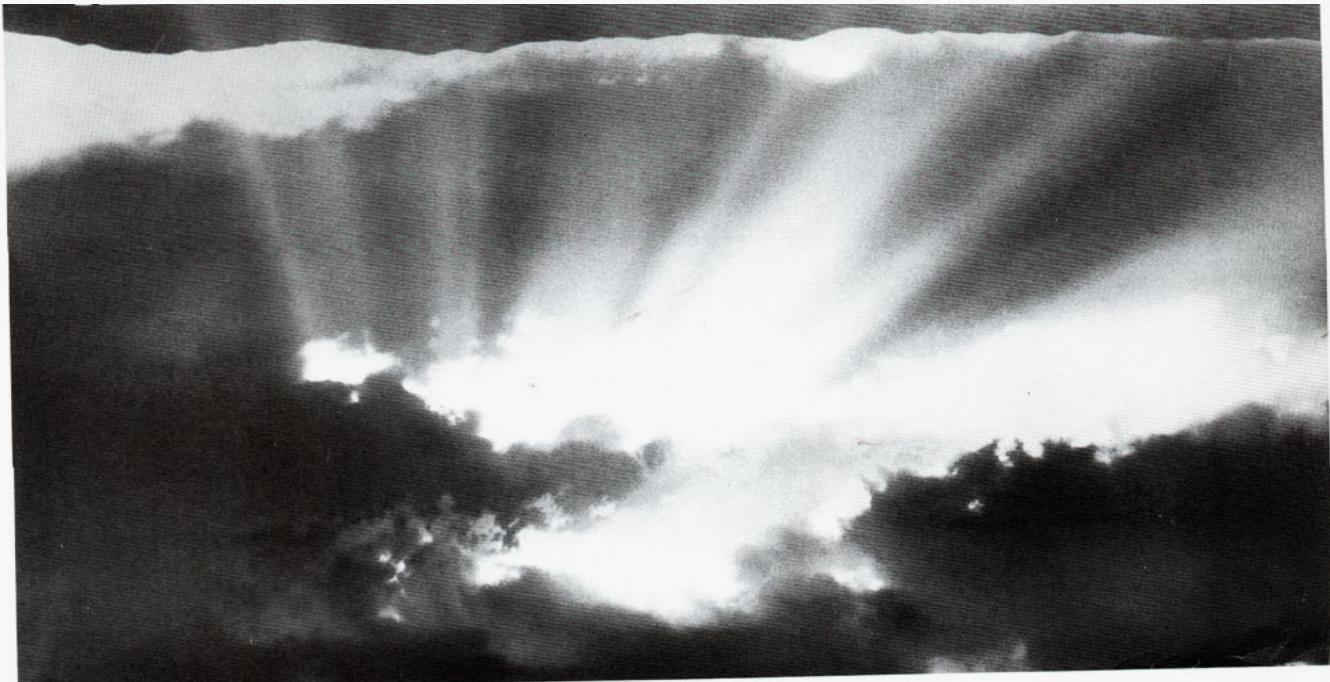


resilience roundtables

How do we continue to create and connect in the face
of exhaustion, precarity, and change?





We had a group meeting to figure out what to do next. It's mid-morning and the sun is warm as it streams into the room. The conversations are buzzing and we take our seats at the cabaret-styled black tables, with pretty little flowers blooming out of small glasses.

The space feels warm, friendly, and welcoming. But there is an underlying nervousness that comes with these kinds of spaces. Everyone seems to know at least one other person. Dancers, producers, cultural workers, clowns. Whatever the outcome of the day, it is nice to have everyone in a room together, as a show of solidarity and genuine support.

Everyone has found a way to make it here today. Despite their exhaustion. Despite distance, or other responsibilities, or obligations. Despite other desires.

“To those who work precariously and are not getting paid to be in the room. Your labour is valued.”

Lara Thoms tells the room that today's roundtable is a response to an awareness that the sector feels “unwell.”

Resilience. No one seems completely at ease with this word.

