## PAT HOFFIE

The first thing I would be asking would involve questions like 'what did the council want out of this?' and then questions about how that might fit in (or not) with my own aspirations about what art can and can't do.

I would do some initial scouting around in terms of finding out about geography, local cultures and customs, dress codes, eating practices, religious and legal codes... the usual, and spend some time thinking about how those things might intersect with what's practiced and valued in my own city.... Often you need to do just as much research – practical and otherwise – into your own city because you assume you know it and you really don't. In a project like this it would be best to spend a little time in the sister city. You need to press the flesh with some of the locals and doing business from a distance is always fraught... The aim is, after all, to make human connections – to make a project that brings people together in ways that go further than cheap sentiment, those 'aw gee those little brown poor people are really as good as us when you get beneath the surface' attitudes.

This stuff is awful if you embark on it thinking that you're going to do some good. There's no point to seeing your role in this way. If you do you're still a part of the next wave of missionaries. The point is you've got the gig, you've got time and money and an opportunity to exhibit, take it for what it's worth and milk it for what you can get. If you do that you might find yourself feeling out of your depth and that's good. If you're feeling uncomfortable and unsure of the compass points then that's even better.

Then I might start looking at some of the more 'out of the spotlight' cultural practices – the kind of things that might happen in clubs or small organisations here, and which only seem 'exotic' when they're practised elsewhere.

The best projects for me are still uncomfortable. They're still raising questions about what my role as an artist might be at this time in history. I'm very conscious of being part of that next wave of economic missionaries whether I like it or not... everyone wants the cash in your pocket and why not?

Perhaps one of the reasons I've engaged in so many crosscultural projects is that they've taken me out of my comfort from and I've enjoyed that – it often seems like FUN, and so much of art is work-a-day stuff.

Pat Hoffie is a visual artist and currently Director of SECAP, (Sustainable Environment and Culture, Asia-Pacific), the research focus at Queensland College of Art, Griffith University.