

## Kites and shaking hearts in the rubble

Deborah Green and Bettina Evans

### Abstract

The following storied accounts of the Canterbury earthquakes and their aftermath were created from real-life experiences by arts therapists Deborah Green and Bettina Evans and presented at the ANZATA 'Artful Transitions' Symposium in Christchurch, 2016. Each audience member was gifted with a small sewing kit and was encouraged to sew a heart during the storytelling.

### Keywords

Earthquakes, trauma, arts therapy, storytelling.

#### Quake 1: September 2010, *Bettina Evans*

Night: Deep sleep. Silence. Darkness.

Shaking, rattling, vibrating, crashing, jolting, racing on bare feet, outside, away from the groaning, stretching house. Breathless in my pyjamas on the street, seconds like hours, uncomprehending, brain seizing, trying to make sense – eyes flickering, scanning horizon, taking in the unchanged view – Port Hills behind me, the lights of Lyttelton below me, the moon on the water of the harbour, on the other side the lights of Banks Peninsula.

But then tarmac bucking under feet, a roar from behind, the hill rises and convulses, the great animal shudders under my feet and thrashes down the hill, extinguishing my street lights, house lights, port lights, one after the other, click, click, click, click, click, the lights fall like dominoes, the darkness grows, the taniwha rages under the water of the Harbour, a last violent thrust and the Peninsula lights are gone. Shuddering earth – starlight above – twitching animal under my feet – moon on snow-capped hill. Body shivering, feet slick with blood from running over broken glass.

Quake 2: February 2011, *Deborah Green*  
*Beginning the day on edge, I succumb to a strange urge and climb from my car to find and kiss my cats before I leave home. I carry this sideways-ness into my sessions. As a beginning arts therapist I'm*

*interning at the Women's Centre several storeys up in an old Central Christchurch building. I'm breathing deeply into a gritty tale of anxiety woven by a new client when a deep-throated roar punches through the room.*

*What follows, I recall in jagged shards:*

*–my client's bloodless face, eyes and mouth wide–  
–the floor kicking upwards, spilling us off our chairs–*

*–yelling loudly: Get away from the windows!! (these had broken during the September quake and policy was to move to the centre of the building)–*

*–riding the jerking floor as I crawl for the door–  
–my hand reaching for the round doorknob–  
–the carpet juddering beneath my knees while all  
around deafening sounds of tortured*

*metal-glass-timber-concrete-humans, batter me–  
–huddling semi-foetal with my client in the hallway,  
covering our heads–*

*–finally, the vast beast galloping on multitudinous  
thunderous legs through the city stampedes off–*

*Again, the moment of frozen silence. Again,  
the incoming blast of sounds – wailing sirens and  
alarms, screaming, falling glass and masonry, car  
horns.*

*My client is intact. I think: Car keys and mobile  
phone. I crawl to my office. The opposite wall is  
mostly gone, the window in the street below. I tug my  
bag free from the wreckage of the fallen bookcase.*

This patchwork of moments was our response when invited to open the 2016 ANZATA/CTAA 'Artful Transitions Symposium' in Christchurch, New Zealand. We chose to craft a creative conversation of lived experiences, a bricolage of quake-vignettes revisited through creative writing, imagining, arts-making and dialoguing that drew upon the core principles of arts-based research (ABR). The tangible experience at the Symposium was sensory: while we spoke these stories, a slideshow of over 50 images played behind us and the audience was invited to sew hearts – an iconic activity that grounded us during the Christchurch earthquakes (2010-). In reimagining this event for publication, we have replaced the tactility of heart stitching with a ribbon of theory aimed at inviting readers to contemplate the research, trauma and arts therapy threads that weave through our quake-arts therapy.

# anzjat

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL OF ARTS THERAPY

## Editorial team

**Chief Editor** Sheridan Linnell

**Co-Editors** Stacey Bush, Catherine Camden Pratt, Deborah Green

**Arts Editor and Editorial Assistant** Vic Šegedin

**Journal Coordinator** Rigel Sorzano

**Copy Editors / Proofreaders** Marie Shannon and Margo White

## Peer review

The editorial team wishes to thank all peer reviewers who have generously contributed their time and expertise to the peer review of this edition of *ANZJAT*.

*ANZJAT* is a peer-reviewed journal and as such all accepted submissions are reviewed by peer reviewers well-versed and respected in the subject of the submission. Full length articles 5, 9, 10, 15, 22 and 24 in edition one, and full length articles 11, 12, 16, 17 and 25 in edition two were double anonymously peer-reviewed.

Published by the Australian, New Zealand and Asian Creative Arts Therapies Association  
ACN 072 954 388  
PO Box 303, Glebe, NSW 2037, Australia  
[www.anzacata.org](http://www.anzacata.org)

© Australian, New Zealand and Asian Creative Arts Therapies Association, 2018

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any other information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the publisher. The publisher makes no representation or warranty that the information contained in articles is accurate, nor accepts liability or responsibility for any action arising out of information contained in this journal.

ISSN: 1833-9948

**Design and production** Vic Šegedin

**Printing** Tender Print, Geelong, VIC, Australia