

# ‘THERE'S ALWAYS BITS OF ME IN THE ART’

AN EXPLORATION OF THE ARTIST AS CULTURAL AND CREATIVE  
WORKER, SOCIAL FACILITATOR AND MEANING MAKER.

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# ABSTRACT

This thesis, which explores the lives and work of South Australian artists, argues that artists are seen, and see themselves, as occupiers of a special, and necessarily contradictory, social facilitation role, that is characterised by the granting of certain social benefits and latitudes, and by the assumption and performance of community obligations. Within the thesis the role of artist is positioned as one that is developed through both formal and informal social structures and practices, including those imposed through disciplinary traditions and the socially normalised ways of belonging to the contemporary Australian art world. In this capacity, this thesis positions artists as a group of individuals who play a key role in skilfully appropriating and utilising the symbolic, spatial and material elements of society in order to uphold, represent, support or contest certain aspects of that social world.

The thesis explores the way in which the artists' themselves understand, develop and maintain this special status through the work they continuously invest in, becoming legitimate art practitioners in key aspects of their work and social lives. It argues that this state of legitimacy is established and maintained in a number of ways that are both personally and externally determined, including in relation to the artist's perceived level of technical, creative, social, critical and financial achievement in the arts. Within this context, the thesis addresses a number of questions, including how an individual begins to see themselves as an artist, what compels them to choose to become an artist, and what are the factors that are taken into consideration in order for someone to work legitimately as an artist.

The research and analysis presented in this thesis provides a contribution to the existing body of knowledge of the art world and art practice, with particular reference to understanding artists within the regional Australian context of South Australia, and in relation to the importance of the role of artist to social and cultural maintenance, renewal and production. In this capacity, the thesis supports the development of anthropological knowledge relating to the practice of artists and their use of material culture and space, and the development of social legitimacy within the creative industries through exploring the contributory role of ritual, performance, creativity, education, and the cultivation of social relationships.

## DECLARATION

**Name: Sandra Howe-Piening**

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Sandra Howe-Piening

21<sup>st</sup> December, 2017

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*No man is an island entire of itself,  
every man is a piece of the continent,  
a part of the main*

John Donne 1624

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