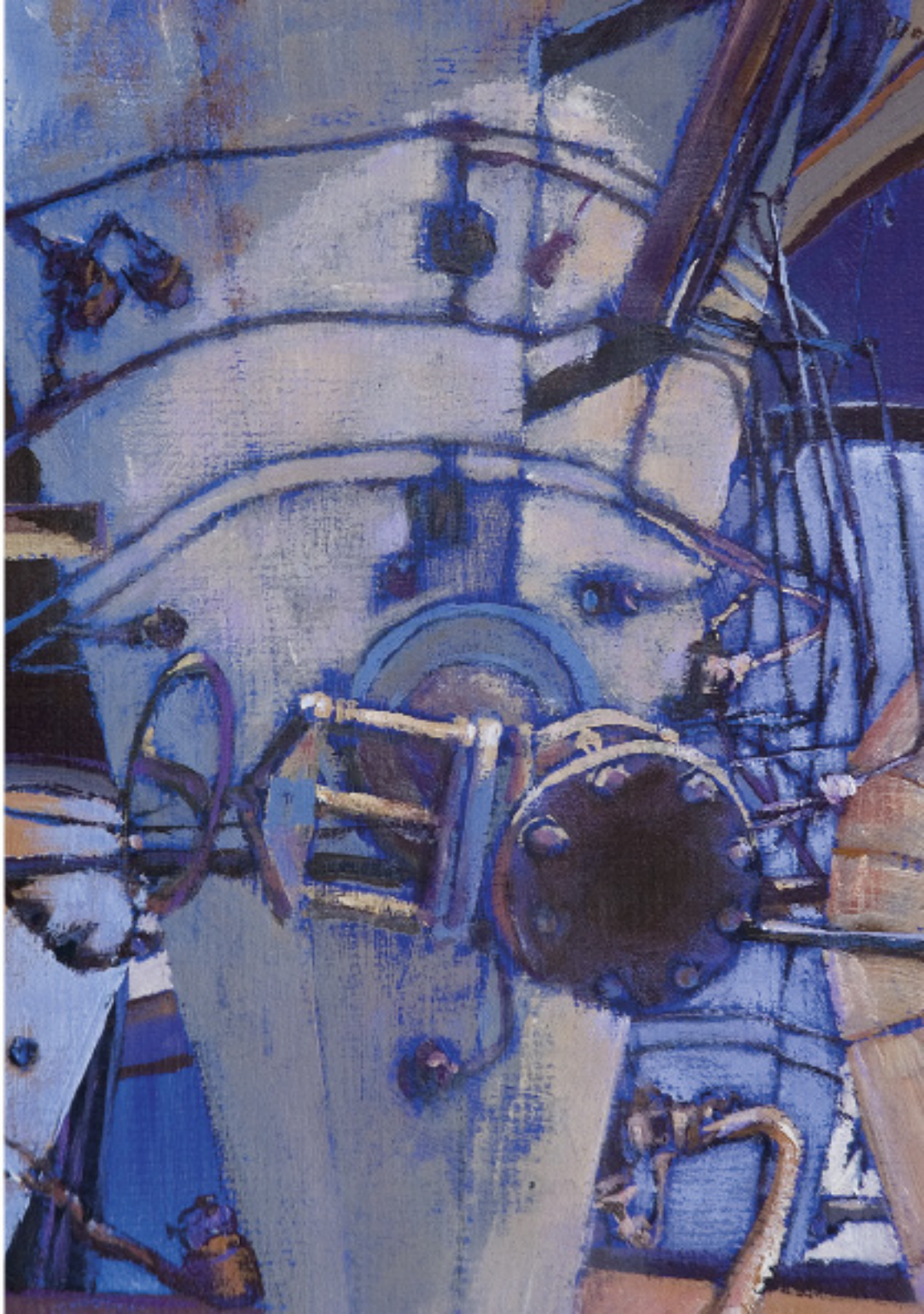


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WE'VE TRIED TO SQUEEZE AS MANY RESIDENCY EXPERIENCES AS WE CAN INTO THIS ISSUE. LET'S TAKE OFF WITH ONE OF SEVERAL PIECES GAIL ROBINSON HAS COMPILED FROM INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL ARTISTS. APPROPRIATELY IT IS WITH FREQUENT FLYER.

