



OPENING DOORS

RENTING FOR ALL



TOURING EXHIBITION PROPOSAL



BACKGROUND

The Opening Doors Project has been commissioned by **AMIDA (Action for More Independence and Dignity in Accommodation)** and funded by the Victorian Government.

AMIDA is an independent advocacy organisation which advocates for good housing for people with disability. We provide advocacy to individuals, with priority given to people with an intellectual disability, and advocate for change in systems which prevent people from achieving good housing.

AMIDA strongly supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability and works to assert these rights and community inclusion for people with a disability.

AMIDA acknowledges that people with disability have a right to a choice of who they live with and where they live. Further, people with disability have a right to good quality housing which is accessible, affordable and non-institutional.

In 2019 AMIDA celebrated 30 years of advocating for the rights of people with disabilities to accessible and inclusive housing options. Opening Doors was commissioned as part of the 30 year celebration.

THE PROJECT

OPENING DOORS - Renting for All is information created for people with a disability, led by people with a disability that will guide you through the process of renting and connect you to information about the world of Real Estate. You will hear personal stories on our website and DVD with easy to access videos which will get you thinking as you begin looking for your new home, whether is it in the city, the suburbs or the country.

People with disabilities face a range of challenges in accessing suitable housing - the aim of the project is to break down discrimination and barriers to a range of housing options including access to the rental market. Opening Doors includes a website which houses 40 videos made for and by people with a disability that explore the journey into the rental world.

These resources have also been endorsed by The Real Estate Institute of Victoria and will be used in their real estate training sessions in 2020 which will reach over 2000 people as well as people with a disability and associated groups.

As part of this project we also mounted the **OPENING DOORS - Renting For All Photographic Show which had a season at the NO VACANCY Gallery in the QV Building in Lonsdale Street**, Melbourne in November 2019. The work consisted of 28 beautiful portraits by **Melbourne Photographer Paul Dunn** of people with a disability in their home environment curated by Lex Middleton.

EXHIBITION PROPOSAL

There are 3 elements to a proposed exhibition:

1. PHOTOGRAPHS - 28 large scale individual environmental portraits shot in the homes of people with disabilities living in a range of accommodation. The photos are large scale prints 1118mm x 791mm and have been beautifully printed by Dr. Les Walkling.
2. VIDEO INSTALLATION - A series of films comprising interviews with people with disabilities which capture their experiences of home and told from a range of perspectives.
3. An EDUCATION PROGRAM which could include presentations from people in the portraits, representatives from AMIDA, photographer and film makers and others associated with the project.

THE PHOTOGRAPHS AND THE PEOPLE

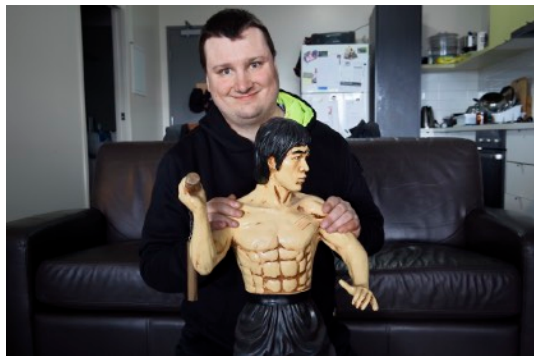
The Opening Doors Portraits are a powerful affirmation of the meaning people associate with living independently in their own home and the foundation this provides for living creative and purposeful lives. The range of accommodation options depicted demonstrate possibility and the very diverse and imaginative 'interior design' flourishes depicted are a wonderful source of engagement and connection with the viewer.



The Photos Shoots started with a chandelier and glorious northern light in Raph's room and we closed the portrait sittings with a candle at Naomi's mothers house on a wet cold Spring Day. The play of light revealing our interior spaces and light as a symbol of hope. Light of course is what photographers play with and it is one of the key metaphors in a Fiona Wright Poem we placed on the wall to accompany the exhibition at No Vacancy Gallery in Melbourne. It's a poem about renting. Light features in the poem – the light that refracts from a mirror and fills the space with possibility.

'I have a mirror mounted opposite the window and the steady hum
Of light refracting. I have lived in a belly of sun.
I have lived. I have been loved inside this house, and I have cried;'
(From *Domestic Interior* by *Fiona Wright*)

Fiona Wright is referring to more than the way we light a room; she is alluding to an internal light - the light of the imagination that is able to flourish when we have access to safe, secure and sustainable housing where we can build a home.



