



The Arts in Victoria

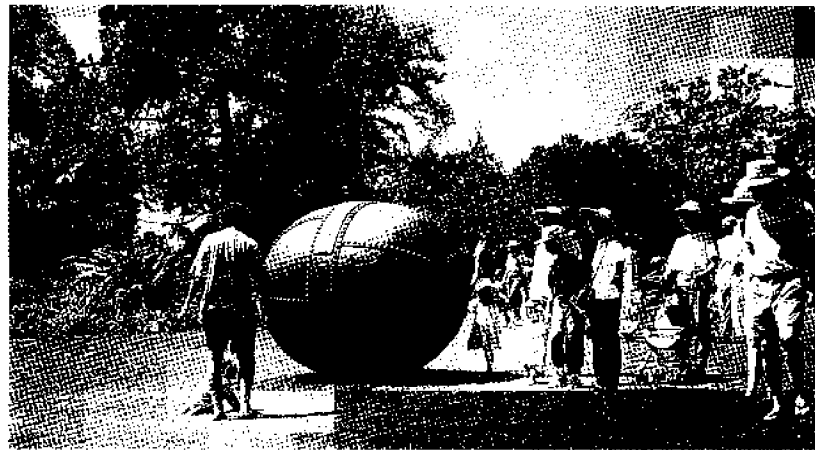
This article has been provided by Arts Victoria. Statistics relating to the arts and culture can be found in Chapter 11, Tourism and Culture.

Victoria, State for the Arts

Even before Victoria was a state, it was a place for the arts. Traditional Koori owners wove art seamlessly into their work, domestic and spiritual lives. Early European settlers brought with them their own mix of the arts. When farmers, doctors and lawyers rushed to the goldfields, the poets and painters rushed too. Wealthy prospectors turned arts patrons, and theatres, temples and statues sprang up everywhere, as Victoria's cities and towns competed for civic prominence.

Through the intervening years, Victoria has maintained its pre-eminence in the arts. Always a centre for innovation and success, Victoria has been home to some of Australia's best. Think of the Heidelberg School, or the Reeds at Heide Gallery; Ray Lawler's *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, or the Pram Factory; Swinburne Film School, or Crawfords; Dame Edna Everidge, Mushroom Records. Fred Schepisi, Tina Arena, *The Man from Snowy River*.

But the arts industry is about more than just the big names. Victorians value and participate in the arts and cultural life of their State. In a 1995 ABS survey, figures showed that arts attendance in Victoria had a very clear lead over sports, when comparing the top five sporting events to the top five cultural events. Only one sports event – 'Aussie Rules' – attracted attendance approaching that of cinemas, libraries, botanic gardens, animal parks, museums or popular music venues. In 1995, almost 1.3 million people used libraries, one of the most accessible cultural resources in the community.



The other measurement of a thriving arts industry is its viability and sustainability. In Victoria, the arts industry is both a major employer and a major contributor to the State's economy. Census figures show that 47,200 Victorians were employed in cultural activities as their main job in 1991. In 1991-92, the ABS estimated that the total value of goods and services supplied to the economy by the Victorian arts and cultural industries was \$3.1 billion.

The commercial arts sector also supports a creative and extremely successful industry. Victoria is home to several large theatre venues and a wealth of smaller venues, commercial galleries, publishing, film and television production houses, and music venues.

The commercial gallery sector is thriving, with galleries spilling out of the two Melbourne gallery precincts of Flinders Lane, in the city, and Brunswick Street, Fitzroy and spreading into the outer metropolitan and regional areas.

Performance venues in the commercial sector are going through a wave of improvement. The Regent Theatre recently reopened with the highly successful Australian premiere of *Sunset Boulevard*, after major refurbishment and the Old State Theatre has been reopened to create a new cabaret space, the Forum.

Meanwhile multi-media and the possibilities it has created across all artforms, is producing some extraordinary performances and installations. Works incorporating this new technology range from Company in Space with its interactive dance/movement investigations and performances to Contemporary Music Events exploring and producing work in the area of new technology and music, and Experimenta Media Arts offering media artists the opportunity to exhibit film, video, animation and digital media through its biennial festival.

Arts 21

This position of historical and existing strength for the arts in Victoria led to a new initiative by the State Government in 1994, with the launch of *Arts 21*, a blueprint for taking Victoria's flourishing arts industry into the 21st century. *Arts 21* contains six key strategies, each one designed to create a framework for supporting and encouraging artists and arts organisations to meet the demands of the industry and its consumers.

Into the Information Age enables the industry to work with new media, to co-ordinate content and distribution and to exploit new technologies. Providing World Class Facilities provides high-quality, properly resourced cultural facilities to support artists and the arts industry, in well-defined precincts and regions. Creating Great Programming encourages an ideal mix of top quality, innovative and marketable arts and cultural activities, while establishing best practice management, presentation and access to cultural heritage collections.