Champagne anyone?

By Gail Robinson

While **David Jones'** overseas travel experience began in 1977 when he studied at the Royal College of Art in London, the residency that changed everything came later. It was the *Australie Echange d'Artistes* which took him to France in 1988. "It was the most important residency I've done," he says. "It kicked off a lot of (invited) residencies for me."

His colleagues during the residency now read like a who's who in the art world and include Mike Parr, Bronwyn Oliver, and Bill Henson. But it wasn't all croissants and champagne. "I went through hell to make it work," he explains. "It was tough working flat-out, and communication difficulties meant safety issues in production couldn't easily be resolved. I learned a lot about the need to make things clear (with hosts) early."

Travel continues to be an important factor in David's practice. He spends three months a year overseas, and while at home experiences a lot of red dirt across the State. "Residencies for me are a real exchange of ideas,

dialogue, new experiences. I don't want to keep doing the same old thing, and cultural interpretations of my work can also be very surprising."

The time to be seriously considering residencies is early in your career, he believes.

"I think residencies are ideal for emerging artists. As a young artist it is important to look at any opportunities. It's the time to take a risk, stick your neck out. They are foot in the door stuff."

But he is keenly aware there are too few opportunities for emerging artists so has made plans, through an organisation he has set up with a small group of international artists, *Studio Australie*, to provide studio and accommodation space in an old silk factory in Saint Julien Molin Molette, south of Lyon.

"I'd like to make it available as a priority to self-funded emerging WA artists," he says, "because I think for too long we've been disadvantaged."

Artist: David Jones, *Green place with the red ants*, 1988

Living the lotto life

By Gail Robinson

An empty suitcase is a reciprocal promise. If you fill it with the necessities of survival in a foreign place, it will fill you with possibilities. Culture shock can resuscitate dying inspiration and may even stimulate fresh forms of practice.

But given that an artist usually needs more than t-shirts and toiletries to survive, what are the chances of a paid residency through the Australia Council or Asialink? A straw poll of artists and administrators around Perth reckon there's a snowball's chance. Given the statistics on the success rates of WA artists applying for residency funding, it appears they could be right. But all may not be as it seems.

The Australia Council's Visual Arts Program Manager, Joe Pascoe, was more than willing to run over the numbers. They show that since the Australia Council's inception in 1977, it has offered 671 residencies. WA artists picked up just 27 (or 4%).

In 2005 there were 31 places offered nationally. One of those went to a WA artist. (Richard Giblett went to New York.) Same again in 2006 from 33 places offered nationally. (The artistic team, D&K, went to Tokyo.) "It's a very competitive situation and there are between twenty and fifty artists applying for each studio, and only four spaces per studio," Joe explains.

While that sounds dire, a quick calculation reveals that an application actually has a possible one in five chance. Odds you'd be happy to bet back at the racetrack if you were trying to supplement your holiday fund, and way better than lotto.

But there is, Joe admits, a catch. "Success is based on how good the artist's work is at the time they apply – in other words is it seen as taking off. On top of that, an artist needs to be able to commit to three months away," he says. "So you might only have at one time in all Australia fifty or a hundred artists who are interested."

All the same, he adds, if there are fifty applications "you can be sure fifteen of them will be very, very good artists."

Or they'll be part of the Sydney art-scene. At least that's what some in the straw poll said. It was an issue worth raising. "It makes no difference whatsoever," Joe says. "The Visual Arts Board (who make the choices) is from all over Australia, it just happens to be physically located in Sydney. And given that the VAB includes peers and currently has two WA members – Ted Snell and Peter Bowles – how can there be bias?"

