

Mickey Miners Lifetime Achievement Award

Speech given at IPAY, January 18th 2017

Dear friends and colleagues,

I'm so given to writing *each* day, and so humbled by the events of *this* day, that I thought rather than stumble through something improvised, I'd prepare a few words – I hope that's okay.

Receiving the lovely news from Boomer, in the dying moments of a trying year (not for me, but for many), is truly one of the most touching moments of my life. The surprise of it was informed by many things: the oddity of being regarded by people I so highly regard; the absurdity of my one artform being applauded when so many coexist to ever warrant applause; and the overarching poetic, that is a compliment given to a thing you love to do – and have to do, and will do always, regardless of salary or circumstance, or celebration or silence.

My thanks go out to Boomer for all his help over the last fortnight, patiently enduring my shoulder taps from across a globe. To Lee and her team at the Consulate, and Kathryn and hers at Ozco, thanks for making that globe feel smaller and for finding ways to find me here today.

My thanks go out to Tassie, and Essie, and Moe. I can only write with faith about many places, because I am nurtured by one. I can only conjure various intangible people, because I share my days with two perfect real ones.

And finally, my thanks go out to the IPAY team and those who chose, for a decision that I believe speaks far more about the integrity of this community than my work within it. The people who precede me – like Mary Rose and Kim Peter and Tony and Dave – are my inspirations, and to encounter a sector which would acknowledge both an artist, and those who shaped their art, side by side, suggests an egalitarianism that is heartening to see at any time – and desperately needed in this one.

Because in two days, a large rock will break the surface of a great lake, and the ripples of this action will extend out to every shore.

Rhetoric will become fact, or fiction, to equally fraught ends. Safety nets will be folded and stored away for other times. Pulses will quicken. Fate will lose favour, and a more guided hand of birth and circumstance threaten to shape destinies instead.

But some things, I believe, endure. And an idea is one of these things. Art is one of these things.

Because a story, strange magic that it is, can be invented by any person in the world. It requires little money and few tools. It may be born of hardship or hope, may be written for an audience of thousands, for one special person, or for you and you alone. Everyone has a right to their story, whether they are loud or quiet, young or old, rich or not so – whether their world is as vast as an ocean, or as familiar as an island.

And I do believe that a child with a story, may ultimately reshape everything – because of the palpable threshold upon which they exist.

On one hand they're still a product of the environment in which they were raised. They carry the DNA of their family, the memory of their landscape, the trauma or blessing of their era. They're the youngest and therefore most hopeful incarnation of many people's histories all funneled into this one being, in this one moment in time.

But on the other hand they are imagining something new. They are recognizing the qualities that make them unique, they are considering experiences not yet had, roads not yet travelled. They are conjuring an image of the person they might become.

And for me a child's great power lies in this duality. They have been fashioned from something familiar, and they may use those elements to invent something new – a new way of thinking, of doing, of seeing the world and whatever it becomes once we are gone and forgotten.

Emblematically, they are our faith in the past, and our hopes for the future, combined. And so it is a privilege, to offer stories to them, in their present.

Even more that this, it is a privilege to offer them permission to tell their own.

Thank you all very much for the honour of tonight, and for the pleasure of the days spent working in this sector before and after.

I am truly touched.