Promoting Leadership is a strategy to develop leadership values and to create a culture of excellence, while strengthening partnerships with education, government and private sectors. Customer-focused Marketing broadens the market position of the arts industry, and aims to increase both local and visitor audiences. Delivering to Australia and the World focuses on internationalising the industry by taking advantage of regional, national and international marketing opportunities.

The Arts portfolio

The profile of the Victorian arts sector was raised even higher following the 1996 election, when the Arts portfolio was moved into the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, giving the role of Minister for the Arts to the Premier, The Hon. Jeff Kennett MLA. The Arts portfolio comprises Arts Victoria and six arts agencies: the Museum of Victoria, the State Library of Victoria, the Public Record Office, the National Gallery of Victoria, the Victorian Arts Centre and Geelong Performing Arts Centre.

Implementation of the *Arts 21* blueprint is the mission of Arts Victoria, whose statutory charter is set by the *Ministry for the Arts Act 1972*. Its activities include policy advice and portfolio co-ordination for the Minister; co-ordination of planning for the six state arts agencies; provision of assistance to 96 non-government arts organisations; and provision of a range of other industry assistance programs in line with the specific *Arts 21* strategies.

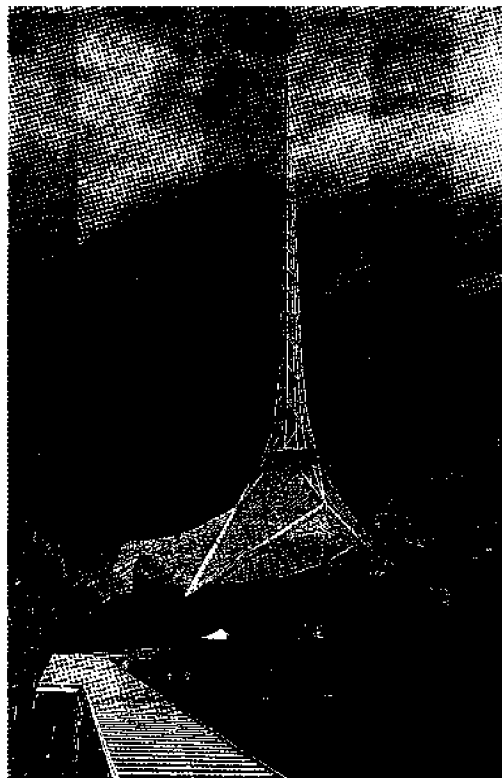
In addition to working with Tourism Victoria to develop cultural tourism activities, Arts Victoria also works closely with many government, education and private sector organisations to fulfil its brief. It is crucial to build a strong partnership and support base from outside government. One example is the collaboration between Arts Victoria and the law firm Deacons Graham and James to provide an award for visual artists to go to Asia for artist residency programs.

The six arts agencies are in a process of change. Most of them are currently being redeveloped through the government's *Agenda 21* program, which provides for major capital works. But these changes are about more than just new buildings. The senior management in each is being strengthened to drive the organisational change and operational reforms required to complement these building projects. The Government's goal is to ensure that Victoria has the best arts institutions in the country by the year 2000.

The Museum of Victoria's move to a new, \$250 million building at Carlton Gardens goes hand-in-hand with a shift towards exhibition design by artists, built around the stories behind the objects on display.

The National Gallery of Victoria has announced a tripling of attendance since entry charges were dropped recently. Eighty million dollars has been committed for the upgrading and extension of facilities in the near future.

The Victorian Arts Centre (VAC) is a leader in the performing arts sector in the Asia-Pacific area, and attracts many visitors. In 1995-96, the VAC recorded 2.65 million visits, and returns from business increased from \$3.6 million to \$4.7 million. The reconstruction of the magnificent spire provides a major focal point for the Arts Precinct on the south bank of the Yarra.



The Public Record Office, which has the responsibility for preserving significant State Government records and making them available to the public, is undergoing a process of upgrading facilities to enable easier access, while touring exhibitions take significant collections to regional areas.

The State Library is undergoing substantial redevelopment to provide better storage and cataloguing, as well as better access for users through the use of electronic systems and improved facilities for visitors.

The Geelong Performing Arts Centre is a major regional centre providing both venue management and entrepreneuring of touring productions, and encouraging development of local artists and arts companies.

In addition to the six Arts Agencies, Arts Victoria provides assistance to 96 non-government sector arts organisations on an annual or triennial basis to assist them in maintaining relevant and well-managed infrastructures. Some of the organisations to benefit from this assistance include Melbourne Theatre Company and Playbox; the Melbourne International Festival of the Arts and the Melbourne International Comedy Festival; the Victorian Writers Centre; and the regional galleries of Bendigo, Sale and Geelong.

