

FIRST DRAFT

2/27 Abercrombie St, Chippendale, 2008. tel. 698 4439.

POSITION PAPER

FORUM : HINDSIGHT

The forum "Hindsight", on the changing nature of Artist-Run Spaces and Contemporary Art Spaces, will take place at First Draft on Monday 12th October at 6.30pm, 1987.

As organisers of "Hindsight", First Draft has had a policy of encouraging forums and seminars during its two year span. Administrative and funding limitations have largely made it impossible to realise this objective. In this instance First Draft has taken advantage of a funded collaborative project with Bitumen River Gallery (now Gallery 3, of the Canberra Contemporary Art Space) to initiate this forum.

The title of the forum "Hindsight" and the choice of speakers places those speakers outside the 'firing line' position and enables them to articulate their views on issues of spaces and contemporary art practice with the advantage of hindsight.

Discussion of roles of art spaces provides a focal point for re-analysis of the nature of exhibition practice and its relationship to contemporary art practice.

Hopefully the participants of the forum (both speakers and audience) will address the following principle issues:

- : Clarification of roles of Artist-Run Spaces, Contemporary Art Spaces, especially in relation to traditional Institutional and Commercial spaces.
- : The issues surrounding the establishment of Contemporary Art Spaces and the on-going need for public discussion of their function and development.
- : The ramifications of funding for Artist-run Spaces, eg. the effect on a critical stance.
- : The appropriateness of the expectations by funding bodies of budgetary and administrative professionalism in relationship to small-scale funding. Does this professionalism diminish risk-taking?
- : Does the existence of Artist-run Spaces allow the Institutional spaces to relinquish their responsibilities to particular forms of contemporary art practice. In relation to this, is the work exhibited in Artist-run Spaces neglected by curators, collectors and museums?

First Draft acknowledges the financial assistance for this forum from the Visual Arts / Crafts Board of the Australia Council.

Also the contribution toward the production of these papers by Canberra Contemporary Art Space which receives support from the Visual Arts / Crafts Board of the Australia Council, the Federal Government Advisory Body and the ACT Community Development Fund.

FORUM : "HINDSIGHT"

The changing nature of Artist-Run Spaces and Contemporary Art Spaces.

MONDAY 12th OCTOBER 6.30pm, 1987.

FIRST DRAFT 2/27 Abercrombie St, Chippendale
Telephone (02) 698 4439.

CHAIR : DENISE ROBINSON (Currently Director Australian Centre for
Photography, Sydney and former Director George Paton, Melbourne)

SPEAKERS : JUDY ANNEAR, KARILYN BROWN, JEFF GIBSON, ROB McDONALD and
JUILEE PRYOR

KARILYN BROWN

(Administrative Assistant E.A.F., Adelaide 1976 - 77, Arts Co-ordinator,
Women's Arts Movement 1978 - 79, Co-ordinator Bitumen River Gallery,
Canberra 1983, U.A.B. Project Officer 1983 -)

General introduction to the funding of Contemporary Art Spaces and Artist-
Run Spaces on a national basis, including an historical overview of the
development of these organisations and research towards establishing
funding policies by the Visual Arts Board.

JUDY ANNEAR

(Director George Paton, Melbourne 1979 - 82, Director Artspace, Sydney 1982
- 83, Freelance Writer and Curator, 1984 - 85, Visual Arts Co-ordinator
Australian Bicentennial Authority 1985 -)

Four years ago the Sydney art world saw the beginning of Ross Wolfe's
directorship at the U.A.B., Timothy Pascoe was still chairperson of the
Australia Council, though in his last year and Di Yerbury became manager.
International exhibitions of Australian art peaked and unleashed a major
re-appraisal of such shows. Artspace had been open to the public for one
year and I had left after five years of working in such spaces.
The paper I am going to deliver was written early in 1984 and discusses the
history of art spaces to that point. I find it interesting to look at that
moment to see how attitudes have changed.

ROB McDONALD and JUILEE PRYOR

(Art Unit Co-ordinators Jan. 1982- Jan. 1985, Artists)

"Breaking the contract of dependence"

Pursuance of funding compromises one's position and is counterproductive.
In 1982 - 83 an artificial difference was made between Artist-Run Spaces
and Contemporary Art Spaces, imposed on the art community by the U.A.B.
The fully funded Contemporary Art Spaces are degenerative models in terms
of their original roles and functions.

JEFF GIBSON

(Co-ordinator Art/Empire/Industry 1981, Union St 1985-86, Artist)

Perceived shifts in managerial attitudes between Art/Empire/Industry and
Union St. What those changes meant in terms of managerial policy and the
reasons for those shifts. Also reflecting on future possibilities for
Artist-Run Spaces.

FORUM : HINDSIGHT

The changing nature of Artist Run Spaces and Contemporary Art Spaces.

KARILYN BROWN

General introduction to the funding of CAS and ARS on a national basis, including an historical overview of the development of these organisations and research towards establishing funding policies by the Visual Art / Craft Board.

There is no doubt that the significant growth of CAS and ARS in recent years has played a crucial though not always acknowledged role in the development of contemporary visual arts practice in Australia.

In this respect, my paper will concentrate on providing a background to the funding policies developed by the UAB in response to this phenomenon, rather than on the specific histories of the organisations themselves.

During the years 1984-86, the UAB undertook a number of policy reviews, including a review of its Program of Assistance for Organisations. This review, for which I was responsible, encompassed the investigation of two complementary strands: one dealt with those organisations towards which the UAB had provided general operating assistance for some time. This research resulted in the CAS Review and CAS Policy Guidelines documents, both of which are now available on request. The other strand was geared towards providing the research and arguments necessary to establish a new program of assistance for what have been termed ARS. I have hoped to have the ARS Report ready for distribution prior to this forum. However, some updating to case studies has delayed publication, but I expect the Report will be available within the next few weeks. Both the CAS and ARS documents provide comprehensive information on the structures and activities of organisations, including managerial frameworks, decision making processes, etc.

I would now like to discuss the Board's program of assistance for CAS.

The purpose of this program is to assist in making contemporary visual art more accessible to the public by helping a limited number of organisations establish active, professional environments for the presentation, discussion and documentation of contemporary visual art and artists in major centres.

The Visual Arts Board provided its first general purpose grants to organisations in 1974. This assistance was regarded as seeding funding only, but it was not until 1981 that the Board formally stated the then policy of providing assistance to organisations for the first three years of operation and that, thereafter, such organisations would not be automatically eligible for continuing

assistance.