What about the influence of population spread? "Melbourne and Sydney make up two-thirds of the artistic population, but Sydney artists tend to put their applications in for new work grants," he says.

So if the competitive finger is to be pointed, it's got to be at Melbournians. They're keen to travel everywhere, Joe says, particularly Europe and America.

The funding picture painted by Asialink appears, on the surface, a little prettier. In the last sixteen years WA artists have received 18 out of 228 places offered nationally (7%) in visual arts and arts management. Better than the Australia Council, but considering WA is ten percent of the population we could still gain some ground.

We do seem to be trying, according to Asialink's Georgia Sedgwick. "In 2007 there was a significant rise in Visual Arts residency applications from WA artists, increasing from six the year before to fifteen," she says. "However, in relation to other states this number is still quite low."

Like the Australia Council, on average Asialink have selected one visual artist a year from WA to undertake a residency in Asia. (This year it was cross-media artist Alwin Reamillo in the Philippines.)

Having ruled out population bias then, perhaps it is just a case of not enough money to go around? Apparently not. "There is certainly capacity to fund more so we encourage all artists to apply," Georgia says.



Artist: Nigel Hewitt, *Unfolded Memory IV*

More money to go round, good odds, and still only two WA artists a year heading off on residencies through the major funding bodies. How can that be? The tentative Asialink answer is that "WA may not have been competitive compared to other states."

Does this imply that WA artists are not good enough to compete for funds on the Australian stage? Joe Pascoe is unreserved in his belief they are. "Look at the eras you've already celebrated in ceramics, craft and programs like Symbiotica," he says. "WA has its own stars."

This is why he thinks artists shouldn't underestimate residencies within the State. "WA has a sophisticated collector base and less burn-out by artists. Celebrate your success," he says. "People often think the market is somewhere else. Often it's right in front of them."

These local opportunities may be contributing to our low representation in the funding statistics, according to artist and former VAB representative, Stuart Elliott. "WA is very much advanced in terms of its public and private exhibition spaces and art touring networks...this might in some way lessen the dependence on (paid) residencies," he says.

His observation, based on recent eastern states and overseas experience, is that, "there seems to be a vigorous and ongoing culture of residencies everywhere but here." He agrees that this may be due to a culture of impossibility that has developed among local artists when it comes to applying for residencies through the major funding bodies.

continue



Artist: Stuart Elliott



It's hardly surprising, according to artist David Jones, who has chosen to base his career largely in Europe. "I was first involved in the Australian Sculpture Triennial in 1981 and at that time there was nothing here, it was like being in a total vacuum," he says. "It's still difficult to make that jump across the desert."

He believes that WA artists who want to work overseas shouldn't bother trying to make an Australian reputation. "When I am away I am an Australian artist – if I go east I am a West Australian artist," he says. "There are millions of opportunities internationally, and I think WA artists should keep looking west!"

As long as you're prepared to do-it-yourself, according to Nigel Hewitt, who has had his share of the idyllic western experience in

Italy as winner (twice) of the prestigious Mandorla prize. "It really comes down to – are you really good at filling out the application forms?" he says. "The extraordinary rigmarole certainly puts me off. In the end I figure if I put the time into a piece and sell it I'll get enough money to do it myself anyway."

That sentiment is echoed often by artists, and makes perfect sense for those who have commodity based work. But Nigel also raises the issue of "artists who do tremendously valuable work that can't be sold". (He is referring to French artist, Orlan, who was a recent resident at UWA's world acclaimed Symbiotica facility)

A local example of an artist who doesn't fit comfortably inside gallery walls is Alwin Reamillo, whose Philippines residency was funded this

year by Asialink. Not only is his work a good match between artist aims and funding body, but he managed to cut out some of the paperwork. "I'd tried for funding with ArtsWA but wasn't successful so when Asialink came up I tried the concept again," Alwin explains. "The writing and conceptual work of applications is difficult so I keep ideas in case I can use them again."

