

Abbotsford Convent Foundation

Annual Report 22/23



Abbotsford
Convent.



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happenings at the
Convent.

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Images from top left to bottom left: 1. Convent Building and Heritage Gardens, 2023. Photo by Photo by Linh Đặng Nguyễn Khánh / 2. *Troubling the margins* by Abdul Abdullah, 2022. Image by Abdul Abdullah / 3. *Glitter Bugs*, 2023. Photo courtesy of Millie DeBoo

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Cover: *Mermaids (Pelicans)*, 2022.
Photo courtesy of Karrabing Indigenous Corporation



A message from the Chair

I was privileged to be appointed as the Chair of the ACF Board in February 2023 and am thrilled to have the opportunity to contribute my experience and expertise to this important place. The generous and supportive community have achieved so much already and, as we now approach our 20th anniversary celebration, we are focused on the next era with much ambition and excitement.

I have the pleasure of working alongside dedicated individuals who have brought the Convent to where it is today — a vibrant arts and cultural hub humming with life and creativity. Together we recognise the significant role the Convent has to play in the community and the importance of continuing to bring to life its full potential for the benefit of all our stakeholders.

Such a place, with its scale, complexity and impact is always in need of as much support as possible. Hundreds of individuals and families contributed to the Convent's two community fundraising appeals, providing a significant and deeply appreciated contribution to the everyday workings of this unique place.

Government and philanthropic partners are vital for our ongoing success. This year, we secured grants from Federal, State and local governments as well as trusts and foundations which are highly appreciated. We also extend our gratitude to partners who provide invaluable guidance and pro bono support. Their generosity enables us to continually enhance and maintain this precious National Heritage Listed precinct for all to enjoy.

Next year marks a milestone: The Abbotsford Convent Foundation celebrates its 20th anniversary. On Saturday 27 April 2024 the Foundation will host and curate a community Open Day. This will commemorate the day in 2004 when Treasury handed the keys to the Convent gates to the then Convent Chair Bill Russell, ending a crucial seven-year community campaign to save the precinct from commercial development.

Whether you're a visitor, creator, tenant, venue hirer, or supporter, on behalf of the Board we thank you for your interest and investment in this special place. Our Annual Report goes beyond simply summarising Convent activities; it is a humble expression of gratitude to all who have generously supported us this past year and will continue to shape our future.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank my fellow Board Members, who all volunteer their time, and the ACF team, all of whom work tirelessly with dedication, to provide a rich and rewarding experience at the Convent for everyone to enjoy.

We are all very proud of this special place and hope you are too.

Gillian Franklin



A message from the CEO

What a year of transformation it has been for the Convent! The Convent team and I are proud to present an Annual Report showcasing a remarkable tapestry of achievements, growth and community collaboration.

After the last few years spent adapting and rebuilding in response to the global pandemic, we were thrilled to welcome over 562,000 visitors through the Convent gates — a 31% increase on last year. Our visitor numbers continue to rise as we revitalise the precinct and our valued community with ambitious and innovative programming and services every day and night of the year.

We have been thrilled to receive four-year funding from Creative Victoria that helps us deliver our curated Convent Kids, Convent Live, and Convent Made programs, as well as partnership programs with the likes of Melbourne Fringe and Midsumma and new partnerships with Photo 2024 and the NGV's Melbourne Design Week. This significant programming activity was also bolstered by multi-year investment from the City of Yarra. Combined, this has enabled an incredibly diverse array of artists, creatives and audiences to connect meaningfully at the Convent.

There is a lot of unseen, but essential work required to undertake ongoing conservation and restoration works at our National Heritage Listed precinct. A highlight was the part restoration of the Infirmary Building enabled by support from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation and the architectural excellence of Williams Boag Architects. This building has been restored for a new life, filled with beautiful music by students from the Australian National Academy of Music, who now tenant some of the building as teaching studios. We are also thrilled to have commenced the

scoping works for the conservation and restoration of the beloved Cork Oak Path for reopening in 2024, with architects Williams Boag Architects, made possible through the generous community donations via our year-end fundraising appeal alongside invaluable support from the Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation and in-kind support from our newest partner Schuler Shook. Furthermore, I am delighted to share that the restoration of the Convent Annexe has made way for a new garden-to-plate restaurant concept Julie, brought to you by the team at Cam's Kiosk.

The Convent's incredible community of 116 tenants* continues to share their creativity and services for the benefit of the wider community. Convent tenants created and delivered 560+ workshops, classes and experiences across everything from lamp shade making workshops with Ink and Spindle and ceramics classes with Melbourne Clay through to Cultural Awareness Training sessions with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

These highlights demonstrate our enduring commitment to this very special place and the many people who bring the place to life from our arts and cultural partners, tenants, and venue hirers to our donors, funders, architectural and building partners and our cherished community. I would like to thank our small but mighty and very dedicated team for their tireless efforts to restore and maintain our place and enliven it with inspiring services and programs for the benefit of our diverse community.

Thanks to an inspired combination of place, people and programs, we have, and will continue to achieve remarkable things together.

Collette Brennan

*Total number of Abbotsford Convent tenants at the close of FY22/23

Vision

To be renowned for stimulating arts, cultural and community engagement and exchange through the wonderful and unexpected curiosities of our people and our place.

Purpose

To transform people's lives through diverse arts and cultural experiences and the striking landscape of our place.

Values

Empowerment

We offer a program experience and landscape that helps people live well. Our community is engaged and feels ownership of and responsibility for the Convent.

Distinctiveness

We make our place the home of arts and cultural innovation, often at the engine room of independent practice, that is shared with our clients, audiences and visitors through unique and distinctive programs.

Resilience

We constantly seek to be a robust organisation. We adopt an entrepreneurial approach that is consolidated through continually improved systems, renewed and new partnerships, and a commitment to providing excellence in our unique client and visitor experience.

Relationships

We nurture, renew and inspire our partners, communities, visitors and audiences through the depth and breadth of our engagement opportunities.

Living Legacy

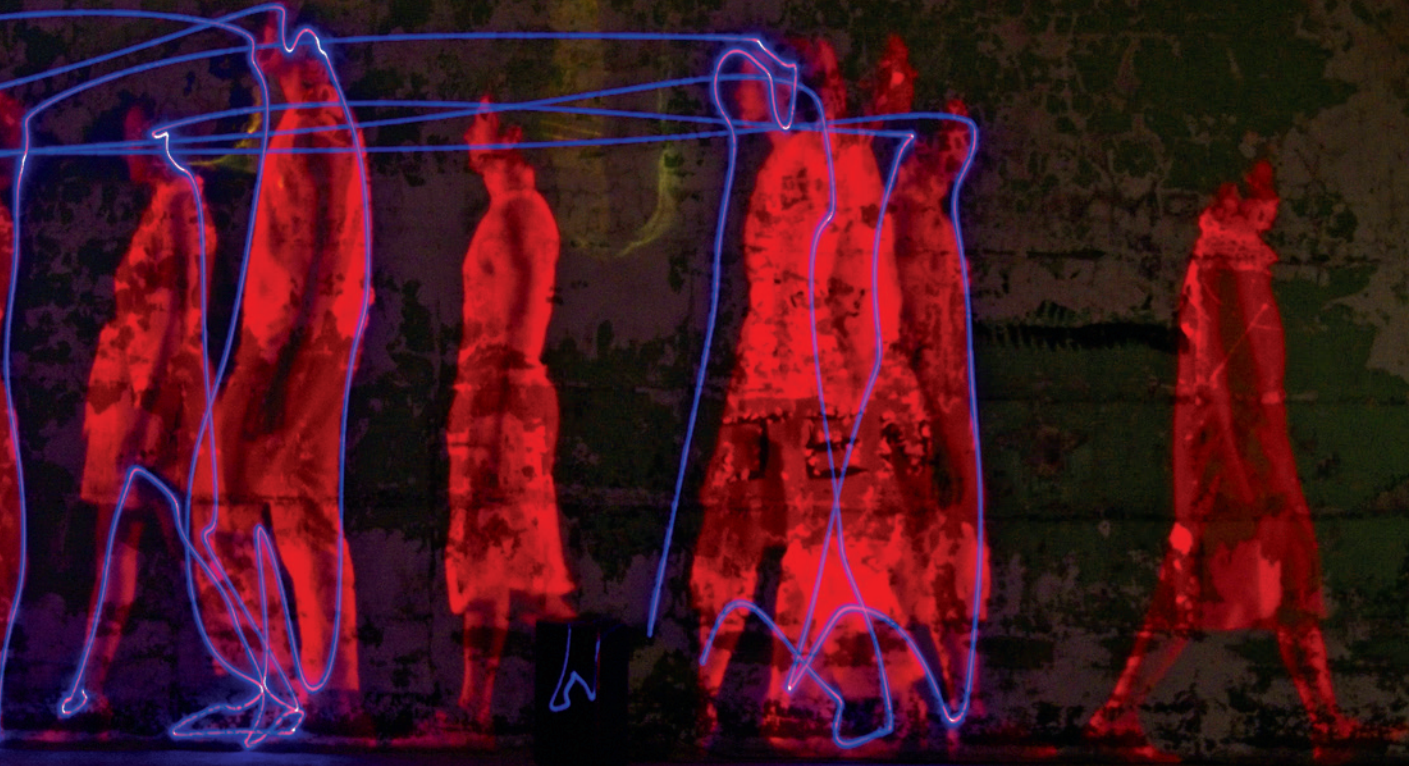
We acknowledge the past and at the same time, we look to the future. We seek to understand the needs of our communities and continually evolve our precinct, programs, services and experiences to stimulate new conversations and stay at the forefront of contemporary practice.

