've been sponsored for years and I think it's because I am not making gates.

Everybody that was and is making a cattle grid or a fence post but I came in and I'm trying to make this and they wonder how I made it look like something. I'd tell them I am glad they think it does.

All these people want to be part of something else, something different, reading a different fresh of breath of air into it.

SARAH LAST:

I am a local and I'm telling stories and they are shared stories and experiences.

SALLY BRYANT:

So you might be a bloody mad artist but you are ours.

SARAH LAST:

That is of value, I think.

HARRIE FASHER:

They all get together. It is like a big steel truck you have to put a lot of cattle on. It is extraordinary. I feel really supported. A lot of people comment on it.

A lot of people say they wish they have what we have got. It is about community.

HEATH CULLEN:

It really is. And when you celebrate, they recognise that.

SALLY BRYANT:

Is it about connection and visibility? It is a smaller community and easier to see and they know your name?

HARRIE FASHER:

They will think you are somebody.

SARAH LAST:

You have got to cultivate that trust and support to happen and that engagement and with the people in the region, you are a person of the region.

To get that kind of support and exchange dialogue and collaboration, an immense amount of trust. They come along for the ride. They think it is quite fun.

It is a personal interest of mine. I grew up on a farm. I am lucky to have grown up on the farm I grew up on.

You know, a lot of it is because of the patronage that they want to engage with you and I'm sorry, Sally, but a lot of it is from the media.

Everyone has got an opinion. For the farmers and how you should do it. They are circumstantial and contextual as well.

If you do a project then it is developmental and it has a long period of engagement with the community and it is dialogue and discussion and you are teasing out all the complexity and not providing a simplistic point of view and that is the silver bullet and you see at an arts practice as well.

SALLY BRYANT:

Or as we are seeing at the moment, and politics.

HARRIE FASHER:

It is often well-intentioned but the result is as sincere or as reflective of the subject matter as it could be. I am going on a bit. Sorry.

SALLY BRYANT:

What are your thoughts about this, Heath? How does the community connect with you?

HEATH CULLEN:

For me, it is a huge part of how I have got to be where I am. It is the support of my community. I mentioned that I grew up there. It is a small town with a fairly small population of a larger area.

It is quite a small community. For instance, my last three recording projects, I have had help with each of them and I tour nationally and I play internationally and I'm sorry, I am doing accordion hands!

(Laughter)

I'm sorry. I... If I look at the numbers of where my crowdfunding base is, most of it is my local community, probably 60% or more.

That comes back to trusting people and trusting the community and when I was working at the local Art Society, you know, initially the idea was to have a little music festival and put the idea to a few people and all of a sudden you had a committee of 15 which is too many for a committee and it was beautiful and anyone that came with an idea was supported and those ideas were all weaved into this thing and my initial idea of having this one-day event in a small town hall out in the few months we had to plan to a festival.

We had a big top tent in the park and it has sort of gone backwards from there and, from the start, we did not know what to call it and we wanted it to call it the Village Festival and when you celebrate your community, they love you for that.

That has been a special part of it for me.

SALLY BRYANT:

The community, connection, visibility, that is all very important but what are the drawbacks?

It is not all fabulous in the bush. We have got connectivity issues, often. The internet can be an issue. There are issues practising in the regions, as you do.

HARRIE FASHER:

Tiger snakes on the back doorstep.

SALLY BRYANT:

That would do it.

HARRIE FASHER:

I was living somewhere where the internet was a challenge but I think I am so lucky to be original and I think that forgetting the milk is a bonus and the distance to town, I have now moved into town and I'm not as isolated as I was.

I revel in the isolation. I miss the isolation. The biggest issue is being with the city-based people.

I try not to use social media to match and it does not do me the world of kit and it does not do my mind the world of good.

I just would not say there is a drawback. I would say that the drive to Sydney can be a bit of a pain.

SALLY BRYANT:

I think an audiobook is the best way.

HARRIE FASHER:

Yes. You cannot get out of the car because you have not finished a book and I have experienced that, you are quite right.

SALLY BRYANT:

What about you, Sarah?

SARAH LAST:

I started my working career as an artist from the regions and I think that has been a barrier for recognition at times.

In hindsight, it bothered me going through that, but in hindsight, it has not impacted me too much.

I think the connectivity has not made a significant difference and we've been able to get thumb drives and I have submitted grant applications from the side of the road in my car at 11:55 and you don't get to do that anymore.