It was envisaged that future funding of these organisations would become project-based rather than general purpose assistance.

However, because of the significant difficulties encountered by these organisations, in attempting to achieve some level of self-sufficiency, the Board recognised that a withdrawal of its general support funds from any of the organisations might well result in their closure. The Board then, during 1983, re-defined its policy and agreed to consider applications from these organisations after the three year period. This shift in attitude reflected the Boards growing recognition of the need to ensure that a strong organisational infrastructure, based on the principle of open membership and committed solely to the promotion of contemporary visual art, was established on a national basis, with the support of SAFA. Hence, the establishment of the CAS program. This now consolidated network of publicly incorporated organisations includes; Praxis in Perth, Chameleon in Hobart, the Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide, the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane, Artspace in Sydney, the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in Melbourne, and the Canberra Contemporary Art Space. These organisations are in receipt of substantial Federal and State funding in order to undertake, effectively and professionally, their primary objective of developing and operating a program of exhibitions and activities which will address the concerns and issues associated with contemporary visual arts practice, including multi-media arts activities such as film and video, art technology, performance art, art writing, etc. As the nature of those concerns and issues changes over a period of time, so too will the concerns of the CAS. It is the responsibility of a CAS to keep abreast of current art practice, particularly through support for experimental work, to be responsive to the needs of its arts community, including support for young and developing artists, and to undertake a regular program of exhibitions of a broad range of contemporary media and critical focus. At present, the limitation of funds available to this program means that the UAB can assist only one CAS in capital cities.

Under such circumstances, the UAB is guided by the objective of ensuring that each of these CAS be resourced sufficiently in order for them to professionally and properly undertake their role and functions, as determined by their CAS Boards of Management, within the framework of broad UAB policy.

The consolidation of Federal and State funding for CAS has, by and large, enhanced their visibility and viability as organisations within their own communities as well as nationally. Indeed, most CAS have strong links with similar organisations internationally through which exchange exhibitions and related activities can be negotiated.

This higher profile has enabled the CAS to provide a much more diverse and challenging program of activities to their constituencies. In so doing, the CAS are, I believe, achieving much success in their efforts to fulfill a vital role which is not provided for by any other public or commercial gallery structure.

Obviously, however, CAS cannot, nor should they be expected to, meet all of the needs and aspirations of their local visual arts community. Even with the significant contribution of the CAS network, there are insufficient venues in metropolitan, and non-metropolitan centres, which can consistently provide encouragement and exposure to artists, particularly emerging artists.

It is too simplistic to assume that an individual visual arts practitioner, having completed several years of tertiary arts training, will with ease and immediacy establish a firm position within our society from which to produce and exhibit work on a regular and financially secure basis.

In reality, moving from the supportive environment and well-equipped facilities of tertiary art institutions to securing one's own studio space and exhibition opportunities is a difficult and often disheartening bridging process for the majority of artists.

Most artists will initially experience severe financial constraints which can directly inhibit the production of work. In addition, limited exhibition opportunities through existing commercial and public gallery structures is also a major factor which particularly affects the development of emerging artists.

In recognising the need to counter complete dependence on these existing structures and in order to open up broader alternative avenues for practice, many artists have moved towards creating co-operatively based structures to facilitate the production and exposure of their own and other artist's work.

As a result, by the early 1980s, the UAB began to receive an increasing number of applications for assistance from artist run spaces. Although the Board had up to that point provided occasional grants to ARS under its various programs, it did not have in place a specific program of assistance with an appropriate budget allocation. The Board was therefore not in a position to respond adequately to the demand for assistance.

However in 1984, recognising its need to argue for additional resources for this area, the Visual Arts Board initiated extensive research into the operations, needs and concerns of artist run spaces, with a primary intention of formulating guidelines for a program of assistance for artist run spaces.

In using the term "artist run space", I refer to those facilities, such as exhibition venues, studios, workshops, information and resource centres, which have been established and are maintained on a co-operative basis by groups of artists. However, in recognising the multiplicity of activities pursued by artist run spaces, it is important to note that many spaces fall quite comfortably within any two or more of these categories.

The emergence of artist run spaces is not only indicative of the desire on the part of many artists for a greater control over and responsibility for the production and presentation of their own work, but also reflects a strong movement towards a less isolationist and more collaborative work process, one in which skills, experiences and resources are shared and exchanged.

Often fundamental to this rationale of artistic collaboration is a commitment to addressing current social, theoretical and political issues pertinent to the role of the artist and the production of artwork within our society. The operations of artist run spaces vary enormously and are dependent as much on the availability of financial and material resources as on the aims and objectives formulated by each group.

As each space is developed in response to specifically identified needs, no one organisational model can be put forward as being more suitable than another. Indeed, it is the very diversity of philosophical and operational approaches among artist run spaces which needs to be acknowledged and in turn encouraged.

Once established, artist run spaces fulfil a number of broader community functions in addition to meeting the needs of individual members and participants. They can act as a working model of constructive action and self-motivation for other artists, and are often a resource and contact point for visiting artists, arts organisations, and other community groups. Many artist run spaces are actively involved in their community, initiating projects which contribute to a growth in local arts activities which, in turn, foster a more realistic understanding of, and greater awareness of, arts practice and its value to society. Increasingly many ARS and CAS are developing mutually supportive relationships on a number of levels, including collaborating on specific artistic projects, information exchange, etc.

Artist run spaces have provided and continue to provide a vehicle for the production and exposure of new and often challenging developments in the visual arts and, at the same time, are an important bridge for emerging artists. Few, however, have done so with the support of substantial and/or regular financial assistance from either State, Federal or Local Government funding authorities. For the majority of artist run spaces, continued activity relies heavily on the voluntary efforts and contributions of committed individuals, and on the irregular and limited income derived from sources such as membership fees, sale of artwork, benefit events, etc.

A formal program of assistance for ARS was this year put in place by the UAB, although it should be noted that as a result of the research into ARS, the UAB was able to positively respond to an increasing number of ARS applications each year over the past three years.

Although still in its early days, the Boards ARS program has generated a remarkable response and this year, over 40 applications for assistance have been received, many of them proposing most worthwhile and innovative projects. In turn, the budget allocation for ARS for the 87/88 financial year has been increased to approx. \$75,000, a not insubstantial sum given the general tightening of funding in recent times.

The UAB program of assistance for ARS is designed to provide funding under three categories: establishment costs, administration costs and special project costs. It is anticipated that through this program, there will be the means by which a range of ARS can be established on a firm footing, with the possibility of further funding to assist during the first difficult year or two of operation.

