

Regional Arts Fund

Community Grant

Case study:

Breaking Bread: A Dementia Awareness Cafe



Boy through window, looking from the outside in.
Photograph by Leonie Van Eyke

Project Summary

Breaking Bread: A Dementia Awareness Cafe was a live art installation conceived of and directed by theatre artist Samantha Bews in collaboration with sculptor Eliza-Jane Gilchrist. The project was realised in partnership with The Good Loaf Sourdough Bakery and Cafe in Bendigo, and took place in September 2018. By challenging prejudices within Western medical diagnostic systems that refer to 'higher' and 'lower' cortical function, the project reframed how audience members perceived people with dementia, and created new pathways for inclusion and worth.

Artist Benefits

Breaking Bread was a successful collaboration between Samantha Bews and Eliza-Jane Gilchrist. The completed installation was of an excellent standard, combining theatrical and sculptural elements. The opportunity to work in collaboration extended Samantha's practice into the territory of live-art and installation work, and was the culmination of 3 years research, practice and experience in relation to dementia. Samantha commented that "Transferring my skills from the theatre to installation was an exhilarating experience that focused my thinking toward the poetics of space and away from the dynamics of traditional theatre making."

The project built on the relationship between Samantha and Australia's leading dementia advocacy organisation, Dementia Australia, that began with a 2017 Quick Response Grant funded project called You Are Not Alone: Letters of Love and Dementia. As producer/artist it also gave Samantha the opportunity to further develop her relationship with arts bodies and widen contacts within the local arts community.



Australian Government

Regional Arts Fund



Project Start Date	02/07/2018
Project End Date	09/09/2018
Project Location	Bendigo
Federal Electorate	Bendigo
No. Audience	297
No. Participants	20
Project Beneficiary	General Community
Main Art Form	Cross Art Form
No. Artists Paid	5
No. Artists Unpaid	2
No. Arts Worker Paid	3
No. Arts Worker Unpaid	0

Public Outcome

Breaking Bread was a live-art installation consisting of a cardboard maze that the public entered, engaging with form, space, sculpture and a poem. It encouraged participation through the sharing of bread in recognition of Dementia Awareness Month. Nearly 300 people passed through the work, including Aged Care students from Bendigo TAFE, the general public, cafe patrons, arts practitioners and health care workers. A book was made called *Loss and Nourishment* using interviews with 10 people who either are living with dementia or caring for someone with dementia. Media coverage was extensive, including interviews with ABC Regional radio, coverage on WIN NEWS, and in local papers the Bendigo Advertiser and Bendigo Weekly.

Community Benefits

The project created new partnership opportunities with the private sector, giving the artist access to a potentially inexperienced arts audience, and the general public access to the arts in the everyday setting of the café. It was the catalyst for conversation about dementia, with many people sharing personal experiences and others expressing new ways of thinking about people with dementia. It created dementia awareness and decreased stigma and fear about dementia.

Through the *Loss and Nourishment* book it gave voice to people experiencing the effects of dementia. The book became the 'heart' of the work and those involved in its creation overwhelmingly found it a positive experience.



Outside the installation.
Photograph by Leonie Van Eyke



Audience next to installation text.
Photograph by Leonie Van Eyke