I can do it at 11:59 from my desk. (Laughter)

Look, you know, distance, but because it is your lived experience you factored it into what you do and how you do it. It is more expensive to do what we do and particularly that we collaborate a lot with a lot of artists and is very developmental and that is human capital, social capital, time.

It's very expensive. That is getting harder and it's harder to get supported now and that is pretty sad.

That would be the main barrier, I think, but for me, it is who I am. I am Harriet. It is also a great point of interest. When you do some work overseas or interstate or internationally, you are reminded of how unique your projects are.

I don't see it as a deficit. I think other factions or other elements of the industry see it as a deficit and that is problematic.

That said, we do need extra support for what we do and to demean where we are and I'm fearful for the future generations of emerging artists and further they would be able to do, you know, what I have been able to do.

I am not saying... It is still really hard and in the last year I have had to think about whether I can still be an artist and that is really sad because as an artist and as an arts organisation we have reached point where we have partnerships lined up with UNESCO and other agencies moving forward and that is gone and if we don't have that base level operational support then I literally cannot do it.

I have mouth to feed and the farm and I have two droughts since I have been there and the reality is I am probably engaged in the two most risky professions possible. It's difficult.

Again, it has informed that I do a great deal and I've had a conversation with my father many years ago and he was at the early stages of Alzheimer's and was always interested in what I did.

We spoke about it and he deleted it and he said, "So they put you do is just like farming," and you talk to me about it, make a plan to do something, and then you hope for the best. It is a very rock and roll way to exist. You can plan as much as you like, but there is a huge element of risk. That was a very long answer.

SALLY BRYANT:

A good answer. What about you, Heath? What challenges do you face in your home space? Are there challenges to doing what you do?

HEATH CULLEN:

Not too many. It is not too far. If I am on the road... Internet connectivity has improved a lot over the last few years. There is still a challenge and this year has highlighted that being off-line... A lot of performances, particularly for musicians, we are working with live streaming and our internet is not that good.

SALLY BRYANT:

I have seen a lot of artists using Zoom at the internet to stay online and connected. Are you able to do that?

HEATH CULLEN:

The quality looks pretty good for a little while and the audio might sound a little bad.

SALLY BRYANT:

Are you there? Are you there? Are you there?

HEATH CULLEN:

I find that pre-recording and publishing is better instead. Live streaming is not quite up to scratch for us. I suppose as far as challenges go, I mean, I do not feel like there are... Like these guys, I could not move into the city. I could do it in short bursts, like if I lived in Los Angeles for a few months of the year each year, that is a possibility. There is a beautiful community of musicians there. LA is quite a different...

SALLY BRYANT:

It just sounds good, doesn't it? Do you think in Australia that we value regionality as much as they do in Europe? I remember that people there were so proud of their market produce, to the point where the French crack it when we borrow terms like champagne. Do you think that we value our regionality in Australia the way that we should, Harrie?

HARRIE FASHER:

I think the whole corona period might change that. People are seeing regional Australia is something to see. The Central West is definitely proud of what they produce, with the cheese and the oranges, and there is Bathurst which is a university town. I wonder why it is not so ingrained as Europe, perhaps because we are not as old. We have not listened to our ancient cultures. It would be nice to see that happen, like with the French champagne or camembert.

SALLY BRYANT:

Do you have any thoughts about that? How would you promote that conversation? Speaking as three champions, about living in the regions and belonging there. I mean we want to be careful about making it sound too attractive.

HARRIE FASHER:

I do get concerned about that. I am only 2.5 hours from Sydney, maybe a bit closer, and I'm aware that people are going to start invading us. You know. People do... We have had a lot of people come through in the last few years in the heritage precinct, and there are caravans after caravans after caravans to look at it.

When I was driving down here I thought that it was beautiful. I thought that I could move out west, out of Tracy's.

SALLY BRYANT:

Tracy has a well program.

HARRIE FASHER:

By default. I built a little team of people there that can help with the process that we are creating, but I am aware that there are more and more people, which is the antithesis of what I really like.

SARAH LAST:

Artists are always a front runner of things like this. If you look at the gentrification of urban areas, art settles there first. There is a sense of liveability as well. It is not valued enough. I am happy that people are thinking about living regionally more, and they might have some ideas about why. You can work that out once you live here, right? It does worry me a bit around where I live, I am worried that it will start pushing locals out. Some of the farms are corporate owned, and that is affecting the community a great deal because they are family run farms. It is quite problematic.

