

INDIGENOUS ARTS AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

■ BELCONNEN Gallery presents an exhibition of new work by Wiradjuri artist Duncan Smith. The show, entitled "Connections", coincides with NAIDOC week and showcases his passion for painting acrylic on canvas and ochre on



Mary Porter, MLA, opens "Connections" by artist Duncan Smith.

board. The artist uses both modern and traditional mediums and styles to illustrate stories influenced by his personal thoughts regarding the importance of passing-on culture.

Smith is well known in Canberra as an

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In the area of support for indigenous arts and craft, the Program has taken fledgling steps: craft exhibits for NAIDOC week, exhibitions by Wiradjuri artist Duncan Smith, arts workshops with Indigenous carers, and free dance workshops with Wiradjuri Echoes open to the public.

In practical terms, Indigenous artists in Belconnen have not taken advantage of the resources at Belconnen Community Service, and have often been approached in ways that do not take into account cultural differences. Belconnen Community Service has an "Indigenous Working Party" which is looking at this across the board, and we are meeting regularly with local Ngunnawal elders to move this forward. Meanwhile, the BCC mural, to be completed in 2007, has a high degree of indigenous content and participation.

SUPPORT FOR ARTISTS

Belconnen arts programs have achieved a high reputation in the last five years for community based participatory activities, while at the same time seeking out and working with local established professional artists. Previously funded projects and initial assistance have helped establish a number of organisations who are sustaining their activity in the region, including Phoenix Players, Strathnairn Homestead Gallery, Scribblers, BANANA, and BEAN. The Belconnen Gallery and Theatre programs provide an excellent mix of community, emerging, established, and professional activities, and this is a true reflection of the arts and cultural milieu in the ACT. Support for artists is a vital part of the Arts and Cultural Program.

There are a number of strategies currently in place to give this support. They have so far proven effective, and are continually developed to provide the best possible assistance and foster the ability of diverse groups to express themselves creatively.

High quality and timely information is of prime importance in assisting artists to further their practise. Technology has facilitated the process of dissemination, but it must be used creatively and wisely, as too much information can quickly become a burden. The arts and cultural email list and website have assisted enormously in this, as detailed below.

Artists' work and projects are encouraged and supported through the Gallery and Theatre framework, but also through opportunities that become available in the region. This applies across the

board. Emerging artists and groups are specifically identified and assisted, often with some elements of mentoring. Community and amateur artists are equally sought out and encouraged, through projects, workshops and the use of facilities. Established and professional artists are similarly supported – our contacts with other organisations, and with other artists and institutions in the ACT, allow for further possibilities in addition to what can be provided at Belconnen, and extended opportunities for wider promotion of their work are constantly being explored. Grant writing assistance and advice continues to be an important function of the Arts and Cultural Development Program, helping artists and cultural groups to build and maintain their sustainability in the ACT.

The Arts and Cultural Development Program has been working closely with Belconnen Community Council in its initiative to build a "Northern Artists and Cultural Network" in the ACT. This network, called BANANA, is now functioning and has staged 3 events. The network will be independent but we expect to maintain a close relationship with its work over the next three years.

The MV NETWORK will provide further opportunities for local practitioners. This network, initiated in 2005 in Belconnen, brings together 5 local regional presenters linked by the M5 motorway. They are Tuggeranong Arts Centre, Queanbeyan Council Cultural Section, Southern Tablelands Regional Arts, Casula Powerhouse, and the Belconnen Community Arts and Culture Program. MV is running its first large scale combined project, Wasteland. Belconnen commenced this in 2006, with an exhibition of 2 photo media works each from 10 local artists. The rest of the members have scheduled their own work for 2007, culminating in a large cross regional exhibition at Casula late this year.



PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are currently being negotiated with ACT based and funded organisations, to establish a permanent presence in Belconnen. The rationale behind this is simple – such organisations are funded to service the whole of the ACT, so a partnership between them and BCS would expedite their services in Belconnen and directly benefit the region. Partnership organisations during 2006 included:

- Canberra Youth Theatre - establishing a permanent presence as a “resident” company in Belconnen, providing on-going theatre activities for young people.
- Music for Everyone. MFE currently stages an annual musical at the Belconnen Theatre.
- Maruki Community Orchestra.
- National Multicultural Festival
- Tuggeranong Arts Centre
- Ickle Pickle – joint producers of Christmas family shows involving large audience and participant numbers at Belconnen

'Engaging with the Hoods in nicely twisted plot

And Policy Head's performance by Peter McDonald. Lida Public Productions at Belconnen Community Centre. Shows until December 22. Showings: 5247 1225.

FRANK MICHONE
Review

Following last year's *Goldilocks* success, director Justin Watson and writer Peter McDonald have opted to produce the only version of *Howling Moon* to feature the original *Goldilocks* team, which, news reports said, "led down the profits and stands account of a range of shady dealings, including cosigning debts so they didn't show up in the company's accounts". But don't worry, this is just a pastiche:

is out for the Good Fairy of Marketing, played ably by Julie Turland as a spirited character who finally brings a new cooie-making cooperative into being and marries off Grassy Hood (Dane Smith) to the pants dealer in Wool Larkness (Peter Liza) who battles at working Grassy's suit and about because he is a male wolf (while she gets hot under the collar in his coat). Red Hiding Hood (Don Brand) marries Martin from Accoconic (Anna O'Leary), the three evil volants (and their, well-gilded) psychically by Grace Connolly, Rebecca de Cour and Clare Shadwell are properly defeated by management consultant Michael Mouse (Gerrit Mackinnon, Stuart

Mouse from Cassidy) and Gerald Mouse (Anna Hood). And Wolf's elderly Crooked, played strongly by James Leitch, is left rather lonely, except that Susan appears to make everyone happy in the end.

