

**Curatorial statement:**  
**Refraction Billboard Project**

**Artists:**

Artful Dodgers Studios is an innovative and creative space in Collingwood for young people aged 15 - 27 whose lives may have been affected by difficult circumstances. Young artists work in fully equipped art and music studios with experienced artists and musicians – exploring and developing creative skills, meeting and connecting with other artists and getting involved in high profile projects and exhibitions. We also aim to assist young people to access education, employment and training by offering a relaxed space with courses focussed on the creative industries. The Artful Dodgers Studios, a program of Jesuit Social Services, was established in 1996 using art as the hook to engage ‘at risk’ young people. ADS have developed a sustained engagement model specifically for young people who are extremely fragile and marginalised due to a range of risk factors. Underpinning this model is the importance of relationship and this remains at the core of our philosophy.

We have held over 45 exhibitions and events showcasing our emerging artists at venues such as the NGV, 45 Downstairs, SIGNAL, Docklands, Shebeen, The Evelyn and Sydney Road Festival. Young artists at the Artful Dodgers work alongside the Dodgers’ CCD artists Kate Geck, Forest Keegel and Amy-Jo Jory and musicians Jesse Hooper and Jesse Sullivan. We propose to develop work for the billboards with the following two external lead artists:

**Benjamin Ducroz:**

Inspired by the forms, patterns, and movement found in nature and the built environment, Benjamin works with found objects and visual abstraction to create dynamic videos and animations. Made with a blend of stop motion animation and computer graphics, his fast-paced works have a vibrant choreographic style. Presenting a fast-paced morphology of the modern artefact-in-transformation underscored by vibrantly lyrical witticisms and impossible perspectives. Ducroz’s purist emphasis on real objects suffused with a surreal post-architectural explosiveness, unleashes the hyperreal latency of everyday objects and obsolete technologies in a sixty second mediaflash. Benjamin has exhibited his works worldwide and received a number of grants and commissions for his work.

<http://www.ducroz.com/>

**Jill Orr** is a contemporary artist based in Melbourne, Australia. Orr is best known for her works in performance, photography, video and installation works that often explore the body, and its positioning within social, political and environmental contexts. While Orr’s works are predominantly site-specific, the recording of her works are regarded as equally significant aspects of her working practice. Over the past thirty years she has presented her work in Australia, Paris, Beijing, Hong Kong, Amsterdam, Antwerp, New York, Toronto, Quebec City and Graz. Orr’s works are included in a number of major public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, Redgate Gallery Beijing, the National Gallery of Victoria, The Graeme Gibson collection, the Monash Gallery of Art and Griffith Artworks. Many of her works are also held in private collections in Australia, Holland, England, France, the United States, China and Belgium. Jill Orr is represented by Jenny Port Gallery.

<http://jillorr.com.au/>

**Works proposed for the program:**

Artful Dodgers will work with Jill Orr and Benjamin Ducroz to produce four billboards. The billboards will form a complement to the outcomes from our Refraction project, which has been funded by Arts Victoria. (Refraction Model Overview provided in next section). These four works will be linked stylistically and thematically through their exploration of geometry, abstraction, and identity. The design and development of the billboards will occur through 2 modular series of workshops held at Dodgers. We will incorporate site visits and investigate design strategies to minimise the potential for graffiti and maximise consideration of the location. As the works will be created on site at Dodgers, we envision elements of the Collingwood/Fitzroy area to work their way into the final designs.

**Workshops:**

***Module 1: Synaesthetic Movements with Benjamin Ducroz***

The project explores sensory experience and the ways we augment movement in space and time. Benjamin Ducroz works extensively with kinetic sculptures which are filmed and animated through time lapse and stop motion to create vivid, animated objects which seemingly defy their position in

time and space. Kate Geck creates synaesthetic acrylic sculptures which diffract video and neon light to immerse the viewer in a sensory moment. Young artists at the studio have explored EL wire costumes, testing ways light and energy can disrupt visual space through dance and the redesign of the human form. This project will allow the studios to bring these areas of interest together in the creation of a performative, tactile animated work. Young artists will investigate sculptural space and ways to disrupt or augment it through performance or audiovisual intervention. Three-dimensional objects will result, along with a standalone video work for projection.

Two large format billboards will be developed from video stills, exploring and exploiting natural geometries in the Fitzroy/Collingwood area and testing ways to augment these with composited sculptural objects. We envision a rhythmic, abstract composition comprised of familiar yet reconfigured local elements, and will investigate ways to create movement and transition between the two January billboards - treating them as one large composition.

### ***Module 2: Psycho-social Ecologies with Jill Orr***

This is a project around social justice, ecology, and politics – with an emphasis on the ways we can use art tell our stories and bear witness to our time. Young people will focus on issues of the psycho-social and environmental as well as cultural and environmental interdependence. Through performance sculpture and photography, a body of work will be created. Orr's work draws on land and identities as they are shaped in, on and with the environment be it country or urban locales. She grapples with the balance and discord that exists at the heart of relations between the human spirit, art and nature. Forest Keegel has a spatial practice in which she responds to the environment and utilises everyday items that have been discarded to create art in public space. Young artists at Artful Dodgers have experimented with projects around environmental issues, creating ephemeral site responsive artwork with natural materials as part of their Sustainable Arts course.

Two large format billboards will be created from these workshops. We imagine this will comprise a staged scene exploring environmental aspects of the local area, and possible personification/characterisation of these elements. Again, we will consider the billboards as one composition, investigating ways to link the two images.

### **Overview of your practice and experience**

The Refraction project has received \$30000 of funding from Arts Victoria with considerable in kind support from Jesuit Social Services. The project has performance/exhibition outcomes planned for mid 2015. We see the Yarra Billboard project in perfect complement to these outcomes. The Refraction model brings together three partners: 'at risk' young people, ADS CCD artists, and specialist practitioners in targeted arts areas. It allows three tiers of experience and knowledge to flow between these partners: between young artists and CCD artists; young artists and specialist artists; and CCD and specialist artists. It aims to include a greater number and diversity of artists and disciplines, further embedding professional development for all and generating high quality artistic and social outcomes.

The project is modular. Each module consists of a workshop and a creative development period for young people led by specialist practitioners with ADS CCD artists, and culminates in a public outcome of original work. This exhibition will coincide with a master class for the wider public, and currently these are slated for June 2015 at SIGNAL or The Meat Market. Young people will be encouraged to be present as 'experts' in this setting. This form of civic engagement is extremely empowering for young people. Showing their work on the Yarra Billboards furthers this civic engagement, providing a forum for new artistic voices to be shared with a broader audience.

The project recognises that creative practice exists on a continuum. At the project's core is the belief that artists at all stages of practice have valuable creative and cultural contributions to make. The project will support artistic dialogue, collaboration and exchange between young people, CCD practitioners, established artists and the wider public. It moves away from the singular community art lens to encompass a more inclusive practice that will enrich the Victorian arts landscape.