There are large holdings as well. It gets to the scale of the farm that you need to be viable. It is again another panel discussion, I would say. It is unnecessarily about the arts, but we are talking about communities and regional communities that we need to acknowledge the global impact as well. And yes, you can have very fruitful existences on a small scale, but if you need to have communities that have diversity, then we can look at all of these different ways to operate with whatever kind of practitioner you are.

SALLY BRYANT:

So in the same way as with cities, you want a lot of different socio-economic groups living in the same area. You can have the rich area, the ghettos...

SARAH LAST:

I am so proud of, in all of the works, as a curator, going right back to the Wagga Wagga space, which was in the early 2000s, none of them would have considered themselves outgoing. I go to contemporary art events, and there is extreme sound and noisy and disruptive events, they are very unconventional in their spaces and their sites. We have had some on a moving train. The train... That is a terminology. I didn't know that. It is a slang for a train enthusiast.

Anyway, that does concern me, that gentrification is coming. We live in a society where the divide is getting wider and wider, and I would suggest that in rural areas poverty is far more significant than it would be in the metropolitan areas. There is a degree of poverty, where people can see it.

SALLY BRYANT:

As we were hearing in the news this week, rural property prices are on the rise. Heath, what are your thoughts?

HEATH CULLEN:

Yes, being regional, I often get asked what it is about Candelo. And the real reason was that 10 years ago it was cheaper to live there. That is why it attracted so many musicians and artists. I do not know about you guys, but since the rise of Airbnb, property prices in Candelo and renting properties has doubled. In the last six years, I would say that is the case.

It is getting harder for someone like me to buy a property, definitely. It is a worry.

SALLY BRYANT:

It is also a worry in a society where artists are not necessarily seen to be a connective force, and if you look at the way that arts are regarded, there is not as much recognition of the fact that they generate income. Would you agree with that, as artists, that it is almost as though you are the jam on the toast rather than being the toast?

HEATH CULLEN:

Absolutely. This year with the coronavirus, the music industry was completely ignored by the government, despite the live music industry turning over millions of dollars for the Australian economy.

SALLY BRYANT:

If Sportsbet had something going with music, you might get a better gig...

HEATH CULLEN:

You might be onto something there.

HARRIE FASHER:

I also wonder about... I have moved from a timber town to a mining town, and it is a beautiful town, and it is a town that is bypassed by two highways. People are hearing about the painted silos and people are coming. But I have seen the local kids, and I was talking to you about that before, which I have not seen really before, because I was not living in town and I was not paying attention to what was happening. I just did not see it, but now I can see it in the lane behind my house.

I have had conversations with his kids, and I think maybe that is the important reason that we are in these communities, because it gives them hope that some opportunities and some belief that you can do whatever you want. There are opportunities out there. There is possibility for regional areas and for that. I almost feel a bit displaced, because they are in this electronic generation but they are stuck in a regional town where they are not much going on.

SALLY BRYANT:

It is a common conversation in small isolated regional communities of kids being in cars and hanging out at the skate park. How often do you hear that?

HARRIE FASHER:

We need to make something for the kids. We need to show them that this is possible. Regarding the graffiti, a good friend of mine is a street artist at one of the leading organisations, and they need to get him in. If they are going to do graffiti, teach them how to do it. Do not just try to cross it out.

SALLY BRYANT:

I think one of the most interesting things I have seen is that there is a journalist at ABC that rides a skateboard, and every time he goes to a new town he takes the skateboard with him and hangs out at the skateboard. He has just one a major journalist award. He goes to the skate park. I just love watching him and seeing the reaction that he gets from the local kids, because he is doing something that they do. It is like just opening that door, opening the door and letting kids see that we all do different things.

SARAH LAST:

Human. There are opportunities. Do you do work with the youth in your town?

HEATH CULLEN:

I have done some work. Through the village festival we have always reached out into schools and pulled the tech crew together with kids that are interested in lighting or sound of putting things together.

We run some lighting workshops and things like that. I think it is really important. Growing up, that encouragement as a kid, that is why I took this path.

I had elders encouraging me to do what I want to do. It helps.

SALLY BRYANT:

It wasn't something they had done elsewhere. We have done some projects with youth and the presence is important for the entire community and younger people as well.

HARRIE FASHER:

I think there is less separation from the arts and being creative than there was when I was their age and that is because of things like phones and everyone takes photographs and they are more engaged in the arts industries than we would have been on a daily basis.

