Forum highlights alarming levels of poor mental health experienced by arts and community practitioners.

Sean Curham, Stand Up Lie Down (2014)
Spectres of Evaluation. Image by Daniela Rodriguez

Managing experiences of burn out, exhaustion, mental health, fatigue and post-traumatic stress symptoms will be the focus of the **Making Time: Arts and Self-Care** forum at **Footscray Community Arts Centre** on Thursday 29 and Friday 30 October.

Developed following conversations at the Regional Art Australia conference in Karlgoorlie last October, the forum has been informed by a group of artists and organisations including FCAC, **Regional Arts Victoria**, **Creative Recovery Network** and independent practitioners, **Karen Hethey**, **Bec Massey** and **Scotia Monkivitch**.

While anecdotally many artists and community practitioners have shared experiences of stress, anxiety and depression linked to the uncertainties of income, hours and working with communities in complex settings, research published in August 2015 by not-for-profit **Entertainment Assist** in association with the **College of Arts, Victoria University** indicates these experiences are much more common in the arts sector than the broader population.

The research reported that:
- members of the entertainment industry had **suicidal rates at 5-7 times higher** the general public
- moderate to severe **symptoms of anxiety were 10 times higher** than the general public
- **depression symptoms were experienced 5 times higher** than the general public

Factors such as lower levels of social support, low incomes and gender issues were all cited as having an impact.[1]

Says Scotia Monkivitch *'Community arts workers work with and for communities that carry complex politics, social and cultural scenarios that create deep layers of trauma and disconnect. They are often working in isolations and under stressful circumstances with tight timeframes and heavy expectations for successful outcomes that cite obvious evidence of community change,'*

With workshops, discussions and a session for reflections and sharing, the forum features arts practitioners and academics including **Professor Judy Atkinson**, author and founder of trauma informed organisation We Al-li; **Associate Professor Darryl Wade**, Director of Phoenix Australia, Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health; and psychotherapist, **Craig San Roque**. Along with community engaged arts practitioners and arts workers **Liss Gabb**, coordinator of cohealth arts

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[1] Van den Eynde, J; Fisher, A; Sonn, C. *Working in the Australian Entertainment Industry.* A research project by Entertainment Assist in association with College of Arts, Victoria University, 2015 http://entertainmentassist.org.au/

generator; **Sam Twyford-Moore**, independent artist / writer; and **Karen Jackson**, Director and Indigenous Services Coordinator of VU's Moondani Balluk Academic Unit.

Director and CEO of FCAC, **Jade Lillie**, hopes the forum will lead to organisations taking more responsibility for the wellbeing of artists, cultural workers and communities they work with.

'Recently, on social media, there has been a swell of conversation about mental health, self-care and support across the arts and cultural sectors, or lack thereof. We hope that this will be an ongoing conversation and invite practitioners, organisations and artists from across Australia to join us in building capacity, across the sector to establish stronger frameworks for self-care and due diligence when working in complex settings,' she says.

Making Time: Arts and Self-Care will be held October 29 and 30 at Footscray Community Arts Centre, 45 Moreland Street, Footscray VIC. Participants to the forum are encouraged to 'pay forward' a ticket to those for whom price is a barrier to attending.

##ENDS##

Jade Lillie and Scotia Monkivitch are available for interview.

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