Discovery

We share our point of view and invite participation to stimulate emotional responses and transformational ideas, about our place and the world around us.

Potential

We encourage our team to contribute by bringing their passions and expertise to the table, empowering them to reach their individual and collective potential.



2022/23 Highlights



263
performances

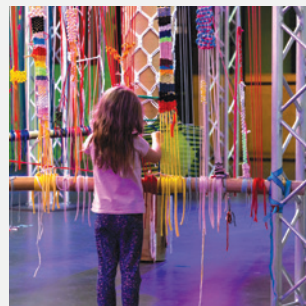


1,844
events were
presented in our
hired venues

116*
Convent tenants



58
exhibitions



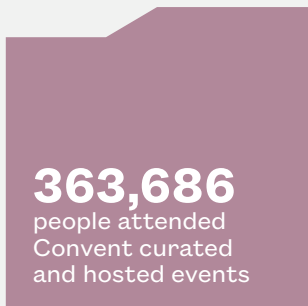
24
festivals



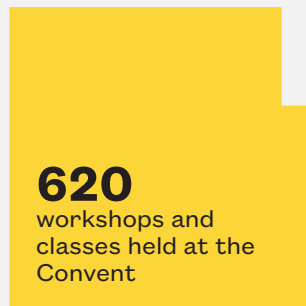
10,000+
market attendees



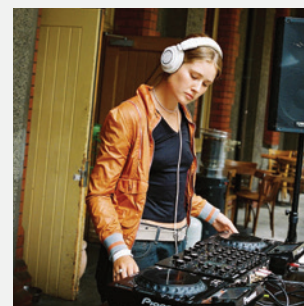
7,700
people attended
348
meetings and
conferences



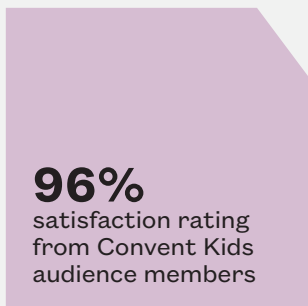
363,686
people attended
Convent curated
and hosted events



620
workshops and
classes held at the
Convent



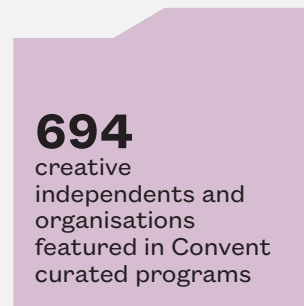
2
Donor Appeals
raised funds to help
keep the Convent
open and running
365 days a year



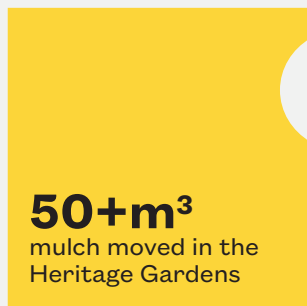
96%
satisfaction rating
from Convent Kids
audience members



35,300+
audience at
St Heliers Street
Gallery



694
creative
independents and
organisations
featured in Convent
curated programs



50+m³
mulch moved in the
Heritage Gardens

Images from left to right, top to bottom: 1. Yo CiTY Connect: AFRO FUTURE, 2023. Photo supplied by Yo CiTY Connect / 2. Midsumma Festival: A Composting Cabaret, 2023. Photo by Alexis Desaulniers-Lea / 3. Convent Kids Slow Art Collective, 2023. Photo by Ryley Clarke / 4. Polyglot Theatre Pram People, 2023. Photo by Kenny Waite / 5. Peek-a-Butoh! Kooks & Spooks, 2023. Photo supplied by Yumi Umiumare

Images from left to right, top to bottom: 1. No Place, 2022. Photo by Mick Richards / 2. Convent Buiding and Gardens, 2023. Photo by Victoria Hermitage / 3. Cam's Under the Arches, 2023. Photo by Tom Hvala / 4. Regional Farmers Market, 2023. Photo by Casey Horsfield / 5. APAM, 2023. Photo by Sarah Walker

*Total number of Abbotsford Convent tenants at the close of FY22/23



Programs

Convent curated programs embody a multi-faceted approach, serving as both a dynamic hub for arts and cultural creation and an inclusive platform for presenting diverse arts and cultural practices to our highly engaged audiences. We cultivate an environment where creative industry professionals at any point in their careers, from emerging to seasoned, can flourish. This year, Abbotsford Convent collaborated with 694 independent and arts and cultural organisations, across 263 performances, 24 festival events and 58 exhibitions for 81,000+ people.

The curation of the Convent's program is informed by our historically and architecturally unique and rich environment. The precinct, with its impressive buildings and expansive gardens and grounds, serves as an open canvas for adventurous artistic and cultural practices and expressions. This melding of the old and new, and the natural and built, fosters a unique environment where traditional and contemporary arts practices coexist harmoniously. With no traditional white or black box venues, our approach challenges norms by leveraging our unconventional venues, providing the opportunity for artistic exploration from the edges and intersections to the centre.

Interspecies and Other Others

In the months of August and October in 2022, the World premiere of *Interspecies and Other Others* transformed the gardens and architecture of the National Heritage Listed Convent into a dynamic canvas for video and sound art, sculpture, installation and performance.

Free to the public, and commissioned by the Convent, we collaborated with Curator Kelli Alred to present an enriching exhibition for the community. The program was also significant because it enabled the Convent to play a key role

in the recovery and repair of Melbourne's arts and cultural sector, particularly for independent artists, who were hit hard by the devastating impacts of COVID lockdowns and restrictions.

The after-dark exhibition explored the human condition, history and habitat, probing the intricacies of human interactions, be they human-to-human, human-to-animal or human-to-plant. Visitors were invited to join an immersive nocturnal journey, with surprising and compelling experiences awaiting within the gardens, on and behind buildings, and throughout the many nooks and crannies of the Convent grounds. The exhibition was attended by 45,685 people, over 29 days and nights.

Interspecies and Other Others featured a diversity of works by 51 talented artists, including 13 First Nations artists. Alongside newly commissioned works from some of Australia's leading contemporary artists including Abdul Abdullah, Megan Cope, Atlanta Eke and Lyndal Jones, audiences were encouraged to explore and engage with precinct-specific adaptations of existing work, video art screenings, performances and participatory events.

At the heart of the exhibition lay a profound commission, Megan Cope's *Rematriation* (2022). This work emerged from a collaboration between Cope and Wurundjeri Elders. On the opening night, a very moving performance by dance group Nhabu Togip with singer James Henry featuring songs in Woi Wurrung, by Auntie Gail Smith and Michelle Mills, took place around the work.

Interspecies and Other Others brought together all the elements people love most about Abbotsford Convent: engaging with nature, rubbing shoulders with artists, experiencing innovative work, freely exploring the Convent's architecture, gardens and grounds and engaging in cultures and concepts.

Keg de Souza: Nganga toornung-nge dharraga Bunjil

Visitors to the Convent will have no doubt noticed the colourful and interactive sculpture by Keg de Souza by the St Heliers Street front gate. Commissioned by the Convent in partnership with the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) for their *Who's Afraid of Public Space?* program, the sculpture takes the form of garden and play equipment. It is designed to enable a bird's eye view of Indigenous grasses growing below the sculptural work that is used for climbing, play and relaxation by visitors of all ages. The installation reflects artist Keg de Souza's interests in practices of re-wilding colonised landscapes and the resistance of nature to taming and control. Working with local advisers and suppliers, the garden is populated with grasses and aromatic flowers that are endemic to this area.

The sculpture offers an aerial perspective from which to appreciate the native garden. The title of the work, *Nganga toornung-nge dharraga Bunjil*, is a Wurundjeri phrase roughly translated as 'looking down from the wings of Bunjil'. The name was generously offered during de Souza's consultations and conversations with Wurundjeri Elders through the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. De Souza, ACCA and the Convent extend our thanks to Uncle Dave Wandin, Auntie Gail Smith, Charley Woolmore, Zena Cumpston and Katherine Horsfall for advising on this project.

Keg de Souza
Nganga toornung-nge dharraga Bunjil, 2021–22
Powder coated steel, net, native plants
600 cm (diameter)

The Abbotsford Mysteries

The Abbotsford Mysteries is a wholly unique way to experience the history of the Convent. A world premiere performance composed by Andrew Aronowicz, the work was based on Patricia Sykes' book of poetry of the same name. An intimate and evocative exploration of the history of Abbotsford Convent, it featured leading contralto Liane Keegan and the PLEXUS collective, which included Monica Curro on violin, Philip Arkinstall on clarinet and Stefan Cassomenos on piano.