I think that is something we should all optimise and some people realise that and Tamara Dean is a well-known Australian photographer who lives originally in Camberwell and we did a three-year project with her and she was coming and sharing photographic skills and she does beautiful work with people and nature and so that was the connection with trying to make and they attended the workshop because they had an interest in visual stuff and the photographs.

Many of them actually went to university and have studied that and I had a lecturer writing to me to tell me that the students talked about a certain project and they wanted me to know the impact it had had on her and that was amazing.

For them, it was seen that Tamara was someone who lived her she did and had this incredible profile and career.

We met as artists in residence 15 years ago and so there is a specific project but it is also like 'build it and they will come' so it is them being aware there is something like that in the community.

It is pretty significant as well. It is about then realising that their place and their stories are of importance and significance and I think the other point about that is about technology and dissolving these original distinctive things that we have and we have all got to look at this because it is at risk of getting lost.

I have children and sometimes when other children play, they are playing with American accents and asking you for cordial and then you will hear them playing and they will play, "I am going to get you," in an American accent. I am worried about that.

This panel is about no limits so I'm not sure where I am going but in terms of culture and how culture is generated and created and authenticity is so important and we have to fiercely protect that and make sure we can keep working originally and original people can keep working.

That is where you get the best conversations and you are lived experience is there lived experience and you could trust that and wonderful and valuable rich engagement from that.

I don't think I would have got access to a train and carriages unless I had been able to talk about the problems this year.

SALLY BRYANT:

We are in a landscape at the moment with a university system has changed dramatically as a result of what is going on with COVID-19.

What concerns do you have about the way forward over, let's say, even if we live within constricted orders and constricted economic times, we have got that University path where there is less stress on the humanities and we are looking at things that will get people ready for jobs.

Talking about things like the music industry generating so much money, what is the future of the arts in regional Australia going to look like? What concerns would you have, given that we have got COVID-19, people thinking it might be a good idea to move to the regions with limited support for artists who are trying to do the best they can and then you have got an education system that seems to be moving away from the arts. What are your thoughts, guys?

Is it bleak or is there an upside?

SARAH LAST:

I think it is quite desperate and to get rid of the art schools, you are saying that thinking outside the square and thinking broadly and making things which might not seem to matter but that spark thought and that we are not contributors and I think that we definitely are contributors.

I find that incredible. Is it a problem originally or in context? -- Regionally

HARRIE FASHER:

I think it is in all contexts but particularly regionally and I don't know of many universities that do not have humanities degrees but everyone has a range of different degrees in this audience and you have had humanities units as part of your studies and can be a catalyst for different thinking about a subject you are studying in and I know of people who have changed their career trajectory from doing a sculpture course or photography course.

You know, it is very cynical and I think it is a form of control, actually. It is dumbing people down. It makes has become a type of society that I would question if it is something that anyone really wants.

Also, I'm hopeful, as we look at history, that decisions like this, creativity is very resilient, look at the rise of punk, and people will find a way through this.

Maybe there will be less of it because, hopefully, younger generations are not getting too dull but I'm hopeful and I think that they are pretty sharp.

We just have to keep cultivating that. It is very concerning. It is economic rationalism gone mad. There is too much middle management at universities and they have forgotten that it is about enrichment and research and that is the thing that has struck me most about the decisions being made.

That research is all there. Why is it not referred to as much as it should be? I do not know.

That should be part of everyone's knowledge and vocabulary about the benefit of the arch to help well-being. The research is there and it is good research. It is not vanity publishing.

It is research that has been done well.

SALLY BRYANT:

Particularly underlining the mental health aspect we have seen in the last 12 months, every time you see somebody in Zoom meeting, people are buying art like there is no tomorrow. People are curating their homes. There is no recognition of this. What are your thoughts, Heath?

HARRIE FASHER:

I wonder if we have become more involved because we originally based and connected to communities and although people are not getting a formal art education and perhaps getting people back to classical Greece and Italy by default you are talking about doing teaching and maybe by default we end up being educators and, as you said, maybe we have to ride the wave until society comes to its senses.

SARAH LAST:

I think critical thought has been downgraded significantly, not just in the university system but all facets of education and we need critical thinkers to have a vibrant and functioning society and that is what these decisions are trying to do.

HARRIE FASHER:

You don't want people who will challenge them.

SARAH LAST:

We do have to keep working at this.

SALLY BRYANT:

As you say, it is worthwhile and rewarding and it is where your hearts lie, so how do you keep doing it if there are the economic challenges and, if as you predict, there will be a growing gentrification of rural and regional areas and property prices become more expensive, how does that leave the regionally arts?

