You Winsome, You Lose Some

Home and hospitality in the Northern Rivers

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The Home Project was a three-year collaborative research project conducted in 2011–2013. It was established through a partnership between Northern Rivers Performing Arts (NORPA) and the School of Arts and Social Sciences (SASS) at Southern Cross University (SCU) in Lismore, New South Wales. A third partner, the Lismore Soup Kitchen, joined the project in 2012 and 2013, when activities revolved around the Winsome Hotel, a Heritage listed and iconic Australian pub that now offers low-cost daily lunches and a short-term accommodation service for marginalised men.

The Home Project's objective was to raise awareness of homelessness in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales through creative arts practice and community engagement activities. The broad project aims were to explore questions of home, homelessness and belonging in Northern Rivers' communities; to address the experiences of individuals affected by homelessness; and, where appropriate, to provide avenues for public dissemination of the stories of individuals who are or have been without a home. Being a collaborative exploration of a complex and sensitive issue, the project was conceived as an open-ended inquiry that would operate according to the principles of participatory action research and creative practice research. That is, in both thematic focus and practical activity the project was designed to be both iterative and emergent, with recurring evaluations ensuring that each year's activities built on the experiences and outcomes of those of the previous year.

This article discusses the activities undertaken in each year of the project, providing a case study of a community engaged research project involving collaboration between university staff and students, a performing arts organisation and a community service provider. In particular, we discuss the way in which the theme of 'hospitality' emerged, as both a theoretical and practical orientation for the project, through our engagement with the history and current operation of the Winsome Hotel. As a longstanding Lismore institution and a venue for live music that now operates as a soup kitchen and accommodation service, the Winsome Hotel is an architectural space designed to provide

commercial hospitality. At the same time though, in ceasing to operate as a pub and music venue and reorienting to deliver services for people without a home, a perception arose in the Lismore community that the Winsome had somehow turned its back on those in the community who had previously found *their* home at the Winsome.

The complexity of this apparent about-face and the social dynamics and reverberations it produced serve as a particularly cogent reminder of the awkward status homelessness carries as a social and cultural issue. In this article, we focus on the way in which the project's openness to emergent themes allowed us to target our objective of raising awareness of homelessness in the region through an investigation of the physical infrastructure of hospitality built into the Winsome Hotel.

SITUATING HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is a complex and difficult social issue, an imbroglio (Latour 1993) that sites the disadvantage and deprivation experienced by people without a home within a network of personal and social factors such as social inclusion and exclusion, social stigma, and mental health and wellbeing (Mulligan, Scanlon & Welch 2008; Secker 2009), and causal factors such as housing affordability, unemployment, poverty, domestic violence and mental illness (Homesslessness Australia 2013).

According to Homelessness Australia (2013), the peak body for homelessness issues and services in Australia, on any given night 1 in 200 people are homeless, with over 100 000 people without a home nationwide. New South Wales, being the most populous state, has the largest number of people without a home, around 28 000 (Homelessness Australia 2014). And notably for this project, the Northern Rivers area of New South Wales (the Australian Bureau of Statistics refers to this area as the 'Richmond–Tweed') has 6 per cent of the state's homeless people, but only 3 per cent of the state's population. Thus the Northern Rivers' rate of homelessness is roughly twice that of the state as a whole, and the rate of homelessness amongst Aboriginal and Torres State Islander people in the region is many times higher, making it a significant social issue for the region (Homelessness NSW 2006).

These statistical measures of homelessness are vital for gauging the scale and distribution of homelessness in urban and regional areas; however, they are not directed at understanding how homelessness is *experienced* and *perceived* by individuals and societies. This more material perspective calls on concepts such as social exclusion and inclusion to situate homelessness within a network of social relations and attitudes. 'Social exclusion' is a term which has been used in social policy internationally for many years, especially in the UK where a 'Social Exclusion Unit' was established in 1997 (Barraket 2005). Secker (2009, p. 5) argues that social exclusion can be understood as the failure of various systems which underpin modern society:

—the democratic and legal system, which promotes civic integration
—the labour market, which promotes economic integration
—the welfare state system, which promotes social integration
—the family and community system, which promotes interpersonal integration.

Clearly, many people without a home will suffer from various forms of social exclusion. Secker also argues that social inclusion is best understood not as the inverse of social exclusion but as a measure of how individuals feel accepted within social contexts. Where social exclusion is a structural problem, 'inclusion operates on an individual or group level and relates to the extent to which people are accepted and feel they belong within different social contexts' (Secker 2009, p. 5). Inclusion, then, is something that is *felt*, it has an affective dimension that questions of housing, civic or labour market integration will not necessarily address.

