



Metro Arts

ANNUAL REPORT 2016

In 2016 take a risk.

At Metro Arts we punch through walls.

We're passionate about diverse contemporary art that makes your heart race and the hairs on your neck stand up.

We create unique experiences, obliterate boundaries and embrace brave ideas.

We believe that with great risk comes great reward.

Leap into the unknown at Metro Arts.



Meagan Streadler, *W-inter*, 2016. Photograph by Louis Lim. Cover image: *Flaunt* by Claire Marshall, 2016. Photograph by FenLan Photography.

OUR PROGRAM SUPPORTS THE CREATION, DEVELOPMENT, EXPERIMENTATION, AND PRESENTATION OF EXCITING AND BRAVE CONTEMPORARY WORK.



**"Metro Arts excels at backing edgy and emerging artists."
- THE COURIER MAIL**

**"The willingness to support experimental and initial ideas with space and money is outstanding. It's so important (for artists) to have a space to develop things that are incomplete, that don't conform to previous structures, forms or topics, and that genuinely take risks. This can be scary but I've found Metro Arts to be the most supportive organisation in this regard."
- 2016 DEVELOPMENT ARTIST**

**"Brisbane's fiercest arts hub"
- CONCRETE PLAYGROUND**



54 WORKSHOPS

12 ARTIST RESIDENCIES

9 EXHIBITIONS

6 PERFORMANCE SEASONS

5 WORKS IN DEVELOPMENT

3 MICRO FESTIVALS

1 PERFORMANCE TOUR

IN OUR BUILDING

137 ARTISTS

282 HIRERS

112,500 CAFÉ CUSTOMERS

f 7,929 LIKES

📷 2,567 FOLLOWERS

✉️ 2,682 SUBSCRIBERS



OUR FOLLOWERS ARE

68% FEMALE / **29%** MALE

53% LIVE IN BRISBANE

55% UNDER 34 YEARS OLD

CREATIVE DIRECTOR REPORT, Jo Thomas

The memory of 2016 looms in my mind as a tumultuous and surprising year. In Australia, the federal arts funding cuts were being felt in the sector and nowhere more keenly than with the small to medium sector and independent artists. World-wide there were major political shocks, displacement of people from their homes and lands and constant talk of barriers, constructing walls and a seemingly growing suspicion of 'the other'.

In 2016 Metro Arts tagged our year of artistic programming "Risky Business". We consciously decided to open our doors wider, to commit more resources to independent artists and to advocate for and support artists asking difficult but necessary questions. Metro's heart lies in this commitment to incubation, diverse communities, multi-artform practitioners and an artist-centred inclusivity. It's a community, a place for exchange and dialogue, a social enterprise.

In 2016, the Board bravely supported curatorial changes and significant in-kind and cash budget allocations to continue the vital support to our artists and our community. It was indeed risky, but exciting, business!

Artistically the risk paid off. Metro Arts presented three thematically-driven micro festivals, *Sonic State*; *Unbuttoned: a festival of gender, art and you*; and *Deathfest*. These perhaps misnamed micro festivals were a huge undertaking as we explored experimental and contemporary music scenes; partnered with Brisbane Festival to present over 20 events in *Unbuttoned*; and led Australia by presenting the first arts and culture festival on death and dying. This new curatorial platform of micro festivals sat alongside

our year-long exhibition and performance program, touring of performance work and our vital creative development, producing and residency programs. We partnered closely with Brisbane City Council and took art to the streets through the Vibrant Laneways Program and projected onto the William Jolly Bridge and proudly presented work as part of the ever-expanding BrisAsia Festival.

Management and Board worked tirelessly and lobbied throughout the year for greater resources for our key stakeholders, independent artists. It was an overwhelming endorsement of the work of all Metro Arts artists, staff and Board to be awarded quadrennial funding from Arts Queensland, and for the first time, Australia Council for the Arts. In the next 4 years, it will be evident how the small Metro Arts team can stretch a dollar even further and support more and better work with this additional funding whilst securing a financial future for the organisation. We shall continue our commitment to curatorial advice, space, time and subsidy for artists; and an inclusive, welcoming community-space for all.