It's a system that works for him, and later in the newsletter there are examples to show how other artists hit the road with more than air in their wallets. But similar themes recur. Namely a solid practice, a keen eye when it comes to choosing the project and destination and a willingness to do the paperwork.

Whether it's worth packing is your call. But there is much to be gained, says Stuart Elliott, "especially for mid-career or hardworking artists who too often fall outside the more fashionable model of the 'young artist'. I know there are lots of really interesting artists who would benefit," he says, "some immeasurably."

Asialink's Boarding Pass:

Exploration of cultural ideas is important when it comes to Asialink grants.

Other things that will increase an applicants chances of success according to Georgia Sedgwick are "proposals that focus on how the residency will extend the artist's practice and why this is the right time in their career to undertake a residency overseas."

An Asialink residency only requires a one-page statement of intent, which "differs from the fully resolved project outlines and budgets of many other funding options".

A 'stand out' proposal is one that is "clear, jargon-free and with a solid rationale for the selection of host organisation/country."

Destination Australia Council:

The Visual Arts Board currently operates ten studio residencies in eight countries. Generally the recipient has three-months in an allocated studio/apartment.

Destinations go up and down in popularity and according to Joe Pascoe, the real lotto win is New York. "If you get picked for New York it can really mean something to your career," he says.

The Board provides a standard grant of \$10,000 to assist with travel and living costs, plus covers some incidentals like insurance.

Also, artists may apply for funds for a self-organised residency.

For further details on the studio program it is "strongly recommended" that you speak to a staff member at the VAB. The Studio Residency Program, Joe says, "remains one of the Board's most sought out opportunities amongst Australian artists".

Snow to Go

Jo Darbyshire shares the secrets that won her "an artist's dream-come-true" residency in Banff, Canada.

“ I'd heard about Banff eight years before I applied and just kept checking it on the website every year for a theme I could connect with. Then when I found one I downloaded the application and made a plan on how best to fulfil the things they asked for. I had a clear deadline to send the application to Canada in the time allotted.

“ I needed to find two referees (and I included their CVs as I knew they might not be known in Canada).

“ I did several drafts of my project aims and outcomes after doing a fair bit of research on the web about the Banff area. I asked other people to read these drafts and comment on anything that could be made clearer.

“ I chose the images I thought worked best to introduce my work and give an idea of where I wanted to take it and I made sure they were perfectly the size and format they asked for.

“ Then I worked out my finances. This particular residency sponsors half the cost of tuition and accommodation through their own donors but I needed to come up with the other half and the airfare. I looked at the Australia Council deadlines and realised I would have to apply for Skills and Arts Development money and send in that application well before I found out the results from Banff. The Australia Council however is used to this situation and said just tell them when I knew.

“ This is when I decided to enlarge my (possible!) journey and stay in New York for two months as well. I wrote to two people I knew about the possibility of development or voluntary work with them in New York. One offered me an opportunity and I was able to include a confirmation letter in my application to the Australia Council. I also wrote to as many people as possible about accommodation in New York. I nearly gave up on that one but luckily a friend of a friend was coming back to Australia for 6 weeks and I arranged to sub let her apartment very cheaply.

“ When I finally got the news from Banff that I had been accepted into the residency, I was pretty excited. It meant I could inform the Australia Council and start to plan my trip. The Australia Council grants are always competitive and I put a lot of time and effort into them as well but I knew I had a better chance of funding knowing I had been successful with Banff.

“ Even with the funding from the Australia Council I needed to save more money to fund my now gigantic trip and I worked hard to make work to exhibit and sell in a show in Melbourne before I went. I knew I needed at least \$5,000 to take with me, even just as a back up.

