

FEAST

21

THE NEW to NOW

Curated by Jackie Wurm
Created on Kaurna country

Exhibition 10-25 November 2017
Raj House, 54 Hyde St, Adelaide



Beginnings

“...three weeks of brilliant arts, entertainment and events produced by our community...[celebrating] pride in the diversity of lesbian, gay and queer culture in Adelaide.”¹

This exhibition marks 21 years of the Feast Festival – the passion, vision, creativity plus blood, sweat and tears of **thousands** of artists, paid staff and countless volunteers. Feast’s audiences, supporters and Adelaide’s LGBTIQ community members and organisations have been, and continue to be, essential ingredients. This exhibition is only part of the story. Your memories and experiences are all part of Feast’s history.

As a new millennium was on the horizon, Feast was created from the ideas and energy of four professional arts and community workers in Adelaide. Helen Bock, Damien Carey, Luke Cutler and Margie Fischer were the initial Artistic Directors. Former Premier and community icon Don Dunstan launched the Festival Guide and poster to a delighted crowd on 5 September 1997 at the Lion Arts Centre.

The 42-page largely black and white Guide had a colour cover and matching poster designed by local lesbian artist Jayne Amble. Around 85 events were on the menu over two weeks and three weekends. Messages of support were included from politicians, Adelaide Festival and Fringe as well as older sibling queer festivals: Mardi Gras and Midsumma, which were founded in 1978 and 1988 respectively. Feast started out with a small budget (\$70,000), big aspirations and a lot of goodwill. Organisers expected 20,000 people, but over 45,000 attended, showing a great appetite for what was brought to the table.²



¹ 1997 Festival Guide p. 3

² Louise Nunn, 'Life's a drag', *The Advertiser*, 24 October, 1998, p. 5

Commitment

Feast's Commitment Statement appeared in the first Festival Guide in 1997. It morphed over time and was renamed 'Aims and Objectives'.

1. To produce Feast Adelaide's Annual Queer Cultural Festival.
2. To nurture, support and showcase artistically excellent, visionary and popular arts and cultural events produced by SA's queer artists.
3. To provide support for marginalised groups including Aboriginal, youth, seniors and CALD [culturally and linguistically diverse people] to participate in Feast as artists, community and audiences.
4. To develop collaborative strategic partnerships with Adelaide's major arts orgs, peak LGBTIQ organisations, government, tourism, youth, health and business organisations for input into the programming, marketing and promotion of Feast.
5. To artistically direct the Festival to maximise community development and social inclusion promoting a sense of pride, community identity, celebration and diversity.
6. To ensure Feast is a major arts and cultural Festival attracting Adelaide, interstate and international audiences to enhance SA's arts profile.
7. To program interstate and international performers and companies to enhance the Feast program and to give audiences access to outstanding queer productions and artists.
8. To seek input and cross fertilisation on content, marketing, sponsorship and tourism from other Festivals in South Australia and nationally.
9. To produce a high quality successful Festival in terms of content, audience figures, tourism development and economic benefit to Adelaide and South Australia.
10. To provide high standard, cost effective management with energetic artistic direction and constant improvement through performance evaluation.
11. To be able to pay core staff, project workers and artists appropriately for their work for Feast.