I agree with the Chairman of the Sidney Myer Fund, Carillo Gantner when he commented recently

... a society can only flourish when all members are valued. For me, the arts are pivotal in creating this environment. We need to support and nurture artists, so we as a society can prosper. Artists ask difficult questions, they celebrate and embrace, they prod and poke and hold a mirror up to society – we need this...

We need this risky business.

BUSINESS DIRECTOR REPORT, Jess Murphy

We started 2016 by opening our doors and Carriageway to the creative team from Backbone's 2high Festival. The 3-day youth arts festival was closely followed by the BrisAsia Festival in collaboration with Brisbane City Council; and in amongst all the action we began the conversion of the Studio into our reinvigorated cinema, the Lumen Room. Thanks to a successful grant application to the Gambling Community Benefit Fund, Metro Arts was able to revive the tired Studio back into a Cinema as it was in the 1980's. Showing cult classics and available for hire, the Lumen Room gained popularity helping contribute to an overall Venue Hire increase of \$47,000 against the previous year.

Other small renovations due to the GCBF included works in the Carriageway and the Gallery. The Carriageway received a 30 metre lighting bar and a resultant increase in casual hire. Metro Arts was able to host two weddings and a Dinner for the Homeless with The Collective Church all in the Carriageway.

We were also able to upgrade our lighting bars in the Gallery and purchase a small stock of new light fittings and bulbs.

With mounting local competition the Espresso Bar struggled throughout 2016. The team was adjusted and reformed twice through the year resulting in skeleton management staff and a refurbishment to begin the next year of trade. Despite these challenges, the quality of service and coffee remained high, evidenced by the Metro Arts Espresso Bar being named in Brisbane Style Magazine's top 10 CBD coffee haunts in 2016.

Metro Arts did finish the year on a high note with increasing coffee sales, full bustling buildings on Edward St as well as our Norman Park facility, plus an exciting plan for the organisation's future!

2017 shall reveal all!



CHAIRMAN REPORT, John Dunleavy

Thank you for the opportunity to present my report as Chair of Metro Arts for the 2016 Calendar year.

Among the highs for the year was obviously receiving news that Metro had been selected, for the first time in its history, for four year funding from the Australia Council. This is particularly rewarding as a Board member who supported and encouraged a funding application to the Australia Council that could not be considered as conservative or safe. As most of you would be aware the Australia Council processes in deciding these matters is, among other things, based on de-identified peer review so it is nice to receive such indirect validation from the Arts community. Lesson learnt – sometimes “safe” is not the way to go and you need to back a leap of faith.

On a similar high note and perhaps as testament to our expanded Australia Council funding our artistic outcomes and achievements in 2016 were very positive. Many thanks to our Creative Director Jo Thomas and broader Metro team for your contributions to this success.

One of my longstanding fellow directors Penny Everingham did not re-stand for the 2017 year so was effectively present during part of the year until our AGM. I take this opportunity to formally thank Penny for her considerable contribution to Metro not only as a Board Member but as an active volunteer, advocate and sometimes general counsellor for members of the Metro family. I know Penny is still active for Metro but I do miss her insights, ethics and values at the Board table.

Whilst we are obviously not happy with the financial result for the 2016 year I am comfortable that the ground work has been done, barring exceptional events, that should see a material financial improvement for the 2017 year. As a person more active in business circles I often make comments about corporates experiencing growing pains. For Metro, as I see it, we are now in a phase of capacity building to allow

scale and achieve critical mass sufficient to justify, for example, a full time staff member for a particular role rather than 0.5 of an FTE. Similarly we are investing time, energy and other resources to identify software and other systems to handle increased activity, do more with less, depersonalise operational functions so they don't just stop if someone is absent and also realise “Big Data” style measures and insights that are significantly beyond prior outcomes in this area. The financial outcomes of 2016 and its predecessor year were the catalyst for these initiatives.

Even though 2016 saw Metro achieve progress on some of the newer elements and initiatives around our 109 Edward Street Brisbane CBD site we were still regularly surprised with unexpected building repairs or equipment failures. These unforeseen events continued to challenge the best financial management strategies and planning.

