

BEYOND: A CASE STUDY IN 'SLOW- TOURING'

In the recent past almost all touring models have measured their impact through audience numbers and value. Everyone has heard of the album that was recorded whilst “on the road”, but the impact on the artist to constantly deliver/perform and/or continue to create whilst touring is somewhat assumed, embedded without foresight, or left unconsidered. These measurables start to become even more incoherent when you introduce experimental fields of arts practice to the world of touring, where experimental practice processes have singular pillars of time, place, and space to factor into delivery.

How are we to understand these impacts when the dispersion of experimental practice is often halted at the boundaries of urban purveyors and not truly invited into or from regional Australia? What happens when you design touring into the experiment? How does responsible, or 'slow' touring enhance the practice or create ways to measure reciprocity exchange and deepening relationships? How does all of this enable artists of difference to connect disparate culturally adventurous communities and iterate an enriching touring framework through their propositions?

BEYOND is a Punctum program initiative which seeks to answer these questions. It came about through a desire to reconsider how regional artists and organisations can be better supported to connect nationally, extend their practice, undertake research, conceive of and share ideas, test and present their work.

Through the pilot of BEYOND, five regionally based organisations working in the fields of contemporary performance looked to the future of experimental practice in regional settings, establishing a collegiate model of collaboration and knowledge sharing that enables sustainable new work development and responsible national touring or mobility for regional artists.

Punctum brought partners including Kyneton Contemporary (VIC), SITUATE (TAS), Country Arts South Australia (SA) and Sunshine Coast Council (QLD) together post-COVID border closures, to replant opportunity, regenerate experimental practice development and production, and reimagine the future of touring and practice development in regional Australia.

In establishing BEYOND, Punctum and its partners formed a regionally based national cohort with shared values, resources and knowledge, and a readiness to test a new model of sustainable work development and responsible national touring and mobility for regional artists.

The following evaluation reports on the pilot of this national 'slow-touring' pilot program. The evaluation covers exchange, creative practice development, localised new work research, and the establishment of presentation partnership from the perspective of both the interregional partners/hosts, and the participating artists.



THE PILOT

Across the 12-month pilot, the partners worked collaboratively, building a strong creative, connected, curatorial, arts practice and mobility framework. We tested the model through three case studies:

ArtsCoast - Sunshine Coast Council to Kyneton Contemporary

Sunshine Coast artists Courtney Scheu and Itamar Freed undertook initial research and development for a new work through a hosted field trip to Kyneton Contemporary Arts Triennial.

Punctum to SITUATE

Central Victorian artist Alvin Darcy travelled to Launceston to take part in two SITUATE Labs, ahead of development of a new work.

Country Arts South Australia to Sunshine Coast Council

Lewis Major Ensemble spent three weeks in residence in Nambour, through Sunshine Coast Council's Creative Spaces program.

The following timeline describes the activities undertaken:

July–September 2021

- Online gatherings mapping partners development and presentation cycles, establishing the timeline, and planning relevant residencies, exchanges, and links with our appropriate festivals/opportunities

September–December 2021

- Online gatherings on connecting regional artists to context, location, place and its people, as well as frameworks for ensuring creative and culturally safe spaces
- Partnership agreements between hosts developed and implemented
- Partners collaborate on the development of an evaluation framework for the program
- Partners collaborate to recruit and select pilot program artists, as appropriate to each hosts residency processes and timeline

January–March 2022

- Online gatherings on radical hospitality, preparing and welcoming
- Partners engage and communicate with selected artists, and undertake producing residencies
- Selected artists, Courtney Scheu and Itamar Freed from the Sunshine Coast, undertake a hosted field trip to Kyneton Contemporary Art Triennial from March 19-27
- Selected artist, Alvin Darcy from Central Victoria, undertakes his first Lab in Launceston with SITUATE from March 21-25
- Partners document the residency outcomes with both hosts and artists, according to the evaluation framework

April–June 2022

- Online gatherings on evaluation, reporting, brokering partnerships for presentation and co-designing next steps
- Selected artists, Lewis Major Ensemble from Mt Gambier, undertake a residency in Nambour hosted by ArtsCoast - Sunshine Coast Council, from April 26–May 14
- Alvin Darcy undertakes his second Lab in Launceston with SITUATE from May 9-13

Plans for BEYOND extend past the pilot, with the following activities planned to take place within the next 6 months:

September-December 2022

- Alvin Darcy continues his research and development as a SITUATE artist, mentored by Punctum in Central Victoria
- Selected artist, Orlando Mee from South Australia, will undertake a residency in Nambour, hosted by ArtsCoast - Sunshine Coast Council during the Horizon Festival period.
- A selected Tasmanian artist will undertake a residency in Robe, hosted by Country Arts South Australia

March 2023

- BEYOND partners and artist will meet for a face-to-face gathering at Castlemaine State Festival and attend a new dance festival in Melbourne, to strengthen relationships formed through the BEYOND pilot.



BEYOND: INTERREGIONAL PARTNERS / HOSTS

Partners participating in the pilot of BEYOND including Punctum (VIC), Kyneton Contemporary (VIC), SITUATE (TAS), Country Arts South Australia (SA), Sunshine Coast Council (QLD), are diverse in scale, voices, visions, skills, expressions, networks, and interconnections, however collectively they embrace a set of shared values and support for shared resources and knowledge, and a readiness to test a new model of sustainable new work development and responsible national touring and mobility for regional artists.