Similarly, the concept of stigma operates on an affective and attitudinal level. Stigma arises from the effects of social practices aimed at marking certain populations, such as poor people or criminals, with the 'marks of shame' (Phelan et al. 1997, p. 323). Such intentional and public stigmatising practices are designed to demarcate social boundaries and hierarchies, differentiating those who conform to cultural norms from those who do not (Goffman 1968). The corollary to these public and visible technologies of shame is the effect this public shaming has on the attitudes and behaviours of people in society. As Phelan et al. (1997, p. 325) note, stigma normalises discriminatory practices and justifies the existing social order by shifting responsibility for disadvantage to the individual. Thus, while compassion for the homeless is widely felt, people without a home are also frequently considered lazy and irresponsible, as having brought their situation upon themselves (Link et al. 1995).

People without a home suffer various forms of social exclusion and stigma. Stigma is cumulative and associative – people are stigmatised for many different reasons, and people without a home are frequently subject to the stigma attached to homelessness, but also to mental illness, alcohol or drug problems, criminality, or ethnic minorities (Link et al. 1995). Additionally, Gronda (2009) argues that stigma can also prevent people from accessing supportive social services and networks and conversely can lock people into destructive social situations. Thus stigma operates as both a mechanism of social exclusion and as a kind of social pressure or inertia, keeping individuals in their current situation and preventing change.

A further concept useful in framing the affective dimension of homelessness is the notion of place and related notions of place attachment, place identity and sense of belonging. These concepts, which are addressed across a range of disciplines such as social psychology, human geography and sociology, all explore the relationship between people and the places they inhabit, the bonds that form between people and place, and the values and meanings

people derive from an attachment to place. People without a home are frequently denied access to the stability and security that place attachment can provide – security both in the sense of physical shelter and in terms of a stable sense of self, a sense of continuity of identity (Garbutt 2011; Scannell & Gifford 2010). The mobility required of the homeless, the way they are frequently treated as a 'problem' of public space which must be always moved on and kept from sight (Kawash 1998), ensures that people without a home do not get access to the positive benefits of attachment to place – the individual and collective meaning-making that can occur when people are able to form bonds to specific places (Cresswell 2014). Addressing the dislocation of homelessness in the Northern Rivers, then, involved exploring how people find meaning and identity in the places important to them and communicating this to the wider community.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND DISCUSSION

Homelessness is an issue that scales right from the very concrete experience of material existence up to the much more abstract sphere of public policy, and *addressing* homelessness requires responses that are appropriately positioned on this scale. At the same time as homelessness is something that is experienced by individuals, it is also a social justice problem for society, for towns and cities which seek to house and support the homeless, and for governments which must likewise provide economic support as well as policy directed at reducing homelessness within the nation.

For an arts-based university department and a performing arts organisation to seek to influence the concrete and infrastructural aspects of homelessness services, such as housing, health and service provision and the policies underpinning these services, would be an ineffective use of the capacities of creative arts practice. The more affective and attitudinal realm of the issue, however, is much more within the purview of the creative arts; these more personal factors of how people feel and what they think delineate two key potentialities of creative arts practice, both in terms of the process of being creative and in terms of the effect of apprehending the outcome. Participation in the arts is understood to 'have a positive effect on the way people feel, which improves personal wellbeing' (Barraket 2005, p. 8). A key aspect of this positive effect is the active, practical nature of creative arts – they require individuals to engage with new knowledge, to learn new skills and to collaborate with others, and in that sense to produce change within their lives and contribute to social inclusion (Mulligan, Scanlon & Welch 2008). While a simple cause–effect relationship between arts activities and social outcomes is difficult to observe because of the diffuse and personal nature of the factors involved, producing the *capacity* for change, creating 'the conditions in which individuals and groups of people can renegotiate the terms of their involvement in their local

communities', is where community engaged creative arts practice can make the greatest contribution (Mulligan, Scanlon & Welch 2008, p. 52).

The Home Project's objective of raising awareness of homelessness, with its correlative aims of exploring the experiences and stories of people without a home, arose out of the need to focus on the affective and attitudinal dimensions of homelessness. Creative activity is not only a process that can be personally beneficial, it is also a mechanism of public communication, a 'powerful vehicle for community education around public health issues' (Barraket 2005, p. 8). The combination of the social change agenda of participatory action research and its iterative structure (Greenwood & Levin 1998), together with the open-ended, processual and publicly visible nature of creative arts activities, allowed the project partners to design The Home Project to cumulatively raise awareness of homelessness through creative activities over three years.

As university researchers engaging with various communities – firstly with NORPA, a community performing arts organisation, and secondly with the Lismore Soup Kitchen, Winsome Hotel and the various communities and populations that circulate through the building – we were cognisant of the need to marry our own interests as creative artists and cultural theorists with the needs and interests of the various community members. In each phase of the project we sought to explore ideas that arose from the literature on homelessness and related social issues. Through the processes of participatory action research, our conceptual orientation found material and active form through community engagement and creative practice (Gustavsen 2001). It was the emergent nature of creative practice research processes that guided us in our endeavours. That is, while we went about the activities for each year with a certain structural sense of where our activities would be focused and located, we did not know what the outcomes of each process would be other than that they would be publicly displayed or performed, and so the process was designed to allow for emergent factors to direct the development of each phase of the project.