“ All up it took over a year in planning for the residency – and lots of help from other people. And yes – it was worth it! ”

For all the juicy details on the Banff experience, check out Jo's letters from Banff in the Residency section of the artsource website.

www.artsource.net.au

Jo on Brooklyn Bridge



Louise Bourgeois, New-York



Jo at Johnston Lake in
the Banff National Park
(photo: Barry Underwood)



Simon with Rundle mountain



Northern lights



Jo on Johnson Lake at night

Perfect hosts

By Gail Robinson

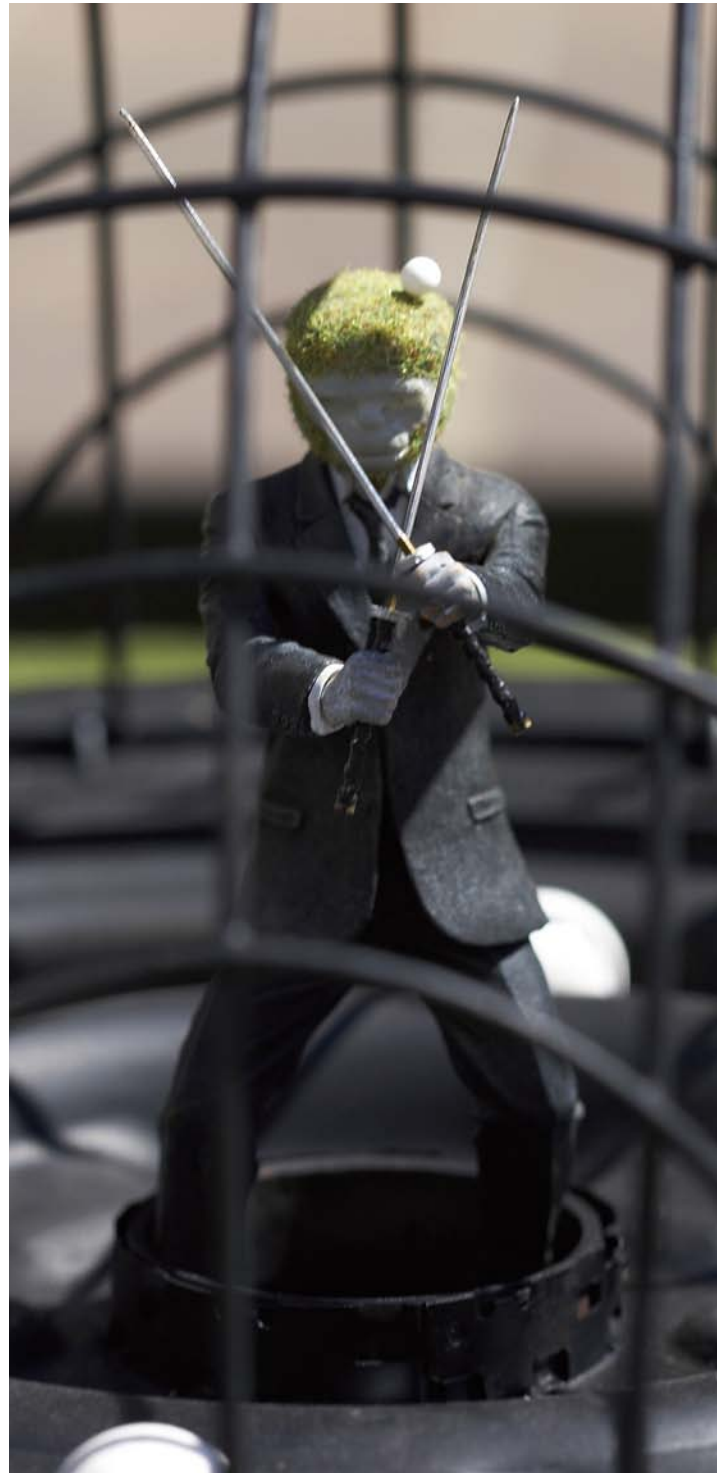
Artists are dirty, smelly and ruin the fixtures. So why would anyone want to grant them free run in a piece of their precious real estate?

It's a question that was explored by Stephanie Britton in Artlink (Vol 24, No 4) when members of the global 'hosts' organisation Res Artis held their biennial meeting in Australia a few years ago. Res Artis is a group of managers of facilities as diverse as a few rooms in private homes to full blown, multi-purpose arts centres. Her conclusion was that "the hosts felt strongly that the movement of artists around the world was a vital force in mutual understanding around the world, and not just a career move for practitioners".