And so, ten or more years down the track, the importance of CAS and ARS as valid art support structures within the broader context of other public and commercial organisations is now fully recognised by the visual arts community, the Federal funding authority and to an increasing degree, the SAFA.

Nevertheless, there are and will continue to be fundamental philosophical and practical issues which have a significant bearing on the roles and functions of CAS and ARS and, therefore, on funding guidelines. For example, the creation of a new artists run space is very much dependent on a high level of energy and commitment by founding members. Eager to see their objective realised, founding members enthusiastically embark on formulating philosophical and functional directions for the space. Goodwill and a strong collective sense of purpose creates a constructive environment in which many problems are resolved, and activities pursued with vitality and innovation.

However, as the realities of operating a space become gradually more evident, the collective process faces considerable challenge.

Groups are made up of diverse interests and opinions which can, as the number and complexity of issues increase and change, make consensus and consistency in decision making difficult. Changes to membership will also affect the operations of the space. The constant process of re-evaluating and modifying aims and objectives can often become a demanding responsibility. The problems of organisation and limited resources can lead to inertia and disinterest.

The underlying challenge for an artist run space is to maintain a capacity for operating in a vital and relevant way, within its particular context.


As the level of activity and identity of an artist run space grows, issues of development and expansion need to be dealt with.

The majority of artist run spaces wish only to consolidate their existing structures, so that they can, as modest facilities with limited operating budgets, continue to accomodate flexible and innovative programs of activity and offer easy, informal access to their artist constituency.

Other artist run spaces have developed and expanded in response to increasing community demand for resources and facilities. Inevitably, expansion creates the need for operational procedures of increased complexity and greater levels of financial support. In these circumstances, the struggle to maintain an artist run space in a non-institutional way can be difficult.

Although the CAS are obviously, and through necessity, more formally structured than the majority of ARS, the need to continually redefine the goals and activities of the institution is no less important and demanding. It is an ongoing process which most CAS and ARS actively pursue, and which obviously relies very much on the participation and contribution of members.

In this context, it is also the responsibilities of the funding bodies to continually reassess their policy guidelines in order to ensure that funding to organisations is being provided in the most effective and efficient way possible. As you are all aware, the UAB and CAB are now an amalgamated Board, the UACB. While in the short term, this situation will not directly affect the CAS or ARS programs, in the long term it is likely that both programs will be merged with craft organisations, leading to a more widely encompassing organisational program. I am confident, however, that the integrity of funding for CAS and ARS will not be adversely affected and that, in fact, a positive outcome is likely to be achieved through further consolidation of the programs and their allocations. In addition, further discussions and negotiations with SAFA can be expected to assist in this consolidation.



FORUM : "HINDSIGHT"

The changing nature of Artist-Run Spaces
and Contemporary Art Spaces.

12th October 1987
at FIRST DRAFT

TITLE: BREAKING THE CONTRACT OF DEPENDENCE

Written and spoken by Robert McDonald

This title has a duality of meaning in terms of the current issues of this forum. They are issues which go back to 1980. They were issues and positions prevalent when we had established Art Unit in 1982. They are still dominant issues in 1987!

The duality of meaning within this paper refers to contemporary art spaces (CAS) and their singular dependence on public funding and increasing amounts of public funding; and it also relates to artist run spaces (ARS). Their 'contract of dependence' often includes inadequate resources, lack of establishment capital, hazardous buildings and usually many unsafe working practices. The 'contract of dependence' in these two forms have bound and crippled both the CAS and ARS to the detriment of the art community as a whole.

The 'contract of dependence' must be broken.

The distinction in name between a CAS and a ARS is artificial and based exclusively on funding from the Australia Council and State arts funding bodies. It is a distinction that has aroused bitterness and divisiveness within the artistic community. It is a system of definition that is discriminatory in the short term and unworkable in the long term. In arbitrarily defining the difference between a CAS and an ARS, the VAB have defined the roles and function of each but also their weaknesses.

The role of each is determined by their organisation and effectiveness within contemporary artistic practice. These give development to their functions in the art community. we will examine a CAS and an ARS in terms of their roles and functions and show how the 'contract of dependence affects each. For the sake of accuracy in using operative examples of each we have taken the year 1984, being the best recorded for a CAS and an ARS. The CAS referred to in detail will be Artspace and the ARS referred to in detail will be Art Unit.

Some of the often quoted criteria for a CAS has been that the organisation has to be an incorporated body limited by guarantee, with a board of management and an open membership. More recently the emphasis has been placed on financial and administrative responsibility including strong representation on boards of management. Put simply the CAS must be seen to fulfil a democratic and managed role within the arts community. Democratic in terms of access and participation and managed in terms of artistic, financial and administrative responsibility. Therefore it can be seen that the CAS has a set of criteria that determines its form i.e. board of management, etcetera. This is a crucial difference between a CAS and an ARS.

The CAS having it's form determined by a set of criteria immediately questions who determines the criteria. The answer is Australia Council and state funding bodies. However it can be seen that this criteria is not always applied equally to all CAS and varies widely in some cases, I refer to a summary of conclusions of Karilyn Brown's 1985 Report on CAS, page 5 para 2.4 .. "It is also recommended therefore that the VAB develop a policy rational for these organisations which though presently funded under a CAS program, may be at variance with VAB guidelines for this program." In essence the status and existence of a CAS is determined by the VAB and it's interpretation of it's own guidelines. This is the core of the 'contract of dependence'.

Now lets return to the models that we're using here to show the affects of this contract. The most important affect on the CAS of this is that it ultimately turns the CAS into a degenerating model drastically effecting its role and functions. In 1984 Artspace was a CAS with an operating expenditure of \$102,000. Now of this 14% or \$14,000 was self generated incomes , the remainder 86% or \$89,000 was funding from various government bodies. This included

a general grant from the VAB of \$39500 or 38.7% of operating expenditure with a matching grant from the NSW government of \$25,000 or 25% , and the remaining \$24,000 or 23% from other funding bodies. This effectively means that the operations of Artspace were funded as a deficit against self generated incomes. Now given that the VAB will continue to recognise Artspace as having CAS status, then the VAB will continue to fund it. The policy I believe actually states that an assurance of not less than 80% of funding for forward commitment. Lets suppose that the VAB gives Artspace the same grant plus an adjustment for increases to the C.P.I. In other words a fixed and indexed grant year to year. We will also assume that there has been no overall increase of self-generated incomes. This will result in no overall growth but merely statis of operations. If funding was reduced or with held by any funding body Artspace's role and functions would commence degenerating as a result of the economic contractions forced upon it. This effect can be precipitated by federal, state, local and even C.E.P. funding bodies where the CAS in question has a 86% dependency on the funded dollar. In order for Artspace as a CAS to grow and develop its roles and functions it would need to continually seek increasing funding through other programs or trans-institutional funding. This is because it is a recognised problem with the CAS model that it cannot raise its level of self-generated income or ever be self supporting, that it is totally dependent on public funding. (see Karilyn Brown's 1985 Report page 138 paras iv & v.)