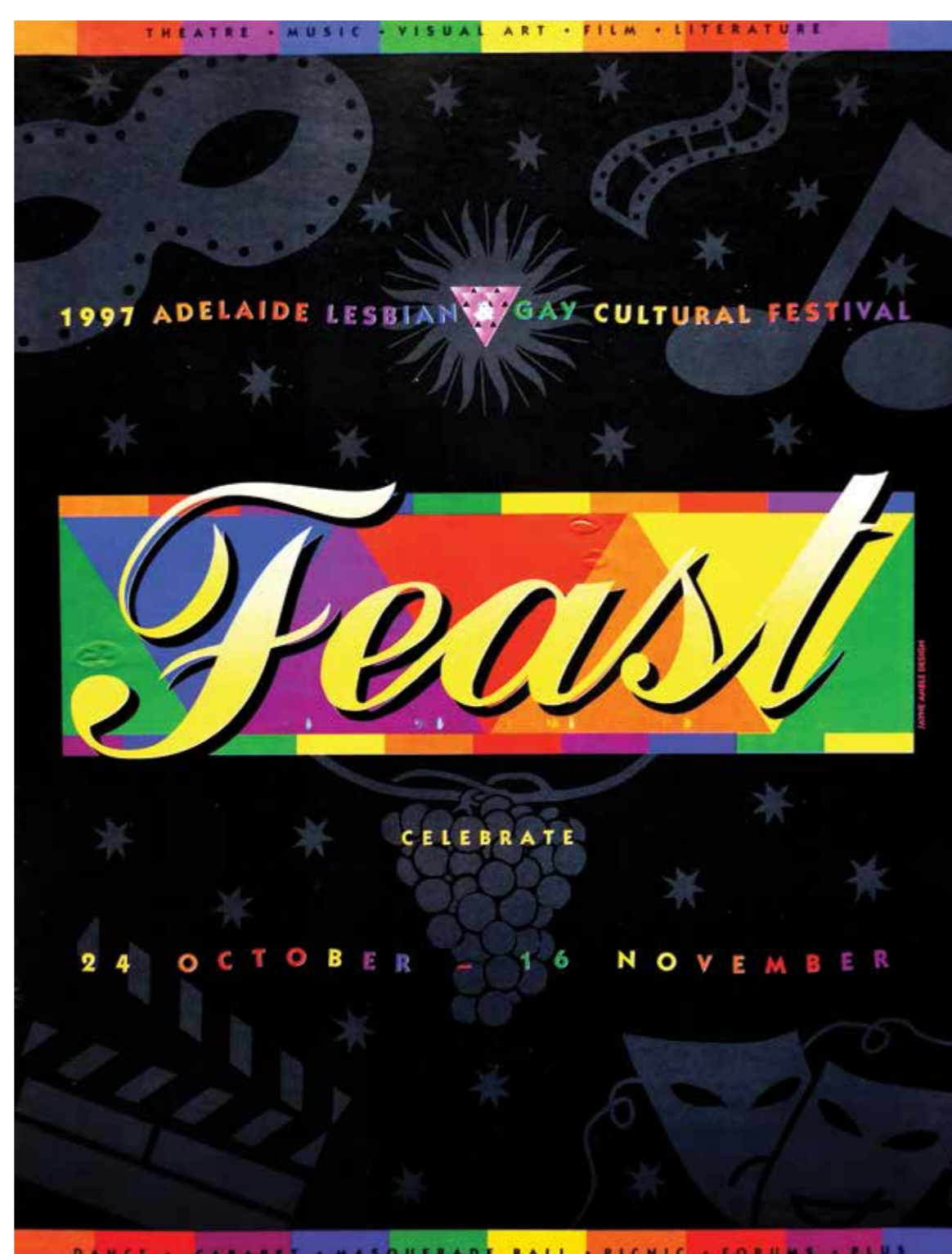


image: 1997 Festival Guide cover

Black & Queer

“...Kamungka Nudlu Kuma Nendi...Together we become one”³

(Kym Wanganeen)

These words in Kurna, summed up the impact for the performers of the *OutBlak Adventures* project which won a 2011 Arts SA Ruby Award. The project featured eight Indigenous artists exploring coming out stories (and what it's like to be different in and out of family) – the highs and lows. A national first, it toured country SA culminating in the *Queer Gay & Blak 4* show at Feast. *Nungay Nite* has been a highlight of many Feast Festivals showcasing Aboriginal culture, queer comedy, dance, music, drag, photography, roller skating and more.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander gay, lesbian and sistergirl artists' contribution to Feast has been, and continues to be, a very important part of the Festival. Feast's Advisory committee structure has included Indigenous members and some years a specific committee. Some projects have received funding to pay artists such as for the 1999 *Blak'N'Out Project*, *OutBlak Adventures*.