In this section of the article, we will outline the activities conducted in each year of the project and discuss the themes that gradually emerged over the full duration of the project.

2011: A Place for Everything

For the first phase of The Home Project, the project partners decided to focus initial activities during National Homeless Persons Week (NHPW) in August in order to, firstly, produce materials for a public exhibition later in the year, and secondly, develop relationships with individuals and stakeholders associated with housing services and homelessness in the Lismore area. Early on in this process, we held a public forum to seek input into the project and invited representatives of the many social service organisations in the region who work with people without a home;

while only a small percentage of invitees attended, crucially we did get interest and advice from representatives of the Lismore Soup Kitchen and Winsome Hotel, as well as from Peter Lehner, the choirmaster for the Winsome Choir, which is a choir made up of people who frequent the Winsome Hotel for meals. Given the sensitivity of the notion of homelessness, developing a sense of trust with the communities we engage with has been a central aspect of the project throughout its development. We saw it as vital that, in this first year of the project, we develop a solid basis of community trust and understanding on which we could build in subsequent years (Jermyn 2001).

With this proviso in mind, the project partners agreed to treat this first year as exploratory and thus to focus on concepts *bordering* homelessness rather than on homelessness itself; we wanted to bring to the fore some of the nuance that is often hidden within or obscured by the stigma of homelessness (Gilbert 2001; Phelan et al. 1997). During creative development meetings which were held with the project partners and the students who had agreed to be involved, the underpinning concepts for the NHPW activities were devised and developed. NORPA's program for new work, 'Generator', of which The Home Project formed part, focuses on creating theatrical work that is both engaging and relevant to the diverse communities of the Northern Rivers. Artistic Director Julian Louis was instrumental in suggesting creative frameworks for the exploration and acted as provocateur to the students and researchers working on the project. We decided to explore individual and community sentiment around notions of home, place and belonging, ideally providing a series of creative spaces for people to think about their own sense of belonging in this region or in others.

In creative and planning meetings, NORPA's site-specific and interactive theatre productions were a key influence on our approach. Recent NORPA projects had included the creation of a site-based work, *Railway Wonderland*, set in Lismore's disused railway station, and a circus show, *Open House*, set in a real house in North Lismore (NORPA 2011, 2012). Particular inspiration was derived from the Democratic Set project by Geelong's Back to Back Theatre. The Democratic Set revolves around a mobile theatre set – a shipping container – in which community members are filmed while performing their response to a given theme or question. Established as a residency at various locations (in Australia and internationally), the project is based on the belief that 'all people are in principle equal, and should enjoy equal social, political and economic rights and opportunities' (Back to Back Theatre 2014). The project enables both an individual address of the concepts being explored and a community response, through the summing of individual performances – in this way employing repetition and difference to provide a 'snapshot' of community sentiment.

On the basis of our desire to produce a snapshot of community sentiment regarding home and belonging, three different activities were designed to produce audiovisual materials

for later exhibition. These activities and the subsequent exhibition, *A Place for Everything*, were centred around the university's gallery space, a small shopfront that had been converted into the SCU next Art Gallery, located in the Lismore CBD. The choice of such a central location for NHPW activities (rather than inviting participants to come to the SCU Lismore campus situated a few kilometres from the CBD) was based on the need to take the project to the centre of community activity. The three activities conducted are described below.