The same arguement of degeneration of roles and function holds true for the effects of accrued deficits. In other words if a director or board of management had gone outside of expenditure budgets and built up a deficit one year that deficit will eventually perform a degenerating effect on role and functions the following year. This happened to the EAF in 1982 and is happening to Artspace now. This degeneration of the CAS model from the fall in funding or the accrued deficit is even quicker when we realise that wages and salaries consume over 50% of income while the program of exhibitions/workshops/lecture costs makes up only 17% of overall expenditure. What suffers first - the role and functions of the CAS.

Lets compare this with the ARS. Most ARS usually commence various functions such as exhibitions, operating studios or serving as an access venue. Invarably it is these types of functions that give rise to the form and role of the ARS. This is the complete opposite of the CAS model. This does not mean that the ARS organisation is not a legally constituted one and in fact many ARS do have strong organisational and collective structures that are properly established. But it is a significant difference in scope between a CAS and an ARS where the functions determine form and role. Most ARS fall into

two types of operating roles- either media specific or time specific. Art Unit was a time specific project, originally limited to an operational lifespan of 5 years, and therefore our role was based on mobility and the functions aimed at diversity in media. When originally established we were hoping to develop a model of a self-sufficient facility within 3 years. With very limited start up capital we were anxious to define this model to the VAB as a developmental one requiring a seeding and development approach to funding support. We proposed that funding assistance to Art Unit should be based on operating expenditure including growth and a decreasing allowance of funding over 3 years. The model required 50% support 1st year, 30% 2nd year and 10% in the 3rd year with no further funding demands or requirements. The importance of this approach is readily seen. The initial establishment funding of 50% means that equity in the management of the ARS remains with the artists initiating the project. As funding declines in relation to operating expenses the requirement of the VAB to have a strong management hold on the ARS also declines. The continuance of the ARS in growth and development remains with the artists involved and reinforces their requirement for sound and professional financial and administrative skills. So the model ensures that artists must learn managerial and entrepreneurial skills in order that the ARS survives and grows. I have never heard of a ARS operating on a deficit principle as the basis of its operations, though most ARS are forced into a hand to mouth economic position particularly in establishing themselves. But there is no better ground for establishing sound management practices and entrepreneurial skills when it is directly linked to your survival.

Under a CAS structure that development of management and entrepreneurial skills within artists running the project is retarded by the criteria of their form, the restrictions placed on their roles and the guidelines placed on the employment of public funds. Management flexibility is eroded over time thus creating a weaker and weaker management role to the initiatives within the function of the CAS.

Now because the ARS requires the development of a strong management organisation it also gives rise to the need for a diversified self-generated income. Returning to the operative models that we are using Artspace and Art Unit, lets examine this self-generated income. In 1984 Artspace generated 14% of its incomes. Art Units operating expenditure that year was \$33,000, two years after commencing operations we had 10 areas of revenue generation, only one of these was public funding, \$5,000 grant from the Theatre Board which represented only 15% of our operating expenditure. The remaining 85% or \$28,000 was self-generated incomes. Given growth and a developmental funding approach Art Unit could have achieved self sufficiency within 3 years. There was never a problem

with growth in Art Unit because of the huge demand we encountered for a flexible and diversified artists facility. Art Unit's actual growth from 1983 to 1984 was a staggering 68%. All forward estimates were based on growth rates of 35% , 20% and 10% over its last 3 years of operations. What affected this growth rate the most was the total flexibility of Art Units resources and particularly the 'space'. Herein lies another important difference between the CAS and the ARS.

Generally the most important resource of both the CAS and ARS is the building which houses their organisation and operations. The term 'space' was never employed at Art Unit - it was an artists' facility. We firmly believe the term 'space' was a 1970's American anachronism not suitable for contemporary Australian artistic initiatives. The space in a CAS is often elevated in appearance and standards to that of the commercial galleries. The space necessarily becomes precious and defines it's use once again so that the only suitable activity becomes exhibitions, meetings, lectures, meetings, workshops (?) and more meetings. The ARS usually commence operations that have undergone the most rudimentary conversions for use, therefore the space is not paramount in the consideration of it's use, but rather the use of the space determines the effectiveness of that space. Art Units derelict factories in Alexandria were used for studios, rehearsal space, music performance nights, exhibitions, dances, theatre, lectures, workshops, a silk screen printery, benefit concerts for ourselves and other groups, darkroom and as a general meeting place. It is in all this diversity of use that you get the broadest spectrum of artistic co-operation and participation. this is the truly great benefit of the ARS that the CAS can never emulate. Caught within the claustrophobic maintenance of it's "space" the CAS sits and waits for the momentum of participation and artistic co-operation to come to it, it waits in vain. Art Unit took it's operations to the pubs and clubs of Sydney. In one afternoon and night Art Unit presented 7 hours of music, performances, installations, theatre, cabaret, video, film and poetry on 3 floors of the Trade Union Club incorporating the artistic efforts of 136 people and another 1,000 people saw it. It was called The Return of the Art Bunker Hang'over. This is the type of participation that can be found in the ARS. The democratic principle of the CAS means you can vote for the people who vote for the suggestions but you just can't go and do it. It is the passive participation of the bureaucracy not the active participation of the collective. This distinction ultimately affects artistic credibility and artistic management of the CAS.

Caught with inflexible management structures , the immobility of its space and the narrowness of its artistic participation the programs within

the CAS devolve into facsimiles of themselves. The spectrum of artistic practice presented becomes narrower over time thus affecting the democratic principle of participation as disillusion and cynicism have adverse effects on membership. This is the case with Artspace now. In 1984 Artspace had 356 members, one year later it had less than 260 members and I understand that Artspace's membership now stands at less than 100 including institutional members. Does a falling membership and narrowing artistic practice constitute the basis for a CAS 's functions in the art community or is this really the symptoms of a degenerating model. This is the affect of the 'contract of dependence'.