Yes it turns to see the show to appreciate McDonald's Tarty Pratchett-like mind, with any number of musical references and bits of other fairy stories laid in. It's just as much fun for the adults as the children.

Directing, choreography and an intriguing stage-se-charge device all show the skills, which we have come to expect from Ickle Pickle, resulting in excellent performances from all the young actors in an engaging production.

CANB TIMES 18/12/06

Jungle story just for the kids

Story and pictures: Lyn Mills

THERE'S a battle in the jungle at the Belconnen Community Centre and the new music for Exceptional production of *King Leo* has a non-sustainable outcome of environmental concerns that the young cast obviously enjoy turning into a positive outcome.

King Leo needs a mythical — keeping all those wonderful animals in check — has left him a bit — slight

challenged and as a wily old leader he splits the jungle domain between two up-and-coming leaders.

The lovely Lady Panther and the musically driven Lord Tiger gather their tribes to convince the old boy that their way is the right way.

There's a G-Robbie dispensing aromatherapy and herbal tea, the Tree Peep Squad (some selling off a fawn prince of jungle, Anna Connor and her sticky

soon blissing about and The Cool Cats rapping along.

Director Nina Steinhilber has created a fun show with a group of enthusiastic participants as part of the Music for Everyone's Act Up: Sing Out youth musical theatre program supported by a professional team.

King Leo runs at the Belconnen Community Centre until Wednesday.

■ www.belconnen.com.au



SOCIAL JUNGLE: Nicola Thomas, of Nicola, Jane Bellamy, of Rovers, Sarah Glynn, visiting from Adelaide, and Anna and Lauren Gopp, of Huggles, at the opening night of the Music for Everyone production of *King Leo*.



IN CHARACTER: January Lyall, of Fraser, as the sleek and cunning Lady Panther from *King Leo*.



PROMOTION AND MARKETING



The use of email and website strategies remains an integral part of the promotion of the Program and assist in marketing and raising the profile of local artists and organisations. The website was kept totally up to date during the year, and always had the latest

photos and news of activities. (<http://www.belcomserv.com.au/art>) There was no expectation of driving large traffic to the site, rather that it was a place where enquiries, artists and groups could be directed to either view events or get information. Similarly, 731 email news items were sent to an expanding mail list during the year, detailing not only local arts and culture events but also containing an enormous number of items from around Canberra and its locality, including jobs, workshops, grants, and opportunities along with the cultural items. This to date has proved to be an effective, versatile and cheap promotional tool, and has provided a profile for the Arts and Culture Program that extends way beyond Belconnen. Well targeted press releases and newsworthy items have appeared in The Canberra Times and the

free press weekly, with some 230 items for 2006. An advertising presence has continued in the City News, giving Belconnen constant promotion as an area of cultural activity.

Belconnen Community Service, host organisation for the Arts and Culture Program, has been a CAM member for some years. We continue to work closely with CAM in developing mini strategies and initiatives to better promote the work of local artists, groups and projects, and build more local audiences and consumers.

PROGRAM STAFF

The Arts and Culture Program has instituted a staff structure that in 2006 was economically viable and offered efficient and highly skilled service delivery. The following details cover broad duty statements:

Community Arts And Culture Program Officer – Jan Wawrzynczak
This full time position manages the program and its staff, and reports to the BCS Director of Community Cultural and Strategic Development.

Duties include:

- Development and coordination of community cultural development projects
- Enable community groups, artists and individuals to develop knowledge, skills, and cultural expression
- Play a leading role in bringing the Belconnen arts community together
- Prepare, implement, and evaluate an annual plan
- Participate as a Belconnen Community Centre team member
- Supervise other staff and volunteers

- Oversee the operation and future direction of the Belconnen Gallery and Theatre
- Manage the promotion and marketing of the program
- Ensure OH&S and risk management practices are maintained



Community Theatre Program Support – David Finnigan

This position is from 4-6 hours per week, and was originally designed to support the bulging theatre program initiate community and amateur theatre activity in Belconnen, based on the strength and interest of this work in previous years. Belconnen gave birth to such well known ACT companies as Tempo, Phoenix, and Free Rain.

Duties include:

- Developing community theatre projects
- Support local artists in developing their work
- Identify emerging artists

- Provide mentoring, training, artistic development, and venue support opportunities
- Encourage collaboration and a regional theatre focus

Since David commenced in 2006, the WET SEASON for emerging theatre artists has been developed for 2007

Gallery Curator – Anni Doyle Wawrzynczak

A part time position that commenced in 2004, allocated 5 hours per week, this position was designed to support a consistent, relevant exhibition program.

Duties include:

- seek out and interact substantially with local artists
- support emerging and first time exhibitors
- ensure that the Gallery is accessible and efficiently run
- assist with openings, invitations, and promotions
- assist with curating advice and hanging
- advise on gallery maintenance and equipment
- develop a varied exhibition program

The position increased in hours during 2006 to 6.5 hours per week, and included developing relationships with other galleries, and the Gallery on the Go project.

Theatre Support Worker – Justin Watson

This position was from 2-4 hours per week, designed to enable easy access to theatre resources for incoming groups.

Duties include:

- Assist incoming groups with technical advice
- Give operational assistance where required
- Be client support oriented
- Ensure safety standards are met

- Supervise maintenance and repair of theatre assets
- Advise on technical and maintenance upgrades
- Be flexible in responding to needs

Reception

The Arts and Culture Program employed (along with other programs at Belconnen Community Centre) staff at reception, an essential service to enable efficient handling of queries and to ensure that staff remain totally accessible to clients.