Arts Victoria also delivers a range of industry assistance and development programs which respond to specific *Arts 21* strategies across the arts and cultural sectors. These programs are designed to drive industry development through the facilitation of dynamic new programming and cultural projects, audience development, best practice management, professional development opportunities, international experience, touring and marketing.

The Victoria Commissions program enables the commissioning of significant new works of art for production, presentation or publication in Victoria, funded through the Community Support Fund, while the annual Women Artists Grants, supported by the Office of Womens Affairs and Arts Victoria, fund three emerging women artists to achieve their first major professional project.

The Export and Touring and the Cultural Exchange programs enable artists and arts organisations to present their work in international markets. The focus is on the key markets in Europe, North America and the Asia-Pacific region. Target countries under the Cultural Export program include Greece, Italy, Indonesia, Korea, China, Japan and Singapore.

The Arts Industry Tourism Council was created by Arts Victoria in conjunction with Tourism Victoria, with a priority to promote cultural tourism. Recently a campaign was undertaken, to attract the special interest travel sector in the USA, and the second stage of the campaign will take place in 1997.

Several of Arts Victoria's programs encourage strong leadership and entrepreneurial skills throughout the industry. Individuals wanting to pursue professional development opportunities can receive assistance through the *Arts 21* Leadership program. Mentor schemes assist young artists and entrepreneurs in learning the business side of the industry, and a range of awards recognises excellence in management, leadership and academic achievements.

In the past, development in the arts and cultural sector cultural industries has been retarded by a lack of systematic information, in particular the

absence of reliable and ongoing statistical data. Since 1990 this situation has been transformed largely through the co-operative efforts of Commonwealth and State arts Ministers and the ABS, in developing a detailed and comprehensive industry classification scheme, the National Culture-Leisure Industry Statistical Framework, and introducing a number of surveys and statistical collections measuring involvement in and outcomes of cultural activity.

Under the new industry development directions established by *Arts 21*, Arts Victoria has recognised that sound research is fundamental to future growth in the cultural sector. As such, to underpin the implementation of *Arts 21* programs and future policy development, Arts Victoria has established a comprehensive research program designed to identify and analyse future industry and market needs and opportunities. This research program has committed significant resources to a number of major research projects and studies. These include the following:

The *Arts 21 Checklist* is a comprehensive statistical database to monitor industry trends and benchmark outcomes in the subsidised sector of the Victorian arts industry. The Checklist is based on a mix of financial and program performance measures including:

- employment and labour force trends;
- financial viability;
- development and presentation of cultural product;
- marketing and audience development;
- touring and tourism initiatives; and
- introduction of information technology.

The *Export Potential of the Victorian Arts Industry* was undertaken to benchmark current export practice, to assess industry capacity and export readiness, and to identify strategies to improve export potential. The research focused on the visual arts, performing arts and the museums/heritage sectors. It is planned to monitor export activity on an ongoing basis and to measure the effects of the Government's international cultural development programs.



The **Arts Audience** research project, managed by the Arts Marketing Task Force, is a major market research initiative which will assist arts organisations to identify opportunities for audience development. The project includes a household survey to measure current arts attendance and other leisure activities, to evaluate awareness of arts events, and to identify critical factors affecting arts attendance including motivation and barriers to increased participation. The ultimate aim of the project is to attract a larger share of the leisure market to arts and cultural pursuits.

A **Client Services Survey** undertaken at the end of 1995 was the first formal customer satisfaction survey undertaken by Arts Victoria, and was integral to the strategic priorities of the Government's *Arts 21* strategy. Its purpose was to assess the impact of the strategy on the client base, in particular to measure levels of awareness of, experience of, and satisfaction with key programs and services. The Survey revealed high levels of satisfaction with staff contact, and extremely high awareness of the *Arts 21* strategy.

A key feature of the research program is a recognition of the importance of communicating findings. A series of forums has been held to report back on specific research initiatives. Through publications such as the Arts Count Research Bulletin, a quarterly newsletter, the arts sector is kept informed on current industry and statistical research from many sources.

The future

The future emphasis of the research program will be on continuing monitoring of industry trends, marketing and dissemination of Victorian product locally, nationally and internationally, and measuring the economic and social impact of the Victorian arts industry.

A key feature of the research program will be working in partnership with organisations such as the ABS, industry associations and research bodies to develop and enhance the capacity of the arts industry itself to undertake research and to effectively utilise research findings. Thus the future research program will ensure that Government planning and industry support will be geared to the needs of all sectors of the arts industry.

Photographs

Justine Summers, Damien Welch and Vicki Attard performing in Divergence by the Australian Ballet. Photographer James MacFarlane

Botanic Gardens: Photographer Andrew Stiller, Public Affairs Branch, Dep't of Infrastructure Arts Centre spire

Moomba Street Parade. Photographer Mike Fisher. Courtesy of Arts Victoria

