

MEDIA RELEASE

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Arts and disability funding for 2016 closes soon

The Australia Council for the Arts is again providing dedicated funding for artists with disability and is calling for applications before the 2 February closing date.

Australia Council Chief Executive Officer Tony Grybowski said this was the second year dedicated funding had been offered as part of a three-year initiative announced in 2014 following a successful pilot.

“Dedicated arts and disability funding is an important part the Council’s Cultural Engagement Framework which has been in place for almost a decade,” Mr Grybowski said.

“The Australia Council is committed to supporting the artistic ambitions of people from diverse backgrounds.

“The pilot program, which supported projects for 25 Australian artists and groups, was the result of extensive consultation with the sector.

“Last year’s round provided approximately \$300,000 to support 15 projects, including in the visual arts, writing, performance and dance, and some works will be shown this year.”

One of the projects is dance theatre work *Falling in Love with Frida* by Melbourne-born and Glasgow-based performance artist and choreographer Caroline Bowditch, which will tour Parramatta, Newcastle, Wollongong and Melbourne in March.

Falling in Love with Frida celebrates the life, loves and legacy of the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo.

The show premiered in Nottingham, England in May 2014 and won the prestigious Herald Angel Award at the 2014 Edinburgh Festival Fringe, where it was staged again in 2015.

Ms Bowditch has now performed the show with three other performers about 80 times, including at the British Council Showcase last year.

She said she was thrilled to be able to bring the show to Australia, which will mark her professional Australian performance debut after working in the UK for the past 13 years, most notably as an advisor to the British Council’s Unlimited Access project.

Ms Bowditch said without the Australia Council grant, the tour would have been much shorter.

“We wouldn’t have been able to bring the work to Melbourne or run as many workshops,” Ms Bowditch said.

“We can now do an expanded tour and engage with more people.”

The show is being presented in Australia by Outlandish Arts after its producer Gaele Sobott saw Ms Bowditch speak about the show at a disability arts event at the Australia Council.

Ms Bowditch said she wanted to create a show about Frida Kahlo after she started researching her life story.

“The more I researched her, the more fascinated I was by her. I saw a connection between her life and mine and the show has become an intermingling of the two,” Ms Bowditch said.

“She was such an iconic artist, but she is rarely remembered as a disabled artist, even though her disability was so integral in her work.”

Ms Bowditch said the show explores how people fall in love, and also how we are remembered.

“The show looks at how we control how people remember us. Frida constructed how people remember her, but how much of that do we control?”

Ms Bowditch said the universal themes in the show was part of its success.

“Everyone has an experience of love, so that allows a way in and focuses on the things we have in common, providing a sense of equality,” Ms Bowditch said.

For tour details on *Falling in Love with Frida* go to: <http://www.carolinebowditch.com/when--where.html>

The Australia Council’s Artists with Disability funding provides up to \$25,000 for development grants and up to \$50,000 for projects involving individuals and groups. Applicants need to select the arts and disability panel to assess their application.

To apply, go to: <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/funding/new-grants-model/artists-with-disability-funding/>

An accessible video with captions and Auslan interpretation on how to apply is at:

<https://vimeo.com/147817745>

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