We see this internal light in the Opening Doors photos playing the role of the self shaper. The imaginative flourishes and touches are everywhere – in the books that are read and the way they are placed on a shelf; in the photos of families; of children; of friends, and of lovers; in the art that is created or collected and placed on a wall; in the birthday cards and get well cards; in allegiances to football teams; in the display of faiths and religious beliefs; in political allegiances; in the devotion to pets; in the beautiful design of a loved daughter's bedroom.

These things help us to shape a sense of who we are. They help to devise an individual story that can hold us, embedding us in time and place and connecting us to others who share our interests, our values and our beliefs. They are our memories, our history and our foundation for a future. These are the individual stories and then there is the collective story of inclusive housing. Part of that story is the struggle to affirm what others will deny – the right to safe and affordable housing for people with disability delivered in a range of contexts including rental accommodation. Again, this is something Fiona Wright alludes to in her poem – those who rent can be vulnerable and homes can be hostile and lonely places but when we get it right the potential for personal and communal transformation can be profound.

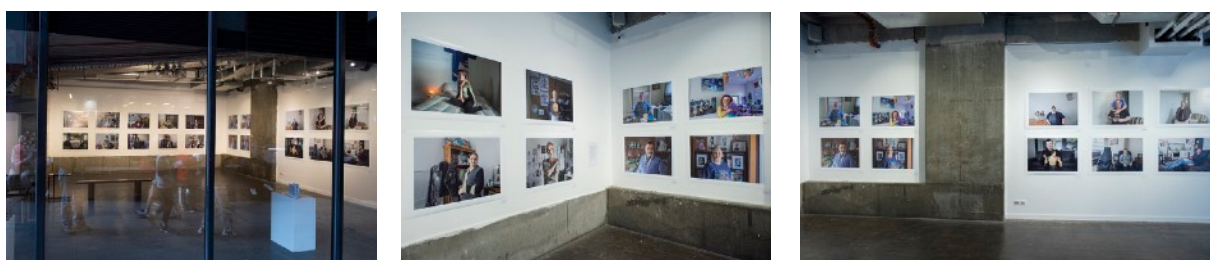
ABOUT THE VIDEOS

Forty Videos have been created for the project. Twenty of these are profiles of people with lived experience of disability who share their experiences in different types of housing and their insights about what makes a place 'home'. The other videos explore the world of rental housing and real estate, with guidance for both people with disability, and real estate agents and landlords.

The videos were researched and directed by award-winning Writer and Director Lawrence Johnston (ETERNITY, FALLOUT, NEON). Lawrence was also the Project Manager for the overall Opening Doors Project.

These videos investigate CHILDHOOD PLACES, HOME and what it means, BELONGINGS and their importance, DISCLOSURE of a person's disability when applying for a rental property and SAFETY. A number of other important issues a person with a disability needs to consider when entering the rental housing market are also explored. The videos are emotional and direct in their communication.

There is potential to screen some of these as part of the exhibition combined with a live presentation event by Lawrence Johnston and some of the Self-Advocates who have contributed their experiences to the project.



OPENING DOORS - TIMELY AND IMPORTANT

The Victorian Hearing of the Royal Commission into the Abuse of People with Disabilities (December 2019) focussed on the impact of inadequate accommodation support on the infringement of human rights leading to a range of abuses.

Numerous respondents decried the limited range of accommodation supports available to people with disability and reported serious breaches of duty of care and neglect. In particular they focussed on an over reliance on congregate care models of accommodation support which seriously constrain choice about where and who one can live with.

Opening Doors challenges this tendency toward reinstitutionalisation by demonstrating the potential for people to access a broad range of housing options that provide a sense of independence and connection with friends, family, and community.

This provides opportunities for a powerful process of restorying in Opening Doors. It's there in the photos; its wonderfully invoked in the videos; and its powerfully present when we are able to hear directly from people first-hand of their lived experience of the value of connection to home. Opening Doors has collected stories from some of the most powerful advocates in the country. They are brilliant story tellers and the community education program accompanying an exhibition of the photos and films would be very exciting for our audiences as we move into a new decade of change.

