

What does creativity mean to you?

BUC Arts exhibition – its genesis and evolution



On behalf of the Brunswick Uniting Church Arts Committee, let me offer a brief description of how this BUC Arts Exhibition unfolded. The exhibition is not an end in itself, but is perhaps the end of the beginning phase of a transition from art as an adjunct to the life of BUC, to hopefully an era in which the creativity of all forms of art are understood as intrinsic to our common life.

There have been many tributaries that have contributed to the confluence of creativity that is this art exhibition:

- Artstop which provides a space through the ministry of the Olive Way and the resources of Artspace Victoria, to encourage participants to use and develop their own artistic talents and modes of expression.
- During the intervals when the Artspace program is in recess, Ann Soo (convenor of BUC Arts) Leanne Salau, and more recently, Philip Kreveld and Geoff Falk, have extended the opportunity for the Olive Way arts program to continue as The Olive Arts.
- The Christmas Pageant is another opportunity for art to be front and centre through Advent with our 2016 artist-in-residence, Simone Alesich gathering the SMP children to create a Christmas art installation last year.
- Ann Soo led another community arts experience by facilitating the creation of a most beautiful felted communion table overlay for Pentecost 2016.
- Our minister, Ian Ferguson has brought into worship the modes of movement and dance, and multi-media imagination to enrich the liturgy and proclamation of the Gospel.
- We have been encouraged and inspired by other art exhibitions, including at Exclusion and Embrace at CTM, Sacred Edge Festival in Queenscliff Uniting Church, Collins Street and Box Hill Baptist Churches, and by the knowledge, wisdom and insight of the Synod Arts coordinator, Christina Rowntree, who has been crucial to the curation of this exhibition.

We acknowledge the contribution of Simone Alesich for seeding and scaffolding the idea of holding an art exhibition. To Ann Soo, for convening and coordinating the exhibition with over thirty volunteers and together with Leanne Salau investing time, energy and commitment to community art to bring it to fruition.

Above all we acknowledge the imagination and creative effort of the artists who have been willing to submit their work in response to the question, "What is Creativity?"

So why have an arts exhibition in the context of an already vibrant faith community?

- Is it art for art's sake, and if so is that necessarily at odds with our participation in the Mission of God in the world? I think the answer to that question, is in part at least, yes! When we discover verbal and non-verbal modes of expressing that which lies in the deepest places of the human spirit, we are surely in tune with something that is much deeper and more profound than can be expressed solely in language.
- Or is the rationale of art as Creativity with a capital C, in other words participating imaginatively in the ever continuing in the Creation of and by the Eternal Spirit?

I think the phenomenon which is the BUC arts exhibition 2017 draws on both the drive to create works of beauty and meaning, and the longing to express the inexpressible depths of our communion with the Triune God whose being is creative community.

And that means that we, the observers and reflectors, belong in this creative community as we ponder the impact of these unique creations on our thinking, our feeling, our remembering and our hoping. As we all enter in our own way into this arts event, we contribute to the continuing creative work of the Spirit in our midst.

Colin Hunter





“What does Creativity mean to you?” Exhibition and Performance was held between 27th October and 5th November 2017.

The aim of the project was to make connections with the wider community as well as seeking to build community within the Brunswick Uniting Church programs and activities.

Contributors were invited to submit a new creative work responding to the question:

“What does creativity mean to you? - What processes help you engage creatively with life? What would you like to share with your community that might inspire the creativity of others? The work could be 2-D, 3-D or performance.

The original inspiration for the project began through ABCD discussions several years ago. The idea gradually grew based around several elements - the desire to connect the church more with the community and to challenge the sacred/secular divide; and a desire for an interactive exhibition that would challenge the separation of viewer and artist, and encourage everyone to see themselves as creative. The concept was developed by the BUCArts Committee with the aim of incorporating the many gifts of creativity within our congregation and to honour these through an interactive exhibition. Our hope was that participation would take the viewer from a passive role into a far more active one to becoming a creator themselves. The invitation to participate was extended to friends and contacts of BUC folk and included the Arts Access program ArstStop. We are grateful for professional advice from Chris Rowntree of the CTM Artful Faith Unit with installation of the works.

