

## **The future** – what's the big picture for IFACCA?

Big pictures are what artists do best. Artists like Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C Clarke, with *2001 A Space Odyssey*, Patricia Piccinini's disturbing sculptural installations, or Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. They imagine the future for us.

Now – at the start the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – national governments are working together, as never before, to tackle global challenges. They are supporting scientists to analyse the impacts of global warming, economists to solve the financial crisis, medicos to halt global epidemics, and strategists to tackle issues of security. All these experts are employed to imagine and create a future that is safer, greener, healthier, and more resilient.

So where does IFACCA fit in with all this? I believe the success of IFACCA over its first eight years is due to its members and their ongoing commitment to working together internationally. In December 2000, when the idea of IFACCA became a reality, it was the leaders of the national arts funding agencies who seemed to recognise instinctively the need to support an organisation that would help join people together, so that they could share information and learn from one another. Who, in fact, put their money where their mouth was. No small thing in a world that throws up so many competing claims.

As we all know, what creative artists do best is to envision the stories and futures of our communities – so that we can see ourselves in new ways and better understand who we are. IFACCA's members are entrusted with a special privilege by being delegated by their communities, through national governments, to support artists to bring their vision, and those of their societies, to reality. And just as there is little point in governments telling scientists, economists and doctors how to do their job, governments should, I believe, also leave the task of artistic creativity to artists.

Whether through our newsletter, *Acorns*, or IFACCA's research reports or events like the World Summit, I believe IFACCA plays a small but catalytic role in the development of creative communities.

IFACCA's members, through their dedication and commitment (in being here in Johannesburg today and in continuing to support IFACCA) have expressed their faith in the need for organisations to talk to one another.

Whether you are from a large or small organisation, a rich or poor country – each of you has a unique perspective on artistic creativity, each of you forms a small piece of the bigger picture.

It is a great pleasure for me to be able to thank the members in person today. Not, as usual, via the Web or a letter. The possibility of personal connection – as

provided by this World Summit – is very precious, because nothing can supplant the value of shaking hands and speaking face to face.

As members – not just of the Federation but of a larger, global, creative network – we need more and more urgently to engage with the big picture. And to engage with the big challenges that these times seem to throw up on a daily basis. How do we go forward in the arts when our planet is challenged, seemingly on every side – by the threat of global warming or the fallout from the economic meltdown? What can we do, as members of a larger creative community, to contribute to solutions?

The future, I believe, for IFACCA and its members, lies in forging ever closer bonds, and in recognising our need to share, information, skills, imaginations. By entrusting our thoughts, aspirations and ideas to a global arena we give other member countries, organisations, and individuals a chance to dream, imagine, and think with us, and to strengthen our creative connections. To add, if only one small piece, something to a bigger, brighter picture.

Perhaps we could learn from our host country, South Africa – the rainbow nation with 11 official languages – that the big picture is, by its very nature, made up of smaller vibrant pictures – and all the richer for it.

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