The performance wove together various strands of the Convent's history, sharing both light and dark stories that provided a narrative about the lives of the girls and women who lived at the Convent during its time as a monastic site from 1863 to 1975. Patricia Sykes, the librettist, herself was a child at the Convent and conducted extensive research by interviewing over seventy people to create her book of poems. Aronowicz and Sykes collaborated closely to convey the emotional depth and social significance of these stories, offering a unique perspective for visitors to the Convent.

The live performance is now available as a free podcast, ensuring a wider audience can experience this evocative piece. Also included in the series is an interview and discussion with Patricia Sykes, providing insights into the creative process behind the libretto.

Leisa Shelton: Archiving the Ephemeral

For the first time, *Archiving the Ephemeral* brought together five bodies of work spanning three decades of practice by performance artist Leisa Shelton. The program combined works into a major installation and series of live performances, with opportunities for audiences to interact with and contribute to the archive.

ARCHIVE was commissioned for the 10-year anniversary of Arts House, where the names of all artists in their programs were typed and printed in a durational film. *MAPPING* invited audiences to share their most impactful experiences of Australian experimental art in a participatory activity, contributing to a publicly curated archive of significant Australian artists. *SCRIBE*, a live writing project within festival and event contexts, aimed to create a democratic document of the festivals and events by capturing audience experiences. *Addendum* emerged during Leisa Shelton's time as Artist-in-Residence at Abbotsford Convent. It presented 30 years of her arts practice and concluded with the burning of the full archive, with the ashes preserved and catalogued in over 140 packages.

Each of these responsive works focused on the need for greater visibility, recognition and honouring of hundreds of Australian experimental artists, through the voices of the audience. Key to the program was a new work, *Performing the Archive*, where renowned contemporary artists, Jill Orr and Stelarc, shared pivotal moments from their careers in private one-on-one conversations. Audiences had an opportunity to be part of this exhibition through participation as well as attending artist talks and panels.

Leisa Shelton's work focuses on collaboration and advocating for new trans-disciplinary Australian art.

This was the first time the full collection was presented in its entirety, providing an environment to reflect on the value and role of artists within our society, and the potential to create dialogue and action for the future.



Images from top to bottom: 1. *Nganga toornung-nge dharraga Bunjil* [Looking down from the wings of Bunjil] 2021–22. Photo by Andrew Curtis / 2. *Archiving the Ephemeral* by Leisa Shelton, 2023. Photo by Sofie Dieu

Key Programs

Convent Kids

Young audiences infuse life and joy across Abbotsford Convent's buildings and grounds. Our year-round Convent Kids program offers children and their grown-ups free and low-cost arts and cultural experiences, fostering exploration, learning and participation through a diversity of arts and cultural practices. Developed in collaboration with leading artists, Convent Kids provides fun, hands-on events that ignite young minds' curiosity and creativity.

Over the course of 2022-23, the Convent welcomed 5,000+ children and families to Convent Kids programs, with support from Creative Victoria's Creative Enterprises Program and the City of Yarra. These events earned exceptional audience satisfaction rates of 96% overall — a remarkable achievement.

During the year, we presented 29 events within the Convent Kids program, showcasing a noteworthy increase on last year's audience attendance as we successfully emerged from the challenges of the pandemic. Convent Kids enabled 186 paid opportunities for creatives, empowering artists across a variety of practices to produce everything from technologically driven experiences and sound-based workshops through to performances and installations.

Highlights included Polyglot's *Pram People*, a collaborative guided choreography of parents and prams, Melbourne Electronic Sound Studio (MESS) workshop, *ButohOUT! Peek-a-butoh* creative workshops as well as Dandrogyny and Betty Grumble's *Mini Beast Disco*, presented as part of the Midsumma program.

Jessica Wilson created two remarkable open-air audio experiences for children. *The Wayfinders* theatricalised the Convent landscape, using the voices and imaginations of children. Wearing headphones and a customised backpack, children hopped, leapt and

jumped in and out of invisible sound zones to trigger the voices of trees, footpaths and rubbish bins. *Child Nation* invited children to listen and look at the Convent in a unique way. Self-guided using a hand-held device, children were prompted to answer quirky questions in response to the things they could see around them.

The end of this fiscal year signified the completion of the first year of our four-year funding partnership with the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria. Combined with support from the Australia Council for the Arts, these partnerships enabled the realisation of projects such as *Pavilion 2023*, a partnership with Slow Art Collective in January 2023. This captivating series of large-scale installations empowered children and their grown-ups to become hands-on creators of immersive artworks, adding their creative touch to woven fabric sculptures, musical structures, robotics and household lighting devices. Recycled and repurposed materials were used to make an incredibly vibrant installation of scale. Slow Art Collective's Dylan Martorell and Chaco Kato worked with guest artists programmed across the exhibition to offer even more opportunities to participate in performance, craft, music and visual art activities. We eagerly anticipate further expanding this partnership with Slow Art Collective in the coming year, with the support of a Creative Australia grant.

"Incredibly innovative and beautiful."

"Just so magical, free, open ended and creative."

"Loved how inviting the space was for all sensory needs."

"Best kids art thing ever."

- Parents' feedback from Pavilion 2023



Pictured: *Pram People*, 2023. Photo by Abbotsford Convent Foundation

Convent Live

Exploring concepts and practices at all intersections of the arts, cultural and creative sector, our curated program Convent Live, shares the best of Melbourne's genre-pushing and horizon-expanding live experiences for diverse audiences, within the Convent's unique spaces. This year, Convent Live, with funding support from Creative Victoria and City of Yarra, enabled 349 artists and creatives to be paid for their hard work.

The Convent Live program makes a particular effort to support, nurture and enable independent artists to reach audiences. Artform agnostic and intended to reach and affect audiences of all ages and abilities, we collaborate with artists, directing support to the realisation of vision.

Independent Artistic Director and Sensory Theatre artist Zya Kane with a wonderful team, including artist and Creative Producer Taka Takiguchi, curated the provocative: *Memory Go Round*, a sound, media and theatre installation showcasing the intimate memories of five artists with a disability. Coinciding with International Day of People with Disabilities, the immersive installation celebrated diversity and the arts, inviting audiences into a contemplative space of personal storytelling, from the interior of a car, to the memory of a church, to a dressing room and a sensory garden experience. A multi-disciplinary platform for lesser-heard stories to be shared with the broader community, the installation captured the artists' imaginations through the universal language of the senses, focusing on the expression of stories through light and shadow, sound, texture, taste and smell.

In May 2023, Naarm-based arts organisation Liquid Architecture presented the inimitable guitarist

and noise maker Bonnie Mercer in a feature live concert. The astounding experience brought audiences to the intersection of contemporary art and experimental music, exploring the worlds of unrestrained feedback, hallucinatory white noise and hypnotically evolving sonic guitar experiments. Internationally renowned guitarist Bonnie Mercer did not hold back, performing their instantly recognisable style: earth-shatteringly loud, transcendently hypnotic and experimental while grounded in rock forms.

First People, Cultural Diversity and Equity

A core principle of Convent programming is its dedication to promoting equity within the arts. This is achieved by ensuring First Nations artists have the autonomy to self-determine and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse artists can self-represent their creative vision.

With the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation reception located at Abbotsford Convent, our precinct continues to be an important meeting place for the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, and for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. All visitors to the Convent are invited to take part in the free self-guided tour: *Ngulu-Ngagin* (Our Voice). Listeners can move through the grounds, listening and learning about Wurundjeri country, through stories facilitated by Wurundjeri Elders. Using their smartphones, listeners will hear the voices of Aunty Di Kerr and Aunty Gail Smith, with original songs by Mandy Nicholson and Dr. Lou Bennett AM.

NAIDOC Week at the Convent gave visitors the opportunity to immerse themselves in the work of First Nations artists and community members.

Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) hosted a vibrant exhibition, featuring artwork from First Nations residents. To celebrate culture and support talented artists from our local community, audiences joined storytelling, art activities and bush-animal weaving with Aunty Bronwyn Razem.

In late July 2022, members of the wider community gathered in Magdalen Laundry to listen as two podcast episodes were recorded featuring Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin and Aunty Fay Carter OAM. Recorded for *The Elder's Lounge*, the podcast documentary was conceived by Narangga/Kaurna artist and former 2021 Abbotsford Convent Studio Resident, Jacob Boehme. This ground-breaking series, supported by Abbotsford Convent and the Indigenous Languages and Arts Program, Stanford Live (USA) and Harbourfront Centre (Canada), honouring First Nations Elders and senior arts and cultural world leaders of diverse nations, is a brilliant example of some of the incredible works and impact our Studio Residents generate.

An extraordinary achievement this year was the securing of a two-year grant from the Office for The Indigenous Languages and Arts program, for a new collaboration with BlakDance that will see senior First Nations choreographers develop new work at the Convent for two years commencing in 2024.

