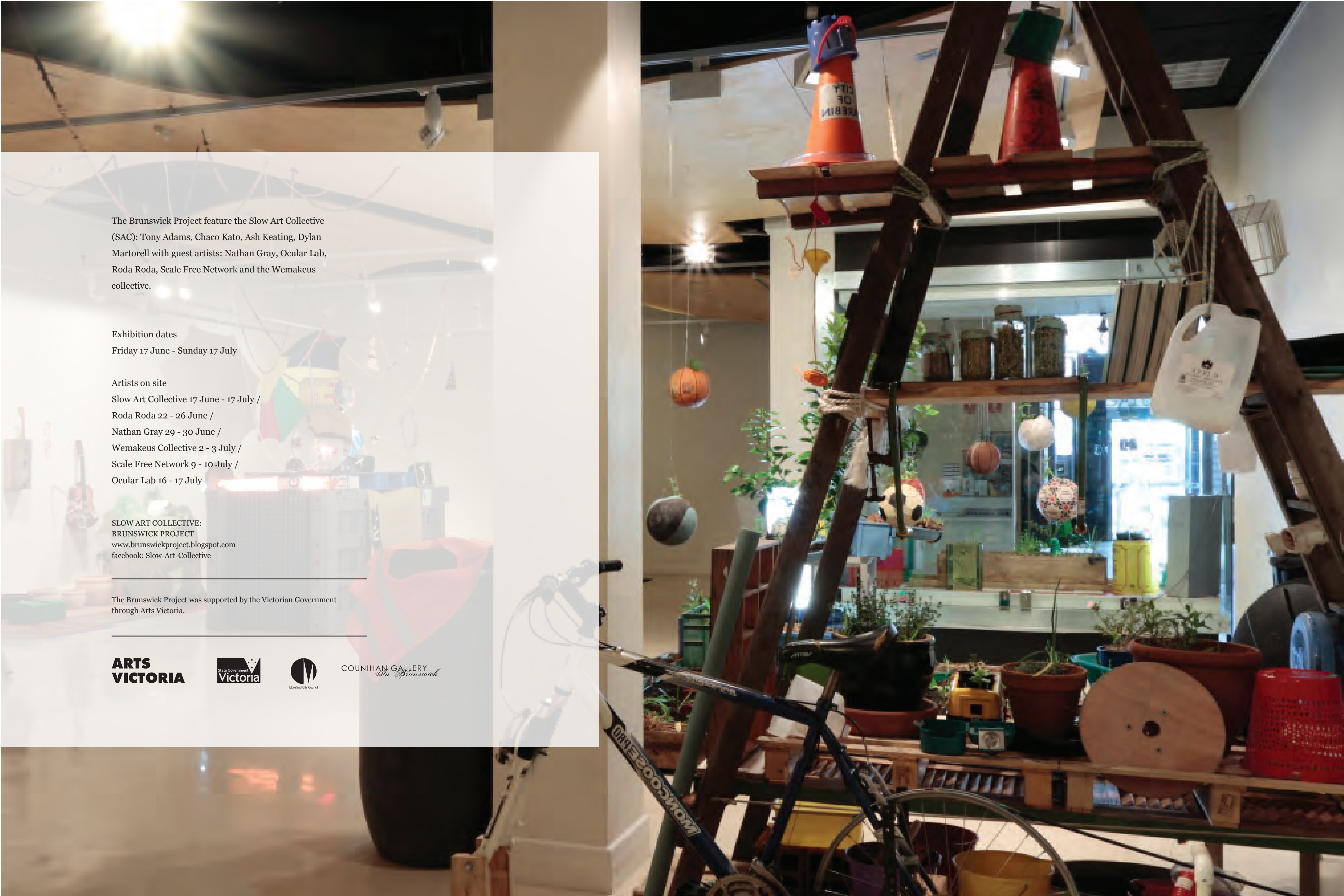


SLOW ART COLLECTIVE:  
THE BRUNSWICK PROJECT



The Brunswick Project feature the Slow Art Collective (SAC): Tony Adams, Chaco Kato, Ash Keating, Dylan Martorell with guest artists: Nathan Gray, Ocular Lab, Roda Roda, Scale Free Network and the Wemakeus collective.

