



A FESTIVAL FOR CHANGING TIMES

The Art & Industry Festival puts a spotlight on the local industrial creators and resources in the Hobsons Bay area that is home to craft brewers, car-makers, designers, oil tanks and treasured heritage buildings. Culminating in multiple art presentations and activities, the festival includes custom-made fashion inspired by local industrial heritage; opens days at Toyota and Qenos; meeting industrial enthused creators from Spotswood, Newport, Williamstown, Altona and Laverton; and a family night at Seaworks featuring fireworks, car crushing, sideshows and songs.

Over ten days, the Art & Industry Festival will celebrate and investigate the ever-changing industrial and manufacturing heartland of Australia based in Melbourne's western suburbs.

Festivals traditionally have marked times of change; for example, the summer solstice or the transition from winter into spring. Festivals and celebrations also signify transformation: the end of something or someone, a funeral, or new beginnings such as celebrating a coming of age or wedding.

It is widely agreed that the West is a region in flux. Once the manufacturing heartland of Victoria, the area is undergoing a fundamental change as some industries decline. A significant example is Toyota's decision to close its Altona manufacturing plant in 2017 resulting in an overall loss to Victoria of around 2,500 jobs. Many local businesses and services are adversely affected by the closures of mega factories like Toyota. Ship-building is another long-term local industry in decline. Other industries, including transportation, plastics, engineering and petrochemicals are thriving and growing.

A festival can be a vehicle for locals from diverse economic and cultural backgrounds to comment, discuss and observe these changes. A festival can examine, explore and amplify, in a manageable and imaginative way, the positives intrinsic to community change.

The Art & Industry Festival is an opportunity to support the development, extension and regeneration of the western suburbs through art projects. The Festival also offers time for the community to honour the history of the region while exploring and celebrating the complexity of living in a unique industrial environment.

The first Art & Industry Festival takes place from 18-27 November 2016. It is produced and created by Hubcap Productions with its principal partner Hobsons Bay City Council.



INTRODUCING FESTIVAL DIRECTOR DONNA JACKSON

Dr Donna Jackson is an artist who has lived locally for more than thirty years. Her family's association with the area dates from 1 June 1837, when ancestor William Hutton was one of the first to purchase property along Nelson Place. The next year he and a partner ran 4,000 sheep through the area and along the Maribyrnong River. Sheep farming was one of the West's first industries, spawning wool storage and scouring enterprises that continued until the 1980s. Her family followed the path of grazing further out across Australia. Donna's return to Newport in 1987 was a homecoming 150 years after her family's first contact with the area.

After one particularly exhausting year in which she travelled and worked in six jurisdictions on fourteen art events and festivals, she felt a strong desire to work from her home in her local area, the western suburbs of Melbourne, an ideal place to explore her interest in industrial aesthetics, an interest amplified by living in the shadow of the Westgate Bridge, surrounded by oil storage tanks and empty and working industrial spaces.

A major childhood influence on Donna was accompanying her father in a ten-tonne truck delivering sand to General Motors Holden in Port Melbourne. The sand was used to create molds for hot metal, which was poured in a shower of sparks. While still too young to go to school, she entered the large factory in the cabin of her father's truck and observed and was impressed by the sparks and industry. This experience was imprinted on her imagination and aesthetics, igniting a passion for industry and its processes, design and architecture. Although extensively trained in ballet, gymnastics and theatre, her interest in this aesthetic evolved.

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Photo: Lundy Allen featuring Tony Mead of Industria to Suburbia

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Donna's work is noted for using industrial and other non-theatre spaces and also for her innovative deployment of devices such as cranes, boats, cars, and angle grinders, not common in mainstream arts projects.

Her work in the mid-1980s to mid-1990s was deeply influenced by feminism. She instigated a circus for women at Footscray Community Arts Centre, initially those who were survivors of sexual assault. These women and Donna used circus skills to experience risk in a safe environment and to build self-esteem. The Women's Circus was very popular with both participants and audiences enabling Donna to develop her methodology while directing large casts of professional and non-professional artists.

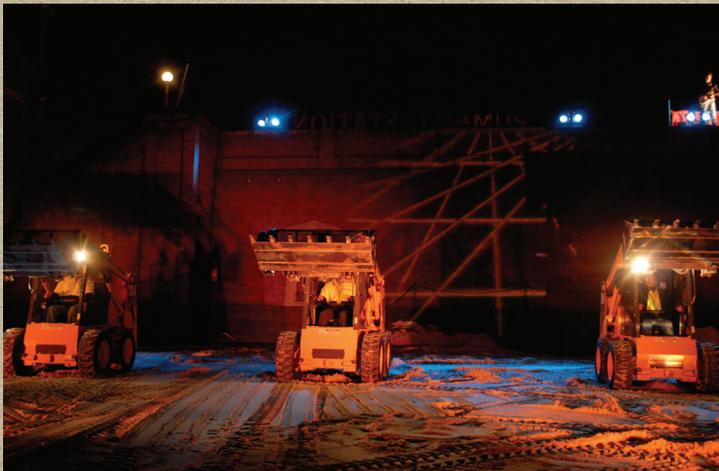


Photo: Georgis Mexis featuring We Built This City, 2006

From 1998 to 2012, Donna was artistic advisor to Regional Arts Victoria, where she developed a new model for linking disparate artists and communities across the state. By creating an overarching theme an inviting proposals from artists working in communities, she could curate a large number of concurrent projects supported by standardised templates for concept development, community engagement, production planning and event delivery. Such fertile ground, a series of landscape installations, was the proto-type and involved 12 artists and communities making an artwork which was aerially photographed to create postcards. Subsequent state-wide projects for Regional Arts Victoria used mediums including song, theatre, sculpture, fire, and multimedia. Donna has since used this method of working in national and international projects. The conceptual thread through all these projects is that, whatever artform is used, they communicate important and authentic ideas.

Asked why she has such a focus on a method of working on arts projects Donna replied,

'I like to work across mediums and often in site-specific, non-traditional theatre spaces. I also like to work with large groups of between 40 – 120 participants. To manage and support projects of this kind I need a strong artistic process and

decision-making framework. I also need to make sure people are well supported and briefed and have enough information to create and develop their section of the artwork. I often collaborate with people who are not traditionally trained in the arts; it is reassuring for them to have clear roles and tasks: what is expected in what timeframe and what the expected outcome should or would look like if it were successful.'

Donna has just released *Art and Social Change, Dust: A Case Study*. The book is a longitudinal case study of *Dust*, an exploration of the disastrous effects of asbestos on workers and their families presented in seven theatrical seasons by professional and community casts of more than 60 people. The book comprises essays from colleagues who worked on *Dust*. The book describes Donna's underlining artistic methodology for both *Dust* and the Art & Industry Festival. Donna's methodology combines project management with aesthetic and creative decision-making (see 'The Method' pp 18-21), and has been applied to projects in every state and territory of Australia. In 2017, the book will be a key reference for Professor Tara Goldstein's trainee arts and drama teachers at the University of Toronto.

Donna's method of working enables her to work across artistic mediums on a large scale with multiple participants. She has shared this methodology with many artists and it is the basis of both the development and execution of the Art & Industry Festival.

STOP PRESS

The Festival was launched September 9 at a function at Scienceworks in Spotswood which was attended by an enthusiastic crowd. People were offered an insight into the festival program. This program of events is now available for viewing on the festival website.

Diary Notes

The Art & Industry Festival takes place from 18 to 27 November 2016.

Website

The Art & Industry Festival is live. Visit us and sign up for our newsletter. artandindustryfestival.com.au/contact/