Up Against It

In this activity, members of the Winsome Choir were filmed performing against the rear wall of the SCU next Art Gallery. Choirmaster Peter Lehner worked with the choir to devise scenarios for their performance, in which they variously sang, chanted, told stories, enacted skits, or simply regarded the camera in silence. Footage from the Winsome Choir's performances was later edited and projected life-size against the rear wall of the gallery at nighttime during the exhibition period, so that it 'mapped' directly back onto the space it was filmed in (see Figure 1). The result was the appearance of a group of figures 'inhabiting' the space while no one else was around. This project thus reflected on notions of public visibility and invisibility, producing a kind of nocturnal after-image of urban space.
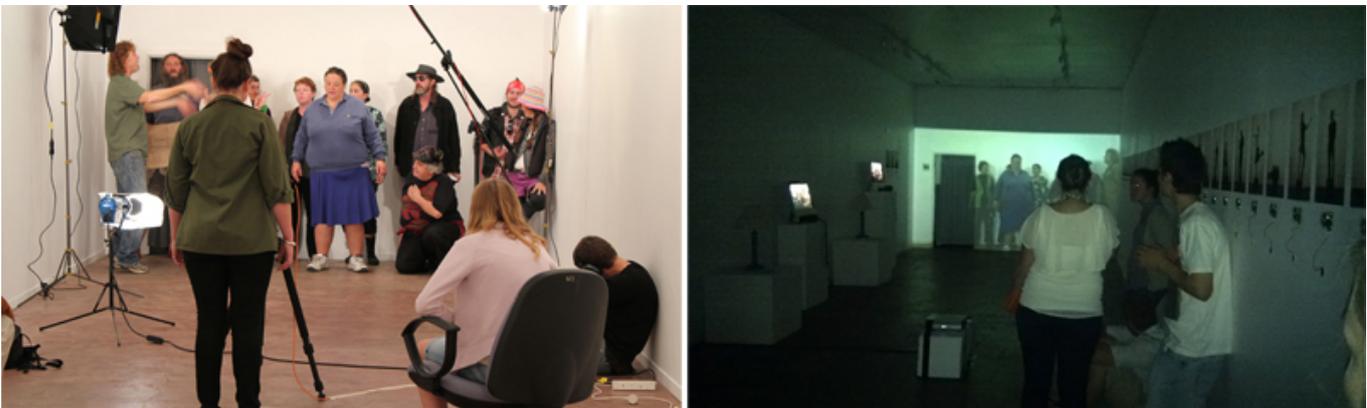
Figure 1: Filming and projecting 'Up Against It'

Where You Stand

In this activity, participants were asked: 'If you had a statue made in your honour, what would it look like and where would it be placed?' Participants were asked to stand on a plinth and have their photo taken, posing as the statue they envisioned. They were then recorded telling an interviewer about the place they would like their statue to be installed in. Responses to the question varied from local to specific places ('in my home in Lismore', 'under the two bridges that come into Lismore over South', 'in the Council's office') to other Australian and international locations ('in Finland near the northern lights', 'in Rome next to the Colosseum') or non-specific locations with personal resonance ('under a jacaranda tree', 'in the ether'). The 'Where You Stand' photos were printed on adhesive fabric and displayed in a row running the length of the gallery, each photo accompanied by an interactive microcomputer

that played the matching audio story (see Figure 2). This project was also edited together for inclusion in an ABC Open story written by one of the project's student participants (see Lewers 2011).

Together, these photos and audio recordings operate as an exploration of place attachment and belonging, requiring participants to think not only of places that are special to them personally, but also to *see* themselves in those places, publicly visible and permanent. This activity, then, was about visibility and value, designed to produce a kind of 'virtual empowerment'. As many commentators (Goffman 1968; Kawash 1998; Phelan et al. 1997) note, visibility is a trope or recurrent theme within homelessness – the homeless are publicly visible because of their lack of access to private space and their often untidy appearance, likewise often as a result of a lack of access to private space (Kawash 1998). This form of visibility feeds the stigmatisation of the homeless; while statistically – in Australia at least – there are more people without a home staying with friends or relatives than sleeping rough on the streets (Homelessness Australia 2013), the heightened visibility of a small number of homeless people crowds out representation or consideration of the 'hidden homeless'. Thus, while it is in part correct to suggest that homelessness is a 'visible problem', it is more correct to suggest that homelessness involves a *problem of visibility*, a problematisation of *being visible in public*. Asking people 'if a statue was made in your honour, what would it look like and where would it be placed?' is necessarily to propose that every person is visible, valued and *included* within a community; it creates a virtual space in which each of us is a public figure, whose identity and memory and thus attachment to place lives on in public space after we are gone.

Figure 2: Shooting and exhibiting 'Where You Stand'

Lounging Around

For this part of the project, an outdoor lounge was set up in the laneway beside the gallery and turned into a film set (see Figure 3). Participants – both passers-by and invitees – were asked a series of questions about home, place and belonging, which were later edited into short vox-pop interview sequences (see http://vimeo. com/32238774 for one of the edited 'Lounging Around' segments).

Figure 3: The laneway film set for 'Lounging Around'

This project benefited from snowball sampling of participants: for example, one couple who took part were inspired by the opportunity to relate their feelings of belonging to the region, and subsequently sought out a friend of theirs, a refugee from Kenya, and brought him to the laneway to tell his story. The project attracted a wide variety of responses to the notions of place and belonging: from Indigenous participants who spoke of home and Country to refugee participants who had found a home in Lismore after years in refugee camps. Notions of 'home' spanned everything from the simple safety of four solid walls to the presence of family, friends and community, and a feeling for the region and the natural landscape.