The process for evaluating the impact of the BEYOND pilot draws on these shared values and commitments, celebrates each partner's unique program and what it enables, and explores the synergy and potential generated through the overarching model.

Through their responses and reflections, our interregional partners and hosts contributed to evaluating the impact of BEYOND against the programs aims of:

- Connecting and deepening regional partnerships and arts practice
- Artist-centred hosting, guidance and connection to place
- Reciprocal partnership and capacity building
- Possibilities and potential for presentation and mobility

CONNECTING AND DEEPENING REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND ARTS PRACTICE

While BEYOND is still in its first stage of roll out (artist field trips, residency / exchange / labs), one of the aims of BEYOND is connecting and deepening regional partnerships and arts practice beyond borders and boundaries, to form a new arts ecology of touring and mobility for organisations, regional artists, regional audiences, and communities. In reflecting on the impact of the pilot, hosts and interregional partners considered how BEYOND achieved this.

BEYOND hosts from Sunshine Coast Council identified the extended duration of their residency with Lewis Major and members of his ensemble as an opportunity to support artists from another regional area to connect with place, as well as a network of local artists, both professionally and socially.

'The biggest opportunity is to keep building the relationship with the artists and the local artists here on the Sunshine Coast' – Nadine McDonald-Dowd (Sunshine Coast Council)

Partners Country Arts SA valued the opportunity for artists from their region to undertake a residency hosted by Sunshine Coast Council, helping to evolve their practice and profile nationally and internationally, as well as providing the opportunity to collaborate with local artists from the host region.

For hosts from SITUATE, regular Zoom catch ups strengthened relationships with partner organisations. SITUATE and Punctum worked together to recruit Castlemaine based artist Alvin Darcy to participate in the program over two years. While the SITUATE Lab and Development model is well established, the additional scaffolding and mentoring provided by Punctum through BEYOND, has ensured the selected artist has been fully supported and is able to make the most of their opportunity.

Kyneton Contemporary cited the connection with other regionally based arts organisations as providing a support network and a collegiate environment for sharing knowledge, learning and applying methodologies of practice. This support translated to new approaches to hosting their curated artists and BEYOND artists Courtney Scheu and Itamar Freed, organising residencies for artists in ways that assist in development through research, to development, and through to delivery.

'We have established links that can be activated in the future, reducing barriers to engagement beyond our immediate terrain (across state lines and discipline focus areas). Our artist residency experience has been highly valuable. Connecting us to new artistic talents while having additional support and assistance to aid us in offering a rich experience for the artists' – Kent Wilson (Kyneton Contemporary)

ARTIST-CENTRED HOSTING, GUIDANCE AND CONNECTION TO PLACE

Critical to the BEYOND model, are the values that each of the partners share, including a focus on artist-centred hosting, guidance and connection to place.

In Nambour, Lewis Major Ensemble members were welcomed by First Nations Elders, and hosted by Nadine McDonald-Dowd, Creative Development Officer First Nations at Sunshine Coast Council, who invited the artists for a big feast, a yarn, and connected them to local places and people.

'...different country presents different experiences and the artists said how relaxed and embraced they felt up here...there are so many formal things you can structure into being a host but sometimes, the best comes from the unscheduled moments' – Nadine McDonald-Dowd (Sunshine Coast Council).

Country Arts SA share similar values and see the benefits for artists from their region.

'BEYOND is a unique offering for our artists in that it provides the artist the opportunity to engage with a new community (interstate), develop new connections and collaborations, test ideas, and explore cross art form possibilities supported by a range of highly skilled mentors' – Marilyn de Nys (Country Arts SA).

At SITUATE, hosts facilitate their Arts Lab framework in a way that allows each artist to take what they need from the experience. Connecting with Punctum through BEYOND allowed mentorship of the selected artist to be delivered in a responsive way.

'A core part of the Tasmanian Arts Labs is fostering a connection to place. We held the first day on Country at the gorge, and continually ask the artist to interrogate their own connection to place and how they weave this into their work' – Emma Porteus (SITUATE)

Kyneton Contemporary also benefited from collaborating with partners to ensure an appropriate welcome to the region, as the artists arrived in the midst of the Kyneton Contemporary Art Triennial and the peak delivery for the volunteer-run organisation. BEYOND partners aided with settling artists into location by facilitating accommodation, food, conversation and establishing an atmosphere of artist-led enquiry, before being immersed in the Triennial.

'These principles have formed the basis of our ethos from the beginning and this process helped reinforce our commitment to the approach. We could see, in real time and in reflection, that an artist-centric / art-led ethos provided a suitable atmosphere and set priorities of focus for our activities and responses' – Kent Wilson (Kyneton Contemporary)

RECIPROCAL PARTNERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING

BEYOND is a model for reciprocal partnership, which strengthens the capacity of each partner to leverage additional resources, support and know-how to facilitate safe, equitable creative spaces for research, development and presentation of new work.

Through the pilot of BEYOND, hosts and interregional partners considered the potential of the collegiate model to generate value and extend their own existing programs.

Sunshine Coast Council viewed BEYOND as part of their commitment to broadening the scope of opportunities currently offered for dance artists who live, work and play in the region. This is particularly expressed through the BEYOND model of reciprocal exchange.