There have been plenty of other firsts. *Two Spirit People* was promoted as the “...first exhibition by Indigenous lesbian and gay visual artists to be held in South Australia” and many more have followed along with writing and other events.⁴ The 2000 Feast offered a Kurna Cultural and Seasonal Food Tour. In the same year, at Tandanya, a forum was held *Reconciliation: What is it? Should Queers say sorry?* Yarning with *Scary Stories* and *Kangaroo Tails by the Campfire* were a feature at the 2011 and 2012 Festival Hub in Light Square.



photos: Nungay Nite, 2013; Blak Elvis (Maree Peters), Jacqui Deering, 2000

³ Raymond Zada quoting Kym Wanganeen's (d) acceptance speech 'OutBlak Adventures', in Dino Hodge (ed), *Colouring the Rainbow: Blak Queer and Trans Perspectives*, Wakefield Press, 2015, p. 167

⁴ 1997 Festival Guide p. 20

Opening Night

“...be part of history in the making at this ageless event for everyone.”⁵

Adelaide’s inaugural Lesbian and Gay Cultural Festival kicked off on Friday 24 October 1997 with a free Opening Party at the Lion Bar and Courtyard. It was the start of an opening weekend of events including a Saturday night Masquerade Ball billed as the ‘Grand Opening Event of FEAST ’97’ and a Sunday afternoon concert.⁶

Since 2003 the Pride March has acted as an entrée into the Feast main course. It has its roots in the 1973 Adelaide Gay Pride Week when male homosexual activity was still illegal. Pride March Adelaide was founded 30 years later the year the second march was held and became a Feast fixture. The 2008 postcard promoting Pride March Adelaide featured a timeline placing the March, and by association Feast, in a historical global queer rights context.

Providing plenty of colour, movement and energy to kick off the festivities, the March also celebrates the love, strength and resilience of the queer community. When appearing, small groups of fundamentalist Christian protesters have failed to dampen spirits and been far outnumbered by thousands of supportive allies and onlookers. Post-March Opening Night Parties have continued to be a signature event showcasing a taste of things to come during the Festival.



photos: Opening Night Party, 1998; Opening Night Party 2015, photojo

⁵ 1997 Festival Guide, p. 7

⁶ 1997 Festival Guide, p. 7

Picnic

“If you’ve never been, you’ve never been seen.”⁷

Picnic in the Park pre-dated Feast having started in 1989 and became the Festival’s giant wrap party on its final day.⁸ The relaxed outdoor setting provides space for people to mix and mingle in different venues: Rymill Park, Elder Park, Veale Gardens, the Light Square Hub and in recent years at Pinky Flat. Temperatures have ranged from spring time to 40 degrees plus. An array of stallholders from community groups to lesbian and gay owned and other businesses and services spruik their wares and messages to crowds numbering over 4,000.

The *Dog Show* continues to be a perennial favourite. Picnic is family friendly and provides a great audience for competitions such as Handbag Tossing, Lube Wrestling and the Tug of War featuring Adelaide’s fire fighters versus picnickers. The *Feast Show* has displayed homemade preserves, cakes, craft, personal collections and a plethora of other astounding categories. Live performance and DJs feature providing popular spaces for LGBTIQ people, friends and family to dance, relax and watch the community go by. More recently, Picnics were followed by after parties into the night.



photos: Lube Wrestling at Picnic, Mick Vovers, 2002; Picnic, photojo, 2015

⁷ 2000 Festival Guide p. 34

⁸ Pride Walk Light Square - first annual LGBTIQ Picnic in the Park held

Artists

“Feast affirms sexual and cultural diversity in a queer space that we know is taken notice of by others, is openly challenged and acts as a point of focus and energy for queer communities to celebrate and debate in ways that respect and create a sense of belonging, a community.”⁹ (Iain Henderson)

Over 21 years Feast has showcased and celebrated thousands of LGBTIQ performing and visual artists. The breadth of creativity, energy and generosity of emerging and established South Australian, national and international artists is impressive. 21 years of Feasts: Cabaret, Dance, Theatre, Writing, Film, Comedy, Visual Arts, Music, Drag, Outings and Multimedia have entertained and inspired the queer and wider community across age, cultures, gender and sexuality.

