

Making Time 2023: Imagining the future: where will creativity take us? - Transcript #2

Arts consultant and creative producer Wendy Martin

Wendy Martin: Thank you very much Mish.

Well first of all, I'd like to welcome everybody who's participating and, as Michelle has just told us, each of them is going to be doing a presentation and I will introduce them more deeply as we go. But starting here on my left is Neda Loh, Danielle Antaki who is now the CEO of CAN, Jack Collard, amazing leader, who I will introduce you to further in a minute, welcome Jack and then Pavan Kumar Hari, who's the music man who's going to be keeping us on track.

I wasn't going to say anything about myself but I think, listening to the last panel, I suppose, I arrived in Perth in 2015, to take on the role as artistic director of Perth Festival. And when I left here last year, I was the CEO of Community Arts Network. And I suppose that says something about my passions and my interests. But when I was listening to the conversation just now I was thinking about the fact that in my career, which began as a television arts producer, I've been given three big gifts.

So when I was a kid at school, actually, when I was 16, to answer Shenali's question, I wanted to be a television arts interviewer. So here I am living the dream [audience laughs]. And I did end up working in television, I moved from ABC to SBS. And I think that was the first gift that I was given, because suddenly, you had to think about the world and what Australia was through the lens of multiculturalism. And that was a gift.

The second gift I had was my second career, which began just after the Olympics, when I started working at Sydney Opera House, and in 2000, the report into the Stolen Generation, the Royal Commission, was handed down in a ceremony at the concert hall at Sydney Opera House. And Michael Lynch, who was then the CEO said, "This big white house is not just for white people," and as the first person in on this new team of programming I was asked to produce an Aboriginal Arts Festival. Nobody, 23 years later, would be asking [me], it would be totally inappropriate. But in 2000, I guess we were living in the same world we live in now but without the awareness that we [now have].

But what I did with that festival was bring in all the young art stars really. Rachel Perkins did a film festival, a guy called Jonathan Jones, an amazing Wiradjuri man who's one of our leading artists now, was an emerging arts practitioner. Anita Heiss, the feisty writer, ran the literary program. And Anita Heiss said to me, "I'll come and work with you, sister, at the Opera House, but on one condition, I'm your boss, you're not mine." And I was very obedient to her on all of this.

And then finally, I think the third gift that I was given was when I moved to London to work for the amazing Southbank Centre. And it was in the lead up to the Olympics, and the Southbank Centre had just been given the equivalent of a million dollars to host a disability arts festival at the Southbank Centre. So

I brought all that I learned, I suppose, from the amazing First Nations artists I work with, and really handed over the keys to Southbank Centre, to artists with disability and the experts from that sector.

And so when I arrived in Perth, I wanted to bring everything that I'd learned over the past 20 years. And really the most rewarding work for me was the community projects that we did.

Some of you might remember the Museum of Empathy when we listened, we walked a mile in somebody else's shoes and listened to their life story, or the incredible Museum of Water, and Sandy [McKendrick] here worked on that, where people were invited to give a personal story, in a liquid form, and to talk about what water meant to them, and 1000s and 1000s of people shared their stories.

And when I was thinking about what we're going to talk [about] today I realised really at the heart of the future is listening to each other's stories [recording ends].