This cultural exchange is at the root of many of WA's residency programs. Ceramicist Leon Pritchard was involved in Curtin's first official artist residency the year it started (as WAIT). "We brought Michael Cardew (ceramicist) out in 1968," he explains. "We were still pretty isolated in those days – to have someone who was pretty important got a tremendous response. It establishes standards to see someone who is a leader in their field talking and demonstrating with you. And it gave reassurance to people, support for directions they may have wanted to pursue that lay away from the English traditions."

It is a view supported by Marco Marcon, co-founder of Kellerberrin's renowned IASKA residency program. "Our objective is to invite 1/3 WA, 1/3 national and 1/3 international artists," he says. "It is a way of expanding art practice – to take them out of studios, out of their comfortable social circle where art is already appreciated and introduce them to a new culture. Most importantly the work needs a grounding and relationship with the place."

There are as many models for running residencies as there are residencies themselves.



Some hosts actively encourage artists not to think in terms of making physical objects for exhibition or sale and are disappointed if the artist spends the time doing more of what they do. Others feel that a residency should be used pragmatically to produce new work to exhibit at the end.

IASKA is a version of the latter. "It's all about new work," Marco explains. "The artist is practically employed by us. We provide the artist with a brief and enough time engaged in the reality of the local community to do the work. It's unlike residencies in beautiful historic centres or attached to a university, where artists are expected to get inspiration from the clouds out of their castle."

He admits this can be as confronting as it is inspiring. "We do tend to invite artists who enjoy working in this way. Even so, for international artists it is confronting at first but generally speaking they end up enthusiastic about the experience."

A residency with few expectations of the artist is one recently created by Guildford Grammar's Teacher-in-Charge, Adam Derums. Through a grant from the school he turned mezzanine space above his student's art room into a habitable artist studio, and has the intention of adding accommodation and a stipend to make it attractive to international artists. "I thought it would be an educational and enriching experience for the boys here, a bit like the university system," he explains.

"In terms of hard-nosed criteria, it's any workshops or interaction the artists are willing to provide. But my desire was to have a space where artists could work on their own work – there didn't need to be closure, it could just be exploratory work. My feeling was that if outcomes had to be met, there would be less chance of the boys seeing exciting and divergent work emerge."

So far two artists have occupied the space and Adam reports that the approach is working well. "We're very excited with the way it's unfolded – it's a subtle form of art education that models different ways artists live their life. It's an enriching experience for the boys, and the way they talk about it helps me to see how they're embedding it into their consciousness."

More Information:

WA: Check out the [artsourcesite](http://artsourcesite.com) website, click on residencies.

Internationally: ResArtis: www.resartis.org



Moora residency behind art shop & gallery



Albany residency at Mary Thomson House

(Opposite)
 Artist: Bennett Miller; *Golf Wars*, 3x3 Urban Art Project 2007
 Photo: Robert Frith / Acorn

Guildford Grammar School

British-based artist, Thurle Wright, recently completed a 3 month residency at Guildford Grammar School (GGS). She is the first artist to be based at GGS after Senior Art Master, Adam Derums, converted a large storage area into a studio space.

Thurle primarily works with paper and text. She transforms pages from books, atlases, dictionaries, and newspapers into small, fragile units and reconstructs them into structures and patterns, creating new meanings. This delicate, often repetitive and complex paper work stems from an interest in the systems and structures of language, in the ordering of knowledge, and in the storing and accessing words.

This is what Thurle had to say about the experience:

“It was an incredibly rare and valuable experience; a combination of time, space, light, concentration, youthful inquisitiveness and spontaneity ... I have no doubt it has enriched my work.

