

**ENDANGERED  
SPACES**

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**ARTIST RUN INITIATIVES  
IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

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The Endangered Spaces project is an exhibition of works at Artspace by artists who show at Artist Run Initiatives, a forum held at Artspace dealing with the predicament of artists' accommodation, and this publication providing a historical overview and discussion papers on government arts policies and marginality. The following people have given generously of their time and labour to realise this project:

Initiation . . . . . Erica Green, Tess Horwitz, A.R.I.  
Exhibition . . . . . PCD 89, Mikala Dwyer  
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This project has been made possible with assistance from the New South Wales Government through the Ministry for the Arts.

# Cutting THE Fringe

CHRISTOPHER DOWNIE

Australia has a fertile tradition of artists organising themselves, occupying sites of discourse where private and public institutions have failed to come up with the goods. Within a recognised historical construct, events like the 'Nine by Five' exhibition or the 'Angry Penguins' are thoroughly documented milestones. Perhaps it is more relevant now to gather threads which are not so easily picked up, where initiatives by artists can be seen to extend beyond their era into crucial zones of intervention, having enduring effects on the development of culture! Within the scope of this essay it is impossible to construct definitive histories, yet it is timely to develop perspectives on artists' projects over the last two decades.

A.R.I. stands for Artist Run Initiatives, a loose confederation of artist groups which are involved in non profit projects. There is nothing new about this, for ages artists have been taking things into their own hands when conditions have pointed to a need. What is new is the level of co-operation and consolidation that the formation of A.R.I. suggests. This points to a general elevation of the game both locally and nationally.

Artist initiatives follow certain well defined trajectories. They are the result of a particular set of circumstances, either an individual or group has a commitment to a certain project or they find themselves in a unique position at a crucial time where specific action seems appropriate. The creative energy typified by A.R.I.s is also a factor of their temporal nature, due to pressures on C.B.D. space and the limits of voluntary energy. There is nothing as sad as an A.R.I. which has reached the cryogenic phase. Ironically market place determinants have made Sydney a vital site. The context of redevelopment and Manhattanisation means that urban areas are constantly changing function which both creates situations, spaces, and opportunities and forces their closure. A good example of this is Inhibodress in Sydney where a group of artists rented a dress factory in 1970 and used it for two years as a contemporary gallery. In the early eighties Art/Empire/Industry was an excellent artist run exhibition space operating in two consecutive sites in Sydney and disappearing when those sites were redeveloped. The life of many initiatives is dictated by planning agendas.

Eventually there was government recognition of the need for more stable exhibition spaces for contemporary art in the formalization of funded Contemporary Art Spaces (C.A.S.s) like the Experimental Art Foundation (E.A.F.) in Adelaide, Art-space and The Performance Space in Sydney, and the Institute of Modern Art (I.M.A.) in Brisbane. The Visual Arts/Craft Board now funds in conjunction with state funding bodies at least one of these spaces in each capital city (except Darwin). Usually the setting up of these galleries has been brought about by pressure from artists and in the beginning artists had a very direct say about curatorial policy and direction. In the free

market environment of the eighties these projects have found difficulty in keeping touch with their grass roots constituencies and the need has been felt to develop an up-market slickness in the hope of attracting private sector funding.

The cliched picture of the lone artist shipping the product off the assembly line then banking the cheques is unrealistic. The contemporary artist requires a diversity of skills: small business management, publicity, graphic design, and theoretical articulation. Artists working in collaboration and collectively attempt to provide alternatives to the critics and curators who define the determinants of theory and criticism about art practice. For example *Art Network* magazine, begun by an artists' collective, consistently maintained contact with a studio based practice as well as theoretical discourse.

Whilst A.R.I.s frequently have limited and fraught existences they can generate and inspire ongoing ventures. Many of the Sydney initiative of the last decade can be traced back to groups who used *Art Network* to engage the issues of the late seventies. *Art Network* itself derived from Creative Space, an organisation which tried to secure low cost work space for artists. Studio Access, which also grew out of Creative Space, was an exhibition programme where studios were opened up to the public and catalogues and maps were provided. The Studio Access project developed a performance, video and audio dimension identifying a need for suitable exposure of temporal, aural and cross technology works.

