From the chapter 'Snapshots – Sydney and Melbourne'
Avril Quaill

1987 saw the formation of Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative. Michael was responsible for getting the group incorporated, as well as getting the funding from the newly revamped Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council for the Arts. His time was mostly dedicated to getting a building with good studio and exhibition space and obtaining support to keep artists interested and producing work. Month after month, we met outside various dilapidated buildings around the inner city of Sydney, including Newtown, Alexandria, Chippendale and Redfern. It was looking like the group would remain working out of their bedsits, flats and shared rented terraces. So many times we were almost assured of a building, only to lose it at the last minute. A space in Chippendale became available to us after a long search. As secretary of the group, I had to go with Michael to a meeting at the Arts Board offices in its then premises in North Sydney, to lobby for money to rent the gallery space in Chippendale. Gary Foley, then Director of the Aboriginal Arts Board, pretty much organised the funds that day.

Michael was constantly getting in touch with members, keeping the group focused on issues and aims. He introduced artists to each other, talked about differing arts practices, about people, about artists – famous and the infamous. Mostly we would talk about Boomalli projects and what the collective might achieve.

For the 1989 Artspace exhibition, *A Koori perspective*, I needed help to hang the works at the gallery in Sydney's Woolloomooloo. Together we worked through the night into the early hours to get everything done. Michael physically hung all the works, leaving his own photographs until the last minute, actually just pinning them up. They were stunning, large format black-and-white portraits. I was gobsmacked he could just tack them up on the walls but he was very 'un-precious' about the display of his own work. He just wanted the images out there.

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