Comparisons in roles and functions between the ARS and the CAS show that both are adversely affected by the 'contract of dependence'. The CAS because it is a degenerating model when totally dependent upon funding and bound by the VAB's criteria for its form and management. The principle of arms length funding does not apply to the management of the CAS. It must capitulate to the policy and guidelines of the VAB or cease to be recognised as a CAS and lose federal and state government grants. The CAS eventually end up as showcase vehicles, for the "we've got one in every state" policy that performs well on audit sheets and simplifies the problem of artistic assessment in dealing with operative ARS. The fact that there are problems with particular CAS as well as the CAS program overall is highlighted by Karilyn Brown's 1985 Report and the many conclusions for standardising the operation of the CAS programme, once locked into policy the VAB and state arts funding bodies will have completed the journey furthest away from seeding and development of new artistic initiatives. I believe that seeding and development are opposed by the Australia Council by and large because it breaks the continuity of the bureaucratic maze.

For ARS operating in the late 1980's in contemporary artistic practice a bleak time and fallow ground for new initiatives. Without seeding and development in funding support the ARS are condemned to a cycle of inadequate resources, intermittent closures, lack of professional assistance and ultimate collapse by this contract of dependence. Strong collective managements of the ARS combined with a linking of the operative ARS is the only way of breaking the 'contract of dependence and bringing the many issues of concern to the open is the only way that your initiatives will ultimately be recognised.

The 'contract of dependence' must be broken.

FORUM : "HINDSIGHT"

The changing nature of Artist-Run Spaces
and Contemporary Art Spaces.

12th October 1987.
at FIRST DRAFT.

TITLE : REJECTING THE PHILOSOPHY OF DEPENDENCE.

Written and spoken by Juilee Pryor.

Way back in 1981 Rob and myself first began working towards the Art Unit . We took menial jobs in factories out in the western suburbs and did all the overtime we could get. After six months of genuine hard slog we had accumulated the magnificent sum of \$5,000. Starting with this, an irrepressible optimism and in hindsight a certain naivety, we launched ourselves into the uncharted depths of the Sydney art scene. At around the same time as this there had been a series of public meetings initiated by the VAB with the aim of developing a funded centre for the visual arts in Sydney. These meetings eventually lead to the creation of what today is known as Artspace. Now in our innocence we thought that what we planned with Art Unit sounded just what they wanted and that the funding bodies would be really impressed with our initiatives. Unfortunately, what happened was that they were seriously threatened by what they saw as usurpers to their perceived role as cultural entrepreneurs. Had Art Unit been a VAB initiative at that time, it is almost certain that Robert and myself would never have been considered for the positions as it's co-ordinators.

We filled none of their criteria and yet time showed us more than capable of managing our own initiative. This is an example of the VAB's arbitrary imposition of often irrelevant conditions on the management of artistic experience. What it indicates is an inbuilt deficiency by the VAB to be able to recognise and develop the skills and talents of individuals as opposed to institutions. It also belies the ability of artists to be competent administrators of their artistic destiny. Over the last 10 to 12 years the Australia Council has accumulated immense power and prestige in its role of providing assistance to the arts. Ultimately the artist is assailed with this image of institutional or corporate control and all the attendant power and glory attached to it through all levels of arts administration. Recently it has become a trendy aspiration to be an arts administrator, this is where all the real rewards in the arts are to be found -- a steady and attractive salary and of course the fractional rub off of all this power and prestige- the artist takes a permanent back seat role.

During this same period of time we have also witnessed a mushrooming of arts funding bodies to state, regional and local levels. At each level there is an expanding bureaucracy determining its criteria for support to artists. Throughout the late 1970's much of the Australia Council's initiatives towards artists was reflected in falling allocations to individuals and the rise of the flagship model of development. This policy permeated from the boards to every other level of arts funding so that by the start of the 80's primary support for

'Flagships' was guaranteed at secondary level through the various state arts funding bodies. Under this policy of support artists were required to satisfy a set of criteria that was institutional or corporate in structure.

This can only place the artist in a position of dependence, implied or otherwise to the funding bodies. It also must affect both the freedom of expression and the critical stance of the funded to the funding body. This philosophy of dependence is forced on artists by a short sighted VAB, and actively promotes the domination of institutional responsibility over artistic responsibility. It also cannot help but foster the imposition of a fairly restricted cultural outlook.

The reality must be faced that it is the working relationships of artists and the development of operative artist managed resources that is the basis of solid and continuous growth of personal professionalism and increased artistic credibility. Visual artists and crafts people have a particular need to maintain contact with their professional colleagues after completing their formal training. The value of non-institutional environments where the exchange and flow of artistic experience can take place cannot be stressed enough. I feel that it is far better for this to be through active participation in an artists collective than through an administered experience in a basically passive space.

A fully funded CAS can ultimately only lead to establishing mediocrity as its base line - it cannot hope to cater for the really excellent or the truly atrocious. It would seem then that the current system of funding can only lead to institutional culpability in the breeding of a scenario of artistic cowardice. An example of this can be seen where one of the criteria of VAB funding is that a group be a formally incorporated company limited by guarantee. While a lofty sentiment in theory, in actual reality it circumvents the need for individuals to take responsibility for their own initiatives. Diminished risk taking equals increased blandness and ultimately acute mediocrity.

Rejecting the philosophy of dependence has to necessitate the growth of personal and professional self sufficiency and increased artistic license. It must also allow for a more flexible approach to the interpretation of the artistic experience. One way to achieve this would be to introduce a system of linked alternative spaces. Throw out the CAS and the flagship models and concentrate on seeding and development of new people and places. Just think the money Artspace is allocated in one year would be more than enough to provide

at least \$10,000 in establishment funding to each of at least 10 new spaces every year!

By providing enough money to assist in the development of many different projects, the funding bodies could be seen to be injecting a massive vote of confidence into many diverse areas. This can only have the effect of generating an exciting and dynamic base from which the art community can find its momentum.

Where an artist run space or collective has immediacy and perhaps also irreverence as its basic modus operandi it will be found that the program undertaken must have the mobility and diversity to incorporate most of the artforms together over a very short period of time. It is usually this productive cross fertilisation that is best un-described by 'post-modernism.

The obvious question that the funding bodies must address now is the differentiation of viability between a system of linked alternatives, all receiving adequate but not overwhelming amounts of funding and the system of funding and totally administering the one approved space in each state. The longer this situation is left unaddressed the more confusion and cynasim there will be in the minds of those artists who have developed operative establishments. Currently and retrospectively it would appear that industry, initiative and determinism go unsupported and unrecognised while immense amounts of support, both financial and moral, are given to pressure/ lobby groups that already have exclusivity of funding.