The Home Project's 2011 phase was designed to canvas the community's relationship to notions of home and place and to highlight the wide range of understandings and experiences of these notions in the community. We used multiple media forms to create a snapshot of the many and varied perspectives on home in Lismore's multicultural community, and in terms of our desire to raise awareness of issues relating to homelessness in the region, focused on the question of visibility in relation to homelessness. We sought to get both participants and audiences to reflect on their sense of belonging *to* and *in* a place, their attachment to specific places and why they felt such attachment.

2012: Winsome Stories
In evaluating the outcomes from the 2011 phase, and thinking about how we could build on this phase in 2012, we saw that, firstly, we had produced and exhibited a number of creative outcomes and engaged with hundreds of people in the process, but that more crucially we had also made a step towards building trust and familiarity with service providers and community members experiencing or working in homelessness. Importantly, the most concerted community response was from the members of the Winsome Choir, who through their enthusiasm for performance and the mentorship of Peter Lehner became very involved in all aspects of the 2011 project.

Thinking about how we could continue to build this relationship while raising awareness of homelessness led the project partners to think about the role the Winsome Hotel could play in the future of the project. It was the Winsome Hotel's dual nature as both a multifaceted social service and an imposing physical infrastructure or architecture that guided us in this thinking. The conversion of the Winsome from a pub and music venue to a soup kitchen and accommodation service had been widely publicised in 2008–2009, accompanied by strong community sentiment, including considerable opposition. Newspaper stories and letters to the editor from this period record both the excitement of Lismore Soup Kitchen volunteers and associates about moving to new premises and the wariness of community residents who feared an increase of crime and disorder through having a homeless service on their doorstep. The 'stigma' of homelessness, then – homelessness as a *visible* problem subject to a *cumulative* fear that links homelessness to the stigma of criminality and mental illness – was very much present in the debates around the Winsome Hotel's new role (Phelan et al. 1997). Indeed, what occurred was that the stigma of homelessness was transferred from the homeless per se to the building itself. In terms of place attachment, we can see this as a complication of the Winsome's 'place identity' (Jorgensen & Stedman 2001), a kind of contestation of what the Winsome was to mean to each community.

When discussing this issue with the President of the Lismore Soup Kitchen, Mieke Bell, she noted explicitly the need to demonstrate to the Lismore community that the Winsome was still a community asset and that its doors were open to everybody in the community and not just those self-evidently 'in need'. In a sense, this perspective allowed our objective of 'raising awareness of homelessness' to be refined and to incorporate the idea of normalising homelessness through demonstrating to the Lismore community that the Winsome had not become off limits; destigmatising the Winsome Hotel could essentially destigmatise homelessness 'by stealth'.

Addressing the Winsome Hotel as a cipher for thinking through the complexity of homelessness as an individual and social issue led us firstly to explore the history of the hotel. The Winsome is situated at the junction of two rivers, the Richmond and the Wilson, and it sits across the Richmond River from the Lismore CBD. The current building, which achieved Heritage listing in 1980, was built in the 1920s, but a pub has stood on the same site since the 1880s when the Junction Hotel was built (see Figure 4). Being situated across the river from the Lismore CBD, the hotel functioned in its early days as a final stop for anyone travelling to Lismore from the north. Newspaper advertisements from the late 1800s highlight the 'commodious' nature of the hotel and its ample stables.

Figure 4: The Junction Hotel c. 1890 (image courtesy Richmond River Historical Society)

We conducted filmed interviews firstly with people involved in the Winsome's current manifestation – soup kitchen volunteers, members of the Winsome Choir and directors of services at the Winsome. Secondly, we interviewed people who had lived or worked at the Winsome in its previous incarnations; we spoke to, for example, a woman who had worked as a barmaid there in the 1950s and 60s, a representative of the Tropical Fruits organisation who had made the Winsome the centre for gay and lesbian communities in the 1990s and early 2000s, and the venue operators who had run the Winsome as a live music venue up until its closing in 2009.

All interviewees spoke about the welcoming nature of the hotel, its conviviality, the warmth of its interiors, the grandness of its architecture and the special feeling this conferred on visitors to the hotel; this sense of both regality and community familiarity is also evidenced in the way the hotel is referred to in newspaper stories through the 2000s, where it is referred to as the 'duchess' or 'grand lady' of Lismore (Cousins 2007; Turnbull 2005) (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: The Winsome Hotel c. 1930 (image courtesy Richmond River Historical Society)

Most importantly for this project, though, was the sense that emerged from interviews, particularly with representatives of the live music and gay and lesbian scenes, that the Winsome was a place for the underdog – for the outcast, the outsider. Being over the river from Lismore proper, it was on 'the wrong side of the tracks' and functioned as a gateway to North Lismore – where the likelihood of floods had kept rents cheap and ensured a sizeable artistic and alternative community – and onwards to places like Nimbin, a centre for alternative cultures in the Northern Rivers. While some interviewees lamented the loss of the Winsome as a live music venue, and indicated that this sentiment was still widespread in the community, they also recognised the appropriateness of turning the Winsome, with its architecture and history of welcoming all who crossed its threshold, into a service for people without a home. What emerged from the interviews, then, was the sense that, while the outward role of the Winsome in the community had changed, its essence as a space for the provision of hospitality to whoever may come through its doors had remained the same. Here we need to acknowledge the concept of universal hospitality, hospitality in its broadest sense, of an openness to whoever and whatever may come (Derrida 2001).