'The Creative Arts Team is committed to the long-term professional, artistic, creative and cultural development of artists on the Sunshine Coast, continually seeking new opportunities for all artists across all forms and creating space and platforms for artists. The partnership with BEYOND partners has been an incredibly strong and supportive contribution to this' – Nadine McDonald-Dowd (Sunshine Coast Council).

For Country Arts SA, BEYOND provides artists from their residency program, The Retreat, with a next step / pathway, expanding development and presentation opportunities nationally. In connecting to Sunshine Coast Council, artists from regional South Australia were supported to develop new contemporary dance work and explore presentation possibilities.

With a focus on supporting outstanding early and mid-career artists and creative practitioners based in regional locations across the country to develop new experimental artworks for festivals and presentation, the main strength of BEYOND for SITUATE has been in connecting with other participating organisations and expanding their networks across Australia.

Kyneton Contemporary have found potential and enacted knowledge and experience shared through the partnership.

'Inward support, especially from Punctum, has been invaluable for us to better grasp an approach to hosting – it's one thing to provide a bed or studio for an artist, and an altogether other thing to offer a 'hosted' experience that establishes an atmosphere of support, safety, and inspiration. The BEYOND model has set us up with better evidence and better opportunities to expand our residency methodology, supported by a network of peers from whom we can draw knowledge and skills' – Kent Wilson (Kyneton Contemporary)

POSSIBILITIES AND POTENTIAL FOR PRESENTATION AND MOBILITY

Our long-term view is to extend presentation potential and instigate responsible mobility ('slow-touring') for regional artists and regional arts organisations working in fields of contemporary practice.

Intended as a multi-year co-designed program, the process of developing BEYOND is iterative, and while outside of the scope of the pilot, the partners have begun to articulate the next steps towards building a bespoke 'slow-touring' model, which is responsive to both artists and the opportunities partners are able to facilitate.

Sunshine Coast Council are pleased to extend their support to include an additional residency for a South Australian dance artist through BEYOND. Orlando Mee will be in residence in Nambour in September 2022 with online guidance and mentoring offered by Punctum. They are continuing their connection with Lewis Major Ensemble through programming in Horizon Festival in 2023.

Punctum are continuing to mentor Alvin Darcy through the next phase of his participation as a SITUATE artist. Alvin is being supported to develop a large-scale installation work in 2022-23 and is working with BEYOND partners to identify and broker appropriate presentation opportunities.

Country Arts South Australia will host a Tasmanian artist as part of their residency program 'The Retreat' in late 2022 (the previously planned residency in November 2021 was postponed due to COVID-19).

Punctum will host an artist associated with Kyneton Contemporary to develop a new live arts work, and Kyneton Contemporary will provide a further residency for Courtney Scheu and Itamar Freed in 2024, towards presentation in the Kyneton Contemporary Art Triennial in 2025.

'We envisage ongoing pathways of movement for artists to mobilise their practice nationally. We see great benefit in assisting regional artists in expanding audience reach as well as developing professional practice through exposure and involvement in the model. Our own local audiences benefit from their exposure and engagement with a national network of artists coming from across the country. Our local artists gain professional development opportunities. Artists are afforded opportunities to connect in meaningful ways to peers they can normally only see via internet connections, rather than directly with immediate and intimate relationships.'

Long term we see a system of ongoing exchange that enables artists to develop practice, to experiment and garner audience response to their ideas and methods. Greater exposure to audience, greater exposure to curators, producers, writers and other industry colleagues and peers that will enhance career development. It will help emerging talent gain exposure to professional practice, with immediate hands-on experience and knowledge transfer. It also fosters and expands our creative reputation, driving economic capacities beyond the artistic community into the local economy.'

BEYOND establishes an excellent framework that itself acts as a model of operation transferable to other organisations.' – Kent Wilson (Kyneton Contemporary)



BEYOND: ARTISTS

Artists taking part in the pilot of BEYOND were selected by partners through a targeted Expression of Interest process on the basis of their readiness for the residency and the opportunity offered by hosts, as well as their alignment with the shared values of the program.

BEYOND pilot artists Courtney Scheu and Itamar Freed, Lewis Major of Lewis Major Ensemble and Alvin Darcy contributed to the evaluation of the model, measuring the extent to which they experienced the values of the program during their residency and how this has extended into their practice through a quantitative survey and a reflective interview process.

Image above: Lewis Major Ensemble in residence | Nadine McDonald-Dowd

As part of developing the BEYOND program framework, the partners identified the following shared values, which they committed to delivering on through their hosting:

Practice based values describe the qualities of the host and their place in the community – their connection to local sites, resources, networks, and a resilience approach, necessary to support culturally, artistically, socially important practices.

Custodial values describe moral or cultural responsibility for care of culture, landscape and Country for present and future generations. Custodial values include legacy or bequest, transmission of knowledge and learning.

Affective values are the qualities of what takes place that sustains aesthetic appreciation, ambiance, inspiration, stimulation, sensory response, ecological appreciation, spiritual realisation, and emotional engagement.

Place based values describe the specific attributes of place that are significant or valuable for their existence.

Social Cohesion values describe the extent to which our model contributes to community connectedness, social interaction, trust, inclusion, equity, sense of belonging, and cultural enquiry.

Identity values describe the features of the hosting and resources that contribute to an artist's self or group identification.

