

# EDGE SYDENHAM: IMPACT

2-10 AUGUST 2019



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EDGE Inner West is a new arts and cultural strategy spotlighting local creatives and site-specific curated programs.

Funded and produced by Inner West Council, EDGE Sydenham investigated and highlighted the precarious position of urban creatives on industrial lands impacted by increasing gentrification.

The mid-winter program was extensive, featuring 340 artists, 76 local businesses, and 60 creative spaces that attracted over nine thousand people to this creative hotspot. Over four nights in early August, the engine house of the inner west's cultural economy was proudly on show.

Creative Trails opened the doors to over 40 ARIs, underground performance spaces, back-alley exhibitions, street art and live music venues such as Camelot Lounge, Gasoline Pony, Lazy Bones, Marrickville Bowlo and the Red Rattler.

The eclectic program funded pop-up theatre, the fabulously garish Pink Flamingo Cinema, leviathan shaggy creatures that strolled the streets in search of creativity and giant projections that carved up the dark with billowing visuals of local EDGE creatives and their stories, courtesy of Labour of Love.

From Monstermouse to Makerspace, Mothership to Create or Die, the offering was a richly engaging and enigmatic insight into a proud old industrial area that is emerging as a nationally significant creative hotspot.

Then, in the dead of winter as howling gales drew in an Antarctic front, Sydenham Green roared into life in an explosion of light, sound and raging fire. A collaboration between Tortuga Studios, the University of Sydney Design Lab and a host of performers, the EDGE finale drew over five thousand people on a night that should have seen them all tucked up in front of their own fires.

THE FIRE GARDEN, presented by Tortuga Studios and commissioned by Inner West Council, featured the work of over 45 artists, makers, performers, musicians and technicians and was the first time in many years that Sydney has hosted a fire festival. Clanking robotics, roving fire-breathing beasts, rope burns, whimsical installations, powerful projections, a stomping live music line-up, food trucks and blazing campfires scattered throughout allowed people to appreciate the primal element that fire represents. This helped with the weather too!

ElectroSK8 – a partnership between the University of Sydney Design Lab and local skaters – explored the relativity of human movement and technology with a digital activation of Sydenham's popular skate park that created a mesmerizing flurry of movement, technology, art and light, and engaged the SES, students, skaters and families from across the city.

Alongside DJs, bands and roving works, Council commissioned performances that address the climate crisis and critical issues by the Deep Sea Astronauts, The Sleepwalkers, and State of Emergency.



"Participating in EDGE Sydenham as the curator of ElectroSK8, in partnership with the Inner West Council and the University of Sydney, enabled me to work in an inspiring interdisciplinary context to create an event of eight performance and interactive art installations for the unique environment of Sydenham skatepark. An important part of my role was to mentor 22 emerging creative practitioners from diverse cultural and artistic backgrounds. Creating an arts event for and with the community - the skaters, locals and visitors gave me a strong sense of meaningful purpose, and exposed the public to the playful creativity of the skatepark in a new way."

DR LIAN LOKE

Program Director Master of Interaction Design and Electronic Arts  
Senior Lecturer | Design Lab | Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning

"I have worked closely with the Arts and Culture team at Inner West Council (and previously Marrickville Council). I respect, appreciate and acknowledge that they do great work. But there needs to be an attitudinal shift (well everywhere actually): Council should feel privileged to work with artists and cultural producers in their catchment, not the other way around. Council need to work collaboratively from beginning to end with artists/ cultural producers if they want to deliver landmark events and programs. We dont need another Vivid - we need meaningful, celebrations of the cultural engine of Sydney! - as they say."

ELENI CHRISTOU

# IMPACT

## Recognition of a creative economy

EDGE is Inner West Council's strategy to highlight the creativity of the area and its contribution to innovation, economic growth, community cohesion and environmental sustainability. This strategy builds communities locally and profiles the inner west as the creative engine of Sydney as a global city.

EDGE Sydenham threw a spotlight on the cultural production, experimentation and manufacturing that takes place in this precinct. This strategy supports small and medium creative industries in the LGA to create new works and opportunities for future commissions and tours across Australia and internationally.

EDGE created rich content that showcased some of the diverse cultural producers that work here, from setbuilders to fine artists, screenprinters, ceramicists, international performance artists, photographers, street artists and more. Creative Trails, meanwhile, invited a glimpse into how artists operate within the spaces they work.

## Significance of inner-city employment lands

EDGE was as much about the small businesses of the area as it was about the arts – breweries, bakeries, chop shops, textile joints and mechanics, they all had a part to play as part of this eclectic makers' area.

This industrial enclave, which acts as an important employment land in the inner west,

put on a show – but beyond that, it invited the community 'inside' to see how artists survive and thrive in these industrial spaces.