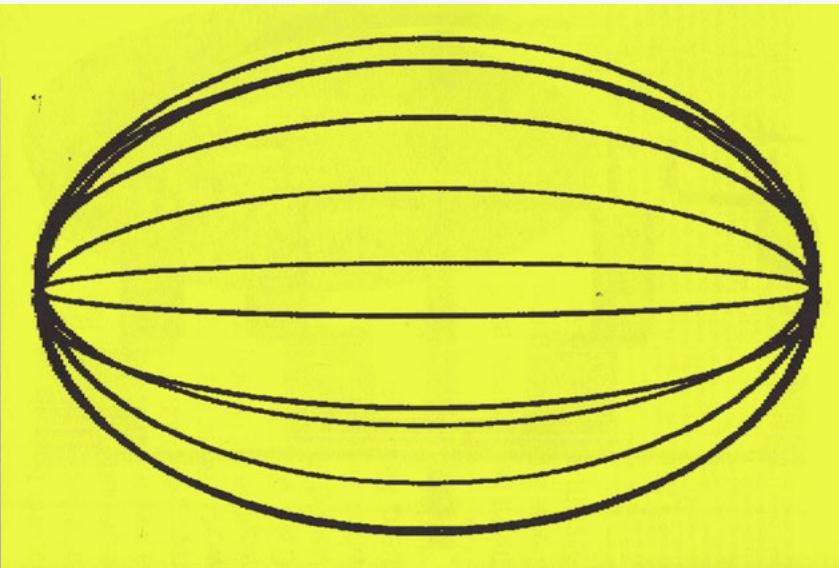
Erica McCalman redefines it for us. Resilience is having a realistic understanding of the circumstances we are in. Resilience is how well we can support each other, so thriving is possible for each and everyone of us.

Nisha Madhan offers a performance gesture - considering witchcraft and shoplifting as strategies for artistic survival.

Each table begins to chat. 'Regenerative economies' lay the foundations for the day's conversations. How do we 'compost the rot of the sector?' We are still breaking it down. Are we the worms? Yes, for the next twenty-five years. It will take time.

We consider the extractive economy and its dependence on disempowerment. Right now we seem to have an industrial model of art – a transactional model – instead of a relationship. Let's de-centre the individual in the arts. We need to get out of this space of needing to be a star and step into art as generosity and kindness. It comes back to us in spades.

Erica suggests "The regenerative model. Reciprocity. Generosity. Circular. Non-linear."



We need to abandon saving the arts, instead we need to liberate the arts. End the expectation to do more, but with less. Sometimes a ‘no’ can be care. Collective permission to rest. Resilience is having a realistic understanding of the circumstances we are in.

We eat together. Performer Sammaneh Pourshafighi offers playful trades beyond the admin burden.

Let us think beyond the fiscal for a moment. Honesty and vulnerability are not a direct answer, but they are rich offerings to absorb. Consider how we work in relationship to one another.

Creative support, like peer feedback and mentorships, is more than just promoting your work. It is a fundamental exchange between you and I, in time and space. It is meaningful engagement.

Reframe the thinking: it is the conversations, the relationships. Transparency. It's a two-way street, organisations need to provide clear ways to connect for these conversations to take place. They need to tell the truth about industry conditions, rather than “inflated success stories.”

We need more joy and more reasons to get out of bed in the morning. Someone suggests playdates for those working in the arts. Spaces where projects are banned and ideas are decoupled from productivity. A place where play is used to think through things.

Emily Parsons-Lord offers a tribute to friendship and collaboration. A small firework completes our day.



**let's get
concrete**

**more
now**

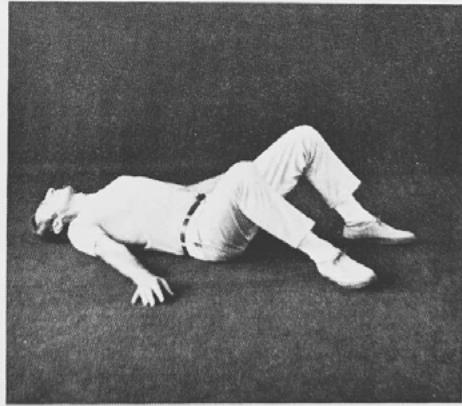
what can happen on a grassroots level

- The isolation that occurs is real and unspoken. Reaching out for a chat is a good start.
- Artists in a local area could have regular skills sharing and supportive meet ups (like parenting groups, but the baby is us too).
- What about a digital and physical library of all the things individuals have to share (templates, projectors, lemons from gardens). Let's stop spending on basic resources.
- Lists of spare rooms at people's houses for artist accommodation and studio micro residencies. (And mini breaks!)
- Transparent email lists, introductions. Offering access to networks and communities for greater sustainability and connections for all.
- The people who have security need to be looking out for those who are struggling.