In 2016 the Metro Board supported a small capital investment to refresh of our ground floor espresso bar in light increased competition and lower returns. I am pleased to advise this decision is showing better financial returns for this operation.

As always I take this opportunity to thank the staff of Metro Arts for your hard work and contribution to the artistic and other outcomes achieved in 2016. Similarly I extend my gratitude to my fellow volunteer Board members for increasingly giving more of your time and energy to helping to strategically position an Arts Organisation in turbulent times. Despite Board member departures in 2016 we are genuinely lucky to have the calibre and mix of personalities around the Board table that we have. I extend my special thanks to our treasurer Michael Cottier for his support and contribution in 2016.

I look forward to continuing to assist Metro Arts, work with our excellent team and fellow Board members in 2017.

TREASURER REPORT, Michael Cottier

It is a pleasure to present my 5th annual Metro Arts Treasurer's report.

2016 was another very challenging year for Metro Arts. It is sad to note that many well-known arts organisations have had significant government funding cuts, and some of those organisations have had to close their doors.

While Metro is far from immune from these headwinds, there are financial positives going forward that give the Board cause to believe that Metro can continue to operate and thrive into the future. This is formally addressed in the Director's Report.

Starting from January 2017, our arts organisation funding position has improved significantly, with quadrennial funding from Arts Queensland, and for the first time, from Australia Council for the Arts. It is very heartening to see this generous government support secured in an extremely competitive funding environment.

Our success is a demonstration of the quality of Metro's people, its organisational strategy, and its vibrant contemporary artistic programs.

Unfortunately this significant additional funding did not accrue in the 2016 year, and 2016 total grants expended were down by more than a quarter on 2015.

Fundraising activities continued to be negatively impacted by relatively weak economic conditions. For Metro, this manifested as reduced 2016-year café sales, fairly flat (but improved) tenancy income (net of subsidies), and lower interest income.

Philanthropic contributions and donations continued to be a tiny fraction of Metro's total income. However, I am pleased to report that in 2017 Metro has appointed a new Development Manager who has recently joined the team and is very focussed on improving outcomes in this area.

Finally, we continue to occupy an aging, heritage-featured building in Edward Street that demands increased care and attention in the form of replacement plant, equipment, and ongoing repairs and maintenance. We recently launched an innovative fundraising campaign to "Lift the Lift"; that aims to fund the replacement of our aged elevator and be able to offer easy and inclusive access to our multi-story building.

I report that Metro Arts delivered an operating loss for 2016 of \$107,571 (2015: loss of \$117,959).

Accounting revenues for the year were down 11% at \$1,589,590. Total expenses were down 11% to \$1,697,161, reflecting the Board and management team's efforts to contain costs and improve productivity in light of reduced funding and difficult operating conditions. For example, employee benefit expenses were down 12% on the prior year.

The Board and management remain very focused on ensuring a more sustainable financial future for Metro, including ongoing initiatives for:

- increased and more effective fundraising
- maximising the value generated from our buildings, especially at 109 Edward Street through tenancies, cinema, food and beverage, and
- expense control and productivity gains.

I would like to acknowledge and thank our Creative Director, Jo Thomas, and all of the Metro staff and supporters for their hard work, dedication, focus and significant artistic and administrative delivery in the continuing challenging conditions during 2016.

I look forward to working with management and the Board to secure a more sustainable financial future for Metro. I thank Chairman John Dunleavy and the other members of the Board for their continuing support.



Yum Chat as part of BrisAsia Festival 2016 by Brisbane City Council.