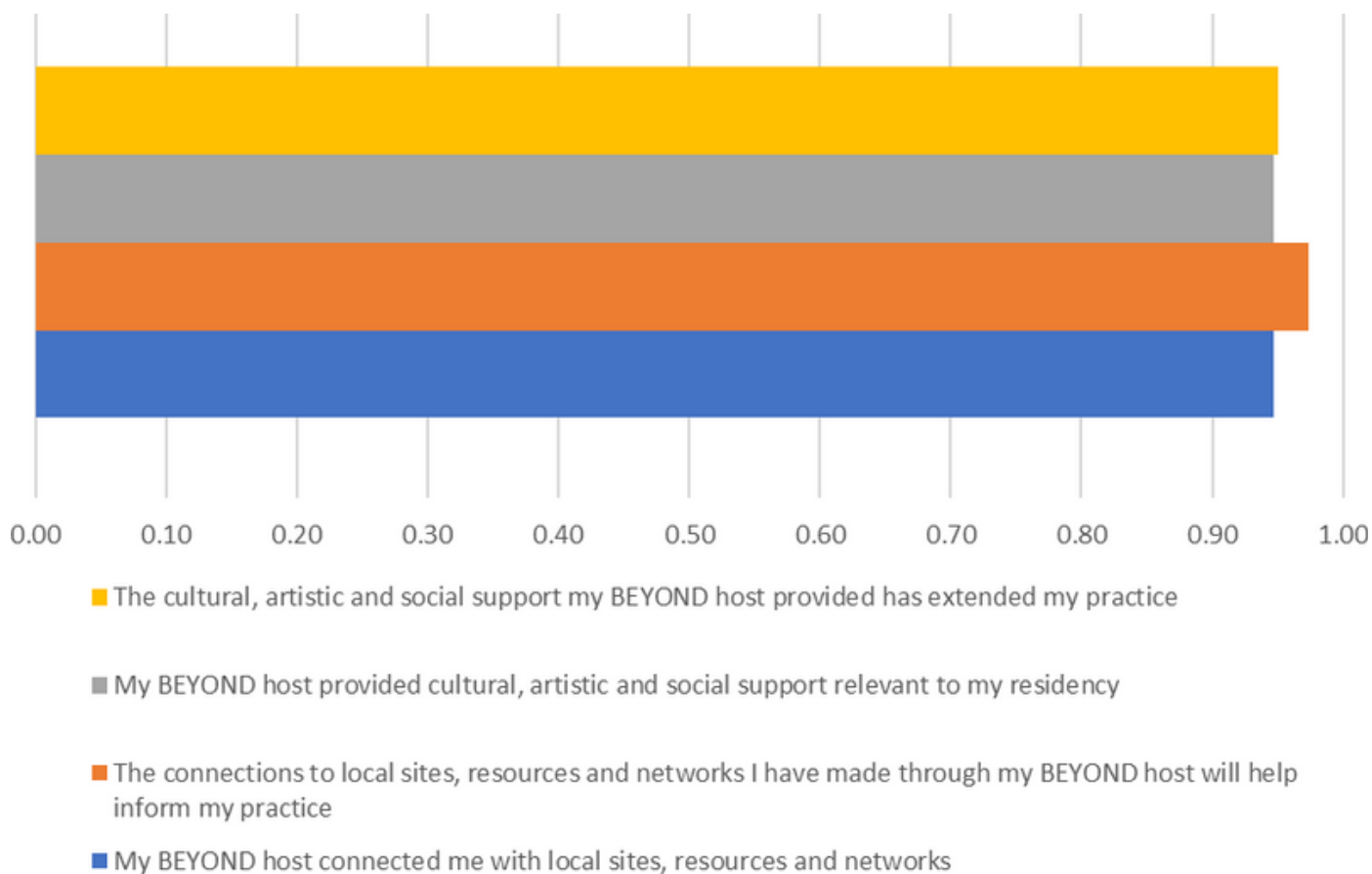
Wellbeing values are the qualities of the activity that contribute to physical and mental well-being and quality of life.

Potential Thinking includes practice pathways and connections tied to development and presentation aspirations.

PRACTICE BASED VALUES

The participating artists responded to questions which measured the extent to which their BEYOND host and their place in the community – their connection to local sites, resources, networks, and a resilience approach – supported their practice.

The average rating for the practice-based values of the program was 95%, with connections to local sites, resources and networks developed through BEYOND as being a strength of the program.



'BEYOND provided the opportunity to develop relationships with artists and arts workers primarily from Victoria, strengthened connections to other BEYOND artists and the opportunity and privilege to dive into a slow creation process'

– Courtney Scheu and Itamar Freed (Sunshine Coast artists)

'The resources provided by the program allowed me to travel. It's fired up my passion and meant I can see a solid road. After SITUATE, I'd be more open to travelling to develop concepts and new work with hosts who are artist-centred'

– Alvin Darcy (Central Victorian artist)

WELLBEING VALUES

The artists agreed that their BEYOND residency experience had a positive impact on their health and wellbeing, with an average rating of 96%.

CUSTODIAL VALUES

The artists were asked to consider how custodial values such as caring for culture, landscape and Country were expressed within their BEYOND residency, and the extent to which it has informed their practice.