FORUM : HINDSIGHT

The changing nature of Artist Run Spaces and Contemporary
Art Spaces.

JEFF GIBSON

" A personal history ".

As a participant in two collectively run galleries, Art/Empire /Industry 1 in Sussex Street, Sydney 1981, and Union Street Gallery, Pyrmont 1985-86, I want to talk very briefly by way of introduction about the management of both ventures, as a lead into discussing certain aspects of our (meaning respective collectives) motives and aspirations. I'd like to make particular reference to the shifts in my own perception of the efficacy of specific objectives for artist-run spaces and the corresponding adjustments to policy and managerial strategies, from my involvement with A/E/I to my involvement with Union Street.

Finally, I'd like to tentatively offer a few findings of my own, as yet perhaps unfinished, post-mortem on Union Street as a means of raising and addressing at least a few pertinent questions with regard to the current and future possibilities for artist-run spaces.

For simplicity's sake I'll refer to the collectives from now on as 'we' and I apologise in advance to anyone who feels misrepresented by my doing so. This is not just a banal gratuity, but a pathological paranoia essential to the survival of any collective venture.

Art/Empire/Industry

Art/Empire/Industry came about rather suddenly and somewhat out of the blue at the beginning of 1981. Blessed by ridiculously cheap rent and abundant square footage, the five person collective pooled labour and resources to open what was to be classified as, like it or not, an 'alternative space', a term thankfully out of vogue these days. Policy and objectives were fairly unformulated initially. It was all new to us and we more or less made it up as we went along. We were however committed to a non-exploitative business practice, favouring work of a more 'experimental', less commercially oriented nature; according of course to our own criteria.

Bound up as we were in the 'alternative space' mentality, we held quite heroic, and in retrospect rather naive, convictions about carrying out some kind of frontal strategic assault on what were clearly unethical and conservative practices by some commercial and institutional galleries. This heroic aura, to some extent

understandable since these ventures are generally born out of a sense of powerlessness, is still I think in operation to different degrees in some artist-run spaces today. However, it was more stridently flag-waving then with the existance of things like Studio Access Projects, a youthful Art Network, Artworkers Union and Arts Law Centre, and ranks gathering over the immanent establishment of Artspace. Self-management was coming of age.

Amidst all this, new critical and curatorial initiatives were being taken. Art and Text hit the scene, significantly heightening the level of critical debate and expanding the closed and parochial field of 'art school politics', operating at the time in the fine arts milieu. This period represented, I believe, a local artworld hiatus wherein a major revision of options and strategies available to the visual arts took place. Meanwhile, the 'alternative galleries' did not, obviously, bring the commercial galleries to their knees. On the contrary, the corporate marketing push had taken root and begun to call the shots. What's more, it seemed that the hardcore museum-mocking avante-guarde anti-careerists had become ineffectual, embittered or fully incorporated museum careerists.

This whole area is far too complex to go into here, and perhaps too familiar already anyway, but the point of these glib reductionisms is that the boundaries or at least the perceptions of those boundaries were changing. 'Alternative spaces' had largely outlived their usefulness in relation to their stated aims. With the benefit of hindsight I think it's safe to say that more sophisticated levels of analysis and criticism were required to address the cultural function of the plastic and narrative arts in general.

Like an allegory of failed utopian visions A/E/I was bulldozed and removed after a full year's operation. The collective broke up and three of its members recieved funding from the UAB to assist the establishment of another gallery A/E/I II in King's Cross. Prior to 1982 there were no effective categories whatsoever for funding by the UAB of artist-run spaces. In retrospect, despite confused perspectives A/E/I carried out a diverse program of activities, giving exposure and acknowledgment to a lot of work that may have been otherwise disadvantaged by existing options. It operated without funding and managed to break even financially.

Union Street

So after a few years sabbatical during which time Art Unit, amongst others carried out extremely eventful programs, I found myself involved in another collectively managed gallery - Union Street. Union Street sprung out of nowhere to some extent as well. The four person collective gravitated towards each other, rather spontaneously, out of necessity, curiosity and shared dissatisfaction with existing promotional structures and exhibition venues.

General policy regarding pragmatics was much the same as A/E/I, although more streamlined - low rent and shoestring budgets geared towards affordability, efficiency and a fair deal for all concerned. However I believe that a managerial attitude was significantly different. This was attributable both to the altered context and I suspect in my case at least, the shedding of a few layers of naivety. We were all perhaps a little further down a constantly changing track. Our first dilemma was what to call it. 'Alternative' wasn't even in the running, 'co-operative' and 'collective' had much the same flavour, and so reluctantly we settled with the relatively neutral 'artist-run gallery', with the emphasis on the 'gallery'. We were all in agreeance that it had to function in a businesslike manner in order to shake off the old and new stigmas. The old being the classic Freudian assumption that artists are artists because they can't cut it in the real world, and therefore couldn't manage a country shithouse let alone a gallery; and the new being that an artist-run gallery had to be a huddle of embittered rad pinko's out to settle the score between the capitalists and the bohemians. What we were actually out to achieve, I think, was respect for taking the initiative of managing our own affairs in order to launch careers without comprimising gameplaying, so as to provide a forum for critically engaging artwork.

We took full responsibility (collectively) for the selection of exhibitors. The success or failure of the gallery should be judged by whatever criteria, on the basis of those exhibitions and the profile they gave the gallery and in turn, subsequent exhibitions. In my opinion there was an abundance of available talent at the time that gave the gallery and its exhibitors a reasonably high profile. In doing so I think it was able to contribute in various ways to a range of polemics, elucidating some key critical issues that may not have otherwise gained the same degree of currency.

I certainly don't see Union Street in hindsight though as a citadel of artistic legionnaires doing direct battle with the Institutional forces, that so obviously possess the ability, to wittingly or unwittingly disarm and absorb heretical avant-gardist strategies. This is not to say that the institutional frameworks are absolutely implacable, but headlong assault from below seemed exhausted and futile.

Instead, Union Street represented to me, a reappraisal of the political and aesthetic efficacy of low-budget, artist-collective galleries. What emerged I think was a diverse, but critically focused range of approaches and methodologies situated between active analytical engagement with the politics of institutional limitations and more subjective participation in the development of visual languages.

Union Street operated without funding in 1985 and received \$2000 from the VAB in 1986, ostensibly for publicity and promotion of the gallery's program.