2016 PRESENTATIONS

15 – 17 JANUARY

FESTIVAL: METRO ARTS

BACKBONE'S 2HIGH FESTIVAL OF ART, SCIENCE AND IDEAS

21 FEBRUARY

BRISASIA FESTIVAL: METRO ARTS

YUM CHAT

Co-Presented with Brisbane City Council and Australian Bureau of Asian Creatives

24 FEBRUARY – 12 MARCH

EXHIBITION: GALLERY / METRO ARTS

W-INTER BY MEAGAN STREADER

30 MARCH – 16 APRIL

EXHIBITION: GALLERY / METRO ARTS

MEMORY FOAM NEVER FORGETS

BY CHARLIE DONALDSON & SPENCER HARVIE

13 – 16 APRIL

PERFORMANCE: SUE BENNER THEATRE / METRO ARTS

FLAUNT BY CLAIRE MARSHALL

Touring work: Centre of Contemporary Arts Cairns, Empire Theatre Toowoomba, Ipswich Civic Centre

27 APRIL – 14 MAY

EXHIBITION: GALLERY / METRO ARTS

CROSSEXIONS FEATURING WORK BY JAMES BARTH, CLARK BEAUMONT, KATINA DAVIDSON, DANA LAWRIE, JULIE-ANNE MILINKSI, CLARE POPPI, MERRI RANDELL, LEENA RIETHMULLER, CAMILLE SERISIER, LYNDEN STONE & SHAYNA WELLS
CURATED BY BETH JACKSON

"Being able to cite my upcoming or recently completed solo exhibition at Metro Arts when writing applications has helped my work be selected in exhibitions and enabled me to secure two overseas residencies programs (2016-17). No doubt this will continue into the future and other more long term benefits will also become clear."

– 2016 EXHIBITION PROGRAM ARTIST

10 – 14 MAY

PERFORMANCE: SUE BENNER THEATRE / METRO ARTS

VIS AND RAMIN BY BARAN

25 MAY – 11 JUNE

EXHIBITION: GALLERY / METRO ARTS

UNTITLED #5 BY ZOE KNIGHT

9 – 12 JUNE

MICRO FESTIVAL: METRO ARTS

SONIC STATE QUEENSLAND WEEK MICRO FESTIVAL

CURATED BY LUKE JAANISTE

17 – 18 JUNE

PERFORMANCE: SUE BENNER THEATRE / METRO ARTS

ELEVATE BY LISA WILSON

13 – 30 JULY

EXHIBITION: GALLERY / METRO ARTS

GEOMETRIC ASYLUM BY LACHLAN ANTHONY

2 – 6 AUGUST

PERFORMANCE: BASEMENT / METRO ARTS

SEDIH // SUNNO BY RANI P COLLABORATIONS

17 AUGUST – 3 SEPTEMBER

EXHIBITION: GALLERY / METRO ARTS
STILL I RISE BY HANNAH BRONTÉ

14 – 30 SEPTEMBER

EXHIBITION: GALLERY / METRO ARTS
EIGHT EMBARRASSED MALES BY JOSEPH BREIKERS & TIMOTHY P. KERR

15 – 18 SEPTEMBER

MICRO FESTIVAL: METRO ARTS
UNBUTTONED: A FESTIVAL OF GENDER, ART AND YOU
Co-Presented with Brisbane Festival

19 OCTOBER – 5 NOVEMBER

EXHIBITION: GALLERY / METRO ARTS
SPLIT SCREEN FEATURING WORK BY SIMONE HINE, CURATED BY KYLE WEISE

3 – 5 NOVEMBER

PERFORMANCE: SUE BENNER THEATRE / METRO ARTS
KOOKOO THE BIRDGIRL BY SARAH HOUBOLT

16 – 20 NOVEMBER

PERFORMANCE: SUE BENNER THEATRE / METRO ARTS
EXQUISITE BY FRAN BARBE & GUESTS

16 NOVEMBER – 3 DECEMBER

EXHIBITION: GALLERY / METRO ARTS
LOOKING OUT BY COURTNEY COOMBS

18 – 20 NOVEMBER

MICRO FESTIVAL: METRO ARTS
DEATHFEST CURATED BY JO THOMAS

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"Fantastic. They (Jo) understood the creative process, and the time that the creative process takes. They understood that when I was creating work that I needed to be left alone (most people don't get that). They stood up for me when I needed fighting for, and they pushed me creatively in the form of suggesting I work with David Fenton. I also valued their creative producing ... anyone can be a producer, but not a creative producer. Metro does this so well."