The climate of debate surrounding these multiple projects pointed to a need for an organisation representative of artists' requirements and led to the establishment of the Artworkers Union (A.W.U.). The A.W.U. had aims such as the development of artist/gallery contracts, affirmative action for women, fighting cutbacks in part-time art teaching, publicising health and safety issues, and publishing information newsletters.



*Creative Space.*

1. A pertinent example of this would be the artist-initiated art schools such as the George Bell Art School in Melbourne which offered a modernist alternative to the emerging Antipodeans. Remembering this, history becomes particularly relevant in the present day when art education is threatened by government education monoliths.

Many projects concerned themselves with the perceived need for exposure, a dissatisfaction with the private sector gallery scene, and a sixties' sensibility of alternativeness. Encompassing the underground/punk/street/Berlin ambience such as Art Unit in Sydney or scaling the theory/practice rock-faces like Art Projects in Melbourne, they were proud of their mainstream rejections. Some had a overdeveloped sense of their own significance and a keen concern to be seen as the cutting edge.

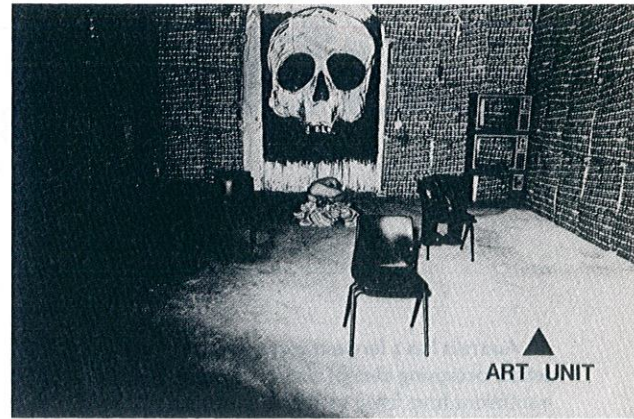
The feminist movement of the mid seventies saw little scope for exhibiting and participating in a gallery system and curatorial nexus which was completely male dominated. This resulted in a number of initiatives like the long running Women's Art Movement (W.A.M.) in Adelaide and the separatist Women's Warehouse in Sydney. Women artists consistently raised issues of equal representation and gender bias and pointed to a continuing need for parallel exhibition spaces?

Artists' needs in relation to practice is one area where co-operation has been imperative. Artists form themselves into co-operatives to gain access to equipment and resources beyond the reach of individuals. The South Australian Workshop (S.A.W.) is a studio based collective which provides a workshop with heavy equipment. The Sydney based Inner City Clay Workers Co-op. provided a support system and eventually established a gallery whose main function was a retail outlet. Printmakers have found collectivisation a way around the prohibitive cost of presses. Zero Print Workshop is a good example, giving access to a range of printing equipment for a small daily rental.

For the artist working in high cost new technology areas such as video, production expenses have always been a problem, as has distribution due to the standards of quality control set by commercial outlets like the A.B.C. From rather idiosyncratic beginnings in the sixties with cowboy trailblazers like Bushvideo and a general milieu of fuzziness about television being community based the seventies saw a new level of sophistication with Open Channel in Melbourne and Metro Television in Sydney. Due to financial pressures Open Channel moved into more mainstream television production. At this stage the dream of video art able to reach a mass audience through broadcasting seems unrealisable and the spiralling costs of a rapidly changing technology defy artists' attempts at setting up some sort of alternative.

Many artist projects are concerned with redefining the context of the viewer's relationship to the work of art and with extending beyond the confines of gallery spaces. The Shephard and Newman building's Billboard Project in Sydney secured a number of large city billboards for the use of artists. Avago was a small window box for rotating non-selective installations, at first in Macdonald St, Paddington and subsequently echoed in the Tin Sheds and Sydney College of the Arts Avagos. Streetspace, a project where artists were given a series of department store windows in a large defunct mid city retail outlet, attracted participation from artists all over Australia. Span-Project was sited in a disused shop, initially encouraging anonymity — 'the work was the thing' — and allowing radical structural changes of the space.