Throughout the year, we proudly presented a total of 23 events, featuring 77 culturally diverse artists, that were enjoyed by Convent audiences. Through our valued collaboration with these artists, the Convent program not only provides a diversity of quality arts and cultural experiences for audiences, but also fosters a more equitable and diverse artistic landscape reflective of our culturally rich community.



Images from top to bottom: 1. ACF x Birrarung, 2023. Photo by Clare O'Connor / 2. Home Is Where The Heart Is, 2016. Artwork by Josh Muir, Yorta-Yorta, Gunditjmarra & Barkinji.



Pictured: APAM Local Players, 2023. Photo by Clare O'Connor

Partnership Events

Following from the significant impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Abbotsford Convent enthusiastically re-established all core public-facing activities, strengthening partnerships across the arts and cultural community, benefitting artists, especially independents, and their audiences.

The Convent continued our established relationships with esteemed organisations such as Melbourne Fringe and Midsumma, in addition to establishing a new partnership with National Gallery of Victoria's (NGV) Melbourne Design Week. These collaborations have provided a platform for an extensive and diverse community of artists, creatives and audiences to come together at the Convent, creating a vibrant and inclusive atmosphere for all.

Melbourne Design Week (MDW)

The NGV's annual 11-day Melbourne Design Week features a program of talks, tours, exhibitions, launches, installations and workshops that champion design. While we have frequently hosted MDW events in the past, this year Abbotsford Convent was a hub, and in turn presented a wonderful program of innovative, free and low-cost events with the community.

Birrarung X Abbotsford Convent, reflected on the relationship between the Birrarung (Yarra River) and the Convent's location on Wurundjeri land. It offered a thought-provoking lineup of events, including Cultural River Walks with Wurundjeri Elder Uncle Bill Nicholson, a site-specific sound installation by Dylan Martorell, and reflections on Abbotsford Convent's new Master Plan (2022) from Hassell's Jeroen Hagendoorn. Visitors were invited to stay on for *Play On Presents: Lotte Betts-Dean*, the London-based mezzo-soprano and a cast of special guests for a performance of contemporary classical chamber music from around the globe.

The *IM-PERMANENT* exhibition, presented as part of our Convent Live program co-curated by Ellis Jones and RMIT Industrial Design, explored how mycelium demonstrates circular practice through more than 20 artworks, spanning sculpture, apparel, lighting, and architectural pieces that illuminated mycelium's vast uses, as well as its ability to restructure traditional design. Also highlighting the key role of the natural world on design processes, the *Origin to Object* exhibition presented by CERES Fair Wood as part of our Convent Live program, highlighted sustainable timber and the journey from tree to furniture, with the final pieces telling the story of the tree, the grower, the miller and the maker.



Pictured: APAM Local Players, 2023. Photo by Clare O'Connor

Midsumma Festival

Midsumma at the Convent was an explosion of diverse events that pushed boundaries and minds. Centred around hidden and mainstream queer culture across artistic practices, highlight performances included *Blanké Pop*, a neon-cabarave extravaganza presented by Midsumma Festival x Scratch Arts and *Fountain* by Forest Collective, featuring Max Lawrence. Performance artists Dandrogyny and Betty Grumble presented *A Composting Cabaret*, as well as *Mini Beast Disco* for younger audiences.

Of special note was *Stranger than Usual*, a Midsumma commission by Asphyxia, that combined sign singing, live band music and powerful vibrations to present an artistic exploration of intersectional identity. This music performance designed for Deaf and hard of hearing people, explored Asphyxia's unique personal experience of being Deaf, queer, chronically ill and needing to use a wheelchair.

Melbourne Fringe

Melbourne Fringe at the Convent was an uplifting program of family-friendly performances and workshops. *Sonder* by Emotion 21 presented a bombastic dance performance that challenged what it means to have a disability. The word 'sonder', referring to the realisation that each passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own, influenced a joyous, unexpected and entertaining dance performance co-created and entirely performed by a magnificent cast of 24 dancers with Down Syndrome. *YUMMY: The Kids Extravaganza* delighted children and their families with jaw-dropping circus and signature campery. This hilarious kids' cabaret about following your dreams included amazing circus tricks, some of which were taught to children in their follow-up *Kids Circus Workshop*. Also free of charge to families, *The Little Nest Workshop*, created by sound artist Steph O'Hara, invited children and their grown-ups to explore imagined worlds, designing and building their own nests.

ButohOUT!

ButohOUT! 2022 celebrated and challenged audiences, traversing boundaries and pushing limitations through unique contemporary styles of the Japanese art of Butoh. Participants were introduced to various exercises exploring beauty in distortion, drawing inspiration from the original Kabuki theatre of the early 1600s. Originally a subversive non-art form, passionately expressing ugliness and beauty, the word Kabuki comes from the word 'kabuku' meaning 'bent' or 'out of the ordinary'. Led by artist and facilitator Yumi Umiumare a supporting series of workshops channeled anarchic forms of Butoh and preliminary Kabuki to unleash the weird from within.

Forest Collective

Combined with multiple art-forms, the often off-kilter, always luminary Forest Collective brought their live contemporary classical musical interpretations to the Convent. Fellow champions of diversity and artistic freedom, Forest Collective, presented *Sung Songs* and *Cycles* as part of our Convent Live program — a collection of hymns and dance rituals in praise of the cycles of the sun and a celebration of spring.. Later in the year, as part of Midsumma Festival at the Convent, Forest Collective presented *Fountain* by Max Lawrence, a breathtaking performance of baroque pop music with an experimental edge.

Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM)

In June 2023 the convent team presented the *APAM Local Player* event that warmly welcomed members of the APAM delegation including performing artists, producers, presenters and curators from across the country and around the globe, to a curated program of performance, networking and dialogue. APAM participants met four of the Convent's respected arts leaders, Forest Collective, Jo Lloyd, Polyglot and Yumi Umiumare, who provided a window into the local contemporary performing arts sector. Whilst meeting and enjoying an insight into these incredible artists' work and learning about the Convent, attendees sat down to a taste of Melbourne with lunch by the Convent's own Cam's Kiosk.



Images from top left to bottom right: 1. Melbourne Design Week, *Origin to Object*, 2023. Photo by Andy Webb / 2. Midsumma Festival: *Composting Cabaret*, 2023. Photo by Alexis Desaulniers-Lea / 3. *Play On Presents: Lotte Betts-Dean*, 2023. Photo by Alan Weedon / 4. Midsumma Festival: *Fountain* by Forest Collective, 2023. Photo by Rubicon

Gallery

St Heliers Street Gallery

The St Heliers Street Gallery, with its commitment to supporting local artists and fostering community involvement, continued to flourish in 2023. A showcase of Convent creativity and a bridge to the community, the diverse range of 14 exhibitions and events attracted an annual audience of 35,000+.

In 2023, the Convent partnered with Cameron Miller of gallery-adjacent Cam's Kiosk to co-curate future exhibitions. This partnership will support a more succinct, collaborative approach to programming, promising an exciting new chapter in the gallery's journey.

Over the course of the year, St Heliers Street Gallery generated a total \$27,400 in revenue for participating artists. These exhibitions not only contribute to the enrichment of the local creative landscape, but also provide crucial financial support to artists.

Notable exhibitions:

Return (December 1 – December 22, 2022) transported visitors to the south-east coast of Australia through the lens of Convent tenant Helga Salwe's camera and the poetic musings of Cate Kennedy. Their collaboration, born during a Bundanon residency, was a love letter to the Australian landscape.

FLOW (February 9 – February 26, 2023) by Convent tenant Brittany Shemmeld explored life's ebbs and flows through form and color. Shemmeld's work emanated peace and joy, a testament to the inspiration she found in her own mind and the natural world.

Oddities (March 2 – March 26, 2023) by David Helmers was a captivating fusion of fabric and clay. Helmers embarked on an explorative journey, shedding the

confines of previous experiences. His process was an intense exercise in letting go and finding the freedom to see things in a new light. In these new creations, he harnessed the energy of the processes and materials to craft unique works.

Dreamscapes of the Natural World – Becoming One (March 30 – April 23, 2023) by Convent tenant Isabel Koslowsky offered abstract interpretations of Victoria's landscapes, transporting viewers to dreamscapes and rekindling their connection with nature.

Send It (May 25 – June 18, 2023) by Convent tenant Schizy Inc was a commendable and inclusive showcase featuring over 30 artists with lived experience of schizophrenia. Exhibiting snapshots, retakes and memories, with Schizy humour sprinkled throughout, this inaugural group exhibition spoke the collective voice of the SiDAS community and the indomitable desire of the artists and writers to be seen and heard. *Send It* included paintings, works on paper, mixed media, digital work and more. The exhibition featured a group project cleverly making use of standardised envelopes to tell the incredible personal stories of the artists. Examining both the literal and the conceptual meaning of 'envelope', artists utilised the outer surface of the envelope, rather than concealing hidden messages within, sharing the artists' reflections as bold visual and visible communication to all.

