

**Artists in Community International** inspire and educate communities, individuals and leaders to be creative in and through art-making. We provide engaging programs and projects that are inclusive, challenging, dynamic and joyous. Our work is contemporary art-based with international flavours – inspired by our roamings and backgrounds.

Make Do Tell is an annual project run in Nepal and /or India.

We arrived in Nepal on 30 December and have been on the go from day one.

We started in Kathmandu with a series of meetings, the first being with Narendra Thagunna who runs a Suicide Prevention program across Nepal. He is a passionate and energetic psychologist who has set up an organisation to raise awareness of mental health issues. We have come to understand more about the high rate of suicide in Nepal where there is considerable trauma after the earthquake of 2015, as well as low work prospects for many which brings economic hardship that can seem insurmountable.

How does Artists in Community International fit in with such an organisation, you may well ask. We have organised with Narendra to run a five-day intensive workshop, *Art in Community Care*, in Kathmandu for social and health workers interested in the field. Drama games that Alex uses will be helpful to bring a group together, but it is mainly through Anne's work, where people, while quietly working away on a piece of art, may be relaxed enough to open up about what is occurring in their lives.

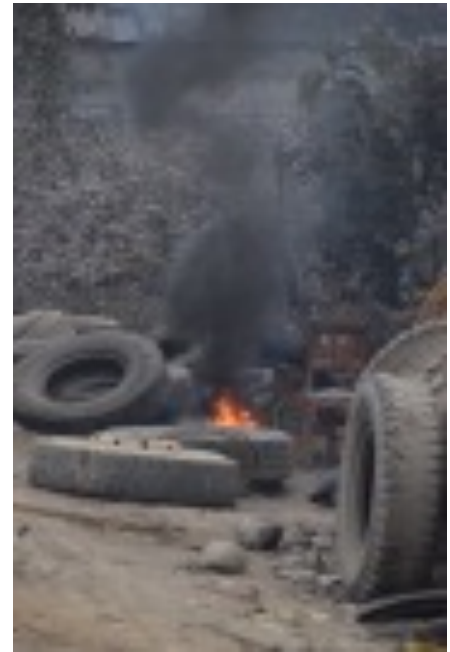
The other meeting we had in Kathmandu was with our good friend Pradipta Kadambari, the CEO of The Nepal School of Social Work. We have a six-year collaboration with this school – which began on our very first visit to Nepal in 2012. The school has been the catalyst most of the other projects we do in Nepal. There was no doubt that Pradipta had plans for us! Alex has been booked to direct students in a play on social issues which will be shown in the public arena as a fundraiser for the school. The idea for this theatre project came from workshops Alex had run in previous years. Students have shown considerable enthusiasm and talent in drama and want to explore it further.

Anne will work with the first year BSW students introducing them to the use of art in their social work practice and in the community.

On our third day in Nepal, we undertook the bone crushing bus ride to Bharatpur. It is 141 kms from Kathmandu, but the journey takes nearly seven hours. The road has improved; last year it took nearly ten hours. We are here to work at the BP Koirala Memorial Cancer Memorial Hospital for ten days.



Bharatpur is a charmless service town in south Nepal and is on the way to The Chitwan National Park. It is at the junction of two major highways. Many hundreds of trucks and buses pass through each day, causing huge amount of smog. People burn plastic and tyres to keep warm during the cold winter – which adds to the shocking pollution problem. It is impossible for us to explore the town because of the pollution, even though there is a river a couple of hundred metres from our hotel. Apart from venturing to the hospital, we largely stayed camped in the hotel.



The hospital is a little out of the centre of town in a relaxing garden setting. It is a public hospital and people travel from all parts of the south west of Nepal to receive treatment. Few and poor roads, as well as big distances means it take days of travel for some people. As a result, many families, as well as the patient move to the hospital for months on end. Every day patients, their families and carers gather and wait anxiously for treatment or news of results.

Anne is passionate about using arts to foster well-being and the significant role art can take in better health practice.

We have been asked to work in two wards: palliative care / hospice in the morning and the children's ward in the afternoon.

Anne invites people to the small art table set up in a communal eating and waiting area. Often their initial response is "NO" The trouble is, in these situations, Anne does not understand the meaning of the word.

After some friendly encouragement and a little time, they start participating in small easy activities, and as the days continue and they enjoy themselves, and the art work and relationships develop.



