

## Artistic Philosophy

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*We have no art. We do everything as well as we can.*  
- Balinese saying

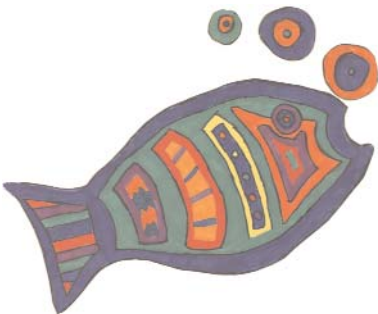
As a social worker and world traveler, I have been blessed with close contact with Australia's Aboriginal people, the Filipino and Balinese traditional cultures of Asia, and the Lakota, Hopi and Navajo people of North America. My travels have also taken me on extensive tours of the newer Western cultures of Europe, Australia and now, the United States.

I have consistently noted that the traditional cultures sing, dance, and tell stories on a daily basis and are overwhelmingly happier than so-called "Western" cultures. Importantly, I think they have more time to play, particularly with their children. In fact, time itself is multi-dimensional, compared to the very linear Western time concept we march to today.

"And the hurrying people daunt me  
and their pallid faces haunt me,  
As they shoulder one another in their rush  
and nervous haste,  
with their eager eyes and greedy  
and their stunted forms and weedy,  
For the townsfolk have no time to grow,  
they have no time to waste."

*A.B. "Banjo" Paterson, "Clancy of The Overflow"*

Children are held in very high esteem in traditional cultures. In Bali the children are seen as direct descendent from Heaven. For the Lakota, the children are the wisest, as they are closer to the Earth. Filipino culture taught me "look to the children, you will find the answers." Aboriginal people "spoil" their children by Western standards. Children remind us daily what it is to be human and these cultures honor this and ritualized this understanding. Similarly, they learned lessons from observing the animals and all the natural world.



For children, business is to play. In fact, play is very serious business for children. For Aboriginal people, business is ceremony or ritualized play. When I visited traditional Aboriginal communities and found the place deserted and asked where is everybody, I was often told "They're out bush doing business." Aboriginal people sing, dance, and paint the plants and animals to ensure they will continue in abundance. They "sing up the land to make it happy," as my



this practice creates culture, art, and importantly, community. Playing as a member of a Balinese Gamelan orchestra, I am reminded by our teacher that it is not music that is the important thing, but that we do it together. So the relationship is paramount. When asked about measuring success, Aboriginal elder Mary Graham said, “Success for Aboriginal people is measured in terms of relationships.”

Sadly for “Western” or our current culture, business is basically shopping or acquiring more cargo. Time is scarce for play and spontaneity, art is cut back or out of the curriculum when funds are short, children are placed in day care, the elderly in nursing homes, and the family is under incredible stress. I firmly believe all these symptoms are interconnected.

“I somehow rather fancy that  
I'd like to change with Clancy,  
Like to take a turn at droving  
where the seasons come and go,  
while he faced the round eternal of the  
cashbook and the journal -  
But I doubt he'd suit the office,  
Clancy of “The Overflow.”

*A.B. “Banjo” Paterson*

In ten years of performances and art in education residencies all over the United States, I have actively brought and applied the essence of play to my programs. We sing, dance, paint, and tell stories while learning about my homeland of Australia. At the same time I am consistently personally reaffirming and rehumanizing my own cultural identity. The results have been very powerful - both personally and for the students - kids and adults alike. I continue to be amazed at the energy, joy and sense of community that emerges from a residency.

“I loved it so much when Paul Taylor came to our school. He is a really funny guy. Normally, it would have been boring, but Paul Taylor explained Australia in ways I would never imagine. It was really good for me to learn about a different culture. Even though he was at Harrison for a week, every time I saw him I got the chills. I like how everyday he wore something different that symbolized different things from Australia. I would give anything to have him come back, but know that other kids need to have a fantastic turn. “No worries, mate!”

*Sarah Bolinder, Harrison Elementary, Green River, Wyoming*



Thank you, to the National Endowment for the Arts, in making these experiences possible in communities all over the United States.