Defining a social role for art is a question which some community based artists have tried to engage. Billboards Utilize Graffiti Against Unhealthy Products (B.U.G.A. U.P.) instigated some noteworthy interventions, and eventually incurred judi-



Art Unit, 1982-85.

cial punishment. Mural art was a vehicle for interaction between artists and communities and artists working together. This vehicle too often seemed to suffer from the problems of aesthetic decisions by committees and worked best with one artist and a small community. Grass roots affiliations between mural artists and communities have frequently been replaced by public and private sector intervention. The Central railway tunnel Sydney, a lively and spontaneous graffiti forum covering a wide range of controversial social issues with art and text, was squashed overnight. The Sydney Rail Authority called in a group of mural artists, The Public Art Squad, to formalize the whole site. The tunnel now has a Nimbini-like aura with murals which acknowledge Aborigines, ecology and the history of rail transport. Public Art Squad moved on to a megavisual jubilee with the Darling Harbour Project which provided work for a horde of artists.

During the seventies artist run spaces provided the main venues for non traditional works. The opportunities for innovative or contentious pieces within the structure of Perspectives and other state sponsored survey exhibitions greatly multiplied. The private gallery sector shifted significantly in its accommodation of experimental media. Installations, video and photo/text can now all find venues in the private sector. This leads to speculation regarding the role for A.R.I.s in this new environment.

The landscape of the eighties seems to have altered out of all recognition. There are deep erosions in government art funding, forced amalgamations, cutbacks and rationalisations. The unprecedented prices paid for art, a return to a position of primacy of painting and a general career orientation has seen the stabilization of many artists in the private sector. The avant garde can now be located within a vector of market determinants.

The rental crisis is placing pressure on C.A.S.s and A.R.I.s to access even more government and corporate funding and to spend time and energy in the fight for stabilization. Priorities are becoming organisational and political.

The contemporary art scene is in dramatic flux, with some rising stars and many sudden deaths. Praxis, the Contemporary Art Space in Perth, has received substantial corporate sponsorship and has grown into the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (P.I.C.A.). This kind of development is crucial if contemporary art is going to find a wider and more informed audience. Simultaneously Brisbane has just witnessed the col-

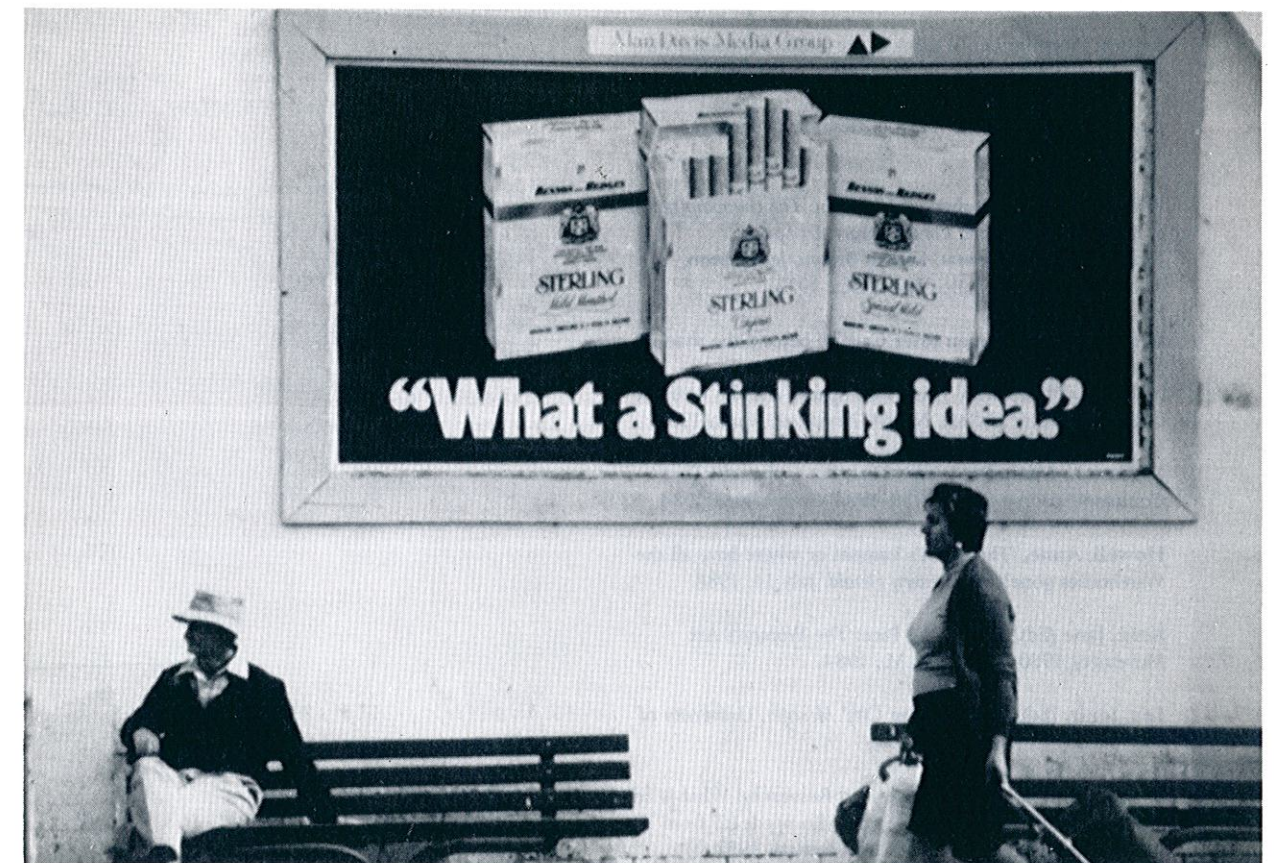
lapse of two artist run studio complexes and gallery spaces. That space and John Mills National both fell victim to the fever of redevelopment accompanying Expo '88. John Mills National concentrated on a structured programme of installation and performance. That space maintained street level interface with a patchy curatorial policy that was game for anything. The support these spaces provided for the Queensland Artists Alliance (Q.A.A.) may have proved to be crucial. With the demise of these spaces, within a context of dissatisfaction amongst emerging artists with the funded C.A.S., I.M.A., Brisbane has lost some vital bridging zones for recent graduates and emerging artists. Yet out of these losses new initiatives seem to have emerged. *Eyeline*, a publication of the Q.A.A., has done much to raise the level of debate. It has created an information base for important industry related issues and given a new sense of cohesiveness to Brisbane art initiatives.