Paul Dunn Photography

Paul is a Melbourne based photographer with interests in documentary and performance photography. Paul's exhibitions include, 8 solo shows - ***The Faith, a documentary of the Collingwood Football Club Cheer Squad*** held at Reportage Gallery (2004); ***Access Arts in the City of Port Phillip, a 15 Year Retrospective of the City of Port Phillip's Arts and Disability Theatre Initiatives*** at St Kilda Town Hall Gallery (2008); ***Acts of Absurdity*** at Theatreworks (2009); ***Imagined Communities*** at Monash Gallery of Art (2009/10); ***Rawcus Encounters***, at The Realm Gallery, Ringwood (2018); ***We Make a Stand*** (a Collaboration with Sculptor, Wendy Bolger for the Ballarat Biennale of Art (2018); ***Weave Movement Theatre, 21 Years***, at Melbourne City Library Gallery (2018); ***Opening Doors***, at No Vacancy Gallery, Melbourne (2019).

Paul's group shows include, ***Around the Grounds***, a Monash Gallery of Art touring exhibition, ***Dream Home*** at the Australian Centre for Photography (2010); ***Pieces: Suicide the Aftermath*** at Mental Health House (2010); ***Burlesque Hour Photographic Exhibition: Seven Years of Seductive Subversion*** at Marios (2011); ***Summer Nights*** at Monash Gallery of Art (2013); ***LEGACY. Your collection. Our story.*** Monash Gallery of Art (2018); and ***Becoming***, St Kilda Town Hall Gallery (2019). Photographs from *Imagined Communities* were nominated for the 2010 Prix Pictet International Photography Prize. Paul's work is in the Monash Gallery of Art and National Library of Australia collections.

LAWRENCE JOHNSTON

Writer / Director / Producer

Lawrence Johnston is an internationally award-winning Writer, Director and Producer who began his career as a Film Repairer at 20th Century-Fox. He is a graduate of the prestigious Swinburne Film and Television School in Melbourne, Australia with a Bachelor of Arts in Film and Television. He has worked in both drama and documentary.

His films have been screened and awarded at Cannes, Toronto, Berlin, Telluride, Chicago and London Film Festivals among many others. His first film, the short dramatic feature, 'NIGHT OUT' was an Official Selection at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival (Un Certain Regard) and named 'one of the year's ten best' in the New York Village Voice.

He followed this with the documentary feature 'ETERNITY' which won the Best Feature Award at the Los Angeles International Documentary Association and Best Cinematography at the 1995 Australian Film Institute Awards for Oscar Winning Cinematographer Dion Beebe (CHICAGO, MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA). It was also named 'one of the year's ten best' in WHO Magazine and shortlisted for an Academy Award.

His debut feature drama, 'LIFE' won the FIPRESCI International Critic's Prize at the 1997 Toronto Film Festival and was nominated for four Australian Oscars and four Australian Film Critic's Circle Awards including Best Actor, Best Screenplay, Co-Written with John Brumpton, Best Editing and Best Cinematography for Mandy Walker (LANTANA, HIDDEN FIGURES).

Lawrence's work has been shown in major retrospectives on Australia Cinema at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He has also worked as a Development and Production Executive at Screen Australia between the production of his films.

In 2005, his company Rough Trade Pictures produced 'THE DREAM OF LOVE' and 'ONCE A QUEEN', both for SBS Television as well as his second feature film, 'NIGHT' which he wrote, directed and co-produced in conjunction Circe Films. 'NIGHT' had its international premiere at The 2007 Toronto International Film Festival was In Competition at IDFA in Amsterdam and also released theatrically in the United States by Film Festival Flix.

In 2013 he completed the feature documentary 'FALLOUT' distributed by Transmission Films, based on Nevil Shute's famous novel ON THE BEACH and the Hollywood film made in Australia starring Ava Gardner and Gregory Peck. Lawrence recently completed the U.S feature documentary 'NEON' which premiered at the 2016 Melbourne International Film Festival.

In 2019 The Australian National Film and Sound Archive Digitally restored his film ETERNITY on it's 25th Anniversary which will now be part of our national collection of films of historic worth.

Lawrence is currently in development on new drama and documentary projects, 'LADY OF THE SWAMP', 'LOVE ME TENDER' and a fiction feature version of 'ONCE A QUEEN' in conjunction with Screen Australia.