– 2016 PRODUCING HUB ARTIST

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"The benefits of working with Metro Arts were; extended creative development through engagement with arts writer/curator, development and execution of an arts project in one of Brisbane's central heritage gallery spaces (!!!) which enabled me to create my most challenging work to date. The time and effort Metro Arts made to invite local curators to view and discuss the work whilst meeting with me at the gallery was invaluable to me."

– 2016 EXHIBITION PROGRAM ARTIST



Vis and Ramir by Baran, 2016. Photograph by Zohre Kord



Courtney Coombs, *Looking Out*, 2016. Photograph by Joachim Froese.

2016 RESIDENCES

ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

12 MONTH ARTIST IN RESIDENCE / COURTNEY COOMBS

5 MONTH ARTIST IN RESIDENCE / JOSEPH BREIKERS

5 MONTH ARTIST IN RESIDENCE / TYZA STEWART

IN RESIDENCE / BENJAMIN KNAPTON

ARTIST RUN INITIATIVE IN RESIDENCE

FAKE ESTATE

COMPANY IN RESIDENCE

4CHANGE COACHING & FORCE OF CIRCUMSTANCE

TRAINING RESIDENCY

ROBBIE O'BRIEN

WORKS IN RESIDENCE

THE ATTIC / M'CK MCKEAGUE

GETTING BETTER EACH TIME / DANIEL SANTANGELI

THE WISHING DARK / JULIE VULCAN

ONE WAY / SAMMIE WILLIAMS

"The openness of the staff, especially Kate, to chat when needed in a supported space where they (Metro Arts) understood my practice, my art as well as the tools and strategies to forward plan and think beyond my time in the studio. This was a process of understanding for me, and I am grateful for the support and encouragement."

– 2016 ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

2016 WORKS IN DEVELOPMENT

LIMITLESS / NATALIE ABBOTT

HOW TO SUMMON THE DEVIL / THOMAS ALBERT, JENNIFER BISMIRE, REGAN LYNCH & SAMUEL VALENTINE

VERSIONS OF TRUTH / ALL THE QUEEN'S MEN

LET'S SPEAK OF THE UNSPOKEN / EMMA WORKMAN BOLT

FIELDS OF DECAY / LEAH SHELTON & SOPHIA REMOLDE

UNSEEN / SARAH HOUBOLT & KELLIE O'DEMPSEY

"Kieran Swann and Jo Thomas, who were both a total pleasure and helped ensure that our process was well taken care of. Kieran was extremely well-informed across a variety of fields (performance, art, design, to name a few) and went out of his way to consult with us and brainstorm during the process. We felt well supported and genuinely taken care of, both as humans and as professional artists."

– 2016 DEVELOPMENT ARTIS

"I found contact with Metro Arts staff to always be adaptable to the project's needs. From the planning stages to throughout the development, contact was professional, timely and effective. The structure of meetings and conversations was perfect, and the formality, though professional, was always open, casual, and inviting of questions."

– 2016 DEVELOPMENT ARTIST



Creative Development of *Unseen* by Sarah Houbolt and Kellie O'Dempsey, 2016. Image supplied by artist.



PRODUCING HUB

EXQUISITE / FRAN BARBE & GUESTS

VIS AND RAMIN / BARAN

OSCAR WILDE'S DE PROFUNDIS / DAVID FENTON & BRIAN LUCAS

EMPTY CITY / THE HUMAN COMPANY

FLAUNT / CLAIRE MARSHALL

BEAR WITH ME / DAVID MEGARRITY

TYRONE & LESLEY IN A SPOT / DAVID MEGARRITY & NATHAN SIBTHORPE

WIRELESS / LISA WILSON



Sonic State Micro Festival, curated by Luke Jaaniste, 2016. Photograph by Bryan Spencer.

2016 MICRO FESTIVALS

SONIC STATE QUEENSLAND WEEK MICRO FESTIVAL

A celebration of spatial and sonic experimental music-making in Brisbane, *Sonic State Queensland Week Micro Festival* featured music performances, free workshops, artist talks and an opening night celebration.

Bringing together nationally significant musicians who are leaders in their field, *Sonic State Queensland Week Micro Festival* gave audiences the opportunity to connect to the latest work by experimental music makers.

.....
"Awesome program, diverse and top notch quality all around..."