Cynics would say that one way artists have found to promote themselves is to start a publication or a gallery; a way to be noticed in a mob where everyone is shouting. However a multitude of important issues underlie the enormous amount of voluntary energy expended in the creation and recreation of these projects within difficult circumstances. A closer look at the lively Sydney milieu provides examples of these issues.

The diversity of organisational structures of the alternative projects in Sydney reflects widely differing aims which in toto create a field of options for artists to operate within. Some examples are the now extinct Kelly Street Kolektiv which at its peak had nearly seventy members providing exhibition and

performance space both for its members and other groups such as the Poets Union. First Draft is now operated by its second four-person management committee; it has sharply delineated exhibition and administrative policies which are its criteria for the selection of artists' proposals. Virtual Object is a group of artists who work together specifically to promote and explore the relationship between artists and technology. There are numerous other initiatives answering various needs: Camera Lucida is a window space for photographic-related installations only; Rondeau is a similar but larger space with window frontage allowing 24-hour viewing and encouraging open participation; *Art Bulletin* is a bi-monthly calendar of art events and newsletter which keeps to its schedule despite the demands of continually finding new funding sources. Ultimo Project is a group of artists who have formed themselves into a housing co-operative to try to secure their living and studio spaces: this goal requires innumerable meetings within the project and liaison with other housing co-ops and government bodies, as well as the development of large scale funding proposals. There are too many other projects to site them individually?

The variety of these projects keeps alive dialogues about the language of different media, about the issues of siting work, and about the artist as individual practitioner versus collaborator or collective member. They make explicit the debate about the artist's relationship to the establishment, specifically exemplified by the feminist dichotomy of intervening within the establishment and providing an alternative to a patriarchal framework. The very existence of these projects



Postcard produced by B.U.G.A. U.P.

3. See catalogue of N.S.W. A.R.I.s in this publication.

places pressure on funded initiatives such as Artspace to address these debates<sup>4</sup> and to provide services to the art community.

The past year which has witnessed an accelerated process of large-scale evictions of artists' studios and galleries for redevelopment purposes also has strengthened the sense of commonality amongst these diverse organisations. The informal A.R.I. group has provided a warm and lively meeting point. Artists are beginning to realise they may need a more sophisticated and unified response to the complex issues of housing, stabilization of studio spaces, and maintenance of alternative exhibition and publishing concerns. The degree of bureaucratisation that is now needed is in direct conflict with artists' requirements in order to maintain their practice; an individual struggle which parallels the broader one.

