

2 xcite U

Proposal Cover Sheet

Name/Group/Organisation

Beaker

Street Address:

Postal Address:

Phone:

Mobile

Fax

Email

Website

How old are you?

Cultural background?

28

Australian-born Chinese

When will you START your project?

When will you FINISH your project?

01/07/02

01/07/03

How much money do you need from the Theatre Board?

\$5000

Where will you do your project? (eg. Melbourne, country Qld, USA?):

Sydney

Briefly describe your project

A Sydney performance of *Hello Kitty* – a show in which 4 young Asian-Australian writers perform spoken word and sing karaoke – for the *Sydney Writers' Festival*

How did you find out about 2 XCITE U? From the *Australia Council's* website

Had you ever heard of the Australia Council before? Yes

If you had help putting your proposal together who gave you a hand? [name1] and [name2] from the *Footscray Community Arts Centre* helped with the budget

What is your ABN? 85 481 520 518 (but project will be auspiced – see below)

If you don't have an ABN, who is your auspicing organisation? *Footscray Community Arts Centre* (ABN: 87 005 140 303)

The Fine Print

The closing date for proposals to 2 XCITE U is **Friday, 10 May 2002**

You can apply for assistance up to an amount of \$5,000.

Proposals will be assessed at a meeting of the Theatre Board in May 2002, and you will hear about results in early June.

2XCITE U

Budget notes

- ¹ We will be applying to the *City of Maribyrnong's Community and Cultural Grants* program later this year.
- ² All personnel flying to Sydney will stay with friends or family. As a result, accommodation is not included in the budget.
- ³ Quotes available on request.

Expected income		Expected expenses		Funded by this applic.
	AUD\$		AUD\$	AUD\$
<i>Earned income</i>		<i>Salaries, fees and allowances</i>		
Box office (50 x \$12 + 50 x \$8)	1000	Writers (4 x \$175)	700	700
		MC	200	200
		Sound technician	150	150
		Film-maker	250	250
		Coordinator: T. Cho (\$200 in-kind by <i>Beaker</i>)	500	
		Coordinator: [name1] (in-kind by <i>FCARTS</i>)	500	
		Zine editor	200	
Subtotal	1000	Subtotal	2500	1300
<i>Other grant income</i>		<i>Production / program and direct costs²</i>		
<i>City of Maribyrnong</i> (unconfirmed) ¹	1000	LCD projector hire	300	
OzCo youth lit initiative (to fund zine)	440	Karaoke machine hire	300	
		Airfares (6 x \$250)	1500	1500
		Per diem costs (5 people x 2 days @ \$50/day + 1 person x 4 days @ \$50/day)	700	700
		Zine photocopying	240	
		Venue hire (in-kind by <i>SWF</i>)	300	
		PA (in-kind by <i>SWF</i>)	300	
		Lighting (in-kind by <i>SWF</i>)	300	
Subtotal	1440	Video tapes	20	
		Subtotal	3960	2200
<i>Your own contribution</i>		<i>Overhead costs</i>		
Posters + flyers (in-kind by <i>FCARTS</i>)	300	Auspicing fee (10%)	500	500
Coordinator: [name1] (in-kind by <i>FCARTS</i>)	500	Administration	500	
Coordinator: T. Cho (in-kind by <i>Beaker</i>)	200			
Venue hire (in-kind by <i>SWF</i>)	300			
PA (in-kind by <i>SWF</i>)	300			
Lighting (in-kind by <i>SWF</i>)	300			
Subtotal	1900	Subtotal	1000	500
<i>Sponsorship, fundraising & donations</i>		<i>Promotion, documentation & marketing</i>		
	0	Hire of publicist ³	1000	1000
		Posters + flyers (in-kind by <i>FCARTS</i>)	300	
		Distribution of flyers ³	100	
		Publicity photos	200	
		Mail out	50	
		Video documentation	230	
Subtotal	0	Subtotal	1880	1000
Requested in this application	5000	Requested in this application		5000
Total income	9340	Total expenses	9340	

WHAT is your idea?

Project description

This project involves a performance of the show *Hello Kitty* as a 'Major event' in the 2003 *Sydney Writers' Festival (SWF)* program.