EDGE is, increasingly, a vital support for small and medium sectors to create new works and opportunities for future commissions and tours across Australia and internationally.

## Thriving creative spaces, venues and hybrid enterprises

Live music and vibrant performances at venues including Camelot Lounge, Gasoline Pony, Lazy Bones, Factory Theatre, Marrickville Bowlo and Red Rattler saw throngs of people actively enjoying the area's homegrown culture.

EDGE is Inner West Council's strategy to illuminate the creativity of the inner west and its contribution to innovation, economic growth, community cohesion and environmental sustainability. The program builds communities locally and profiles the inner west as the creative engine of a global city.

## Arts-led social change

As part of EDGE Sydenham, LGBTQIA stalwarts Heaps Gay presented Femmebot at the Rat, an immersive party experience that reflected on changes to queer spaces in the face of gentrification and the strong sense of pride in the LGA. Similarly, cultural activists HICCUP hosted an art party at Marrickville Bowlo to build awareness and raise funds to divert the climate crisis.

## Showcasing inner west creative expertise

EDGE Sydenham brought people together to celebrate the rich diversity of creativity in the inner west. It featured some of Sydney's most acclaimed industrial artists and entertainers: these are the creatives that work for the Opera House, for the Art Gallery of NSW and the MCA, for the ABC and the BBC, for ANZ, the Olympics, Expo 2020, MONA and many more acclaimed arts, film and entertainment industry leaders.

Tours, talks, documentaries, art in the street, art in communities – EDGE embraces the broader society of the inner west and engenders new and valuable connections between residents and artists, between business owners and new customers. It starts the conversation between like-minded future collaborators, and encourages new connections between Council and the creative sector it is proud to support.

EDGE recognises and reinforces the dynamic cultural infrastructure that the inner west is home to, cultural and creative spaces utilising industrial areas once thought void, and artist-run ventures that show economic success with a social framework. It values, too, the creative economy of the inner west and how it is essential to the future success of global Sydney.

## A call to action

EDGE was also a call to action, a response to the devastating effects of loss of parklands, communities and creative spaces through large-scale development, Westconnex and urban transformation. THE FIRE GARDEN's renegade vibe became a siren song for the many thousands of locals affected, and allowed people to stand strong in the face of something they feel powerless to defeat.

Ultimately, EDGE operates as a powerful social and cultural strategy highlighting the value and significance of the inner west's cultural capital, its enigmatic, enthusiastic and highly engaged creative sector, and the interconnectivity that exists between this and residents, businesses, the education sector, the financial per capita turnover of the area and the role of local government in spearheading this growth.

*A fire-breathing dragon, a hanging fire, music and a mad clown... all in my backyard! The festival made our family feel alive. Thank you, Tortuga, for bringing the people together again.*

JAMES WATKINS, INNER WEST RESIDENT





"I was one of the participating artist in THE FIRE GARDEN in Sydenham Park as part of the Edge festival, organised and directed by Tortuga Studios. I have been a practicing artist, working with fire and kinetic sculpture and large-scale installations for 25 years in Australia and overseas. Due to my experience with the wider arts community I was asked to assist in artist curation, too. The event itself was fabulous, the night, I thought, was excellent, very well organised and executed for such an ambitious project, involving many local and interstate artists, and to say the feedback from the public was enthusiastic would be an understatement. The event had the feel of a European arts festival. The out-of-state guests left with an overwhelmingly positive impression of Sydney's cultural scene, and the members of the public I spoke to were universally positive about the night, saying they had never experienced anything like it in Sydney, and were looking forward to seeing more. As an artist, this is the sort of event that really gives my art purpose. I love participating in these public cultural events, where my art is one part of an immersive environment, where it is accessible to the general public and provides a cultural service, rather than in the traditional gallery environment. It was also wonderful to be working with all the other amazing artists that were involved in the event. I found the whole night to be inspirational, and I also look forward to helping Tortuga realise more events like this in the future."

DILLON MACEWAN  
INSTALLATION ARTIST | ROBOTICS ENGINEER

A master robotics and mechatronics engineer, Dillon MacEwan specialises in large-scale installation, kinetic sculpture, pyrotechnics and special effects for the film industry. As part of the legendary Mutoid Waste Company and working with Arcadia, Walking with Dinosaurs, Sculpture by the Sea, Stalker Theatre Co. and many, many more, his work is the product of creative and construction genius.

"Having worked with Tortuga Studios for over ten years, I can attest to their incredible creative diversity, their ability to pull a significant crowd in whatever they do, and their absolute professionalism. They have cultivated a powerful cultural economy in Sydney, and they are renowned for supporting their artists as well as providing a platform for both established and underground creatives to experiment."

