



What I Wish I'd Told You Claire Bridge and Chelle Destefano

An immersive exhibition empowering Deaf people to be heard.

Footscray Community Arts announces next exhibition *What I Wish I'd Told You* by Claire Bridge and Chelle Destefano.

Opening 13 July 2022 at Footscray Community Arts.

Told from lived experience.

Challenging hearing audist colonisation of Deaf lives, bodies, language, and knowledges.

Disrupting hearing-oriented systems and spaces with Deaf presences and perspectives.

This work centres Deaf voices and agency.

***What I Wish I'd Told You* is an immersive exhibition.**

What I Wish I'd Told You transforms the gallery into a Deaf space, a place of belonging, and affirmation of sign language, culture and Deafhood. Using decolonising strategies of truth-telling, provocation, and self-representation, *What I Wish I'd Told You* storytellers create a valuable living archive of Australian sign language.

The lead artists for this exhibition are Chelle Destefano and Claire Bridge – Destefano is Deaf and Bridge is hearing from a Deaf cultural background, a GCODA, (Grand-Child of Deaf Adults). The two artists collaborate with Deaf community to challenge limiting perceptions of the auditory world and drive social change.

Bridge states “with more than 70 Deaf and hearing collaborators involved, *What I Wish I'd Told You*, offers a model for Deaf and hearing allyship, bringing Deaf storytellers together with hearing allies, creating interpersonal connections, dissolving barriers and providing opportunities for deeper sharing and understanding.”

Image: Claire Bridge and Chelle Destefano, *I'm Deaf and Visible*, with Catherine Lillian in *What I Wish I'd Told You*, 2022, video still

Destefano, goes on to say "In Auslan, we pass stories from hand to hand. Our stories cannot be put on a page, detached from us. When we tell stories through sign language, our whole body, mind, emotion, and inner-self is also expressed. Our signed stories carry culture. They are a site of resistance and pride."

Daniel Santangeli, Artistic Director & Co-CEO of Footscray Community Arts says "We're proud to be presenting our most ambitious exhibition for the year with the Deaf community. At the heart of this large scale exhibition across all three of our galleries is social justice, equity and allyship, which are all values at the core of Footscray Community Arts."

A launch event for this powerful exhibition will be held on Saturday 23 July, 3-5pm, opening event speech will be made by Dr. Gabrielle Hodge, followed by Deaf performances from Chelle Destefano and Ramas McRae.

The exhibition is inclusive and accessible:

- Cross-culturally (including Deaf/hearing, Indigenous/non-indigenous LGBTQIA+)
- Cross linguistically (Auslan/Deaf mob sign/English)
- Cross-modally (Auslan sign language, Deaf/blind sign, voiced-spoken English and captioned text)
- Video stories are told in Auslan by a broad range of stories and identities, with English captions and audio voice-overs provided in English to match the Auslan storytellers

After its launch at Footscray Community Arts, *What I Wish I'd Told You* will tour Victoria in 2022, to Hyphen Wodonga, ArtSpace at Realm and will go on to Woollahra Redleaf in NSW in 2023 to coincide with World Pride celebrations. It offers a provocative activism which challenges, builds connections and fosters understanding. This innovative exhibition is of international significance and offers a cultural treasure for current and future generations.

Launch event:

Saturday 23 July 2022

3:00pm - 5:00pm (Auslan/English Interpreted)

Exhibition dates:

13 July - 28 August 2022

Location:

Footscray Community Arts (Entrance Gallery, Gabriel Gallery and Roslyn Smorgon Gallery)

Opening hours:

Tuesday to Friday: 9:30am - 5:00pm

Saturday and Sunday: 10:00am - 4:00 pm

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IMAGES: [Please visit this link here.](#)

For more information or enquiries about this exhibition, please contact Marketing Campaign Coordinator, Bridgette Le at bridgette@footscrayarts.com or head to our [website here](#).

Footscray Community Arts in partnership with West Space present *What I Wish I'd Told You*.

WEST SPACE

What I Wish I'd Told You is supported by the Victorian College of the Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music at the University of Melbourne, Australia Council, Creative Victoria, Regional Arts Victoria and the City of Melbourne.



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