Hello Kitty will feature 4 young Asian-Australian performers, with each artist performing spoken word and singing karaoke. Performers will be [artist1], [artist2], [artist3] and myself. The performance will be hosted by Miss Suzzanna, an Asian drag queen. Film-maker [artist4] will film deliberately 'tacky', karaoke-style footage of the performers. This footage will be projected during the performance. The set design (existing set from previous shows to be used) will also be deliberately tacky, combining a traditional Chinese 'red and gold' look with a garish, kitsch *Hello-Kitty*-and-'Cantopop'-themed-look. (Cantopop = Cantonese pop music)

This project will be a *Beaker, Footscray Community Arts Centre (FCARTS)* and *SWF* coproduction. Previously, *Hello Kitty* has been performed at the 2000 *Melbourne Fringe Festival* (to a sell-out audience; winner, *Fringe Award for Most Successful Spoken Word Show*) and to near-capacity audiences in 2001 for *Midsumma* and the *Big West Festival*.

The show is a dynamic event that features polished spoken word performances, combined with the spontaneity of karaoke. Humour is used to subvert Asian stereotypes. The slogan used on our publicity posters indicates the sense of fun behind the show: "A night in which stereotypes are subverted and literature becomes glamorous".

The *SWF* general program is held at Wharf 4/5. The Sydney *Hello Kitty* performance will be at the Festival Club café at Wharf 4/5, giving the opportunity to potentially draw existing audiences from the general program and also be part of the festival atmosphere. I have visited this venue before and believe it to be an excellent venue for the performance.

Hello Kitty originated during my time as Coordinator of the Spoken Word program for the 2000 *Melbourne Fringe Festival*. I approached [name1] (Workshop Coordinator) and [name2] (Theatre Coordinator) at *FCARTS* with the idea of jointly producing a performance featuring young Asian-Australian spoken word performers.

Previous *Hello Kitty* performances have promoted various young Asian-Australian performers to the public, many of whom had previously performed their work only within certain specific spheres (eg in the queer spoken word scene). Word of the show has spread since the first performance; comments from Asian-Australians living outside Melbourne (eg Queensland, NSW and WA) who wished that they could have seen the show prompted me to consider touring the event.

SWF has regularly held events concerning the Asia-Pacific region and the project is a 'good fit' for *SWF*. However, this aside, *Hello Kitty* is significantly different from any other *SWF* event; this is an important opportunity to draw new audiences to *SWF* who might not necessarily be regular *SWF* goers, and also to attract new audiences to *Hello Kitty*. The partnership with *SWF* is also valuable in other, practical ways – *SWF* will provide the festival club venue, lighting and PA for free, and we will be able to use their ticketing system. *Beaker* and *FCARTS* will also keep box office takings.

The previous performances of *Hello Kitty* have allowed its coordinators – myself and [name1] – to experiment with the concept in various ways, including line-up changes, different approaches to working with the writers and generating work for performance, different venues (theatre, pub, restaurant) and use of various karaoke machine setups. We have learnt a great deal from these experiences and are now well-placed to tour this show for the first time.

Note: This project will also feature another change from previous shows – I will produce a print zine featuring work by young Asian-Australian writers and zine-makers. The zine will be distributed to the show's audience and throughout other *SWF* venues at Wharf 4/5 (it will be free). This application does not request funding for the zine.

How we will do it + timeline

July 2002 – October 2003

October 2002

Feb 2003 – mid April 2003

Mid April 2003 - performance

Late May 2003

June 2003

Secure additional funding (see budget)

T. Cho to visit Sydney (at own cost) to check venue, meet *SWF* Director, network with relevant organisations and research promotional opportunities

Make zine; performers workshop spoken word material; produce film footage

Publicity campaign

Venue check, dress rehearsal and performance

Evaluation and acquittal

All of the spoken word performers except [artist3] live in Melbourne. With input from [name1], we will workshop spoken word material and develop it for performance. As [artist3] lives in Sydney, she will liaise with [name1] and myself via phone and e-mail regarding the development of her material.

I will go to Sydney 4 days before the show to promote it (eg media appearances, distribute additional promotional material if required), spend time with [artist3] to develop her performance, and do further onsite coordination, as required.