Exhibition dates  
Friday 17 June - Sunday 17 July

Artists on site  
Slow Art Collective 17 June - 17 July /  
Roda Roda 22 - 26 June /  
Nathan Gray 29 - 30 June /  
Wemakeus Collective 2 - 3 July /  
Scale Free Network 9 - 10 July /  
Ocular Lab 16 - 17 July

SLOW ART COLLECTIVE:  
BRUNSWICK PROJECT  
[www.brunswickproject.blogspot.com](http://www.brunswickproject.blogspot.com)  
facebook: Slow-Art-Collective

The Brunswick Project was supported by the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria.

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COUNIHAN GALLERY  
*In Brunswick*



Slow Art Collective opening week.

# SLOW ART COLLECTIVE: THE BRUNSWICK PROJECT - DAN RULE

*Exhibition openings aren't meant to be this fun. The space is awash in a sea of chatter, food, unwieldy objects, constructions, music, big and little people. In one corner of the gallery, herbs grow in an indoor garden bed; plants hang in deflated, upturned basketballs; a rusted bike powers a makeshift grey water pump. Chaco Kato jumps on to give a demonstration (Tony Adams checks for leaks). The edible garden adjoins a makeshift kitchen, dishes already piling up in the sink. Delicate strings of dried fruits and citrus peel drape from the ceiling the length of the gallery, tracing weblike a maps just above eye-level.*

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Like the very notion of ephemeral art practice, there seems a particular slipperiness to the guise, shape and creative outputs of the Slow Art Collective. Though conceived and fashioned by – but by no means limited to – central protagonists Chaco Kato, Tony Adams, Dylan Martorell and Ash Keating, there is an inherent looseness to their activities, actions and activators. In gauging the collective's practice, questions of designated or somehow steadfast outcomes begin to float astray. The roles of the artist and collaborator and audience are untethered and unbound – set adrift amid a seemingly endless palette of conceptual, social, familial and material possibilities. The activity of art making becomes a kind of communal melange, a re-use and re-imagining of contemporary life-stuffs, art spaces and detritus.

Using materials saved, found, foraged and recycled from domestic and urban spaces, the quartet craft and care-take contexts for communal and familial engagement, thought and play. One's trash is another's treasure (or so reads the old chestnut), be it a deflated soccer ball, bent basketball ring, reclaimed timber or composted fruit.

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*Dylan Martorell is wandering about somewhere in the throng. A quiver of his signature home-built and improvised musical instruments hang on one wall, as eager to be plucked, strummed or however else played. Nearby, he's built a kind of aural cubbyhouse from found plastic crates, straw mats, a rickety plastic banana lounge and jumble of old speakers. People burrow in and recline only to become enveloped in wiry, arcane pulses of music and found sound.*

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The Brunswick Project was the second site-responsive installation by the Slow Art Collective. Their first, TS2 (Transfer Station 2), took the form of a colossally scaled, e-waste installation in August 2009. Working in partnership with the Moonee Valley city Council Waste Transfer Station, the collective shifted over 15 tonnes of partially recycled computer parts, power cords and plastics to the council's the adjoining Incinerator Arts Complex to fashion a rolling, colossally scaled landscape that encompassed a cyclical ambient soundtrack and a garden of sprouting potatoes and wheat.

At the end of the three-week project, the vast installation was dismantled, re-separated and all 15 tonnes of e-waste was returned to the transfer station to re-enter the recycling process. Having arrived onsite with nothing, Adams, Kato, Keating and Martorell left with nothing, effectively minimising the project's footprint to the smallest possible impression.

It's within this missive that the Slow Art Collective's work (and play) begins to find its traction. In a similar vein to which the 'slow food' movement necessitates an eschewal of multinational, corporately sanctioned chains of supply to instead engender a reconnection with locally grown and organic produce, the collective's projects draw on the materials and people of their surrounds and cover their tracks when they're done.

