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<b>Paper Name:</b>	Too Bissi for Boredom or Loneliness	
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Most people refer to it as a disability. I almost see it as a gift. To experience near death and be able to view life from a new positive perspective is something that I have found many Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) survivors have in common.

My name is Scott Trevelyan and I was halfway through a Visual Arts Degree at Southern Cross University (SCU) studying printmaking when a motorcycle accident changed my life.

In August 2002, I was riding through the hills behind Byron Bay NSW when I crashed my beloved Ducati in a high speed accident that left me in a coma with eight broken vertebrae, a couple of broken ribs, a punctured lung, a dislocated femur, a broken shoulder and a traumatic brain injury.

I spent two weeks in Intensive care before I surfaced from the coma into a state called Post Traumatic Amnesia. It was during PTA that I thought I was partying with others in Switzerland, every nurse that Visited me was Swedish until I disbelieved one that actually was! I also believed I was a 'singers assistant' (?), I worked for the Prime Minister that had an office just down the hallway. And I had devised a brilliant plan to make my fortune shipping 'egg & lettuce' sandwiches all over the state by rail. I would ask all my visitors whether they liked egg & lettuce sangas and upon agreement, spent literally the whole day calculating how many sandwiches would fit into an empty cargo railway carriage.

After my month long stay in hospital, it took a year of hard work teaching myself to walk again properly whilst learning strategies to overcome severe fatigue (as a result of my brain injury) before I could find the stamina to return to study and resume printmaking in the university studios. In my studio time, I found that the repetitive nature of printmaking very cathartic and almost meditative. I also

developed a strong desire to share the benefits I had encountered whilst making art, with other survivors of an ABI.

( Willowbank slide)

As part of my bachelor's degree, I worked with staff from the university and also the North Coast Brain Injury Rehabilitation Service to design and build a wheelchair friendly art space, '*Willowbank Studio*', on my property at Alstonvale. This entailed not only construction of ramps or maintaining level surfaces to entrances and exits of the studio, but also handrails etc adjacent to the composting toilet. All facilities comply with Australian Safety Standards. The availability of such a print studio was sadly lacking in the Northern Rivers area, to not only those confined to wheelchairs etc, but even to those that do not require such resources.

I also joined a Ballina based organisation known as BISSI (Brain Injury Support Service Incorporated). It was here that I found other brain injury survivors of all demographics that experience the same sort of obstacles throughout each and every day. Due to my artistic interests, I was asked to design the BISSI logo, which is still in use till this day. I was later to be elected as President of BISSI and have held the position ever since (four years).

(BISSI slide)

With over 70 current members who have survived an ABI in some form, (multiple sclerosis, stroke, motor vehicle accidents, disease and alarmingly more common now, assaults) BISSI's priority is to help members (and their carers and families) learn to live with the everyday challenges associated with such a complex injury. The aim is to promote social reintegration so that members may once again, be accepted productive contributors within our community. With a strong focus on empathy and understanding, BISSI is run *by* people with brain injuries *for* people with brain injuries.

(art auction slide)

*Willowbank Studio* was officially opened in November 2006 with a charity auction that was hosted by the effervescent drag queen and comedian, Vanessa Wagner.

The auction was attended by over 200 people and raised a total of three thousand five hundred dollars. Fortnightly art workshops for members of BISSI have been held ever since, at no cost to those that have sustained an injury of this nature. These workshops are facilitated by myself and occasionally with the services of a qualified Art Therapist.

(4xArt therapy workshop slides)

The workshops aim to bring together people who live with an ABI in a safe, creative environment, to participate in art activities designed to facilitate self-expression, self-awareness and healing targeted to their specific needs. All art tasks are designed to ground participants in the here and now, respecting the path they have and will travel as a result of their injuries, via guided therapeutically oriented art-making. A further aim is to support participants to make connection with others who may understand and share the very great impact of ABI on daily lives and functioning, thereby decreasing isolation and increasing a sense of empathy and relatedness. Some participants find that just showing up and drinking cups of tea without even engaging in art exercises, to be a rewarding experience.

(‘BISSI with Life’ slide)

Several exhibitions have been held to display work undertaken at Willowbank with the most recent display to commemorate Brain Injury Awareness week 2008. Called ‘BISSI with Life’ the exhibition was held at Northern Rivers Community Gallery, Ballina and featured the work of more than a dozen artists that have survived an ABI. It was also here that my own work took on a new path. I had moved away from using artwork to overcome the trauma from my accident to more anatomical type work that depicts brain neuron and synaptic activity.

The exhibition of ‘Willowbank’ artists’ work at Northern Rivers Community Gallery instilled a sense of excellence in their efforts by utilising a ‘professional’ venue that other well-known artists without an ABI regularly use.