Having conducted these interviews, as well as archival searches, the project partners decided to present the project as a research presentation, an evening in which some of the stories of the Winsome could be told and the past could be brought into alignment with the present. We produced what could be termed an 'expanded documentary'. Drawing on the tradition of 'expanded cinema' (see Youngblood 1970), we presented our research as a mixture of live video mixing of interview footage, live music from the Winsome Choir (now named the Bridge St Choir) and theatrical recitations by choir members of key 'headlines' or moments in the Winsome's history.

This presentation was widely publicised and held alongside a 'Winsome Café' evening where soup kitchen volunteers ran the Winsome as a restaurant open to the public. In this way, we sought to achieve the dual aim of demonstrating to the Lismore community that the Winsome was still 'open for business' to the broad community and not just to people without a home, and that its current manifestation was really not much different from what it had been in the past. In the interviews and historical materials we presented, the key theme underlying this presentation was the *continuity* of hospitality; that the Winsome had always been a site, both in practice and material design, for the provision of hospitality, and that the services it now offered were likewise entwined with the complex tradition and social function of hospitality.

2013: You Winsome You Lose Some

Given NORPA's expertise in theatrical performance and production, the 2012 presentation had been a useful test in which to explore the Winsome's capacity as a venue for live performance.

As indicated above, a large part of the Winsome Hotel's effect on visitors lies in the grandeur of its architecture. It has wide balconies running around the front of the building and a balcony and courtyard area at the back, as well as numerous interior spaces, making it the perfect environment for a multifaceted performance and exhibition event designed to tell multiple stories in different ways. In evaluating the 2012 iteration of the project, the project partners agreed that, having explored the history of the hotel as well as tested its theatrical potential, we were ready to work towards a much more fulsome and professional public outcome, and that the Winsome Hotel would once again serve to focus the project both thematically and materially.

In discussions between SCU researchers, NORPA and the Lismore Soup Kitchen staff, the idea of an artist-in-residence program emerged as a way of both engaging Winsome residents and day users in creative processes and working towards a public outcome that would provide a suitable challenge for participants (Barraket 2005, p. 13). The impetus for conducting an artist-in-residence program was twofold. Firstly, we saw it as a way to explore the capacity of creative arts activity to improve individual and community health and wellbeing. While the previous two years had involved a number of creative activities and had also involved the Winsome Choir – who are living testament to the contribution of collective creative activity to personal empowerment – this was the first time in the project that we would be working with specific groups of people who were not necessarily already involved in creative practices.

The evidence for the capacity of arts activities to improve personal and community health and wellbeing is strong. While the evaluation of community arts processes is often difficult owing to the 'soft' nature of the factors involved, widespread evidence supports the idea that engaging in creative arts practices *feels* good for participants and, further, that the collaborative nature of community arts endeavours ensures that this feeling is communal and can contribute to social inclusion and social capital (Lowe 2000; Mills & Brown 2004, p. 106; Mulligan, Scanlon & Welch 2008). Our desire with this project was that the artists in residence would be able to facilitate participants' explorations of new or unfamiliar art forms, highlighting the positive value of a sense of discovery and of newness, and also of the *risk* of trying something new, of rising to and meeting an active challenge (Barraket 2005, p. 13).

Secondly, the other core idea funding the artist-in-residence model was that, in working towards and presenting a performative 'showing' of work arising from the artist-in-residence workshops, residents and day users of the Winsome Hotel who had engaged with these workshops would be able to reverse their usual role of 'guests' of the hotel and become 'hosts' for the night. Hospitality is defined by relations between host and guest. Lashley and Morrison (2000) argue that, to be effective, hospitality requires the guest to feel that the host is being hospitable through feelings of generosity,

a desire to please and a genuine regard for the guest as an individual. Critically, hospitality also implies reciprocity, which is an understanding that, while I may be the guest on this occasion, in subsequent meetings I will be the host. Derrida (2000) theorised hospitality as the binary opposite of tolerance, because tolerance was always at the discretion of the host. In a world where the homeless or other subjects are merely tolerated, the host is always the host, and the guest is always the guest – often an unwanted or uninvited one. 'Indeed, tolerance is first of all a form of charity. A Christian charity' (Derrida, cited in Borradori 2003, p. 16). Given that understanding of hospitality, this iteration of The Home Project worked to create a sense of personal efficacy in the residents of the Winsome by requiring them to function as hosts for a final night 'showing' of the artists-in-residence program.