"Through our BEYOND residency, we witnessed Kent (host) interact with the committee, us and the community with a high level of consideration and care. We will share this knowledge and learning by interacting with the community in a way that is sensitive, caring and open as we gather information for our project and create our work. We will invite audiences into our process, to contribute their personal stories"

– Courtney Scheu and Itamar Freed (Sunshine Coast artists)

'Having someone like our BEYOND host Nadine to speak to and learn from over the course of the residency was invaluable and a huge glimpse into the workings of present, Country-based practice. We took time to be in Place and the work represents that. I look forward to taking this slow, careful and caring approach to making work in the future'

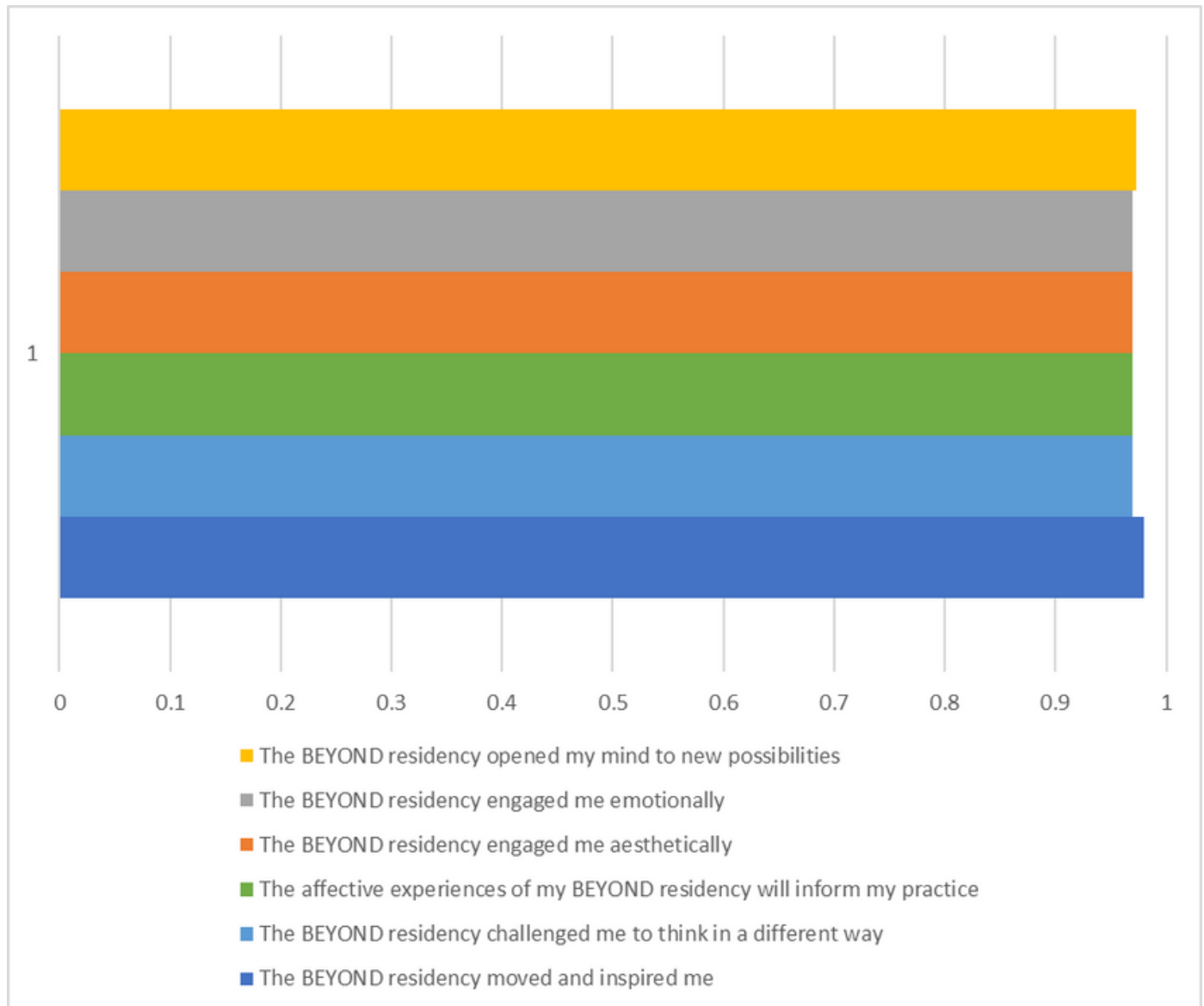
– Lewis Major (Mt Gambier artist)

'It opened me up to working with community. I'll bring in greater engagement or participatory practice, and explore relationships with audience and the work more deeply'

– Alvin Darcy (Central Victorian artist)

AFFECTIVE VALUES

The affective values of the BEYOND residencies were highly impactful for the artists. The average extent to which these values were experienced through the BEYOND residencies was 97%.