(4x brain neuron artwork slides)

Accessible Arts recently recognised the value of my own current art practice with the award of the 2008 Inaugural Accessible Arts/Bundanon Trust residency at the late Arthur Boyd’s property, Bundanon. Nowra NSW.

(Arthur Boyd’s house slide)

This provided me with an opportunity to focus on my practice and pursue it to the next level. A whole month without mobile phone reception and all its inherent distractions. 4 weeks that I didn’t have to mow lawns or worry about paying bills. When I was selected as the successful applicant for the residency, I was a little bit apprehensive about being away from my home for so long. I originally figured that I could fly back to Ballina halfway through my time there, just to check on my home, catch up with my family and friends and see my beloved pooch, Indie.

It took me a couple of days to wind down from the long drive from Northern NSW and set the studio up to suit the needs of my practice. It was only after I arrived there that I appreciated what the residency offered. Following a brief introduction

to my own studio and self-contained apartment, I was left to experience a month dedicated to nothing but my own art practice.

(inside Bundanon 2x studio slides + 2x inside apartment)

Four weeks of being totally in an artistic state of mind with no outside distractions to dilute my focus. But it was reassuring to know that staff from Bundanon Trust were only 15 minutes away and proved to be very responsive by simply calling them from the landline phone provided in my apartment. Even if it was just to change an out-of-reach light globe in my studio.

(Bundanon violin slide)

During the month I spent there, I met with other artists in residence (AIR), all of who were staying for two weeks only. This meant that I was lucky to meet two different groups of wonderfully creative people during my month's residency, each working on their own individual art forms. As I began drawing I observed one artist performing movement art in the kangaroo paddock next to my studio whilst listening to another playing violin. During the second half of my residency I had the pleasure of listening to a concert pianist playing her compositions on a grand piano in the nearby musicians cottage. I no longer felt the need for a brief return visit home.

(northern aspect of Bundanon studio slide)

As an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) survivor, the attention and focus that I was able to dedicate to my practice whilst at Bundanon, was priceless. I was able to immerse myself into a very healing and refreshing headspace that I rarely encounter in the everyday duties of life at home. This meditative-like state enabled me to produce a more informed and resolved quality in my artwork and a state of excellence that I would perhaps not have achieved at home. I hope to pass on this discovery to other ABI survivors in my capacity as an art facilitator during the fortnightly therapy workshops that are still held at my own studio. I also came to the conclusion that I must dedicate at least a couple of days each week at home on my own practice to maintain this cathartic technique.

(Josie's visit + river studio slides)

Apart from the artistic benefits I discovered after arrival at Bundanon, I also began to realise the positive effects media attention was having on an emerging artist such as myself. Through the Accessible Arts/Bundanon residency selection process, my name was passed onto Penrith Regional Gallery in Sydney to be included an upcoming exhibition on motorcycling called 'Born to be Wild'.

(Penrith 'Born to be Wild' slide)

This recognition of my artwork's merits provided me an opportunity to exhibit my work alongside some of the heavy weights of the Australian art world, Tracey Moffatt, Shaun Gladwell and Patricia Piccininni. I have also since, had my first solo show at Barratt Gallery in Alstonville. The theme of both exhibitions was the motorcycle, still a great love of my life. My work had progressed even further from issues relating to my accident.

(phonebook cover slide)

In recognition of my efforts and under the theme of 'Creative Australians - Inspiring our Communities', I was chosen as the front-cover subject for the Northern Rivers 2009-10 Yellow Pages phonebook. At the 2009 Ballina Shire Council's Australian of the Year Awards, I was commended and awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the Mayor for the work that continues at Willowbank Studio.

I was also invited to talk about my experiences on 'Conversation Hour' with Richard Fidler on ABC Radio National. We discussed my recollection of the accident as well as the time spent at Bundanon. I was given the opportunity on radio, to promote the 'Born to Be Wild' show at Penrith, as well as my first solo exhibition at Barratt Galleries called 'To Fly Without Wings'. This show celebrated the ingenious Italian inventor, Leonardo da Vinci and my thoughts on what it would be like if he were alive today riding Ducati motorcycles.

(6x 'To Fly Without Wings slides)

Seven and a half years on from my accident and through what I learnt at Bundanon, Accessible Arts has provided me with further provision for self-healing, one that I hope to pass onto other ABI survivors.

As a regional artist with an ABI, the odds are stacked against me to make a successful career in the art world. However, the time already dedicated to my artwork and desire to make a successful occupation from such efforts has been recognised by Accessible Arts. I hope that more of the same programs such as Bundanon continue to be available to other artists with a disability.

Thank you.

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