SARAH LAST:

Maybe they get further out. I met someone from Broken Hill this morning.

SALLY BRYANT:

Those Broken Hill people will be glad to hear you are common.

SARAH LAST:

I think we are just and we are lucky enough and Tracey was mad enough to take 12 artists in the UK 5-6 years ago, seven years ago, and we all went and we went to Hillend and it was a mining town and derelict and no one wanted to live there.

Maybe we have to keep moving.

SALLY BRYANT:

You are the trailblazers.

SARAH LAST:

We are flexible and we can change and adapt and are not stuck in the moment so maybe we have to be open and keep amenities like this and someone asked me yesterday and I was in a breakout panel and they asked what Artstate was about and if it was showcasing art and I said it was about that but it is about community and making connections with people outside your immediate sphere.

I think species like this are very important.

(Applause)

HARRIE FASHER:

It is about community and that is plural and we're part of the local community, arts community, and whatever community we work in, and your question, that is why we need support and advocacy agencies because it is not all up to the artists and we do it, we live it, and we need representation and I'm not talking about agents or service agencies and that is why entities like Regional Arts NSW are so important to regional communities.

(Applause)

Because they consolidate these very points and they represent us and they do it very well and they have generated the research, for example, and collaborated with other entities to generate the research.

So, yes, artists have an important role but it's not up to us and there is part of the ecology that we coexist for the reason because we are all interdependent.

SALLY BRYANT:

So, how do you highlight the need to continue even greater investment in that infrastructure that keeps the arts community practising and keeps it developing and keeps it viable? How do you raise that issue around people's kitchen tables and how do you read it at the footy, at the pub? If that is what people are talking about at the footy in the pub, it will become an issue for politicians and of the art scene has something rather nice that we do for those who have a glass of white wine, that is how it is seen, and it does not have - it does not pass the pub test.

SARAH LAST:

We live in a world of extremes and people only pay attention when something is disappearing. I do not want to be an alarmist, but when I talk to people and when I tell them in reality about the funding situation, about how it is getting pretty low, they have a look of panic on their face. They value the fact that we are in the community doing stuff.

It is unfortunate that it comes to that direness for them to realise. We do have political power in the region. We are often in marginal seats, and there is a political system that we can articulate and be knowledgeable about. I am not saying that you'll need to become political animals, but if you have been established and have been doing stuff, your community will know who you are. They see your name and they have funding to announce et cetera.

HARRIE FASHER:

They always want to have a photograph with you, but they never want to hear what you have to say. Maybe we need to spend more time in the pub.

SARAH LAST:

I think that is a valid statement. There are some colourful discussions around rural politics. But yes, I think that needs to be said at a panel like this, about the ecology element and having lived regionally.

SALLY BRYANT:

But it really is. I remember somebody saying to me that you do not really truly value your region until you have spent some time in the big city and you come back, and you think, that is better.

SARAH LAST:

Absolutely. I think if anyone did a study on arts in Australia, I think the most salient movement, or the most influential thing, the interesting movements throughout Australian arts, including Indigenous art as well, they have all been influenced by place and regionality. It astounds me that that is often quite lost. The rural aspect is often quite part of it. And with Indigenous culture it is very much part of what makes Australian arts practice really significant internationally.

So yes, it is kind of funny that it is perceived as not being valued. It is actually the most significant element of our culture.

SALLY BRYANT:

As you say, people often do not realise how often they value something until it is threatened to be moved, and they will not have it anymore. And then they are not happy.

HARRIE FASHER:

I do not think that they can remove art. I mean, with music, there is nobody that does not value having music in their life. I do not think... They cannot lose us. We are here to stay.

(Laughter)

SALLY BRYANT:

Any other points that you would later make? Overwhelmed by femininity, Heath?

HEATH CULLEN:

I think what you are saying about the pub is right. Within the local community, it is about making people aware. People may not realise that what they are appreciating is art. Going back to the Candelo Village Festival, we could say that we could reach out to all of the people in Candelo and discover that in a village of 500 people there were about 60 different community groups. That was just shocking. He had the cricket club, the football club... You had tae kwon do. The list went on. We involve every one of those groups and gave them an opportunity to show themselves.

We closed off the main street, we had a lawn bowls team in the main street... Everybody felt a sense of ownership around this festival, so that was good.

SALLY BRYANT:

Beautiful.

SARAH LAST:

Yes, that is beautiful.

SALLY BRYANT:

So it is about the arts not being a silo over here.