Being part of Feast has launched artists' careers and provided platforms for works in progress as well as premiering new work. The diversity of live performance, filmmaking, visual art and writing has enriched our lives. Live performances at Feast Parties and Picnics inspire and affirm who we are. Advisory committees have been an essential ingredient to Feast's success. Over the years there has been Visual Arts, Drag, Gay Men, Aboriginal, Lesbian, Community, Intersectorial, Show, Literary, Forums, Youth, Film, and Special events committees feeding ideas for events and support to the Feast team/s.

“Feast is renowned and respected nationally and internationally for its artistic excellence, originality, vision and ambition. Artists affirm who we are, allow us to dream, bring joy and connection, a chance for reflection and inspiration.”¹⁰ (Margie Fischer)



photos: 2002 Feast Guide listing; Ikochi Japanese transgender rockabilly punk band, Jenny Scott, 2011

⁹ Chairperson Iain Henderson, 2005 Annual Report, p. 3

¹⁰ Margie Fischer, 2017

Across generations

“...take a risk...get out of the house...and be a part of something perverse and diverse this Feast.”¹¹

Feast has created space for events and initiatives for all ages with a particular emphasis on celebrating local young gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual performers and visual artists. Several dedicated youth zines have been published. Youth-led parties and other underage events and spaces have been prominent throughout many programs as well as youth friendly events. A Welcome Mat program ran in 2002 where young people could meet a worker from Bfriend, or Second Story 15 minutes before a show started. Other access initiatives have included discount schemes, pay what you can and membership programs. A queer youth regional exchange program hosting people from regional SA were other examples. The Feast Queer Youth Drop In is an enduring initiative which runs all year.

The Festival has supported the creation of new work and community cultural development projects. *I Can See Queerly* queer filmmaking projects resulted in young people creating their own short films, some of which have gone on to be screened at international and national queer film festivals. Short story competitions, youth theatre, health and wellbeing weekends and creative projects for Elders are a taste of the richness of Feast's community programs. The 2002 Wisdom Kitchen series, including an evening hosted by Don Dunstan and Stephen Cheng, and in 2003 a Remedies and Recipes film making project also tapped the knowledge of Elders.



photos: International Day of Transgender Remembrance, Ian Buckland, 2011; Feast youth, Pride March Adelaide, 2015

