

In-Habit.

Cultural Exchange and Arts Research Centre draft

Possible statement of purpose based on Clayton Campbell's paper:

In-Habit at Abbotsford Convent is a not-for-profit residential cultural exchange and arts research centre in the City of Yarra with branches in regional Victoria. It supports artists and arts organisations dedicated to issues of site, place, space, landscape and cultural diversity in contemporary society.

In its curatorial decision making process, In-Habit seeks artists who demonstrate a poetic and socially engaged approach to site in a well developed art making practice. We emphasize artists who are emerging and mid career in their development, manifest the spectrum of approaches to contemporary ideas, and reflect the cultural diversity of people in Australia. In-Habit aspires to be an international artist friendly gathering place with access to rural Victoria, providing a physical centre on a heritage site in a city characterized by its multi culturalism.

Relationship to people and locale

extracts from paper ***Multiculturalism, Community and Diversity, A Community Roundtable*** given by Clayton Campbell Co Executive Director of 18th Street Arts Complex in Santa Monica California 1999.

(We are)... "moving from an era of emphasis on the Individual to an epoch of Interdependence. Artists, in the next decades, will rely on 'Community' more than ever before. Contemporary art centres, and especially those which are residential in nature, provide the structure for explorations of community, artmaking and diversity, and growth of the individual within a socially redemptive sphere of influence. At the bottom of the cultural conversation in which each individual is engaged, resides the fundamental truth that real change can never occur unless individuals are willing to come together to discuss their differences. An art centre, especially one which has a multicultural orientation, should provide the ground for these crucial conversations."

Multiculturalism, Community and Diversity - A Community Roundtable
by Clayton Campbell

Challenge 1:

Living in An Era of Reasoned Racism

"The need for widely accessible critical forums becomes paramount so the discussions artists are undertaking can be continued, expanded and heard. These forums can take place within an organization's programs, presentations, publications, and its electronic presence. Support of community based arts efforts is an even more effective means of sourcing collaborations between an art center and its constituents, and their respective audiences and communities". Campbell

Challenge 2:

Technological Change

"The role of the artist and arts organization as mentors is paramount, providing basic human interactions between the privileged and the disenfranchised. The mentoring role overlaps into all areas of influence an arts organization may have, and within the area of technology the responsible use of technology made available through education and arts programs is key to the mentors role with a younger generation." Campbell

Challenge 3:

Shifting Constituencies

How does In-Habit reflect the shifting demographics of City of Yarra in its programs and curatorial integrity?

"Does inclusion foreground artistic excellence, yet remain mindful of class and multicultural demographics in deciding which artists can come and use the studios at the art centre?"

Can the criteria for making these decisions remain flexible yet give a real direction in order to stress the importance of contemporary art?"

If the first constituency of an art centre is artists, (as it is with the case of In-Habit), the curatorial process is key to determining how the above questions will be answered. By extension through its residential and curatorial choices, it determines which larger constituencies and communities the art centre is going to try to reach.

An art centre cannot be everything for everybody. It is best served by picking its audience and making a strong commitment to serving this finite group. Nevertheless, an arts and cultural exchange organization in an urban setting like the City of Yarra, will want to keep a rotating mix of

people from as many communities and art making practices as possible on its roster in order to fulfil its mission. The curatorial skill is in determining

1. the excellence of the art making
2. the true need of the artist for the organization's services,
3. the symbiotic chemistries which can grow out of exchange and collaboration within a culturally diverse artist environment. "

Challenge 4:

Ecological Necessity

"Any arts organization would be wise to address climate change, as most are already under severe financial constraints that will only increase over the next decade aided by rising energy costs. For inspiration, arts organizations can look to the many artists who are now involved in environmental processes as an integral part of their art practice. In a residential arts community, 'environmental' art projects should be encouraged which deal with site, place, and restoration of the habitat."
Campbell

© Jude Anderson – Punctum 2009

© Clayton Campbell - 1999