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# THE POLITICS OF SPACE

PHILIPPA BATEMAN

"DATELINE TORONTO. In 1988 I lost my affordable apartment, my affordable studio and my affordable parking place. I can no longer dine in once affordable restaurants in a once affordable city. I can't afford to make art. I can't even afford to go to see it. I can barely afford to keep my unaffordable job. I am not alone".<sup>1</sup>

This editorial, in a recent issue of the Canadian magazine *Parallelogramme* paints a familiar picture. Appropriately entitled "Purchase or Perish", the writer makes the pertinent point that in 1989 the obsession is not with art but with housing. Sydney is following an international trend of over development and gentrification. The prevalence of demolition and "renovator's dream" sites (a euphemism for making a large profit out of an inner city slum rented to low income earners for a disproportionate sum) has incited panic among Sydney artists. Commercial interests invariably take precedence over less profitable ventures and it is in this capacity that the practical, real needs of artists are marginalised. N.S.W. is remarkable for its lack of policy with respect to artists and affordable space. This article attempts, in an introductory manner, to look at the examples set by other state governments and local councils, American and European initiatives and by contrast, the sorry state of cultural planning in a city regularly accused of being a cultural backwater.

We all know there is a housing crisis in Sydney but for artists trying to live in the inner city and inner west, the situation has become critical. Arts organisations are just as vulnerable. During the unmemorable Bicentennial year, Artspace's and Arts/Law's rent doubled, putting a considerable strain on their already stretched finances; the Craft Council of N.S.W. was advised by the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority to vacate their premises by April 1990, the Ultimo Project and Kelly Street Kolektiv artists were evicted from their Sydney City Council owned building (even after having spent several thousand dollars on renovations) and 338 Pitt Street was demolished. Early this year, the Gunnery artists were given notice to quit and the Pie Factory in Burton Street was emptied for commercial development. It should also be mentioned that a number of these premises had been designated as art centres over the years.<sup>2</sup> In Wentworth Avenue where one building utilised by artists is to be demolished, a handful of buildings have remained unoccupied for at least three years; an anomaly when considering the recurrent claim that there are simply no appropriate buildings available.

1. *Parallelogramme*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1988-89, p. 5.

2. The Gunnery at Woolloomooloo was originally designated for development as an arts centre, by Federal decree. In January 1989 however, it was put up for tender by the N.S.W. Government for commercial return on the building.

The provision of space for artists could not be more fundamental to their conditions of production. This blatant reality has been largely ignored, so far, by both local and state governments in N.S.W. Artists' social and economic survival is significantly hampered by the invisibility of artists and arts organisations who would benefit, directly or indirectly, from policies ensuring studio space. This is after all where the process of creation, in material terms, begins and ends . . . or continues. Politicians are not elected on supporting the arts, and when formulating policy it is clear that major arts institutions, established arts companies and reputable artists are given more attention because they are more visible to the general public and consequently more accessible. Australia is proud of exporting its cultural entities and commodities when they are inextricably linked to international recognition and the promotion of cultural national identity, but is often lacking in its support of artists at a grass roots level. Unless young artists are snapped up by dealers and commercial galleries, their careers rely for the most part on self-initiative and support from other artists.

In a country dominated by the exploits of lauded business tycoons and their unflinching appetite for profitable enterprises, making money has become a more revered art form than art itself. Unlike New York, the artist in Sydney is not a celebrity. Few artists, even those who make it into the public eye, function as influential citizens; nor are they accorded the sort of status which seduces the powers that be into acting on their behalf. If the bottom line of economic rationalism is: "We can't spend what we don't have" (but we do anyway — check the deficit), the bottom line for the average artist is that he or she earns approximately \$8,000 a year which is below the poverty line. Funding to enhance the image of the arts is generally more important from a political perspective than implementing policy to facilitate access to secure studio space, thus encouraging artists to help themselves. Of course it is not as black and white as that. There are numerous examples nationally which disprove the theory but we are still to be convinced in N.S.W.