The gallery's **Convent Made Showcase** was a shining example of community engagement. It offered visitors access to a unique collection of one-of-a-kind creations and the opportunity to connect with local artists. Importantly, 100% of the sales from this exhibition went directly to the talented artists who created the showcased works, contributing to the sustainable growth and success of the Convent's tenant community.



Images from top left to bottom right: 1. *Send It* by Schizy Inc.'s Dedicated Art Space (SiDAS), 2023. Photo courtesy of Schizy Inc. / 2. Caitlin Klooger, *Forage*, 2023. Photo by Lara Cameron / 3. Helga Salwe and Cate Kennedy, *Return*, 2022. Photo by Helga Salwe / 4. Ghost Wares, large bud vase and mug, *Convent Made Showcase*, 2023. Photo supplied by artist

People

The Studio Residency Program offers a distinctive opportunity for artists to explore site-specific or site-responsive research and creative work. This initiative provides artists with the necessary time, space and support to advance their practices while fostering networks and sharing their creations with diverse audiences. Works generated through these residencies are shared throughout Abbotsford Convent, promoting dialogue and engagement between the precinct, urban surroundings, artistic community and audiences.

Artist-in-Residence: Jo Lloyd (2022–2023)

Jo Lloyd, a renowned independent dance artist and choreographer, was selected as the artist-in-residence for 2022. Known for her unique approach to choreography, which centres on social encounters and the revelation of behaviour over time, Jo's residency was dedicated to a concentrated period of physical practice, research, development and presentation of new work.

A graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts, Jo Lloyd has presented her work in various prestigious venues, including international galleries, theatres in Japan, Hong Kong and at prominent Australian events like Dance Massive, the Melbourne International Festival — ACCA and the Biennale of Sydney. Her recent projects, such as *Archive the Archive* and *OVERTURE*, have garnered critical acclaim and recognition with Green Room Awards and a Helpmann Award nomination.

During her residency, Jo Lloyd collaborated with fellow artists to explore new choreographic methods and generate multiple artistic byproducts. Working closely with her producer, Michaela Coventry of Sage Arts, Jo developed *Ephemere*, also titled *FM Air*, along with accompanying written materials.

FM Air was further refined with contributions from long-term collaborators, including designer Andrew Treloar, composer Duane Morrison, dramaturg Anny Mokotow and producer Michaela Coventry. Importantly, this residency coincided with an invitation to present the work at Carriageworks, Sydney, in 2023.

Throughout the residency, Jo and her collaborators experimented with choreographic methods, composition and costume design. Duane Morrison composed a 40-minute piece, while Andrew Treloar crafted a unique transparent tulle bag for the dancers, a significant component of the performance. The creative process involved finding innovative solutions to challenges that ultimately contributed to the development process and enriched the final work.

Prior to premiering *FM Air* at Carriageworks in April 2023, Lloyd held a sharing session at the Convent in February, providing an opportunity for feedback and adjustments with a select audience. The residency's success is also attributed to the instrumental role played by Lloyd's producer, Michaela Coventry.

Jo Lloyd's Studio Residency at Abbotsford Convent was a transformative period. The residency not only supported the creation of significant dance works but also facilitated the artist's continued exploration of the ephemeral through live performance. The residency extended beyond its initial timeline due to COVID-19 disruptions, further highlighting the artist's dedication and adaptability. Happily, Jo loved her residency so much that she decided to stay and has now joined the Convent tenant community with her studio, The Booth, in the Sacred Heart building.



Pictured: *FM Air* by Jo Lloyd, The National 4, 2022. Photo by Peter Rosetzky

Community

Tenant Community

The Convent is a vibrant community with 116 diverse tenants at the close of FY 22/23, including two schools, a radio station, arts, cultural and creative independents and organisations, hospitality providers, not for profit organisations, creative enterprises and wellbeing practitioners. Convent tenants engage with the community in many ways and provide a wealth of creative opportunities with over 560 workshops and classes conducted by 9 tenants this year, across practices including painting, screen printing, sewing/design, life drawing, ceramics, dance and cultural awareness training.

Among the notable achievements of the tenant community, founding tenant Katheryn Leopoldseeder's work *The almond branch that buds, blossoms and fruits, 2022*, is now permanently featured in the National Gallery of Victoria. Working from the precinct since 2005, Katheryn creates both intimate and large-scale art objects, using the language of jewelry to contemplate our relationship to the body in time and place. Cast in bronze from the branch of an almond tree in Abbotsford Convent's Heritage Listed gardens, Leopoldseeder's brooch was first shown in the jeweler's solo exhibition, *New Day*, held at The Store as part of the Convent's 2022 Melbourne Design Week program. This exhibition provided the context for the acquisition for inclusion in the NGV Collection. The design references the Hebrew story of Aaron's Staff, the walking stick of Moses's brother, which had miraculous powers during the Plagues of Egypt. She uses the biblical tale to symbolise the faith and resilience of the Convent's artistic community in the once closed and gated environment, saved from commercial redevelopment, to become a flourishing artistic ecosystem that supports creativity in its many stages.

Fellow tenant Sophie Cunningham was featured on ABC TV program "Gardening Australia". The well-known Australian author has penned 9 books ranging in

genre from novels, essays and children's books. She draws much of her creative practice from walking and spending time in natural places. The *My Garden Path* feature on "Gardening Australia" followed Sophie as she walked the grounds of the Convent, with its many heritage trees stopping at one of her favourites, the Separation Tree. This Oak tree is an example of Sophie's quest to write about the history of cities as told by iconic trees within the landscape.

Additionally, Ilona Topolcsanyi, co-founder of ceramic studio Cone 11, combined her passion for craft, hospitality and philanthropy to create *The Good Plate*, in partnership with Bendigo Pottery. She believes every meal, however casual or ceremonious, to be worthy of good plates. While these beautiful ceramics will grace the tables of renowned Australian restaurants, they also represent a great cause, as a percentage of all profits from *The Good Plate* go to not-for-profit organisations helping people through food.

Regular visitors to Abbotsford Convent will know that live music pervades every corner of the Convent each and every day of the year. This is in part thanks to Convent tenant Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM) who continue to showcase Australia's most exceptional young classical musicians through their enlightening year-round program of events.

The Convent was also very pleased to host performances by The Boîte, Victoria's beloved multicultural music organisation. Supporting excellent artists from diverse cultural communities, Convent tenant The Boîte promotes cultural understanding through the dynamic presentation of unique cultural experiences, and nurtures creativity, collaboration, access to and active participation in the arts. *The Boîte Spring Festival* in September featured The Faraway Trio: an eclectic combination of Anne Norman on shakuhachi, Chris Lewis on drums and Stephen Hornby on bass performing original compositions and free improvisations.

Convent Made

The Convent Made initiative, both in-store and online, provides opportunities for Convent-based artists to showcase their work. As well as opening studios to the public, the Convent Made platform has welcomed 10 new artists to its e-commerce offerings. Furthermore, the seasonal Pop-Up Shop at the Convent has seen a surge in participation, with 32 tenants in comparison to 26 in the previous year, reflecting the growing vitality and creative spirit of the Convent community.

Volunteer Community

After a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were delighted to resume our Volunteer Program in September 2022. A total of 199 participants attended our in-person and volunteer led Social History Tours, and five volunteers have returned to the gardens.

The Convent would like to acknowledge and congratulate one of our longstanding tour guides Dr. Madonna Grehan, who was honoured with the prestigious Order of Australia Medal (OAM). She was recognised for her remarkable contributions to the fields of nursing and midwifery history, as well as her outstanding service to the community. Dr. Madonna Grehan has been an integral part of our tour guide team for nearly 18 years.

Online Community

Bolstering this year's growing visitation to the precinct, our digital community continues to thrive with 173,893 visitors to our website over the course of the year. Keeping our community up-to date with creative happenings at the Convent, our social media platforms boast a 17% increase in followers with an encouraging 54% increase in likes, comments and shares on our daily posts. Unsurprisingly, our most popular posts have been images capturing our beautiful gardens, grounds and breathtaking buildings. Regular 'What's On?' e-news updates have been key in keeping our community of subscribers informed of the many exciting arts and cultural events and workshops to join at our unique precinct.



Images from top to bottom: 1. Ink & Spindle Screen Printing Workshop, 2022. Photo courtesy of Ink & Spindle / 2. Melbourne Clay School Pottery Class, 2022. Photo by Gina Millicia



Place

Reviving the Cork Oak Path

The Cork Oak Path is amongst the earliest surviving works at the Convent precinct from the 1860s. We are delighted that urgently needed restoration and conservation of this treasured entry, and adjoining pathways, is now underway. Currently closed to the community, due to health and safety issues, this vital pathway — dearly missed by our community — provides direct access to and from the Main Yarra Trail and connects us to the Birrarung (Yarra River).

This project is all possible thanks to donations from 109 members of the community during our end of year 2022 *Always Welcome Appeal*, funding from the Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation and investment from the Convent. Such generosity has paved the way for the Convent team to work with highly credentialled heritage experts Williams Boag Architects to begin scoping and restoration efforts.