Publicity

Brown Nose Publicity (publicist for our *Melbourne Fringe* and *Midsumma* performances) will be hired as our publicist. Past performances have drawn good media coverage (eg from outlets such as *Triple JJJ*, many community radio stations, the *Herald Sun* and also local papers). *Hello Kitty* makes a good story and – in contrast to many spoken word readings – it is very visual, making it more attractive for promoting to the media. We will continue some of the successful strategies that have enhanced our appearances in the media – for example, photo opportunities with Miss Suzzanna and karaoke singing on radio to promote the performance. There is no other show similar to *Hello Kitty* – it will stand out from the other events in *SWF*'s program and we are confident of obtaining good media coverage.

The show will be listed as a 'Major event' in the *SWF* program (over 600,000 inserted in the *Sydney Morning Herald*). It will also be publicised in a *SWF* major events brochure and in *SWF*'s media kit. *SWF* will also distribute flyers and posters for the show when it delivers *SWF* programs and posters to various bookstores and libraries. Additional flyers will be distributed using the services of *Mainwaring Advertising Group*.

In the past, we have been very strategic in attracting audiences from various different groups within the community to our performances, including young people, spoken word performers, Asians, and people from the queer community. We will continue this approach to draw a diverse audience. Other outlets for promotion will also be used (eg *NSW Writers' Centre Newsletter*, *Asian-Australian Artists' Association* mailout, various e-mailing lists). In addition, the show will be listed on various websites (eg *SWF* site).

WHY do you want to do it?

Professional development

While I have been coordinating spoken word performances since 1994, I have never toured a spoken word show before. In fact, spoken word shows are rarely toured and I have found it very difficult to get advice from other people associated with spoken word about touring (particularly interstate touring). The more commonly-toured literary event typically involves an established writer speaking on the festival circuit. Such events typically have backing by publishers, agents, and large festivals. This type of event is very different to touring a spoken word show like *Hello Kitty* which features emerging artists, and I was at times daunted by how to begin to approach the issue of touring. However, since I made the decision to tour this show, I have embarked on a significant learning curve by learning more about touring (eg by consulting with artists working in other artforms such as theatre and music, speaking with organisations such as *Multicultural Arts Victoria*, and reading publications such as the *Let's tour* guide). Touring *Hello Kitty* will enable me to gain significant new skills that I will also be very keen to pass onto other spoken word performers. In addition, a show for SWF would be a significant achievement in the short life of *Beaker*, the organisation I started only last year.

This project will also continue my association with FCARTS, an association I continue to learn much from. My work with [name1] has significantly developed my coordination skills and has been something of an 'unofficial mentorship'. I have also found my experience working with [name2], Theatre Coordinator at FCARTS, to be valuable, as I have learnt new ways of approaching spoken word from a theatrical perspective.

This project will also develop my work as a writer. The themes explored in *Hello Kitty* are particularly relevant to the fiction I am working on. I am currently writing a collection of short fiction concerning popular culture and Asian-Australian identity. The collection – called *Yellow is the new black* – is influenced by both Asian and western pop culture. It has a contemporary focus on such diverse topics as Asian Elvis impersonators, mail-order brides, Rose Hancock, MSG and karaoke. It has taken me many years to write about my ethnicity and my work with *Hello Kitty* is a major catalyst for the development of *Yellow is the new black*. In fact, both projects have influenced each other, and I have found working on the two projects simultaneously to be very beneficial.

This project will thus contribute to my professional development as both an event coordinator and a writer.

Benefits

The benefits of the project are:

- *promotion of spoken word performance by young Asian-Australian performers to new audiences:* a performance at SWF represents a high-profile opportunity to promote spoken word by young Asian-Australians. SWF is very different from the other festivals *Hello Kitty* has appeared in, and will take the performers' work to a significantly new audience. We will also take advantage of the number of publishers and literary agents based in Sydney, plus the additional people in the literary industry coming to Sydney for SWF, by giving complimentary passes to such people
- *professional development of all artists:* many of the artists associated with *Hello Kitty* have had little or no touring experience, nor have they had any experience performing at a festival like SWF. *Hello Kitty* is also unique in the way it develops the writing and performance skills of its associated artists. The combination of spoken word and karaoke has proven to be an excellent way for the performers to develop confidence on-stage and a SWF performance will take the performers to a new level of achievement
- *presentation of spoken word performance in an innovative framework:* *Hello Kitty* is significantly different from other spoken word performances – it creates a type of cabaret atmosphere, and audiences have been consistently surprised by how well the combination of spoken word and karaoke works
- *presentation of positive images of young Asian-Australians:* *Hello Kitty* is fun, dynamic, subversive and presents a contemporary perspective of Asian-Australian identity. Such attributes make a positive contribution to the presentation of Asian-Australians
- *further development of a successful concept:* The SWF performance will further develop what I already know to be a successful concept. A new, stronger line-up (with less performers than previous performances), the introduction of a zine component, and a new challenge in the form of an interstate performance are natural progressions from the development that has already taken place. The performance is an opportunity to build on the investment that has already been put into *Hello Kitty*.