The World

Having spoken of the changing perceptions of contexts and strategies for artist-run galleries, I'd like to move back to a broader perspective now, in order to offer a few thoughts regarding current and future possibilities.

Implicit in the revision of ethically and politically motivated tactics that I've referred to here is the partial collapse of ideologically determined dualities (eg. high vs. low culture, traditionalism vs. innovation, left vs. right, abstraction vs. representation). While this might be read by some as a loss of orientation it could also be read as a liberation wherein diffuse artistic activities are given the conditions for exploring different modes of cultural production.

With the "death of the author" the end of the 'master narrative', the collapse of 'metaphysical closure' (call it what you like) and the advent of so-called critical practice, the criterion for assessing the work of art, for assessing the assessment itself, needs to be reformulated. According to some theorists, 'performativity' or the efficiency criterion is currently replacing the good/bad, just/unjust dialectic as the principle epistemic foundation for post-industrial society, postmodern culture. While some argue that this phenomenon simply forecasts the arrival of a new, more sophisticated narrative, you could also claim that the loss of faith in 'truths' opens up a field for argumentation and the imagination.

Against this horizon of 'performativity' and the artworld's structural inter-meshing to it, there is clearly an urgent need for a critically engaged art practice to sustain debate and forestall and problematise the tendency for closure, motivated by a normalising, controlling impulse. I think that present it's possible to operate in this way both within and without the existing institutions. However, since these institutions house their own interpretive framework, I also believe it essential that tensions be constantly created within and between these structures. In other words to insist on their flexibility. Artist-run galleries can I think be instrumental in creating these tensions both by example and by transgression.

In order to do this though their presence needs to be felt and acknowledged by the institutions themselves. Of course this means playing the game to some extent, which presents us with a very precarious balancing act, but I still maintain that that game can be played with dignity and integrity. Withdrawing into half-baked hippy

conspiracy theories or romantic delusions of spiritual purity is to retreat from the reality of the times, ultimately reinforcing the myths by which the dominant culture is validated.

Aside from this very programmatic view of constructive courses open to self-management, artist-run galleries can provide a useful facility for experimentation and the acquisition of skills and experience. In this sense the greatest 'failures' in terms of formal acknowledgement and influentialty can prove in the long term to be very real 'successes'.

Given the broadened field of contemporary cultural activity though I can't help feeling that just as many interesting critical and aesthetic possibilities exist for the visual arts elsewhere, outside the sanctified domain of the gallery (eg. public space, information and media technologies, informal and entertainment venues).

Despite the changes I've outlined here certain things have remained historically consistent, according to my knowledge and experience of artist-run spaces. The pooling of resources and skills necessitated and the inevitable conflicts of viewpoints and objectives can be an extremely productive furnace. It can generate an atmosphere of co-operation and debate that extends throughout all facets of the gallery's activities.

Finally, I've referred monotonously here to 'ethical' questions (which are themselves unsubstantiable and constantly under revision). However, despite the changing contexts I see the determination of 'ethical' positions and their implantation within respective domains as being a primary role and a distinguishing characteristic of most artist-run spaces.

FORUM : HINDSIGHT

The changing nature of Artist Run Spaces and Contemporary Art Spaces.

JUDY ANNEAR

The paper to be delivered was written in early 1984 and discusses the history of the art spaces to that point. I find it interesting to look at that moment to see how attitudes have changed.

and the art museum. Both were seen to be moribund and out of touch with contemporary art making. There was a desire on the part of the politically and socially aware members of the art world to break down the elitism inherent in art practise. Even artists who were not politically aligned were questioning the inflexibility of a system which admitted such a small proportion of practising artists and only those who worked within particular styles and media. The fervour of the late sixties when any change seemed possible also produced ideas to do with what is now known as community art: the American W.P.A. schemes and Russian agitprop became role models. Possibilities seemed endless with the idea that anyone could be an artist and everyone's lives could be enriched if they had more contact with art and art making. The evangelical nature of this egalitarianism was to come under scrutiny and attack throughout the seventies and has not yet been resolved in the eighties.

A further and equally important consideration was the desire on the part of artists to take back control of their work from the administrators, that is, any non-artist employed in dealing, curating, writing or in funding bodies. There was an attitude, which still exists, to see all non-artist personnel in the art world as essentially predatory: in short, administrators feed off the body of the artist. The split in opinion which occurred then also continues: many artists feel that to involve themselves to any great extent in administration would inevitably remove them from art practise while an equal number believe that it is essential for artists to develop the skills to look after their own work in what ever context. Artists might conceivably not be interested in administration at all if they were able to earn a living from their art making. The dichotomy of an artist who may make money from teaching or other areas but not from their art and the administrator who does earn a living from their profession remains not only unresolved but is at the heart of the conflict. Attempts to take back control led to questions of moral rights, copyright, the status of the artist and the law, the development of artists' unions, the battles for fees for artists, equal representation and so on.

The spread of art forms such as body art, performance, land art, political art, film, video, sound work, photography and work by minorities and women, all of which were being ignored by institutions exacerbated the situation. It was inevitable then that artists would group together to form workshops, exhibition spaces or quite simply areas where they could meet together to talk and discuss each others work. There were endless variations on the basic themes: for some saleability was not an issue, for others it was essential to place ones work within a market context; some artists wanted to reach a broader public, others were quite happy to have a venue where their friends could see the work. Spaces such as these evolved in one of two ways: either they became exclusive and clublike, ran out of money, space, patience and disintegrated, or else they secured funding from an existing institution (usually a tertiary institution or an arts funding body or both), stabilised themselves with regard to policies, staffing and space and slowly throughout the seventies became institutions themselves.

There are exceptions to these models: some alternative spaces took form in ways radically unlike orthodox institutions: mural groups appeared, artists' books and other publications came into being, artists became musicians, a space indoors or out and of any size for the briefest amount of time could house an exhibition, the body itself became the ultimate and final space. It is in the areas of publications, cassettes and the body that the idea of the alternative space remains the most viable and least open to co-option and absorption through mobility and an openness to constant regeneration.

The unifying factor in all alternative spaces is the need to present art work which does not have an outlet: the work being experimental regardless of media. But the battles to remain in existence have been constant and it is inevitable that human resources would burn out in the face of general and continuing conflicts. The opposition to alternative spaces comes from a variety of areas, not least from groups of artists who may feel excluded from the workings of a particular space, but in the main from funding *bodies*

who consistently underfund such spaces or cut them off as priorities shift. More insidious is the co-option and absorption without acknowledgement of spaces by the museum and the dealer. It became evident by the end of the seventies that the primary role of the alternative space in the eyes of the status quo was to provide a line up of new artists for the museum and dealer to pick from. The alternative space had become another link in the hierarchical chain. Inevitably such co-option was welcomed by most young artists: like everyone else they needed to be paid for their work. It is through such absorption that some alternative spaces will continue to exist: they are indispensable as long as they assist the dealer and the museum.