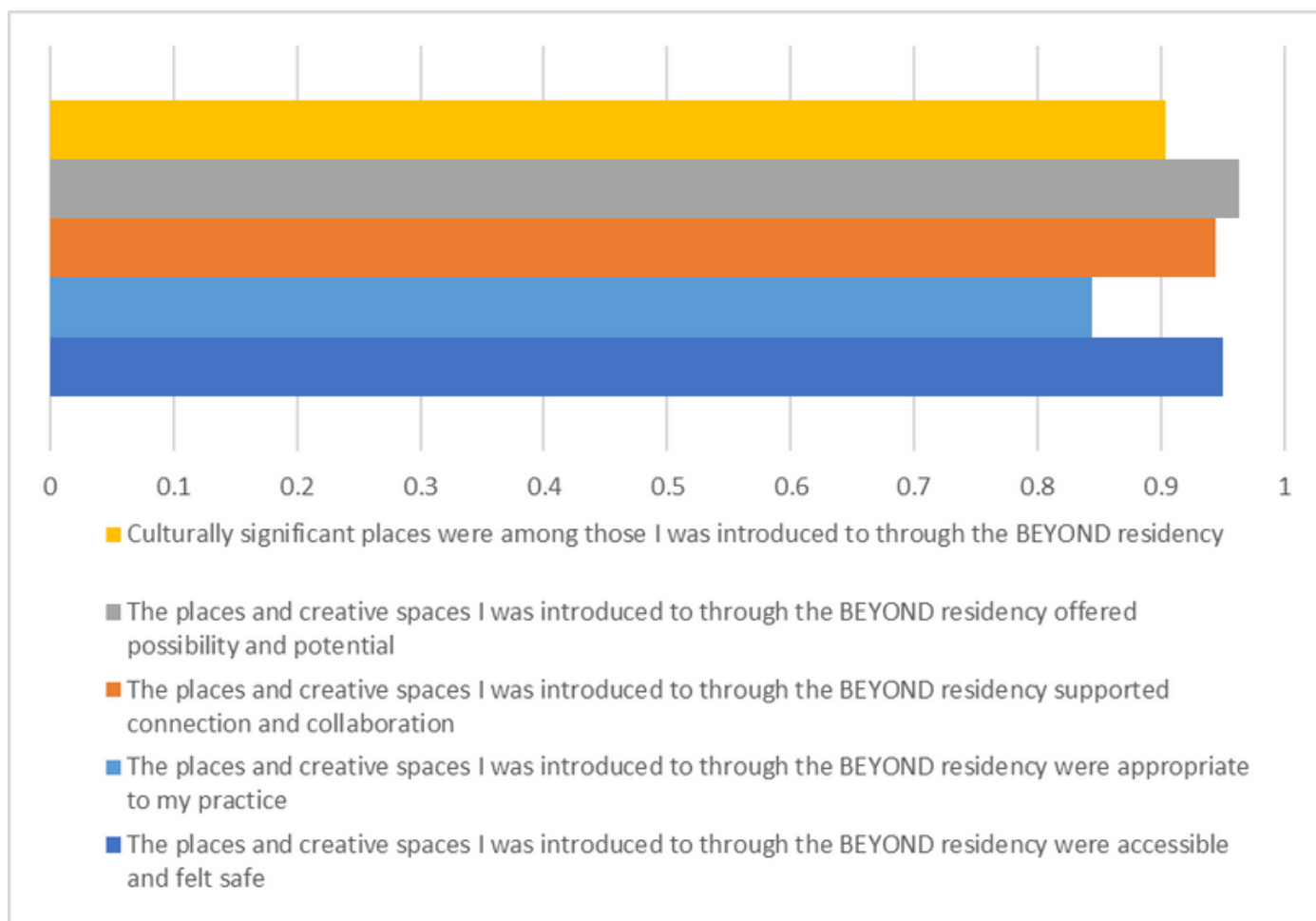
'We spent time in Kyneton, Castlemaine and Malmsbury in natural and urban spaces, watching, listening and feeling place. This sensorial and experiential form of "data collection" will inform our work in the future' – Courtney Scheu and Itamar Freed (Sunshine Coast artists)

'Being in such a beautiful, connected environment as the Sunshine Coast has highlighted the absolute importance of presence and Place as well as community connection while trying to make work' – Lewis Major (Mt Gambier artist)

'Being among artists and provocateurs made me think about myself differently' – Alvin Darcy (Central Victorian artist)

PLACE BASED VALUES

Each of the BEYOND artists responded strongly to the influence of place within their residency experience. The average rating the artists provided for dimensions measuring the impact of place was 92%.



'The places that come to mind are the waterways around Kyneton that mark the edges of land for First Nations people. The waterways are rich in life, full of colour and detail visually and they are important sites for people/community to gather. Our work for KCAT will be in response to water in the area'