Hospitality is also a cultural practice that operates in the private, the social and the commercial domains (Lashley & Morrison 2000). The Winsome Hotel provided this research project with a unique opportunity to analyse links between these three domains of hospitality, in order to better understand how these domain considerations of hospitality address various problematics associated with homelessness. Critically, there is no domain consideration of hospitality where notions of the private, the social and the commercial do not overlap. This iteration of The Home Project understood the Winsome Hotel as an architectural space that was originally designed to provision commercial hospitality to paying customers in the form of meals from the commercial kitchen, accommodation in the bedrooms and bathrooms on the top floors of the hotel, and refreshments in the bar downstairs. All hotels are designed to operate as a form of commercial hospitality. In its current iteration, however, the Winsome does not serve alcohol, and has transformed the bar area into a café that serves coffee and snacks to visitors and guests. Commerce and profit, which are the central tenets of the commercial domain, are not the reason the Winsome currently functions, in that its primary aim is to address the social issue of homelessness. In this way, the commercial architecture of the hospitality industry is being deployed at the Winsome to address a complex social issue. And despite not functioning around notions of profit and loss, the building, and its staff and volunteers, continue to provision hospitality in much the same way that the hotel has always done.

Further to this, in considering how the private domain of hospitality intersects with the commercial/social domains of hospitality at the Winsome, the notion of 'home', or of what it means to be housed, is generally understood as a place where families and/or individual subjects sleep, eat and practise hospitality amongst themselves. Thus The Home Project theorised home as a space and place where hospitality is provisioned and received by hosts and guests. The Home Project's inversion of guest and host relations on the final night of the artist-in-residence program, whereby the formally homeless 'guests' of the Winsome

functioned as 'hosts' for the night, was designed to highlight how the cultural practices and architectural spaces of hospitality can equal notions of what it means *to be* home and *to have* a home.

As Barraket (2005, p. 13) notes, community arts activities are most effective when established artists are involved in engaging and motivating participants. NORPA engaged a project director, Bronwyn Purvis, and selected a group of local artists from a range of disciplines – musician Jamie Birrell, visual artist Karla Dickens, and writer and chef Jim Hearn, and Peter Lehner was again involved as choirmaster for the Bridge St Choir. Each artist was employed to conduct activities at the Winsome Hotel for four weeks, during which time they would work with Winsome residents and day users to produce art or performance ideas which could be presented at a public showing later in the year. Additionally, Jim Hearn worked with residents on professional food preparation and kitchen etiquette in preparation for the public event, where the residents would become hosts for the evening and welcome community guests to the building with a meal.

These activities culminated in a performance and exhibition event in December 2013 (see www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_RO2Hk22eY for video documentation of The Home Project's 2013 manifestation). The event was developed over the four preceding months during artist-in-residence meetings held at NORPA in Lismore. The artistic director of NORPA, Julian Louis, and the General Manager of NORPA, Emily Berry, were keen for the evening to be both a showing and a performance of both the artist-in-residence program and the Winsome Hotel more generally. Given NORPA is a performing arts organisation which generally works with theatrical scripts, actors, stages, musicians and designers, participants were all aware of not wanting to simply 'aestheticise' homelessness by somehow re-presenting what already existed at the Winsome. This early problematic was overcome by maintaining a focus on hospitality, rather than homelessness, and by highlighting how hospitality can be both theorised and provisioned as a response, and even an initial 'solution', to homelessness. This is not to suggest there is not a complex web of individual and social/cultural reasons that lead people to finding themselves without a place to call home, but rather indicates the desire this research project had to highlight that what people without a home lack is a place to call home, and what functions in home-like places are various modes of hospitality that address the needs of the human body.

In this way, the project aimed to reveal how hospitality, rather than homelessness, functioned at the Winsome. Given that decision, the aim of the project involved thinking about how the residents and day users of the Winsome could function as hosts during the showing of the artist-in-residence program to the 150 invited guests from the city of Lismore. Planning and cooking a dinner for people who attended the showing became a central concern during the final month of The Home Project, for which

residents worked with chef Jim Hearn to plan and prepare a menu for the evening. Julian Louis and Bronwyn Purvis worked with Indigenous actor, Mitch King, on performing a reading of poetry that evolved out of the writing workshops, as well as with sound artist Jamie Birrell to overlay soundscapes with recordings of residents' stories about life on the street. Karla Dickens, who is a highly regarded and widely collected Indigenous artist, hung a large sculptural exhibition that repurposed large wire birdcages and innerspring mattresses (see Figure 6). NORPA technicians created lighting and AV effects for Karla's exhibition, which during the evening of the showing silhouetted both the wire sculptures and key words of Karla's inquiry against the brick wall of the Winsome. The Bridge St Choir also presented songs on the evening, as did Jamie Birrell's Winsome band, which was made up of residents who could play musical instruments.