The project commenced with focused and meticulous excavation work to undertake the necessary assessment of the underlying conditions of the Cork Oak Path. Through these works, and to our amazement, we unexpectedly uncovered large tracks of the original spoon drains and discovered that the path outline is intact.

The restoration of the Cork Oak Path will enable community use of the path and ultimately greater precinct engagement. Over time, adjoining pathways will also be repaired enabling safer and more aesthetically engaging access to the Heritage Gardens and nearby buildings.

Architect Peter Williams, AM, Director of Williams Boag Architects and project lead said, “The Cork Oak Path is one of the lost assets of the site being what was once a primary access to the Convent. Over the years accretions of soil, some plantings, weeds and adjustments to the margins, has meant definition and detail has been lost, and it has been a forgotten place.”

“What was not obvious until a couple of days of careful soil removal was undertaken, was what remains of the path, and what clues this gives us. While the original path is not intact, the process of soil removal has revealed brick detail across the path, the path outline and the spoon drains. This is an exciting discovery of rich information that will help us eventually with the construction of the path. A detailed feature survey of the area extending back to the Convent shows all the trees and vegetation within the path corridor boundaries, and coupled with the existent site evidence will unlock the design and documentation, and eventually the construction of the path. We know, for instance, that there are missing Cork Oak trees. Given the slope of the land, and the large amount of water flow that can happen, we need to work careful gradients linked with a resilient surface for the path that also gives the sense of a rural walk.”

The new path design will also integrate a subtle low energy lighting installation to extend the usability of the path in the darker times of the day. “It’s wonderful to be working with Peter and his team again after their incredible work on the restoration of the North side of the Magdalen Laundry”, said ACF Chief Operating Officer, John Di Natale. Most recently, Peter, with dbg Projects, completed the part restoration of the Infirmary Building — which is now filled with the music of exceptional students from the Australian National Academy of Music.

The Convent expects works to be completed by the end of April 2024. We look forward to the unveiling of a restored Cork Oak Path, a testament to the collective power of community philanthropy and our commitment to preserving and revitalising our Heritage Listed precinct for people now and future generations to enjoy.

A place for the great outdoors

Our community embraced the beauty of the Convent's gardens and grounds, filling them with live music and dance at 4 major music festivals held at the precinct. Highlights include the *Milo Eastwood & Friends Day Party* in February, where revellers made the most of our verdant, open spaces. We were also thrilled that Wax'o Paradiso celebrated their decade-long contribution to the Australian electronic music scene by hosting their largest open-air discotheque to date in our Heritage Garden with a city sunset backdrop.

We also encouraged our curious younger generation to embrace the Convent's gardens and grounds. Jessica Wilson's *Child Nation* and *The Wayfinders* offered self-guided audio tours designed to engage kids with their surroundings through interactive story-like adventures.

A place for unique staging

In FY22/23, the Convent undertook collaborative programming with 24 festival events held at the Convent, taking full advantage of multiple locations. Of our venues, Sacred Heart continues to thrive with its hybrid indoor/outdoor set-up, lending itself to events that offer a dynamic blend of music, retail and gastronomy across a variety of spaces. *Daybreak x Espace Noir* and *Whitvoir at the Convent* were both examples of innovative one-day events that traversed the worlds of music, art, design and community, with visitors enjoying music, markets and food, surrounded by the stunning architecture of the Sacred Heart Buildings and Courtyard.

Most events at the Convent are responsive to our surroundings and make the most of our unique setting. In March 2023, the walls of Magdalen Laundry were lit up with light, colour and movement for the Centre For Projection Arts presentation of *Longing + Forgetting*, a collaboration between media artist Matt Gingold and Philippe Pasquier, a

world-leading expert in machine learning and digital choreography. This incredible exhibition explored a combination of physical and algorithmic choreography with architectural projection. The work questioned the relationship between the inanimate and the animate: how are our bodies measured and controlled by technology and what traces do our bodies leave on the structures around us?

A place for learning and development

This year's diverse array of workshops, ranging from drawing, dance and cultural awareness to yoga, acting and martial arts, provided a holistic approach to personal and professional growth. The inclusion of creative workshops, featuring tenants like Eureka, Cat Rabbit, Slow Fashion Studio and Custard Creative, attests to the Convent's commitment to fostering creativity. Noteworthy collaborations with organisations such as NIDA, Impro Melbourne as well as local groups such as the Convent Quilters and Jake Potter Dance, enhanced the educational and artistic landscape.

Abbotsford Convent's appeal extends to businesses and organisations, with a rebound in meetings and conferences returning to the Convent following the worst of COVID restrictions. This year, we were pleased to welcome the likes of VicHealth, Parks Victoria, Spark NEL Consortium and LAST Conference. The Convent provides a unique and inspiring backdrop for strategic workshops and cultural awareness training, aligning seamlessly with the evolving needs of the government and corporate sectors.

A place for buying local

In 2023 the Convent entered a new chapter with the arrival of our monthly Regional Farmers Market. With over 45 stallholders, Regional Farmers Markets is one of the oldest and most established operators of farmers markets in Australia. The market offers a diverse range of seasonal fresh produce, delicious foods and condiments from Victorian farmers.

Retail events such as the *3MBS Book and Music Fair*, *National Trust Vintage Clothing Bazaar* and *MOTI Clothing Pop-up* added a vibrant and diverse element to the range of market experiences presented at the Convent.

There was a clear trend towards supporting local artisans and makers. Not only did customers choose to engage with sustainable practices and help support the local economy, they sought out products with a personal touch and unique story behind them. Meeting the makers at these Convent market events helped visitors foster an emotional connection by recognising the time, effort and skill required to make or curate each product. With this in mind, the Convent Made initiative continued to host stalls and pop-up stores that support tenant community artists, encouraging visitors to buy one-of-a-kind products crafted on-site.

A place for connection

The Convent proved to be a chosen space for meaningful connections as the city's residents opted to commemorate their significant moments within our natural and built heritage environment. Having hosted 75 functions, ranging from community events, launches, weddings and engagements and gala dinners, the Convent is a backdrop for life's milestones. We are so pleased that this year alone, the Convent played host to over 9,700 guests, each coming together to share unforgettable experiences and special occasions.



Pictured: International Women's Day Exhibition by Platform Exhibitions, 2023. Photo by Mason Mo

Protecting our Precious Place



Pictured: Convent Building and Grounds, 2022. Photo provided by ACF.

ACF Master Plan Implementation

2022 saw the delivery of the Abbotsford Convent Master Plan after three stages of community engagement. Developed with architects Hassell, the Master Plan provides a comprehensive vision for the Convent, guiding the protection and enhancement of the precinct over the next decade and beyond. Today we are at the earliest stages of approval and building the case for government and philanthropic support to enable activation of these long term, ambitious projects.

Precinct Maintenance and Enhancement

The Convent is home to 116 tenants, 31 indoor and outdoor venues, and an abundance of treasured green open spaces. There is a lot of unseen, but essential work required to restore, operate and maintain this National Heritage precinct. The Convent always adopts a rigorous and meticulous approach with its partners to realise restorations to the highest heritage standards while enabling contemporary function, amenity and safe use for the community.

With the help of a generous supporter community, the Convent was able to enhance our business as usual. This included activities such as site maintenance, heating 11 heritage buildings, ongoing security costs, system and building upgrades and delivering support for 116 tenants, countless artists and community groups and thousands of visitors each week.

Gardens and Green Spaces

Two days a week, a dedicated team from Church Street Gardeners bring their experience and expertise to the Convent's Heritage Gardens. Headed up by lead Horticulturalist Cam Lyneham, a rotation of 12 professional gardeners, each contributing their own specialisms, tend to the seasonal requirements of the diverse plants and trees in our green spaces.

With tasks ranging from irrigation to permaculture, mowing many kilometres of lawn and trimming countless metres of hedges, our gardeners have their work cut-out. We are grateful for the support of our Garden Volunteers, who with the guidance of the Church Street Gardeners, roll up their sleeves to join weekly sessions, replanting The Fernery, day-to-day planting, weeding and watering the lush garden beds.

Visitors to the gardens will appreciate that the care and attention provided to our Heritage Listed plants and trees, requires particular sensitivity, ensuring that all improvements remain true to original form and design. Last year, 3 cracked irrigation pipes were found and repaired, 15 broken lawn sprinklers were replaced, 5 storm damaged tree limbs were safely removed and 50m³ of mulch was shifted.

No two days are the same in the Convent gardens, with many of the onsite residents making special appearances. Dominic Ferguson of Church Street Gardeners commented, "One of the joys of working at the Convent is not only the many varying and interesting plant species in the one location, but also the wildlife. The team have sighted bluetongues, king parrots, bull ants, thornbills, spinebills, a family of superb blue wrens and admired a small tiger snake (from afar) to name a few."