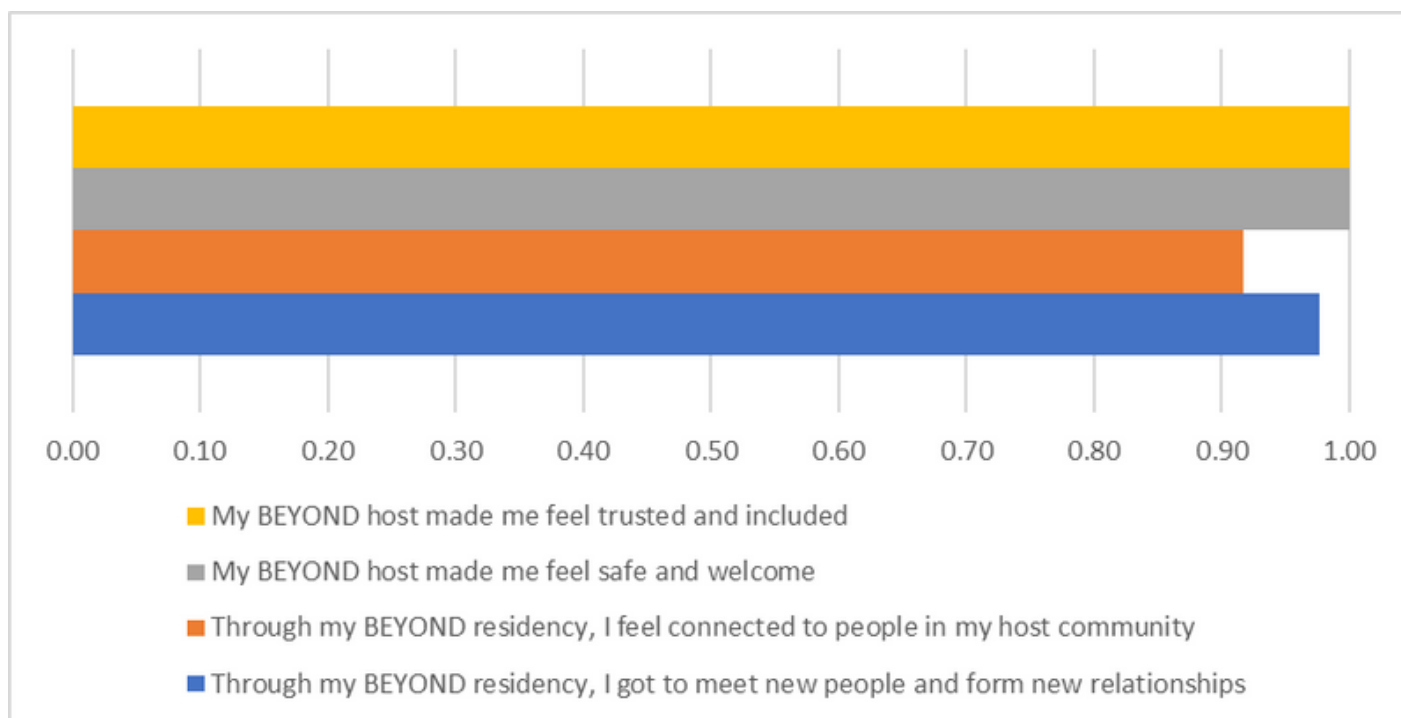
– Courtney Scheu and Itamar Freed (Sunshine Coast artists)

'The slow, easy, careful but connected sense of Place and Country was imbibed by the whole company during our residency. We carry it with us now as we move forward'

– Lewis Major (Mt Gambier artist)

SOCIAL COHESION VALUES

The artists participating in the BEYOND pilot supported the proposition that the model contributes to community connectedness, social interaction, trust, inclusion, equity, sense of belonging, and cultural enquiry, measuring their experience of social cohesion values with an average rating of 97%.



IDENTITY VALUES

Each of the participating artists articulated ways in which the BEYOND residency strengthened their sense of identity, connection and belonging, with an average experience of these values rated at 97%.

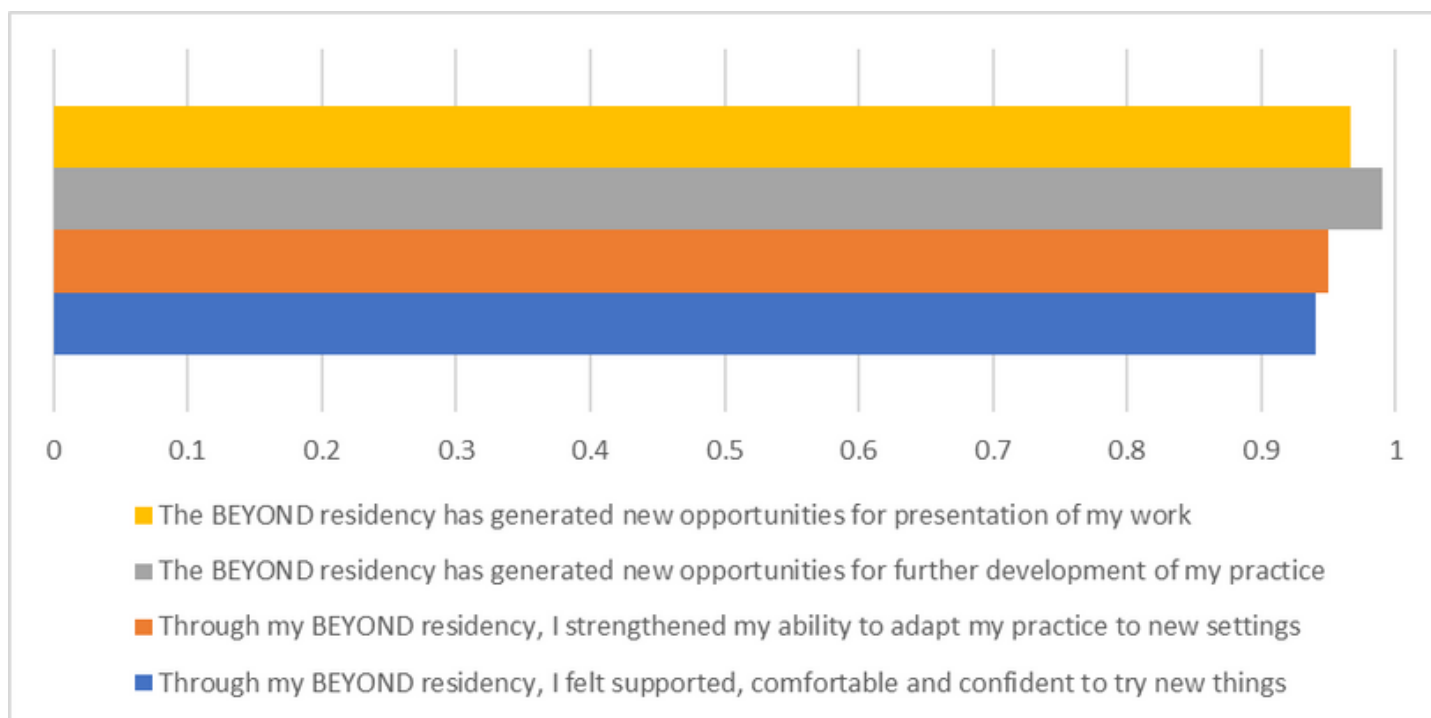
"The Field Trip contributed to the continual process of establishing and adapting our collaborative practice that is part of our artistic identity. Conversations around how and what we observe when witnessing nature and artwork allowed us to fine tune our aesthetic and artistic interests and ideologies together" – Courtney Scheu and Itamar Freed (Sunshine Coast artists)