The work of the Fremantle Arts Foundation and the Western Australian Ministry of the Arts is an admirable case in point. Ironically, the America's Cup proved to be a catalyst for improved conditions for artists in Fremantle. Following the Review of the State of the Arts in Fremantle<sup>3</sup> (prior to the Cup), fast dwindling space caused by spiralling rents and the pressure of commercial interests was identified as the common factor affecting the arts. From this enquiry came a

3. The review was undertaken by the Fremantle Arts Foundation.

diverse number of developments<sup>4</sup>, one of which was the establishment of Custom House. Purchased by the W.A. Ministry of the Arts from the Commonwealth Government, it was set up as an artists' studio complex and is managed by the Fremantle Arts Foundation who are advised by a committee of practising artists resident in the studios. Needless to say it is a superlative example of low cost, secure workspace.

A spokesman for the W.A. Ministry of the Arts, initially involved in the Custom House Project, commented that providing studios for artists is not only a more equitable means of funding, it is more economically sound for the State Government than handing out substantial grants to artists and organisations to cover their rental costs. Premises which have come into the possession of the W.A. Ministry of the Arts of late have been given to artists and arts organisations in need of accommodation, free of charge.

In the A.C.T. increased allocation to the Community Development Fund has earmarked 1.9 million dollars for artist studio spaces in Canberra. The Gertrude Street Studios in Melbourne were set up in 1985 originally by a group of graduates from the Victorian College of the Arts, with a studio establishment grant from the Victorian Ministry of the Arts. This development is unique in so far as it provides proof that the Victorian Ministry of the Arts is committed to the continuation of Gertrude Street; in funding it as both a model for other organisations and in using it as an agency for the Ministry. There are 18 studios in the building, 17 of them used by local artists and one kept for a visiting artist (interstate or international). The rents are minimal and artists take up an occupancy agreement for two years; there is no necessity for artists to stay the duration of the agreement but they cannot stay longer.

Despite the litaney of evictions and the grating sense of desperation, familiar to people unsure of their future, there is hope in N.S.W. This year the Artworkers Union has been granted \$10,500 by the N.S.W. Ministry of the Arts to conduct a study into potential spaces in the southern and inner western suburbs. The Australia Council has traditionally funded Contemporary Art Spaces and Artist Run Initiatives (such as the

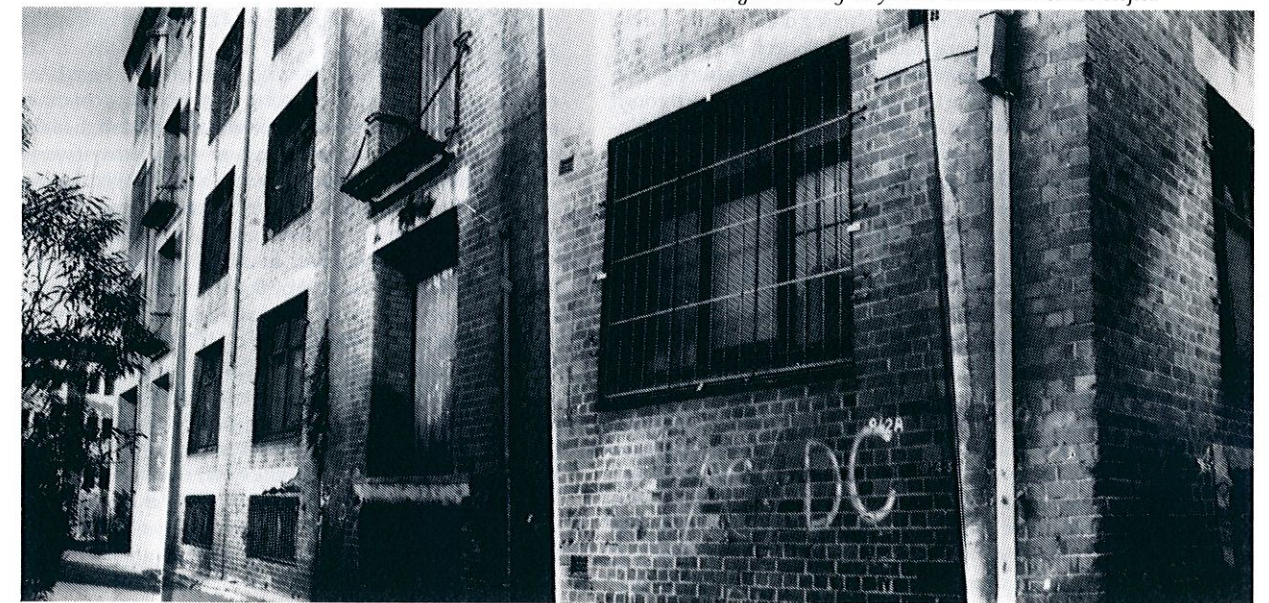
Ultimo Project<sup>5</sup> which is committed to providing low cost housing and studios for artists). Unfortunately, at the moment, it is outside the charter of the Australia Council to provide capital funds for developing buildings — that responsibility lies with the State Government. Nevertheless, the Visual Arts/Craft Board has formally acknowledged the scarcity of work space.