Heritage Works

This year, Abbotsford Convent received an Australian Heritage Grant from the Federal Government's Department of Industry, Science and Resources. The Australian Heritage Grants are focused on helping National Heritage Listed places improve their conservation, preservation and access. The grant will enable work on four vitally important projects, with works now scoped for delivery in the next financial year:

> Universal Access

Design works have been completed for an important accessibility upgrade in the Industrial School and The Store, with the installation of Universal Access ramps and automatic door mechanisms, set to be in place by April 2024.

> Convent Building

In January 2024, the very tired and worn carpet throughout the beautiful and high-use Convent Building will be replaced. This will benefit so many as the Convent Building currently houses more than 80 tenants, a gallery, Cam's Kiosk and 6 venues available for hire: The Bishop's Parlour, Breakfast Parlour, Community and Linen Rooms, Mural Hall and The Salon. Each year, 58,736 people across 735 room bookings enjoy these venues.

> Fire Safety

Crucial testing of the fire protection systems in four buildings, St Mary's, Providence, Mercator and St Euphrasia, is in progress. This assessment will help define requirements for the installation of new sprinkler systems in these well-loved heritage buildings. Home to a radio station, a school for 180 students, an array of arts and cultural independents and organisations from designers to jewellers and ceramicists, as well as the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Corporation, the work is key to ensuring a safe environment for all tenants and visitors.

> Heritage Gardens

This grant will enable the Convent to undertake urgently needed repairs to the 15 tanks providing 31,500 litres of water, for 5,200m² of gardens. With 16 acres of incredible heritage gardens and green spaces, water management is critical for the health of our garden, as well as the financial and environmental sustainability of the Convent. This project will be delivered in January 2024 (depending on the weather!).

Infirmiry Restoration

Generous investment from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation and the architectural services of Williams Boag Architects, enabled the part restoration of the Infirmiry Building. Previously closed and in disrepair, it is uplifting to see part of this building in use as Australian National Academy of Music teaching studios. The restoration stabilised the rooms and prevented further deterioration, preserving the history of the building, while providing new rooms for artistic expression and learning.

The part restoration in the Infirmiry Building has included:

- > Equipping rooms with modern amenities including soundproofing to facilitate musical performances and recordings.
- > The installation of improved lighting and climate control to ensure a comfortable studio environment.
- > Installation of electrical, mechanical and fire services for safe public use.
- > The preservation of original features including conservation of the ceiling cornicing and restoration of the original wall tiles.

Sacred Heart Creative Space

The precinct's Heritage Listed Sacred Heart building includes four separate venues available for artist-led programs and community use: Industrial School, Oratory, Packing Room and the incredible Magdalen Laundry. The installation of a dedicated state-of-the-art projector system has enabled the ACF to offer arts and creative professionals and our venue hire partners the right equipment to share their vision with audiences. This projector purchase was made possible thanks to funding from the City of Yarra.

Convent Annexe Restoration

We are pleased to announce that the restoration of the Convent Annexe, previously tenanted by Lentil as Anything, is now complete. The Abbotsford Convent team worked hard to clean and clear the Annexe to make way for building improvements that involved painting, plastering, tiling and restoration of the original celestial windows. The new light-filled space was then put out to tender. Review of applications eventuated in the selection of our own Cam's Kiosk team, who have put forward Julie: a paddock-to-plate dining concept headed up by their renowned Head Chef Julieanne Blum. We look forward to seeing what they bring to the table.



Images from top to bottom: 1. *Movement Rites*, Open Floor Movement Workshop with Henry Fowkes, 2022. Photo courtesy of organisers / 2. *Leaps and Bounds Music Festival*, 2022. Photo by Naomi Lee Beveridge



The Round Table

Katheryn Leopoldeseder's *The Round Table* is a special artwork that commemorates the community campaign that saved Abbotsford Convent from commercial residential development.

The artist, Katheryn Leopoldeseder, has had a studio at the Convent since 2005. Originally exhibited in *New Day*, Leopoldeseder's solo exhibition, *The Round Table* caught the eye of 11 past Abbotsford Convent Coalition and Convent Board Members and staff.

Michael Smith OAM, himself a former Board Member and long-term supporter of the Abbotsford Convent Foundation commented:

"Nothing summed up more succinctly the essence of the campaign to save the Convent more than 20 years ago. A simple table with a handful of wine glasses. For that is how one of Melbourne's most successful conservation campaigns began — a small group of local residents meeting at a kitchen table after it was announced that developers were planning apartments on the site."

"Firstly, how gorgeously apt it was that such a piece had been created by one of the Convent's original tenants. Secondly, 20 years down the track, many visitors to the Convent would be unaware of how the Convent was saved and they needed to know. Thirdly, how can we acquire the piece, so it remained at the Convent as a permanent reminder of the community campaign?"

The Round Table acquisition is thanks to generous donations from:
Andrea Hull AO
Antonia Syme AM
Charlotte Allen
David Gibbs AM
Haydn Raysmith AM
Maggie Maguire OAM (The Convent's inaugural CEO)
Michael Smith OAM
Roger Allen AM
Sally Romanes
Tim Hammon
William Russell

The Round Table was unveiled in September 2022 at the ACF Supporter Thank You event and is now on permanent display at St Heliers Street Gallery.

Katheryn Leopoldeseder
The Round Table, 2022
Mild steel, polypropylene, wooden table, paint, LEDs, glassware
1000 x 1000 x 800mm



Pictured: Donors and artist Katheryn Leopoldeseder at Supporter Event with *The Round Table*, 2022. Photo by Naga Sonu Kasu

Abbotsford Convent Foundation Arts Trust

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
REVENUE	\$	\$
Donations – Cash	162,836	178,067
Grants Received	33,500	66,300
Interest Income	14,253	166
TOTAL REVENUE	210,589	244,533
EXPENDITURE	\$	\$
Donations to Abbotsford Convent Foundation	49,800	207,067
Other Donations	–	–
Bank Charges and Fees	1,074	1,440
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	50,874	208,507
(DEFICIT) / SURPLUS BEFORE TAX	159,715	36,026
Income Tax Expense	–	–
SURPLUS / (DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	159,715	36,026
Other Comprehensive Income	–	–
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	159,715	36,026

Notes to Financial Statements

Abridged financial statements: These abridged financial statements are prepared from the full audited financial statements. The Abbotsford Convent Foundation (ACF) is constituted as a company limited by guarantee. The company owns and manages the property at Abbotsford. The company also acts as trustee of the Abbotsford Convent Foundation Arts Trust. The financial statements are prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and Corporations Act 2001. The statements are audited by Banks Group and lodged with the ACNC. The ACF has tax-exempt status and is the trustee of the Abbotsford Convent Foundation Arts Trust, which is a Deductible Gift Recipient listed on the Register of Cultural Organisations. Donations over \$2 to the Abbotsford Convent Foundation Arts Trust are tax-deductible. A complete set of financial statements is published at abbotsfordconvent.com.au

Abbotsford Convent Foundation Arts Trust

Statement of Financial Position

As at 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
ASSETS	\$	\$
Cash and Cash Equivalents	716,956	558,996
Term Deposit	167,547	165,769
Trade and Other Receivables	–	23
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	884,503	724,788
TOTAL ASSETS	884,503	724,788
LIABILITIES		
Trade and Other Payables	–	–
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	–	–
TOTAL LIABILITIES	–	–
NET ASSETS	884,503	724,788
Settlement Amount	100	100
Retained Income	884,403	724,688
TOTAL EQUITY	884,503	724,788

Abbotsford Convent Foundation

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
OPERATING REVENUE		
Car Park Income	914,145	633,957
Events	16,626	14,341
Grant Income for Operating Activities	342,785	1,324,038
Room Hire	858,372	455,791
Rental Income	2,246,868	1,945,064
Recoveries of Outgoings	88,275	72,280
Other Revenue	24,725	2,100
TOTAL OPERATING REVENUE	4,491,796	4,447,571
Interest Income	7,274	135
	4,499,070	4,447,706
OPERATING EXPENDITURE		
Administration	301,179	522,599
Advertising and Marketing	98,007	67,123
Car Parking	211,619	150,616
Fundraising	24,990	20,511
Insurance	143,103	144,694
Programming	564,180	290,419
Rates and Taxes	64,515	60,843
Site Operating Costs	1,285,340	951,081
Staff and Employee Expenses	2,165,842	2,492,407
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURE	4,858,775	4,700,293
OPERATING RESULT BEFORE DEPRECIATION	(359,705)	(252,587)
Depreciation	965,437	951,781
OPERATING RESULT AFTER DEPRECIATION	(1,325,142)	(1,204,368)
NON-OPERATING GRANTS AND DONATIONS		
Government Pandemic Support	-	543,400
Donations	14,089	6,802
Grant Income for Capital Projects	46,600	230,268
TOTAL GRANTS, DONATIONS AND SPONSORSHIP	60,689	780,470
RESULT FOR THE YEAR	(1,264,453)	(423,898)
Income Tax Expense	-	-
Other Comprehensive Income	-	-
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE RESULT	(1,264,453)	(423,898)

Abbotsford Convent Foundation

Statement of Financial Position

As at 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,252,016	1,732,485
Tenant Bond Deposits	282,963	267,386
Trade and Other Receivables	263,587	214,057
Prepayments	181,398	151,330
Security Deposits	-	32,370
Inventory	7,620	9,090
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	1,987,588	2,406,718
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, Plant and Equipment	15,855,465	16,601,629
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	15,855,465	16,601,629
TOTAL ASSETS	17,843,049	19,008,347
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and Other Payables	460,152	522,456
Deferred Income	223,790	93,468
Rental Bonds and Deposits	283,095	275,484
Employee Benefits	181,213	174,663
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	1,148,250	1,066,071
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Employee Benefits	45,064	28,088
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	45,064	28,088
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,193,314	1,094,159
NET ASSETS	16,649,735	17,914,188
Equity	16,649,735	17,914,188
TOTAL EQUITY	16,649,735	17,914,188

Supporters

The ACF acknowledges the vision of the Abbotsford Convent Coalition whose members campaigned for seven years to secure this public precinct for the community. Our success would not be possible without their commitment, and that of many others. Over the years, the Convent has also been greatly assisted by a vast number of individuals and organisations who have contributed their time, energy, skills and financial support. The Foundation is extremely grateful to all those who have provided sustained support and advocacy.