Why I want to do it: Conclusion

Spoken word projects tend to result in one-off performances, and I have never worked on a spoken word project in so many different incarnations as *Hello Kitty*. I continue to work on this project because: **1)** there is a clear need for it – there is no other event like it that showcases work by young Asian-Australian spoken word performers, **2)** there is still scope for developing the project, **3)** the framework is innovative – the combination of spoken word and karaoke is unique and highly effective, **4)** the artists associated with the project have given me a good deal of positive feedback, including various requests that I continue work on the project, and **5)** word about the project has spread, which has resulted in continued interest from people in various Asian-Australian communities across Australia as well as other arts organizations. For example, the directors of *Word is Out*, Australia's main producers of queer spoken word events, have long expressed interest in the project. This year, I have worked with the directors of *Word is Out* on a potential *Hello Kitty* performance for the forthcoming *Gay Games*. I also recently received interest from the *Melbourne Festival*, in relation to staging *Hello Kitty* in The Spiegel tent for the *Melbourne Festival*. To receive this latter potential opportunity is a tremendous achievement for the project.

A good deal of momentum has been generated since the development of the first performance in 2000, and this tour represents an opportunity to build on this momentum. We have had 3 successful performances in Melbourne, and continued interest from people and organisations from interstate. *Hello Kitty* has an important role to play in presenting and promoting new work by young Asian-Australian spoken word performers, and it is now timely to take this fun and exciting project to new audiences.

WHO will be involved in the project?

[In this section, I had short bios for all the project's personnel – performers, coordinators and our film-maker/sound technician. It all fitted onto one page.]

[After this, I included our support material for the application. This included a 2-page summary CV for myself and a letter of support from Sydney Writers' Festival. I have not included my summary CV in this file but I've included the letter from Meredith so you have an idea of what a letter of support can look like, if you have never seen one before. It's on the next page...]



Michelle Kotevski
Program Officer
Australia Council for the Arts
PO Box 788
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

Regarding: Application for Hello Kitty under the 2xcite U program

Dear Michelle

Please accept this letter as both endorsement for the Hello Kitty production and confirmation that the 2003 Sydney Writers' Festival, scheduled for some time next May, would be proud to host a Sydney production of Hello Kitty as part of the core Festival program for 2003.

The Sydney Writers' Festival has ventured into theatrical co-productions this year with each Sidetrack Performance Group and The Studio at the Sydney Opera House. Our experiences and what we learn this year will ensure that Hello Kitty can be well-hosted and promoted in 2003.

As the production has a cabaret feel it would be staged in the Sydney Dance Company Café in the evening as part of our Festival Club program.

Hello Kitty would be included as a Major Event in the Festival Program (distributed in the Sydney Morning Herald and through Dymocks Bookstores across NSW and other good bookstores, cinemas and cafés), on the Festival website www.swf.org.au and in a Major Events flier broadly distributed across Greater Sydney and Australia. The Festival publicist would promote the event in the Media Kit and in other materials.

The Sydney Writers' Festival has worked hard to diversify our audiences, particularly in the evening, across age, gender, language ethnicity and interests. Translated works and authors have been a priority of the Festival for some years and this year we will also be producing events and readings in languages other than English. I believe the Festival could supply young and enthusiastic audiences for Hello Kitty and that Hello Kitty will bring new audiences for the Festival.

I would be happy to provide further information on the Festival and/or our level of support or endorsement if required and very much look forward to co-producing Hello Kitty as part of the 2003 Sydney Writers' Festival.

Sincerely

Meredith Curnow
Festival Director

Sydney Writers' Festival Ltd, PO Box 841 Broadway NSW 2007
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The Sydney Writers' Festival is a joint initiative of the City of Sydney and the State Government through the NSW Ministry for the Arts