Members of the Board are now contemplating the possibility of obtaining equity and security of tenure for artists and arts organisations. At present they are talking to the Commonwealth Bank, the N.S.W. Housing Department and other Government Departments to assess the viability of liaising on behalf of legally constituted entities; in addition to analysing the position of state and local governments in relation to capital expenditure and building availability.

One of the major problems confronting policy makers is gaining access to professional research to elucidate and specify the needs of art practitioners. It is by drawing on knowledge and experience gleaned from artists in the community that advisors on policy can make the conceptual leaps necessary to resolve the crisis we are now facing.

In 1988, the Australia Council commissioned the National Association of Visual Artists, in association with the Victorian Ministry of the Arts to produce a report on Assistance For Emerging Visual Artists<sup>6</sup>. This document and a policy paper for the visual arts and crafts in N.S.W. both pinpoint the lack of affordable space as a critical issue. As a starting point for change, local council could conceivably rethink restricted use regulations and actively bring together interested parties and access existing space. While this may appear relatively straightforward as a suggestion it is fraught with legal contingencies. For example, acknowledging that there is studio space available, fire regulations designed to meet high safety standards, here as in Melbourne, mean that it is imperative for owners of buildings in disrepair to refurbish if people are to occupy the premises. Most owners are reluctant to spend large sums making buildings safe and it is often cheaper to leave them vacant until sold or demolished.

Original home of Kelly Street Kolektiv and Ultimo Project.



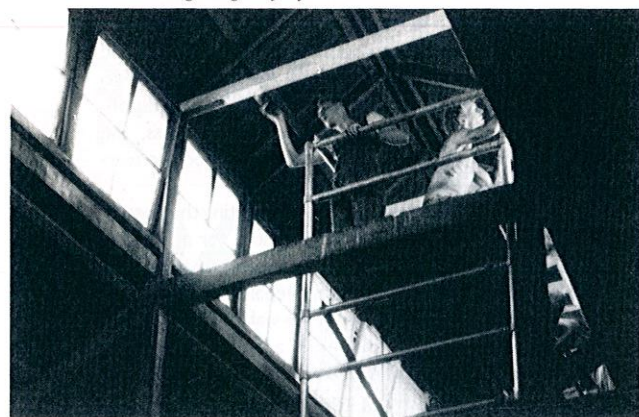
4. These developments were significantly assisted by the budget for the America's Cup Arts Programme (\$80 million).

5. The Visual Arts/Craft Board funded the Ultimo Project's submission to the N.S.W. Department of Housing for assistance under the Local Government and Community Housing Program for a housing and cultural complex.

6. This will be launched in late April 1989.

7. Also by N.A.V.A.

Constructing the gallery, Sylvester Studios.



In Amsterdam the local government offers rebates and concessions, such as low interest loans and low cost building materials, to developers who restore buildings to a livable state for artists. Creative legal thinking (perhaps in Arts/Law?) is imperative if these ideas are to be pursued to their logical conclusion. The Sydney City Council offers no special technical assistance to artists or developers. The costs of meeting fire, building and zoning regulations are unequivocally prohibitive.

In the Los Angeles Task Force Report On The Arts (June 88) the activities of a group called Artspace Projects (a non-profit advocacy and technical assistance group in Minneapolis) are used as a model for what could feasibly be initiated in Los Angeles:

Artspace Projects recently proposed legislation for arts opportunity zones/enterprise zones, providing incentives to property owners in designated cultural zones in several cities to develop and improve facilities for arts use as an economic development and tourism tool, with priority given to the creation of artists studio and living space.<sup>8</sup>

Sydney artists, real estate agents, councillors and politicians take heed! In America, cultural planning draws on the diverse skills of mayors, lawyers, visual artists, poets, architects, psychologists, critics, businessmen and others all assisting in an advisory capacity in the formulation of policy, usually through a central body. The aim is to get disparate groups fostering disparate beliefs and interests to talk to each other.