**- SONIC STATE QUEENSLAND WEEK
MICRO FESTIVAL AUDIENCE MEMBER**

.....

466 ATTENDEES

13 SOUND AND VISUAL PERFORMANCES

2 ARTIST TALKS

1 SOUND ARTWORK



Grumble: Sex Clown Saves The World by Betty Grumble, 2016. Photograph by Dave D'Arcy.

UNBUTTONED // A FESTIVAL OF GENDER, ART AND YOU

A fierce four day program of performance, visual art, film, workshops and parties *UNBUTTONED* served up an electrifying experience for audiences.

With affordable prices and promised surprises, the micro festival took over Metro's six storey heritage building giving audiences the opportunity to improve their technique at the *Wank Bank Masterclass*, sing their hearts out to their favourite hits at *Femioke* and join provocative conversations.

337 ATTENDEES

6 ARTIST TALKS AND OPEN STUDIOS

5 FILMS

4 EXHIBITIONS

3 PERFORMANCE WORKS

2 SOCIAL EVENTS

1 DURATIONAL LIVE PERFORMANCE



Deathfest curated by Jo Thomas, 2016. Photograph by Dave D'Arcy.

DEATHFEST

A deadly mix of live art, music, film, visual art, discussions and social events, *Deathfest* increased death literacy in the Brisbane community and encouraged audiences to find a new way to embrace grief.

Over a week of events across Brisbane, *Deathfest* was the first arts and culture event of its kind in Queensland.

"I feel this is only the beginning of a very important, evolving, ongoing conversation. My hope is that it is the first of an annual event in Brisbane and other cities/towns."

- DEATHFEST AUDIENCE MEMBER

804 ATTENDEES

51 SPEAKERS AND ARTISTS

7 INSTALLATIONS

5 PERFORMANCES

3 SOCIAL EVENTS

3 FILMS

BOARD AND STAFF

Alex Anderson, Maintenance Coordinator

Amida Callinicos, Administrator

Bri Ellison, Administrator

Shani Gould, Project Coordinator

Olivia Fredheim, Espresso Bar staff

Jeremy Gordon, Administration Assistant (maternity cover)

Emma Healy, Administration Assistant (maternity cover)

Nicola Jones, Venues and Facilities Coordinator

Joy Lane, Finance Manager

Emmaly Langridge, Communications Manager

Bec Lawes, Box Office and Facilities Coordinator

Amy-Clare McCarthy, Curator (Exhibition Program)

Jess Murphy, Business Director

Katelyn Panagiris, Administration Assistant (maternity cover)

Kieran Swann, Programming Manager (Performance) until May 2016

Genevieve Trace, Executive Assistant

Jo Thomas, Creative Director

Kate Usher, Associate Producer from June 2016

Verity Woodford, Producer

A total of 11 board meetings were held in 2016.

CHAIRMAN John Dunleavy, Barrister and Chartered Accountant

TREASURER Michael Cottier, Chartered Accountant

SECRETARY Andrea Moor, Actor and Director

DIRECTORS Penny Everingham, Actor (Board member until November 2016)

Brian Lucas, Performance Maker

Daniel McKewen, Visual Artist

Joon Yee-Kwok, Creative Producer (Board member until March 2016)

Margo Powell, Philanthropy Manager

Metro Arts acknowledges the traditional custodians of Brisbane, the Turrbal and Jagera people and their unique relationship with their ancestral country. We pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, and recognise their strength, wisdom and creativity.

SUPPORTERS

We are truly grateful for the support of all of our partners. Their assistance enables us to continue to support the development and presentation of ambitious contemporary art. Work created at Metro Arts goes on to national and international platforms, connecting with audiences from around the globe.



Metro Arts is supported by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.



**Queensland
Government**

Metro Arts is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, part of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY



Dedicated to a better Brisbane

*Metro Arts is proudly supported by the Brisbane City Council.
Norman Park Substation No. 9 is assisted by Brisbane City Council.
BrisAsia Festival – Yum Chat is presented by Brisbane City Council.*



Health Ethics Australia



Deathfest was supported by Queensland University of Technology through the Medical Engineering Research Facility.

Metro Arts

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