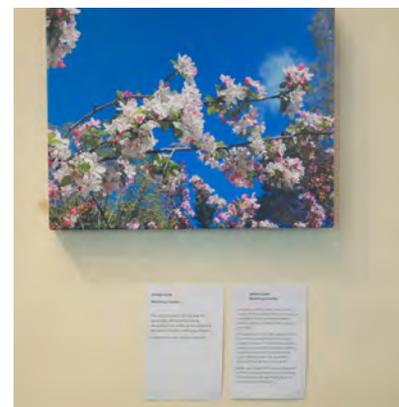
The exhibition was open to the public assisted by volunteer guides and a helpful prompt card encouraging the viewer to engage with the works. Forty-eight artists exhibited 73

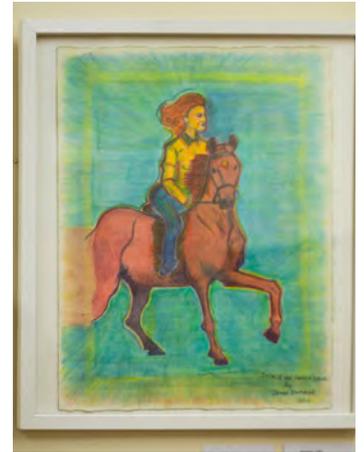
works. Eleven ArtStop participants contributed 19 works and these remain on display in the Olive Way space. The works included numerous art forms – paint, pastel, charcoal, quilting, felting, handspun, basketry, knitting, cake decorating, photography, floral art, audio/video, collage, upcycling, sculpture. Performances were offered on opening night and a special performance evening. Twelve contributors offered spoken word, original poetry reading, dance, creative movement, an Interplay experience and a presentation by SROC.

The weekday opening times saw approximately 6-7 people attend each day, all from the community in response to a Sandwich Board on the footpath on Sydney Road. At other times the exhibition was enjoyed by Sunday congregations and regular users of the facilities.

The BUCArts Committee under the leadership of Ann Soo welcomed thirty-seven volunteers to make it happen. Every contribution whether large or small helped to make the Creativity Exhibition enjoyable.

Ann Soo with Helen Rowe





The art exhibition and performance night responding to **'What is Creativity?'** was a manifestation of the joy and creativity of our church community. As revealed in our mission planning process in 2016, we are a community of communities and this exhibition brought all those communities (and beyond) to be in one place; to share, celebrate and rejoice with each other for God's gifts to us. I believe art and creativity became the avenue to connect people to one another in a sacred place that is our beautiful church. The exhibition was a community event and we came together as a community to mount the exhibition in a very short space of time. This speaks of the cohesion that is our community - accepting those who can give a lot and those who can only give a small amount. All of it is valued.

Invisible barriers can exist and creativity can break down those barriers as we find out more about each other and see aspects of ourselves not always evident on the external. The exhibition broke down barriers whether it was age, race, ability, resources, gender, class - whatever division we were all there in one place as a people and as a community in Christ. I believe it achieved the aims.

I am blessed and deeply humbled when I see the Olive Way being the centre and heart of the exhibition. I strongly believe

that art is intrinsic and integrated to our church and worship life. The Olive Way artists work from the grass roots and have a home where people who experience marginalisation can be creative, be uplifted, valued and loved. The art in the Olive Way continues to be displayed and for celebration to continue. It was the best place to offer refreshments on performance night. Not only was it bridge between two large spaces (church hall and worship space) but the heart of our church where we provide welcome and hospitality three days a week.

I feel honoured to have been part of something that was so much larger than what could be created on one's own. I look forward to what will emerge from its inspiration. Many people were deeply touched.

My enormous thanks goes to our whole community for embracing this exhibition and for reflecting God's love in how we love each other and work alongside each other.

Ann Soo

And from Stefano (poet) on performance night (paraphrased)

'...I am accustomed to a pub crowd when I read my poetry. Tonight is different. We are already in a sacred place. This art makes this place more sacred'.

