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## **Collaborations**

The Art of Change is a visual arts organisation concerned with issues of change, particularly its impact on identities, quality of life and the environment. We use the focus of Agenda 21 - the agenda for the 21st Century that came out of the Rio Earth Summit - to pull together the strands of Art, Ecologies, Cultures and Change, through interdisciplinary practice.

There is little doubt that the key issues of ecology, sustainability, urban crisis, cultural and racial tensions, are becoming increasingly urgent as we approach the Millennium. By their very nature they require an interdisciplinary approach and an international dimension.

Our approach is a philosophy-in-practice of an *art of engagement*: concerned with ideas, issues, processes and products of transformation. It is people centred and critical. By critical we mean that meanings and identities should not be prey to superficial stereotypes, that mechanisms and processes are established to allow the lived, changing, complex and problematised identities to emerge. It is about empowerment. In that sense it is a political statement as much as an artistic one.

Our work is collaborative for the reasons discussed above but also because we want to ensure that it is as precise and appropriate as possible. That means working with those who have first hand knowledge of what is needed, whether they be activists, professionals, or someone who has relevant personal experiences. Change is about inspiration and aspiration. This, we believe, results from a transformation through critique, collaboration and communication. It involves social and visual processes inextricably linked, forming a 'lens' which creates a focal point in the energies of transformation.

A critical practice is not simply about a critique of what is, the point is to construct new models, to begin to create stepping stones in the pathway to a different future. Collaborations are both the means and the end.

Peter Dunn