¹¹ Q-ZINE the official queer youth magazine, 2001 Feast Festival

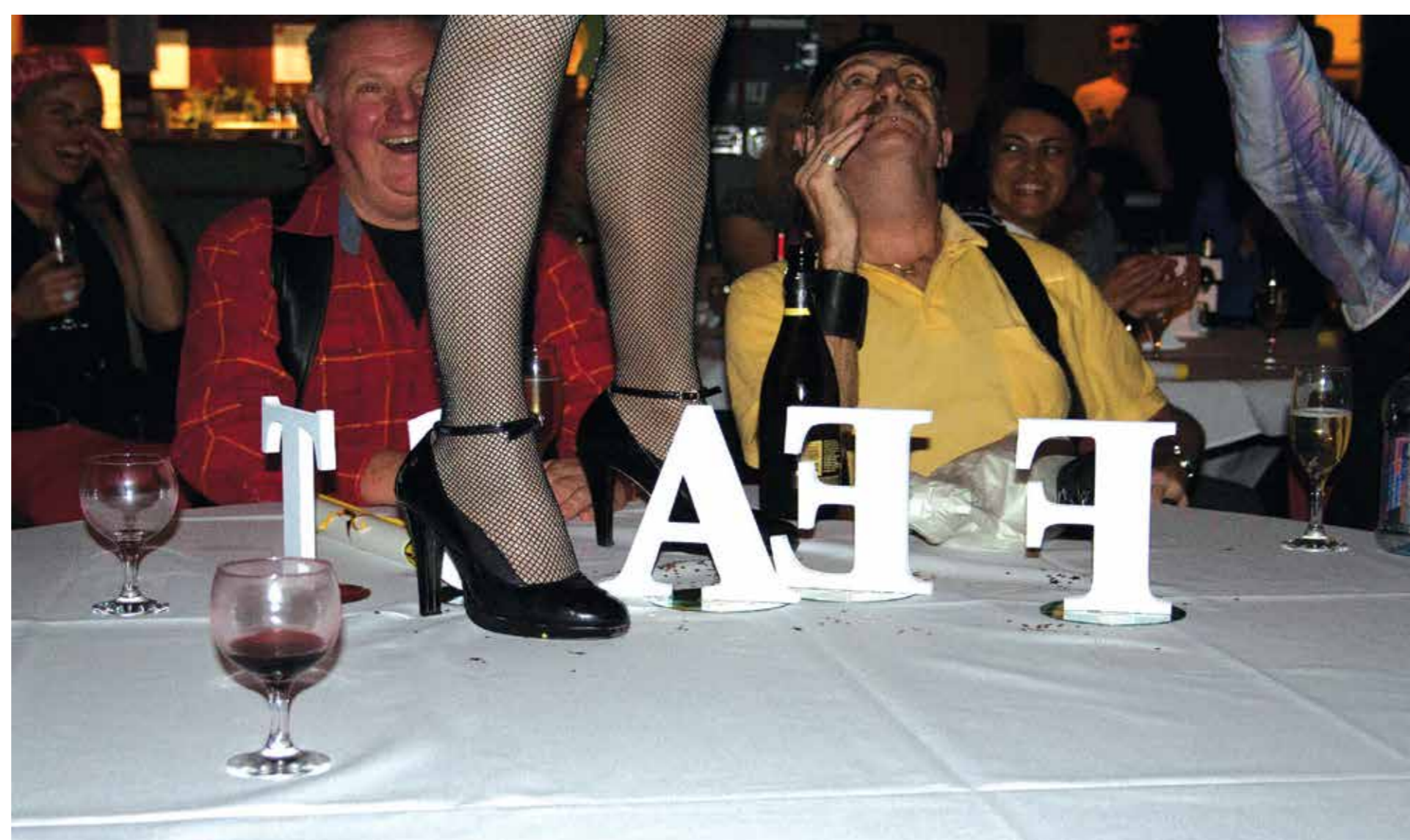
Scenes behind the scenes

“Volunteering provides the opportunity to learn new skills, to network and be involved with an iconic Adelaide Arts Festival.”¹²

Volunteers are an essential ingredient of every Feast, complementing the small staff team and enabling the Festival to punch way above its weight. Feast has been able to tap an amazing range of skills and networks as well as provide professional and personal development opportunities and friendships. Over 21 years there have been dozens of Board members whose talents, experience and commitment across the year and during the Festival have ensured Feast's survival through tough times, a challenge shared with many boards of arts organisations.

Several donor programs have been developed over the years. Generous Sugar Daddies and Mummies helped meet the cost of a huge (\$50,000) increase in public liability insurance in 2003. The Feast 500 philanthropic program was formalised in 2005.¹³ Creative and energetic fundraising has always been key to Feast's income. These include Film Festivals, Quiz Nights, Wine Feast, *Dragorama* in the Speigeltent at the Adelaide Fringe and Christmas in July in the Hills.

Feast has conducted significant reviews throughout its history. Staffing, the size, shape and scope have been evaluated and changes made. An organisational review in 2005 included community consultation with some feedback such as: “...is the festival too long? Try to do less, better”. However, in summary “...a vital component of our community...it has changed the scene in Adelaide for the better.”¹⁴



photos: backstage; Feast fundraiser, Jenny Scott, 2008

¹² Feast recruitment poster

¹³ 2009 Annual Report, p. 18

¹⁴ 2015 Festival Guide, p. 41

Community events

“...the inclusiveness of the Festival did not present an us and them tone, rather we are a part of a wider...community who have something to share.”¹⁵

(Leith Semmens)

The number, variety and quality of community and sporting events over 21 years is astounding. They make every Feast delicious. Community groups and health services are many and varied. Some no longer exist, some continue, others recent. The extraordinary list from the South Australian community that have contributed events includes:

The Bears, Golden Club, Pride March, Uranian Society, Gay and Lesbian Qwire, Women's Studies Resource Centre, AIDS Council of SA, Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service, Happy Wanderers, Lesbian Line, Team Adelaide, 3 G's, Women Performing, The Lampshade Shop, Feast Queer Youth Drop In, Pink Parents, Cycling Dykes, The Metropolitan Community Church, Gay Men's Health, Bfriend, Long Yang Club Adelaide, Aqueerium Radio Adelaide, Deaf Gay and Lesbian Association, Catalyst, Southern Women's Health Service, Southern Pride, Moolagoo Mob, Blak Lemons, Queer Doctors, International Transgender Day of Remembrance Committee, Carrousel Club, Shine SA, SAMESH, Second Story, Leather and Fetish, No Frills Women's Radio, Safe Schools Coalition, Cougar Leather Club, Mardi Gras Collective, UNIDOS, UniSA Rainbow Club, Flinders University Queer Society, Pride Club of the University of Adelaide, Rainbow Amnesty International, PFLAG, Pink Parents.

Sporting Clubs and events include: tennis, ten pin bowling, golf, Samesex Dancesport, Adelaide Spikers Volley Ball, Team Adelaide Squash and Racquetball tournament, Lawn Bowls, Rainbow Crows, International Gay Rugby, pool parties, race days and cruises.



photos: Miss Dim Sim and Miss Chew Mee, *Showing Off* listing, 1998 Festival Guide; 1999 Stroke Pool Party

¹⁵ Leith Semmens, visual artist, 2008 Report to Sponsors

Places & (safe) spaces

“...waiting itchingly for the Feast Festival to spring up and claim for two weeks each year the space that we so desperately wanted and needed to feel connected and widely accepted.”¹⁶ (Laniyuk Garcon-Mills)

It has been a moveable Feast. Feast Hubs have included the Lion Arts Centre, Adelaide Festival Centre, Queens Theatre and Higher Ground. Creating a Hub in Light Square for several years was a hugely ambitious undertaking. In 2016, Raj House became a more permanent home. Many Councils provide funding for Feast events in their areas and show their support with 18 committing to fly the rainbow flag during the 2017 Festival, the most since the initiative began. Feast has reached out along highways and biways to regional communities including Mount Gambier, Renmark, Tanunda, Port Pirie, Whyalla, Port Lincoln and Port Augusta through partnerships with Country Arts SA and others.

Events like (safe and sexy) Women's Sauna Nights at Pultney 431 have been a chance to try out new spaces. In 1999 – 2001 Feast's Shop@rt saw up to 100 west end shopfronts become mini galleries, long before laneway activation. History Walks are unique to Feast with Dr Gertrude Glossip providing insights every year into the untold story of Adelaide's gay and lesbian people, places and events since colonisation.

Queer and mainstream media have promoted Feast in South Australia, nationally and internationally with one ad campaign reaching an estimated national audience of 1.5million.¹⁷ The digital has also been embraced through web and social media and the first mobile app in 2011.



photos: Feast Hub Light Square, 2011; Picnic, photojo, 2015

¹⁶ Laniyuk Garcon-Mills, 'The Conflicts of Camouflage' in Dino Hodge (ed), *Colouring the RainbowBlak Queer and Trans Perspectives*, Wakefield Press, 2015, p. 85

¹⁷ 2008 Report to Sponsors

Programming

“...support...people who are taking risks in the program...”¹⁸ (Helen Bock)

Artistic Directors and Producers in partnership with staff have steered Festival programs. Starting out with a model of registered events and a small number of Feast produced events through to a more curated Festival. In 2017, Feast is back to programming registered events and producing the two large scale extravaganzas – Opening Night Party and Picnic. Programs continue to expand across all art forms. Special Feast outings include Zoo Tours focussing on same sex attracted animals, of which there are many, and full day Garden Tours across Adelaide in a 45-seater bus. Mini festivals within the Festival have comprised – Bearstock, Film Festivals, Leather, Youth, Seaside Feast weekend at Semaphore and Port Adelaide. Megadrag is unique to Feast providing the opportunity for new and established drag kings and queens to perform in a non-stop over the top drag fabulousness.