“To begin with I worried that it may be distracting working in one space with teaching going on, but I adapted quickly. It was grounding to hear the students chatting away as they worked below, and to feel their intense concentration. It can be very isolating working in a solitary studio and to have the ‘buzz’ of the classroom below brought the experience to life. It also made it convenient to interact with the students in a very natural way; they came up to see what I was doing and I made an effort to access my studio though their classroom, so being able to watch the progress of their work and encourage them. Strangely, I found some of the playfulness of the students’ language and attitudes filtering into my own work; that is a good thing.

“The main expectation was just to ‘be there’. Adam seemed very keen to instill in the students the idea that art is a serious business and wanted them to see a professional artist working over a sustained period. I was careful to show the students the planning stages of my work, the mistakes and frustrations as well as ‘finished product’. I gave some talks to the senior boys, showed images of my past work, and chatted to them regularly about their work. I did a workshop on figurative paper sculpture and helped with the life drawing classes.



Photo: Guildford Grammar School studio

There was very little formal or official requirement; most interaction being quite spontaneous and organic. Everyone was very respectful of my time and space, to the extent that sometimes I felt as though I should be doing more for them!

“I will take away the luxury of having had 3 months to simply play/ explore/experiment in any way, with no formal demands or deadlines or exhibitions to prepare for. It was such a valuable chance to collect a body of work and ideas; uninterrupted, uncritical time. Time to think and be myself. Most of all, a space larger and lighter than I have ever had to work in; something that has affected my work positively. I will remember the birds flocking across the windows of the studio every evening and the force of the rain against the glass louvers, the light, walks by the river, the sound of the boys laughing and teasing their teacher, their delight in coming to their art lessons, and their tentative curiosity towards ‘the artist upstairs’.

“Coming from London, where space is at a premium, the size of the studio allowed me to work more freely than I have before. The large studio space looked out onto uninterrupted bushland outside; I loved walking across the fields and by the river in the afternoons. I felt very free. This sense of space, light and freedom, as well as the humor of the boys, will hopefully add a new element to my work.

Holiday of a lifetime

Hans Arkeveld had doubts. Never mind the depth and commitment to a career that began in 1963. He still felt the application that resulted in a four month Australia Council residency in Barcelona in 1995 had no chance. He put it in anyway.



He chose Barcelona because he wanted to look at roadside shrines and to see woodcarvings and gilded work at the Catalonian Museum. As fate would have it, there were very few shrines and the Museum was closed. But it made no difference to Hans, who was blown away by the volume of Roman architecture and Catalonian art featured in the many other museums.

"It's just awesome," he explains over coffee nearly ten years later. "I got into a pattern of going to a museum or drawing on the street, then I'd go back and work on it in the flat."

Hans was also interested in the depth of history of the city. "It went right back to the Stone Age, and the Spanish had enormous energy in their ideas and their thinking," he says. "It affected the way I thought about what I was making."

Ten years later Hans says he is still feeding on that residency. "I've got drawings in my book I still want to finish."

His thinking too continues to be influenced by the observations he made about the lives of other cultures – their passion and commitment and the important signals about our values and the way we live.

"Barcelona was important because it fitted with issues that motivate me," he says. "Things like good and evil, manipulating thoughts from the way of thinking we're born into, the imbalance of wealth and power and suppression of the individual. I think the influence from that residency will be permanent."

Free to fly

A need to get away from the daily grind(er) was behind metal sculptor **Peter Graham**'s decision to organise his own residency in the USA in 2005. "I felt like I was stagnating a little and needed something to inspire me," he says.

His first challenge was finding the right location. "It's easy to do a residency as a painter; you can get locked up in a garret somewhere and paint, but as a sculptor you need a workshop and the machinery," he says. He settled eventually on Michigan and arranged to spend four weeks in an art metalworking school and gallery called Smartshop.

"The purpose was to facilitate an exchange of ideas, techniques and skills between myself and US metal artists and gauge a level of support for a metal working artists' exchange program between our cities."