We are very thankful for the invaluable support we have received from our donors and partners, both long standing and new. We look forward to working together to continue ensuring the Convent is open every day of the year for a wide range of community uses. The Abbotsford Convent Foundation acknowledges the philanthropic, grant, pro bono, low bono and sponsorship support of many people over many years, especially the following supporters in the 2022/2023 financial year:

Principal Donors

Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM
Judy Matear
Sally Romanes
Ray Wilson OAM via The Ray & Margaret Wilson Foundation
Anonymous (1)

Major Donors

Rosemary Campbell & Tony Campbell
Mavourneen Cowen
Andrew Evans & Shushen Feng
Diana Heggie
Joan Johnson & Graeme Johnson OAM
Ruth Jones
Megan Laidlaw & David Laidlaw
Maggie Maguire OAM
Victoria Marles AM
Paula McLeod & John McLeod
Cynthia Nadai
John Paterson
Alexander Patton
The Hon. Justice Michelle Quigley
Gregory Shalit
Sisters of the Good Shepherd
Michael Smith OAM
Terence Teo
Christopher Thomas AM
Judy Williams & Peter Williams AM
Anonymous (1)

Key Supporters

Robyn Bainbridge
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Haydon Elliot
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Gillian Franklin
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Northeast Family
Gina Settle
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Lady Marigold Southey AC
George Willox
Anonymous (1)

Friends

The Hon. Robbie Aitken
Charlotte Allen & Prof. Peter McPhee AM
David Baile
Robyn Ball
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Debra & David Hirschfelder
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Jenny Kay
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Peter Kenny
Ezekiel Kigbo
Simon, Killen
Genevieve Lacey
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Judy Morton
Alexandra Murphy
George Novakovic
Rema O'Neill
Lynette Payne
Victoria Prentice
Ian Renard AM
Naomi Richards
Gary Rimmington
Janey Runci
Sally Draper Architects
Pamela & Barry Saunders

Schored Projects
Terry Shields
Ian Steedman
Peter Summers
Mary Symes
J M Taylor
Patricia Tooth
Mark Tran
Peter Treloar
Vin Vijayan
Rosemary Warnock
Gregor Whyte
Lorrae Wild
Simon Wilding
David Wilkinson
Robyn Williams
Lorena Wright
Anonymous (9)

Trusts & Foundations

Principal Partners

Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
Roger Allen & Maggie Gray Foundation

Major Partners

Ballandry (Peter Griffin Family) Fund: a sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation
Henkell Family Fund: a sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation
Myer Foundation & Sidney Myer Fund
The Pratt Family

Government Project Partners

Federal

Australia Council for the Arts (Creative Australia as of 24 August 2023)
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
Department of Industry, Science and Resources (Australian Heritage Grants)

State

Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions - Creative Victoria and Jobs Victoria Fund

Local

City of Yarra

Corporate Partners

Allens Linklaters
dbg Projects
Ellis Jones
Williams Boag Architects

Corporate Supporters

Colour Factory
Inspired Printing
MAV
Zilla & Brook

Bequest

Final bequest payment from the late Janette Norma Tourrier paid through State Trustees.

Board and Team

Board

Chair

Victoria Marles AM
(retired 17 October 2023)

Chair

Gillian Franklin
(commenced 20 February 2023)

Deputy Chair

Judy Williams
Ros Abercrombie
Justin Blumfield

Ruth Jones

Diana Heggie
(retired 17 October 2022)

Mark Henry
(retired 30 November 2022)

Stuart Kells
(retired 20 February 2023)

Tim Northeast
Hannah Schwartz
(retired 21 November 2023)

Michael Sokulski

Independent Committee Members

Matthew Bilney
(Audit & Risk Committee)

Diana Heggie
(Fundraising Committee)

Victoria Marles
(Fundraising Committee)

Patrick Ow
(Audit & Risk Committee)

Giselle Pinto
(Fundraising Committee)

Sally Romanes
(Fundraising Committee)

Peter Summers
(Audit & Risk Committee Chair)

Maria Troumboukis
(Audit & Risk Committee)

Jerome Tymms
(Finance & Capital Works
Committee)

Executive

Chief Executive Officer
Collette Brennan

Chief Operating Officer
John Di Natale

Administration

Accounts Manager

Ilona Molyte

Accounts Coordinator

Shona Kohler
(until July 2022)

Keith Hammond
(until August 2022)

Casey Wood
(from May 2022)

Administration & Governance Manager

Luke Gianfriddo

Administrator

Callum Buster Stewart
(until July 2022)

Sophie Whiting
(from July 2022 to
December 2022)

Lydia Kerrell-Vaughan
(from December 2022)

HR Officer

Bhawna Sharma

Building & Facilities

Operations Manager

Jason Kain

Facility Officer

David Morris
(until June 2023)

Heritage Assets

Lynette Dean
(until October 2022)

Site Coordinators

Paul Blakeney

Jesse Brogden
(until October 2022)

Neil Cook
(from February 2023)

Samuel (Otto) Enos
(until May 2023)

Jason Hood

David L Morris

John Moyle
(until February 2023)

Lucien Perry

Sodi Murphy-Shrives

Development & Fundraising

Head of Development

Enrica Longo

Fundraising Coordinator

Rebecca Clarke
(until May 2023)

Callum Buster Stewart
(from June 2023)

Marketing & Communications

Marketing & Communications Manager

Lucia Perera

(until May 2023)

Elisha Wilson

(from May 2023 to August 2023)

Marketing Coordinator

Clare O'Connor

Programming

Producer

Shae Nagorcka
(until November 2022)

Marcia Ferguson
(from January 2023)

Associate Producer

Heven Osborne
(until September 2022)

Kenny Waite

(from August 2022)

Tenancy

Tenant Community Manager

Leonie Wray

Tenant Community & Studio

Coordinator

Shani Cowell

Venue Hire

Events & Venues Manager

Kristy Foulcher

Events & Venues Coordinator

Sherry McLane Alejos

Event Operations &

Production Coordinator

Harvey Ogle

Volunteers

Naomi Callander

Madonna Grehan

Rema O'Neil

Amanda Russell

Ben Russell

Eddie Schubert

George Willox

Moyna Wilson



Pictured: Melbourne Design Week. Origin to Object, 2023. Photo by Andy Webb

Thank you!

Your support protects, enriches and enlivens the Abbotsford Convent precinct

The Abbotsford Convent precinct is owned and managed by the Abbotsford Convent Foundation (ACF) — an independent, not-for-profit organisation — on behalf of the community.

As custodians of the Convent precinct, it's our privileged responsibility to care for, maintain and protect our 11 heritage buildings — as well as our precious and expansive 6.8 hectares of green landscapes — places of creativity, celebration, retreat and sanctuary for all.

With the support of our growing community of donors and partners, we take enormous pride in restoring, nurturing and enlivening this unique arts and cultural hub, piece by piece, for the enjoyment of the people of Melbourne and Australia.

Now proudly inscribed on the National Heritage List, it takes a significant amount of time, energy, specialist support and resources to care for this iconic place — and we couldn't do it without the generosity of the community who care enough to contribute to see it thrive.

While we are honoured to receive local and state support for activities to enliven our incredible precinct, when it comes to managing and maintaining the expansive Convent precinct, we rely on our social enterprise model and the support of the community to ensure the precinct remains open and engaging for everyone, 365 days of the year.

If you love your time spent at the Convent, and feel grateful for this extraordinary community asset, please join our growing community of supporters and make a donation today. The Convent was saved by the community — for the community — and your support will make a direct and meaningful impact; helping to keep it thriving for generations to come. If this is a place that is meaningful in your world, please help safeguard and enliven it for the future.

Abbotsford Convent.

abbotsfordconvent.com.au

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