The State Theatre, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, State Opera, Art Gallery of South Australia, the State Library, SA Museum and Migration Museum and many others have been co-creators or partnering venues for Feast events. The plethora of events continue to enrich every Feast offering, whatever your cup of tea.

Artistic Directors and Creative Producers

1997: Helen Bock, Damien Carey, Luke Cutler and Margie Fischer

1998: Helen Bock, Luke Cutler and Margie Fischer

1999-2000-2001: Luke Cutler and Margie Fischer

2002: Margie Fischer

2003-2004-2005-2006: Fanny Jacobson

2007-2008: Daniel Clarke

2009-2010-2011-2012: Kerry Ireland

2013-2014: Catherine Fitzgerald

2015- 2016 no Artistic Director

2017: Margie Fischer



photos: Amanda Andlee Poland, 'Hair filled cup with saucer and spoon', Type C print, 75 x 75cm from *Cups and Coupling* exhibition listing, 2005 Festival Guide; Feast Office, Lion Arts Centre, Jenny Scott, 2013

¹⁸ Helen Bock interview with Michelle Holden, 29 September 1997

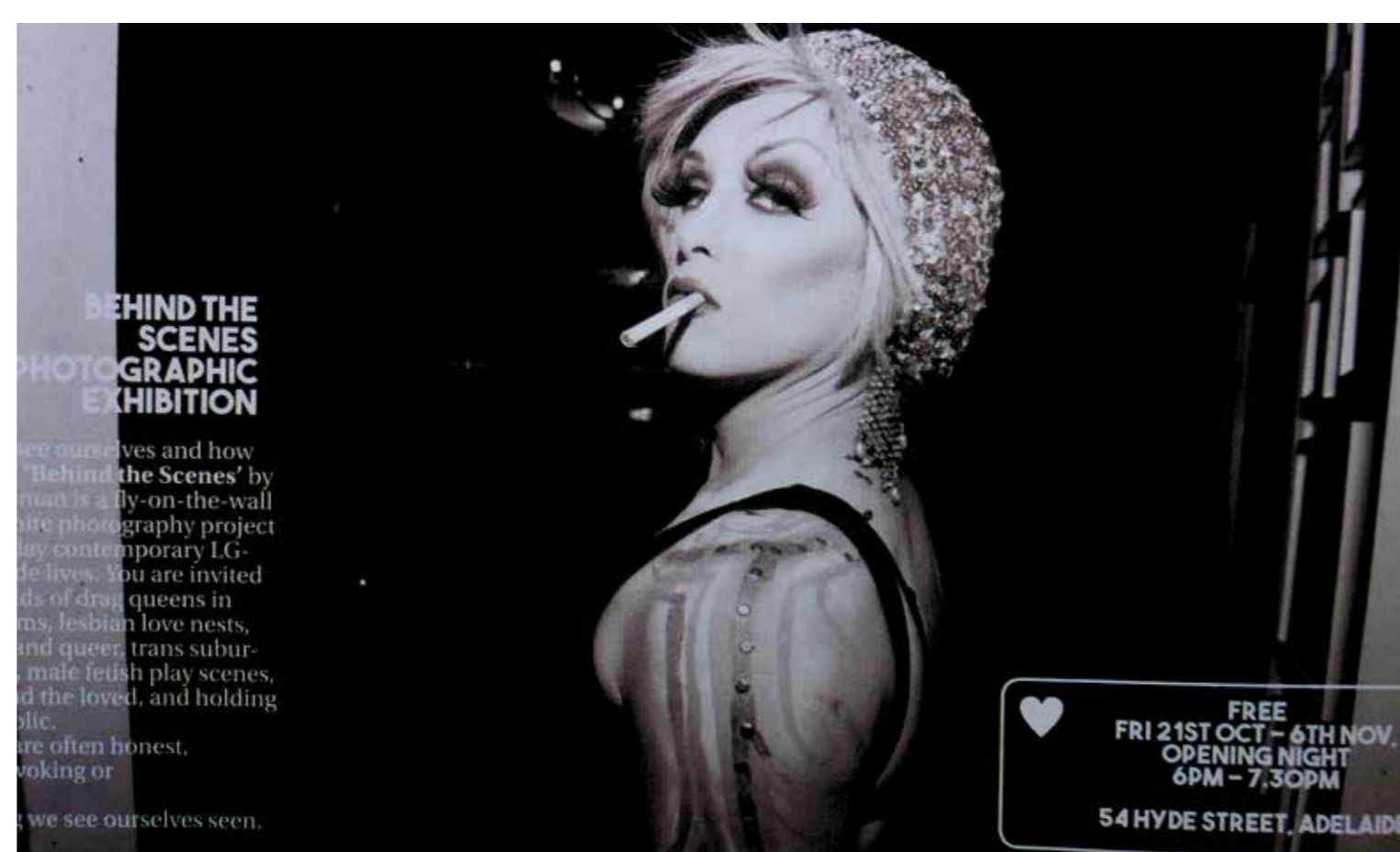
Gender / agenda

“Mac employs gender-bending surrealism to explore the human condition and challenge the contemporary culture of fear.”¹⁹

Feast has provided a platform to respond creatively and proactively to the growing investigation of sexuality and gender within the queer community programming a rich variety of art by gender diverse artists. The International Transgender Day of Remembrance held annually on 20 November includes film screenings, performance, guest speakers and a candlelight vigil honouring transgender and gender diverse people. Performance highlights include a record number of (16) drag kings in one place strutting their stuff in 1998, Taylor Mac (2008), Buck Angel (2014) and Conchita (2015).

Forums exploring some of the binary-busting questions of the time include gender diversity, coming out, parenting, body image, youth, bisexuality, disability and desire, trans experience, drag, discrimination, gay refugees, mental illness, HIV/AIDS, spirituality, sex work, being gay in the country, non-acceptance within the queer community, marriage, beats, ageing, safe schools, safe drug use, reconciliation and intercultural partnerships. In 2006 a forum was held *Untying the knot – same sex breakups*. In 2007 Feast hosted *Loved up - the wedding of the year* when 15 same sex-attracted couples married on Montefiore Hill. Workshops imparting skills and strategies have included drag kings, self-defence, transman health and even one on a steam train about safe sex.