HARRIE FASHER:

It is really hard to do that. To deliberately do that, because the attitude is that you just cannot have it like that. Yes... That is something that we deliberately try to do with the agricultural projects, for example. I want to engage all aspects of agriculture. This is my community. I want to keep talking. To go in there and is a this is the farm, who am I going to engage with? It is a very isolated and small group of people. That is not relevant. It is unethical. I do not think that I would have an enduring relationship with my community... I do not think that I would have a positive one. It is all about exactly that — maintaining dialogue.

One thing that I like about rural and regional communities is that they have difference in perspective. You will see the person at the post office or the football club presentation or whatever, and the saleyards...

SALLY BRYANT:

There is genuine diversity there. This is what might be interesting about the regions. There is diversity and it can be surprising for people that are coming from outside. They think that they are people that do not open the mouth because the flies might go in.

HARRIE FASHER:

We are all interdependent on each other. It is embedded in regional practice, that they are the imaginations of what makes sense. It is a great way to work. I do not think there is anything negative about being regional.

SALLY BRYANT:

No limits, but we are over time by two minutes. Are we taking questions?

HARRIE FASHER:

It is the end of the morning. They are all tired. They are sitting there going, "We all know this."

SALLY BRYANT:

Well, thank you.

(Applause)

I think that is us done. Thank you, everyone. Thank you.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

Thank you to the panel, and thank you to the artists, who I did coerced to come in. And thank you to Sally Bryant from Riverina. It has been an interesting morning, I think looking at the different ways that arts and science are collaborating are extraordinary. It is a vitally incomprehensible technology, to see how important it is living and working in regional communities and the cross pollination of being in a community, being able to make contact with the farmers or the train drivers or having a local festival.

It is almost that there are two ways in that how we can look at tomorrow. There is the high-tech way and the human contact in communities where it is much easier to have a diverse silo that the arts sector does tend to get a little bit tied up and internal about. The regional communities are able to work in a far more external way, both for the inspiration space for the practice and still being able to have those connections with national and international audiences. I think it is kind of exciting for tomorrow. It is interesting to think about.

Just to let you know, sadly, we are unable to hold the conference dinner this year. As you know. We could not fit any people in the space that would be considerable, enough to seat everybody. What we have done is schedule a short final plenary session at 4:50 this afternoon. I know that you are all tired, but please make an effort to come back, as this will be the final conclusion of our four year conversations. We will try to keep it brief, and there will be some artistic surprises for you to enjoy as we finish up the formal part of our program.

We also have the advantage of hearing from our repertoires, so at 4:50 here. It does not give you long to get your venues, but I do make a request that you make the effort to get there before the wrapup. You can then do whatever you like in the evening. For those of you that have not decided what to do and think that you would like to go to the concert, it is free for delegates. You do still need to have a ticket for an allocated seat. Check with the box office.

The other thing that is happening in a moment is that we are going to be doing a launch of our Ash, Dust, Air. That is an anthology of works of young writers from southern New South Wales. We will be back here at 1:30.

This has been especially commissioned by Artstate Wagga to capture a snapshot of the thoughts of their experiences and responses to the events of this year. It was funded by New South Wales Health, and we really do think local LMC Bonnie Taylor for her support in finding this funding that went directly to this project. It has not been dispersed around the rest of the state health budget. I thank her for that.

You all have a copy of the anthology in your bag, and I do urge you to take the time to read it. I am halfway through it and it is beautiful. It is interesting to see what the impact has had on young people and how articulate their thinking is. Unfortunately she cannot be with us today, but it will be launched by the MLC, later today.

Onto the lunch instructions. There is a staggered exit to lunch. Please follow directions from the star. It will be served in the lower foyer, and we ask that once you have collected it, you leave the building and allow space for the next group. If you will attend the launch at 1:30, we ask that you make your way back to the auditorium to be stated as soon as you finish lunch. It will take up about 10 minutes of your time and there will be the launch and there will also be a reading by one of the other writers of their piece in the book.

If you can make the time to do that, it is great to be able to support young writers in this area. It really has reflected with the whole arts program on how this has been put together. There is a huge diversity of amazing talent and creativity across the Eastern Riverina Arts. So that is it for me. The lunch people will come in. The large marshals will come in and issued the instructions. If you can be back here at 30 past one for the book launch. If you can please had here at around 4:50 for after your final session, that would be good.

There are tickets available if you want to participate in the 3:30 session. Enjoy your afternoon. Thank you.

(Applause)