Back Fall

123. When falling back, avoid hitting your head.

123



Avoid this.

What small orgs could do



- Lobbying and advocacy to all government levels, representing the independents, who are time and money poor, not just leveraging for their own orgs.
- More residency programs, and labs with a focus on skills and knowledge sharing, rather than outcomes.
- Critical thinking: more space to read, think, interrogate systems together.
- **Administrative activism:**
 - Keep artists fed. Employ independent artists in all kinds of roles (we are good at grant writing, marketing, producing, FOH) so they can afford to keep making.
 - Employ them with flexible leave entitlements to allow them to follow their practices.
 - Provide sick pay to independents.
 - Create a freely accessible data hub of artists looking for administrative and other gig work. A kind of temp agency.
 - The terms of contracts can come from artists.
 - Let artists hand over the administrative load in their practices, remembering independents aren't paid for their time. Allow longer timelines for requests.
- Businesses and orgs with unused space (even just out of business hours) should offer it to artists for free. Empty space is a micro crime.
- Artists on recruitment panels for any major artistic appointments.
- Artist observerships on boards, which then translates into actual appointments to these boards with real decision making power. Best practice of boards being made up of 50% artists or those with strong connections to the grassroots communities.

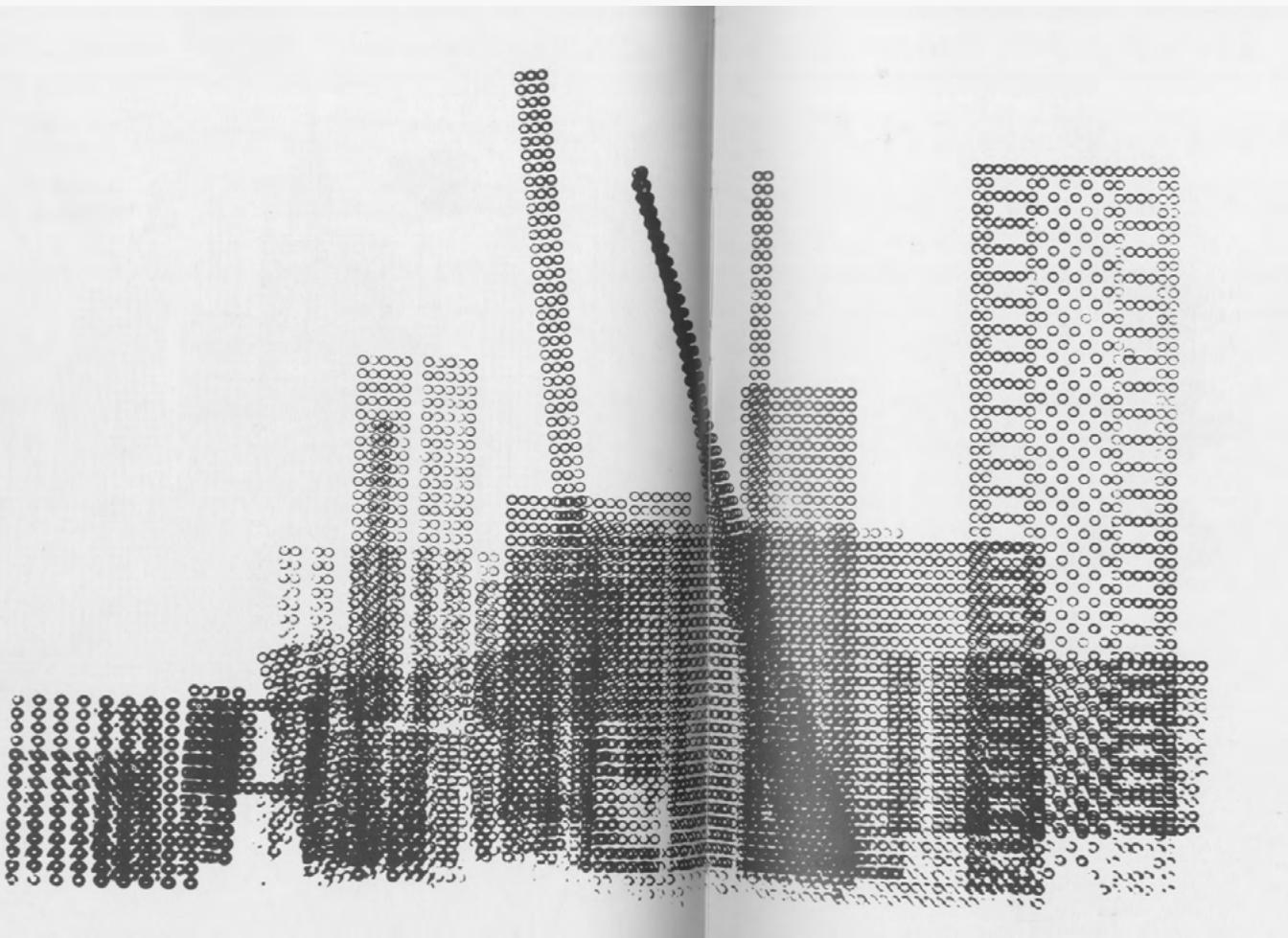
What big orgs could do, in addition to the above