Australia’s Homosexual Histories Conferences, Health Indifference 3, Speak Out and the Queer Spirituality Conference are some of the national gatherings that have also been part of Feast.



photos: Feast 1998 drag kings, William Yang, *Outrage*, January 1999, p. 18; *Behind the scenes* photographic exhibition listing, 2016 Festival Guide

¹⁹ The Be(A)st of Taylor Mac, 2008 Festival Guide, p. 18

Queer from here

“Show your support for a future that doesn’t include homophobia, violence and intimidation”²⁰

This was the call to action in the 1997 Guide and remains an aspiration. What if there had been no Feast? Feast has laid a foundation which reflects the strengths of our community. Despite the challenges of funding, structure, staffing and achieving appropriate payment for artists, Feast has met its aims and objectives with relatively modest resources and collaborated with most of Adelaide’s major and smaller cultural organisations, including as a founding member of Festivals Adelaide in 2011. Ties with sister festivals have continued and broadened to make Feast one of the largest queer festivals in Australia.

Among other formal recognition over the years, Feast won a 2008 Ruby Award for Community Impact over \$100,000.²¹ The Festival generates millions in economic impact and continues to attract significant numbers of intrastate, interstate and international as well as local Festival goers.²²

However, we still don’t see ourselves reflected in the wider cultural landscape often enough and continue to need places to meet face to face and to capture evidence of our cultural footprint. Out of sight is out of mind. Coming together at Feast to celebrate who we are, our community, courage and creativity is as important now as it was 21 years ago. It’s up to us to shape Feast’s future, continue promoting exchange across boundaries and to pass on our stories in this diverse universe. Help to continue to make it yours and ours.

Happy coming of age Feast.



photo: *Past racism future rights* listing, 2016 Festival Guide

²⁰1997 Festival Guide p. 6

²¹(SA arts and cultural awards) 2008 Report to Sponsors

²²2016 Report to Sponsors