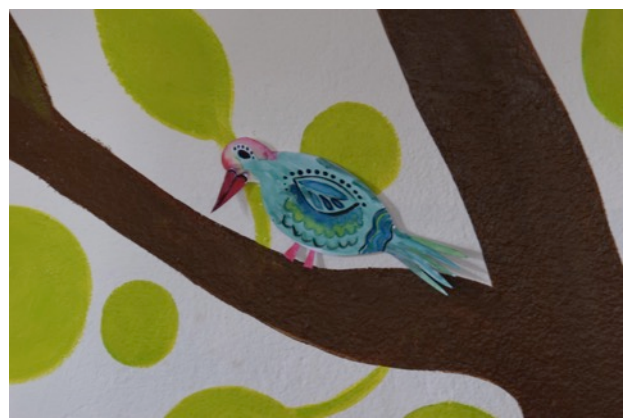






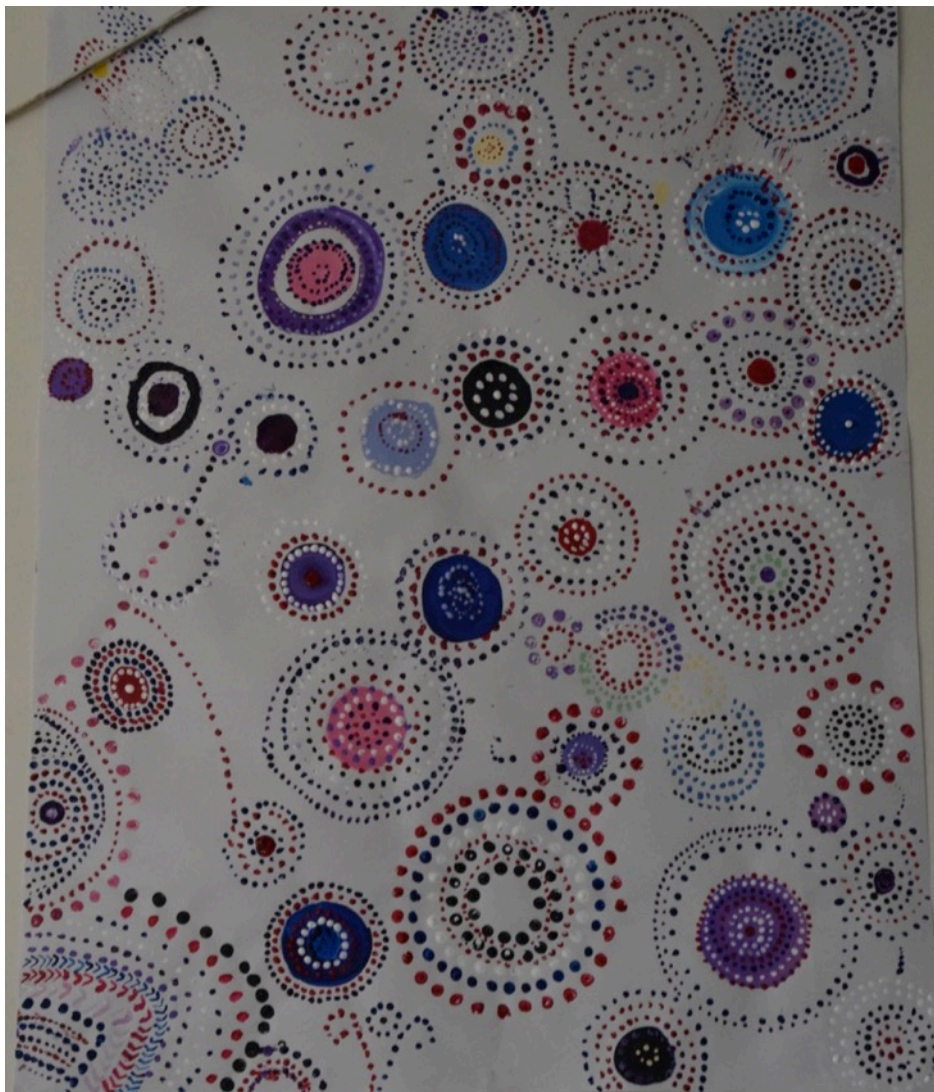








We leave the art materials in an accessible place so after we leave in the afternoon the creating continues.



The art work mounts up. We feel it is important for the art work to be put up, seen and enjoyed by the makers and by others – it helps create a relaxing ambience in what can be a scary place. So, it does not take long before the wards are covered in art!! The pride people have as their art work goes up is palpable.

Towards the end of the two weeks people were laughing chatting and dancing to the music we put on every day. It is wonderful to see the positive results art can play in helping people go through the stressful treatment of cancer.

But more about that later.

***How long did it take to get back to Kathmandu? Look out for the next issue.***

Artists In Community International

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