'It helped me to understand the great benefits of professional connection and practice process, and who I could be as an artist' – Alvin Darcy (Central Victorian artist)

POTENTIAL THINKING VALUES

While BEYOND is still in its pilot phase, the artists and partners can already see the potential of the model to identify and support practice pathways and connections tied to development and presentation aspirations.

The artists rated potential thinking highly, with a 96% rating of the extent to which new opportunities and possibilities emerged through their participation in BEYOND.



‘At this stage, we understand our final work for KCAT will be in response to water in the area...we are grateful for the opportunity to connect, create and to dive into a slow process’ – Courtney Scheu and Itamar Freed (Sunshine Coast artists)

‘Our entire residency was wonderful, and we are super keen to return, rekindle and reforge relationships formed for Horizon Festival 2023 with the work that we were making, but also the possibility of other performances in Queensland’ – Lewis Major (Mt Gambier artist)

‘They really pushed my practice and pushed me to think big. It was a safe space to take a big leap...I’ll keep going with BEYOND mentors, provocateurs, producers and hosts, towards the development of a new installation work’ – Alvin Darcy (Central Victorian artist)



IN SUMMARY

In measuring the impact of the BEYOND pilot, Punctum applied the theory of change, measuring the shift for partners and artists participating in the model, and exploring how resilience is built.

In determining the success of the model, we looked at measures of value critical to the economic development of resilience and can clearly identify that the shared resources of the project were leveraged by each cohort partner, and that leveraged resources flowed directly to the artists and into local economies.

We measured the impact of building relationships, trust, self-determination, and respect within the framework. Through the professional, social and cultural interactions of both the program's partners and artists, we can demonstrate responsible stewardship of 'difference' in our regional communities and our communities of practice.

Our enshrined values of equity of access within practice, exchange and presentation were measured through the positive impacts of the experiences of participating artists, and in our communities.

Image above: Lewis Major workshop | Nadine McDonald-Dowd



In reimagining what touring is, and locating it within a practice of hosting, we found that touring is a function of development of new work, as much as it is aligned with presentation. In this 'slow touring' approach, the impacts are felt economically, culturally and socially, and continue to build alongside the trajectory of each artist and their work.

Through our evaluation, we have found the BEYOND pilot has been successful in:

- Building and deepening regional partnerships and artists' practice beyond borders and boundaries
- Connecting artist centred reciprocal programs of exchange and a network of partners offering creatively and culturally safe residencies/hosting for regional artists
- Creating 'slow touring' and presentation potential

We look forward to extending BEYOND the pilot; establishing a new ecology of mobility and touring for regional artists, organisations, audiences, and communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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BEYOND hosts acknowledge the generous support of the following funders for their respective residency, exchange and lab programs which all contributed to BEYOND's success:

- Creative Spaces - ArtsCoast, Sunshine Coast Council and Sunshine Coast Regional Arts Development Fund - the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) is a partnership between the Queensland Government and council to support local arts and culture in regional Queensland.
- Country Arts South Australia – Regional Arts Fund, Government of South Australia
- Kyneton Contemporary – Creative Victoria, Macedon Ranges Shire Council
- Punctum Inc – Australia Council, Creative Victoria, City of Greater Bendigo/BV&E
- Situate – Australia Council

**ARTS
COAST**



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Regional Arts Fund



CREDITS

BEYOND is an artist centred national 'slow touring' pilot developed and tested by Punctum.

PARTNER COLLEGIATE:

Punctum Inc – Djaara Country / Central Victoria

Creative Spaces – ArtsCoast - Gubbi Gubbi Country / Sunshine Coast

SITUATE – lutruwita / Tasmania

Kyneton Contemporary Inc – Djaara / Taungurung Country / Central Victoria

Country Arts SA - Land of the Boandik People / Mount Gambier

We pay our respects to all First Nations peoples and Elders on whose lands BEYOND took place.

With deep gratitude to the following friends and colleagues:

Amie Moffat, Emma Porteus, Kent Wilson, Megan Rowland, Marilyn de Nys, Nadine McDonald-Dowd, and the communities of Castlemaine, Launceston, Kyneton, and Nambour.

Image above: Courtney Scheu, Itamar Freed and Kent Wilson at KCAT | Leonie Van Eyk