- Artist-run resources hub, where companies can send their post-show/installation materials to the hub, to have their items sorted through and later purchased, or shared back into the broader arts community for free.
- Open door policy: free consistent available work spaces where artists can walk in and use the space. From this, organic conversations and collaborations can develop.
- Decentralising resources. Think big - pool your savings to purchase a residential property for artists with subsidised rent.
- Training: It should be implemented that a minimum of 5% of big orgs funding should be put towards upskilling and training independents (like local content quotas for tv/streaming services).
- A minimum of 20% of all institutional funding should be put towards commissioning new works from local independent artists.
- Insured AV equipment library: gear support for independents and smaller orgs, we can all store our gear here, and make savings by renting it out when not being used.
- A mandate to invest any surplus back into the local scene, not just in one organisation.
- Ticketing: increasing audience access through pay as you go/pay as you want models.
- More gatherings and sector-wide events, with a focus on making the learnings accessible post-event. This energy can be focused into an advocacy strategy.

What government and funding bodies could do

- Free education, stop attacking arts degrees.
- Advocate for universal basic income.
- Make grant applications simple.
Eg. Have a single grant application platform across all grant making bodies that stores details and support material so artists stop replicating this labour.
- Find better ways to narrate and measure 'impact'.
- Enforce quotas for major's budget allocations that benefit independents.
- Schemes: shaving some money off from industries, like the footy, to pay \$5 more for a ticket that could be redirected to the arts, or smart phone tariffs.
- Pool a collective super fund for the future.



Written documentation by Grace Macpherson with Lara Thoms.

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Grace Ellen Macpherson is a journalist, freelance writer and cultural agent with a masters in dramaturgy.

Lara Thoms is a co-director of APHIDS, and a practicing artist interested in socially engaged work.

Erica McCalman is a Ballardong (Noongar) woman with Irish Convict, Scottish and Cornish Heritage who works as a creative director, leader and thinker.

Nisha Madhan (India/Aotearoa) is an independent artistic director and producer.

Sammaneh Pourshafighi is an Iranian performer, producer and multidisciplinary artist.

Emily Parsons-Lord is a visual artist working across installation and performance.

APHIDS is led by **Lara Thoms** and **Mish Grigor**. Collaborative, risk-taking and future focused, they make experimental work across artforms and contexts.

Thankyou to the performers and table hosts for facilitating and documenting conversations, and to Collingwood Yards for hosting us.

Will McBride (Temperance Hall)

Theresa Angela (MAV) Danish Sheikh (Independent Artist)

Kath Pappas and Samantha Butterworth (Performing Lines)

Nisha Madhan (Independent Artist)

Rafaella McDonald (City of Yarra) Jason Maling (Strange Engine)

Madeleine Gandhi (Ilbijerri)

APHIDS

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