Peter applied to ArtsWA for a \$3,000 ArtFlight grant. "It was a first time application for me, the paperwork has always put me off," he says, "and I always get the feeling that if I went off to dig a few holes (he used to work in geology) I could just pay for it. In this case though it was a fast response, that's why I tried for it. And I got support from artsource to write it up."

All up Peter estimates the trip cost him an extra \$7,000 in expenses, including accommodation, food and materials. There were some stressful moments in terms of personal conflicts in the workshop but Peter judges it a success overall. "It reinvigorated my work. I've always been big on experimentation, now I'm integrating mixed media. And to look at other people's art without daily pressure was really valuable."

During the residency Peter held an exhibition of his work and received positive feedback. He has maintained contact and returned, at his own expense, in 2006 to do some short courses. "Several artists have expressed an interest in visiting Perth and I have offered the use of my workshop should they do so," he says.

Artist above left: Hans Arkeveld, *Of Two Minds* (detail)

Holiday at home

It is her interest in engineering and a red-dirt reputation that led to **Angela Rossen's** invitation to be Artopia's inaugural Artist-in-Residence-in-Mines for Rio Tinto. We caught up with her after her first visit to the smelter.

"I went to the heart of the mine, in at the forge," she reports. "It's very dramatic, the pour of the molten metal. And it's quite a privilege to be there, because at mine sites they can't just have extra drongos hanging around."

Her involvement requires 40 hours presence across four sites and she is finding the expectations and possibilities at each site vary. "When I am not sketching it has mostly involved workshops with staff and at the end there will be a display of my work and that done by the workshop participants," she says. "But I am flexible so it's whatever comes up."

Which suits Angela perfectly. "I love this sort of residency because it is very short term. And I love the idea of involving people in art who wouldn't normally be involved or wouldn't go to a gallery."

"To get a foot in the door for any overseas residency, you need to be involved in the WA art scene. Anything where you can get shows and be written about. They don't care where in Australia you are showing, it's all Australia to them."

David Jones, artist



As well as acrylic works on paper Alex did three larger works on wood, and some papier maché, which he says are a shift in his practice. He is currently expanding on these, as well as sorting and cataloguing his photos, in his WA studio.

Photo: Alex Spremberg's studio in Basel

Opposite: Alwin Reamillo's piano

A break in routine

A recent recipient of the Basel residency, **Alex Spremberg** had been a practicing artist for 30 years when he applied. "Being selected was like a lottery win, it seemed so unlikely," he says.

The lift out of his routine was as invigorating for Alex as it was scary. "I really wanted to get a new perspective on my work, without the pressure of living," he says, adding that having no prescribed outcomes for the residency meant he could freely explore whatever he thought was interesting.

The first month was a time of "soul-searching", of experimentation and trying new things. As his studio practice often uses varnishes that can take a year or so to dry, he decided to make works on paper that he could take away. "I took a lot of photographs and did whatever came into my mind, and slowly some interest formed," he says.

Alex participated in the Regionale, a massive group show that spans several venues, and his work was shown in Germany. He traveled widely and saw a number of amazing exhibitions, all of which he found most inspiring. "I experienced works by artists that previously I could only see reproductions of in journals and catalogues," he says. "I believe it is of utmost importance for artists to experience works first hand."

Artist -in- transit



Artist Alwin Reamillo has chosen the life of 'Artist-in-Transit' he explains from the Pinnacles Gallery, Townsville, where he is their first artist-in-residence.

"All my residencies have been by chance, through people I know," he says of the time he has spent in the Philippines, Auckland, Japan and around WA. The residency process suits me well because of the nature of the work I do. It borders with communities and challenges spaces which is not in synch with the gallery system."

Alwin has just moved on from an Asialink residency that took him back to Manila, where he built a grand piano as part of

project designed to connect cities, cultures, arts communities and people.

"The project grounded me," Alwin says. "I grew up in a piano workshop – so many people putting so many components together to produce music. Now the piano is a dead industry in the Philippines so I had to track people down to do it. It made the old workshop hum for a few months."

Alwin is bringing the universal instrument to Fremantle in December as the last stage of the project.