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*A basketball ring punctuates an expanse of wall on the southern perimeter of the gallery. A volley of muddy scuffs surrounded the ring as if an ode to mischief and poorly executed afterschool sports. I question Ash Keating on the matter and he just grins. Later, a sprightly game of table tennis ensues with Keating, young Ringo Watanabe(son of Chaco) and an unintroduced female opponent with a powerful backhand. Suffice to say, she dominates and swaggers out early. No autographs are taken.*

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Unfurling over four weeks in June and July 2011, The Brunswick Project saw the group's activity assume a very different form. Taking residence at Counihan Gallery In Brunswick, they worked to construct various transient installations from materials sourced from backyards, streets and op-shops around the City of Moreland. Where TS2 made for a relatively static landscape for others to wander and explore, The Brunswick Project was porous, malleable and in constant flux.

Utilising the gallery to forge a kind of 'open house' for various artistic collaborations and community interactions and events, they invited a host artists and groups – experimental bike-making crew Roda Roda, artist Nathan Gray, the WeMakeUs Collective, art/science group Scale Free Network and long-time Brunswick-based collective Ocular Lab – to collaborate and extend the amorphous structural and philosophical reaches of the project. Discussions were had and food was shared. With each collaboration came a distinct new vantage.

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*You can practically hear the giggles, hollers and over-excited shrieks from out on Sydney Road. Inside the dimmed gallery, the space has been transformed into a mysterious landscape peppered with video projections, mystical sounds, strange purple lights, smoke-machine mists a curved roadway that winds its way in and around various urban flotsam and jetsam. Little tykes on tricked-out bikes tear about the nocturnal scene, cackling and yelping at will.*

*A couple of weeks into The Brunswick Project and bike crew Roda Roda are in residence for the weekend. Headed by designer Lichen Kemp, Martorell, sound and visual artist Lucreccia Quintanilla and filmmaker Jason Heller, they hold creative bike modification workshops as means for education, innovation and artistic, communal and international exchange.*

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Chatting with Kato in the weeks leading up to the project, she described her work, somewhat uncannily, as adhering to similar thread to that of permaculture, "where everything is linking up and one existence is for a few reasons."

"It's not just saving money or trying to be environmental," she continued. "In my mind, my art practice is really part of my lifestyle, rather than cut off, like 'This is my art and this is my life'. I've always wanted to connect these things together and one way to do that is to use material from my everyday life. Another way is to get my family and my friends involved, so I like to exchange my ideas with them."

It's a proposition that neatly extends to the work of the wider Slow Art Collective. That Adams spent the month-long residency preparing and sharing vegan food with the collective, gallery staff, Moreland Council workers and visitors was no solitary act, but instead, a gesture of inclusion. Though pragmatic and inexpensive, his making of meals as part of the work positioned food as a kind of activator, an agent for participation. Whether a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice or hummus, salad and crusty bread, it worked fortify the intersection between life-stuffs and creative practice. Little brings people together like sharing a meal.

Indeed, by disengaging their compositions, gatherings and constructions not just from unsustainable materials and practice, but traditional artistic strictures and audience interactions, Slow Art Collective's work becomes an inseparable extension of the daily – a kind of coexistence – fleeting and temporal. Their artworks are there to be used, inhabited, eaten and expounded; they espouse no lofty privilege.

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*Three figures dressed in lab-coats stalk the space. Microscopes, projectors and Soviet-era scientific instruments punctuate the darkened gallery. It is like a fictional underground lair, a Batcave occupied by Melbourne's Scale Free Network, a science-art collaborative comprising two artists and a microbiologist. I'm offered a seat in front of a microscope, petri dishes filled with dust, litter, bits and bobs collected from about the space span out on the table. One of lab-coated technicians issues instructions. Within seconds I'm viewing a dried leaf and tiny, torn swatch of fabric in an entirely new light.*

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On the final weekend of the project, longstanding Brunswick art collective Ocular Lab (Julie Davies and Alex Rizkalla) invited all involved to return to the gallery to feast on soup made from the produce grown from makeshift garden bed throughout the project.

In a sense, this simple act represented the project's most succinct missive. Planned onsite, created onsite, grown onsite and eaten with friends onsite, this was art that had revolved full-circle.



Art/Science group Scale Free Network workshop and collaboration.



Dream Ride with Roda Roda Soundsystem.

Soup kitchen with Brunswick art collective Ocular Lab (Julie Davies and Alex Rizkalla).



Scratch Orchestra workshops with Nathan Gray.