KERRIE GLASSCOCK  
DIRECTOR, SYDNEY FRINGE FESTIVAL

"I have worked with Tortuga studios on many occasions for more than a decade. I have always found them to be excellent partners in the realisation of my artworks in many forms, including exhibitions, installations and performances.

Their project management, curatorial and problem-solving skills are excellent, and they have always been a pleasure to work with.

In association with Inner West Council, I cannot recommend them highly enough for their ability to conceive, manage and bring to completion THE FIRE GARDEN, a project that was beautiful, out of the ordinary and otherworldly."

GARTH KNIGHT  
MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTIST  
[www.garthknight.com](http://www.garthknight.com)

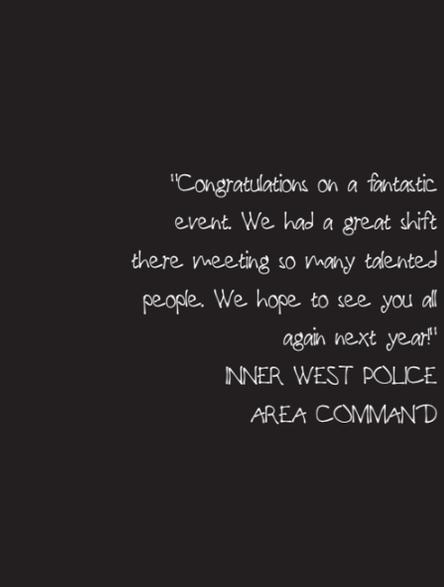




"How brilliant to stand around a fire on a cold night with the locals and listen to fantastic musicians and watch artists in their element warmed our souls! Love our community thanks for putting this on for all of us!"  
JEMMA LAINE



"Great finale to the festival. Next year Inner West Council need to put more thought into publicity, promotion and curation!"  
LYZAH MUA



"Congratulations on a fantastic event. We had a great shift there meeting so many talented people. We hope to see you all again next year!"  
INNER WEST POLICE  
AREA COMMAND



"What a truly ambitious project that managed to capture the imagination of all involved including those who ventured out on such a cold night. I cant imagine the work and worry that went into this collaborative gathering - you managed to dance the line of safety with that of freedom - not an easy task! (And much more interesting than NY fireworks!)"  
ALI DAVIES



"Took me back to the childhood pleasure of cracker night... thank you!"  
ANNEMAREE ADAMS

"That was a great event. Well done indeed, more please!"  
CHRIS ROSS

"Well done, such a great night and thank you to EDGE and the local council for supporting such amazing events - awesome!"  
BRETT SCHOLLUM

Was a fantastic night, and so well produced! More of it please...  
JENNY LEAHY





"My breath was taken away!  
Love your work!"  
NICOLA PATTERSON WOOLFREY

"I went to EDGE Ashfield and it  
was beautiful, but this was next level.  
I'm excited to see what's next for  
Inner West."  
LINDA GRIEVES

"It was delightful! Keep the  
flame burning, always..."  
ROSE MASTROIANNI

"A momentous effort with an amazing  
result! Thanks for  
such a fun night!"  
CATHERINE BAKKER



"Thank you to everyone, but  
mostly to Council for letting this  
go ahead. Events like this make  
the Inner West the incredible,  
diverse, strong community it is!"  
Carla Jeffs



"Oh please! Please do  
something like this in  
Balmain! It was wonderful,  
so wonderful!"  
CHRIS JENKINS



"Amazing evening  
- thank you!"  
KATRINA BUNTING

"Tortuga Studios, you guys are  
simply amazing!"  
BARRY LOVE

"Thank you to everyone who made  
THE FIRE GARDEN such a roaring success,  
artists, makers, builders, sound techs, lighting  
gurus, liggers, loaders, drivers, fire flossies,  
plots, clowns, performers, rockstars, kids,  
kelpers, punters, locals, even the randoms  
who stumbled upon something they couldn't  
put work to. It was wild and it was beautiful,  
but mostly, it was about community and  
proving that fire is an ancient power that  
need never be contained!"  
H. MORGAN HARRIS





"The fire, the warmth, everyone's smiles and all the little kids learning to skateboard whilst parents watched on with The Cure playing in the background up the back - it was truly beautiful!"  
MONICA MARIA

"This has to be an annual event!"  
JAMES BOYD

"Loved every moment! What a night of magnificent creative community power!"  
ZOE BRATHWAITE

"Such a wonderful success. It was magical!"  
LINDEN ABBOT



"Thank you it was amazing!"  
NICOLE DIXON

"I got there when you were packing up! I had friends ringing me all night saying come down... I really appreciate your efforts please do this again! What a wonderful event!"  
LIZZIE KRUSE