Alternative spaces have always been in the midst of ideological crises. One of the basic tenets of such spaces is to promote dialogue as well as support innovation. While these debates can be constructive as well as destructive they are very much part of the life of a space. A more cynical observer may remark that such debates are simply power struggles and it certainly seems true in Australia that collectively based efforts are often fraught with conflicts between Board (employer) and Director (employee) unless, in very rare instances, there is either the active intervention of the membership as mediator or the Director is given complete creative control for the period of their contract. In an unfunded space such conflicts can be dealt with 'in house', in a publicly funded space they become problems for public scrutiny and retribution.

In the 1980s the return to painting has created a further upheaval in the role of the alternative space. This resurgence has been accepted almost without question and largely to the exclusion of work such as video, installation, film, photography, sound and performance while overseas the various media coexist in parallel and in crossovers. In Australia as elsewhere the painting revival could be viewed as a return to the formalism of the sixties, to the saleable object and the identifiable

image. It is a return to the known, the familiar, the commodity. Regardless of what one may think of the current situation it marks an acute crisis for the alternative space. The response has varied: some spaces have continued to balance their activities between various media areas, others have withdrawn from visual arts per se to concentrate on more community oriented activities thereby confronting yet another dilemma in the Australian art world: community versus visual arts.

The dilemma has been compounded by funded spaces being forced by funding bodies to prove their audience or face budget cuts. The audience for alternative spaces has never been large and there is no tangible evidence of the presence of an audience unlike user pays organisations. The alternative space is forced to either charge at the door or to attempt the impossible: revolutionize the education system from the bottom up so that the general public has some comprehension of the possibilities of experimentation enriching cultural life. A further possibility is for the space to concentrate to a much greater extent on being representative of the community at large. It is worth noting that if community art too often smacks of therapy it is largely because of the imposition, quite unwittingly, by the middle class artist on the working class participant:

" Rather than indulging in cultural colonialism - persuading the unwilling natives to accept a dose of art because its good for them - artists will have to study and understand the working class world in its totality - its values, mores, economics - and allow their art to be changed accordingly."

Tony Rickaby Studio International Vol.195.No.990 1/1980
p. 46.

Essentially the problem revolves around the education system. In Germany there are model towns like Bergkamen where art education begins at primary school. The arts budget per year for the town of 51,000 is twice the annual budget of the Australia Council. There is no question in this context that art education is a vital part of people's daily life. When the funded alternative space in Australia

with an annual budget of c.\$80,000 is forced to produce the same results, the situation is untenable. Any attempt on the part of the space to encompass any of the requirements funding bodies place upon them in the current situation is bound to fail.

Another of the current dilemmas for an alternative space is to be seen to be professional in the eyes of the funding bodies. It is dubious if professionalism is at all relevant as much as one might wish for it in an environment where there is ^{often} only one person available to do the work. The bureaucratization of art in any area receiving public funds has reached an unprecedented level. The organisers of spaces have, since the late seventies, been forced to spend less and less time on assisting artists, the public and ^{on} creative programming and an exponentially increased period of time in justifying their existence to funding bodies. Yet professionalism is insisted upon if grants are to be handed over.

A further and enduring pressure on alternative spaces is the need for more money: more money to be professional, to pay artists' fees, to hire more staff, to advertise, to document, to produce catalogues etcetera. The trend toward private and corporate sponsorship in a country which has no tradition of such funding for anything other than traditional art forms is being created by the federal and state governments. It has not yet been perceived in Australia that culture does not grow in a vacuum; that the innovators of today are often the history makers of tomorrow. To persist in seeing art as a luxury rather than a necessity is to persist in seeing fat to be trimmed. Attempts by alternative spaces to tap into private and corporate sponsorship have proved to be costly and negative experiences. Another frequently mooted way to survive is for a space to become a commercial gallery: it then becomes pointless to pursue the notion of an alternative space.

It seems that at this point in time the alternative space is situated at the crossroads: there appears to be no

viable middle course between absorption into the art bureaucracy or marginalisation and disintegration through lack of funds. It is significant that at the first alternative spaces conference in 1983 the name of such spaces was changed to contemporary art spaces. It was recognised that these organisations were very much part of the art bureaucracy and that it was essential to take an aggressive rather than a defensive role within the system to retain integrity and a sense of identity. There needed to be considerable agitation for recognition of the vital role spaces play in Australia as they are the only organisations in the country with strong grass roots links, that function as information centres and are often the only places where immediate reactions to new and innovative work can occur.

The alternative course for the alternative space is to remain determinedly outside the funding system, to retain complete creative control and to operate from a small base with little concern for an audience. Most unfunded and some funded spaces operate or have operated like this for varying lengths of time. The characterising factor is a complete single mindedness with regard to the work presented. Many of the spaces exist only briefly in whatever venue can be found. Currently these are the only true alternative spaces left although they too exist in direct relation to the dealer and the museum: they could not exist without the hierarchy.

The inevitable institutionalisation of funded alternative spaces has led to a misunderstanding of their origins. Spaces began in response to a need and that need still exists: to support innovative and experimental art forms which do not receive exposure elsewhere. It is pointless to assume that a workable model for an alternative space can be formulated and imposed regardless of specificities of time, people, the particular kind of art and so on./ The imposition of model alternative spaces on the community both in Australia and overseas has been a fruitless task: too often these organisations are incapable of reacting in any viable way to grass roots needs. By being imposed, no one is too sure who the grass roots are.

In 1984 there is a network of small spaces in most State capitals. They see themselves now as contemporary rather than alternative, they are usually state and federally funded and much of their time is spent in trying to retain that funding. They attempt to act as exhibiting spaces, lecture and seminar halls, film and video venues, performance spaces, small bookstores, information centres, sometimes as printers of publications. They have a fulltime paid staff of two at the most, they may have space of between 1-3000 sq. ft., some have been in existence for 12 years.

In addition there are the unfunded spaces who are much smaller: indeed they may not have a recognizeable space at all. These may last one hour or a couple of years. Both are highly valuable and completely necessary to the continuing development of cultural activity within Australia because they attempt to assist emerging artists by providing a constructively critical environment for these people to work in.

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