Figure 6: Karla Dickens' installation (photo courtesy Karla Dickens ©)

Guests on the evening gathered in a space outside the Winsome, where the Bridge St Choir performed a song, and were then led through various sites within the Winsome in order that guests could experience the results of the artist-in-residence program. The mapping of the guests' movements through various architectural spaces of the Winsome, each of which highlighted a different outcome of the previous four months of work, ended in the back garden where an outdoor Thai barbecue dinner was served by Jim Hearn, Winsome residents and volunteers. The provisioning of food and drink is central to any understanding of what hospitality means. Lashley and Morrison (2000) argue that, fundamentally, the act of contributing to and sharing in the collective food supply are the foundations of obligations and rights which underpin hospitality. And it was this final act of the artist-in-residence program, of the formerly 'homeless' residents of the Winsome Hotel functioning as hosts by provisioning food and drink to the invited guests of the region, which enabled participants to gain some sense of agency through their participation in The Home Project.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

As we have noted above, we focused on the Winsome as a kind of cipher for the issues surrounding homelessness, in an attempt to gain greater traction and to link homelessness to a related issue and cause felt very strongly in the community. The love the Lismore community felt for the Winsome, and the loss they felt when it ceased operating as a venue for live music and parties, constituted a kind of homelessness for the community members, a complication of place identity and attachment. Focusing our activities on the Winsome allowed us to highlight the broader issue of homelessness by tapping into a pre-existing locus of community sentiment. It enabled us to unpack and communicate the stories of people without a home within the context of a kind of 'homecoming' where the Lismore community was welcomed back to the Winsome and the complication of the Winsome's identity in the community was resolved.

The principles of participatory action research, and creative arts practice, were central to the unfolding and success of this project. The openness and emergent nature of this method and practice allowed the project to develop according to its own internal logic; the regular evaluation sessions held by all project partners ensured that the project was responsive to the ideas and experiences of participants and stakeholders on an ongoing basis. The broad emphasis on place and belonging that we started with became more finely honed as the project went on, turning to focus on the Winsome and the notion of hospitality as instantiations of these broader concepts. Thus it was through the emergent notion of hospitality, and the inversion of the roles of guest and host, that we sought to destigmatise homelessness in general and the Winsome in particular, and in so doing achieve our objective of raising awareness of homelessness in the Northern Rivers region.

There are many positive outcomes we can take from this project. Over three years, hundreds of community members engaged with The Home Project, either as participants or audiences, and in turn were asked to think through, and orient themselves in relation to, questions of home and homelessness. Social inclusion was kept at the forefront of this process through a focus on visibility and acceptance, and bringing the history and present of the Winsome Hotel into this mix ensured that those at the margins were central to the project.

Feedback sheets from the 2013 performance evening elicited many positive comments from community members, delighted to see the Winsome once more a hub for music, performance and storytelling. Follow-up interviews with the artists in residence, as well as residents of the Winsome, demonstrated that the positive effects of creative community engagement did indeed occur in this project. Both artists and Winsome participants indicated the pleasurable nature of the trust and communication they developed between each other. The fact that these were professional artists was significant; a number of Winsome residents spoke about the

professionality of the artists and NORPA staff, and how impressed they were with the final outcome. The sense of personal efficacy is tangible here – the sense that it *is* possible to be involved in bringing to fruition something of personal, social and cultural *worth*. As one participant noted, 'it demonstrated that we can run an event like that here. It can be a good experience'.

At the same time, all participants, both artists and Winsome residents and attendees, indicated that the program could have run for longer – that more could be done, that longer residencies were required to build greater connections and to have lasting effects in the lives of the participants. Even after three years of activities, we still only scratched the surface of the *potential* of this project. This was inevitable though, and is as it should be; addressing homelessness in all its complexity is an ongoing project, a project we can never be done with. But highlighting how the Winsome *already* functions as a unique model of addressing homelessness in our community, through providing what Derrida labelled 'unconditional hospitality' to our region's uninvited guests, makes plain the capacity all communities have to understand how the ethic of hospitality requires citizens to 'say yes *to who or what turns up*, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any *identification*, whether or not it has to do with a foreigner, an immigrant, an invited guest, or an unexpected visitor' (Derrida 2000, p. 77). This ethic of unconditional hospitality, of saying 'yes' to the uninvited guests amongst us, which includes the homeless on our streets, underscores how hospitality is first and foremost a civic responsibility. Homelessness should not only be a question of tolerance, or of Christian charity, but rather an indication that a person amongst others in a community requires what hospitality provides, which is to say a meal, a drink, and a place to socialise with others: a place to call home.

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