Melbourne City Council has attempted to do just this. Last year it organised the Creative City Seminar in conjunction with the Victorian Ministry of the Arts, the Victorian Ministry for Planning and Environment, The Australia Council, The Commission for The Future and UNESCO. The reason: to discuss the role of the artist in building the cities of the future. Everyone fronted: artists, town planners, local and state government policy makers; everyone except the developers. A similar thing had occurred a few years earlier when the Council, intent on resuscitating the urban centre, organised with the Real Estate Institute a seminar about artists and housing? Thirty-eight major real estate companies were invited and only seven attended. Since 1985, Melbourne councillors interested in and sensitive to the manifest needs of artists, young people, and low income earners, were concerned that development was pushing people out of the city. As the Coun-

cil could not afford to purchase real estate nor provide space at a low cost, they put considerable time into liaising with real estate agents and artists and even went so far as to walk around the city spotting empty buildings. Ultimately this fell short of tenable provisions sufficient to guarantee enduring support.

Among the Melbourne Council's many suggestions at this time was the real need for an efficient and comprehensive public relations campaign to woo the real estate fraternity and convince them that the presence of artists in the city was wholly desirable — not in the role of voluntary refurbishers but as contributors to the well-being of the community. By stark contrast, Sydney City Council has no policy whatsoever relevant to the dilemma facing artists eager to secure workspace. Admittedly, the Council has only recently been reinstated and, at the time of writing, the new Community Arts Officer has not started. If, however, Sydney South Council is anything to go by, that job is strictly promotional and policy changes are not on the agenda.

Although Sydney City Council no longer deals with residential property, its commercial properties in Ultimo, Pyrmont and The Rocks include numerous warehouses and building sites suitable for establishing artists' workspaces. A likely hindrance in this will, however, be zoning. Seattle resolved the problem of zoning and conditional use by allowing joint live/work as a principal use in five of ten non-residential areas.<sup>10</sup> Sydney might do well to follow suit in respect of areas currently ripe for development. An abundance of historic buildings in The Rocks (for example) look sure to fall prey to demolishers in the not too distant future. If saved they would provide ample space for artists in co-existence (perhaps) with either companies or individuals keen to maintain the heritage of one of Sydney's oldest vicinities.

The artist's "purchase or perish" catchcry grows out of an intimate knowledge of "gentrification". In cities like New York the process of gentrification resulted in an accelerated departure of cultural producers as the new 'gentry' moved in to settle in "artists' zones."

Artistic ambience had become a very marketable commodity. Keen to heed the New York mistake, more enlightened cities in the United States support the establishment of artist-owned co-operatives to at least partly keep the puppies at bay.

In New South Wales, housing co-operatives have been traditionally favoured by artists for sound economic, philosophic and social reasons. First and foremost, high rental costs have forced artists to live where they work. Co-operatives not only supply low cost, secure physical space, they allow flexibility and function as a model of management necessary if people are to work amicably together.

One of the most efficient means of gaining funding for these collective projects is through the Assistance Under the Local Government and Community Housing Program, a federal initiative administered by the N.S.W. Department of Housing.<sup>11</sup> Emoh Ruo, the Alpha House Association, and the Ultimo Project all involve artists organised into housing co-operatives to become eligible to apply for funding through this program. The demand, however, is very high, the budget limited, and the program is not specifically designed for artists.

Since the inception of the program in 1987 there have been ten co-operatives funded in N.S.W. (five definite and five recommended to the Minister). And yet there are many more submissions than those funded. At present 80% of the funding

comes from the public sector and 20% from the private (in the form of a bank loan organised by the housing co-operative through a bank or building society). As would be expected the Housing Department insists on retaining equity in the properties in question.<sup>12</sup>

Artists' involvement in real estate development is abhorrent to some at first glance but it offers a valid means of confronting the realities. For those who need a gentle introduction to the potential entrepreneurial talents of the artist so traditionally divorced from the clutches of commerce, consider Jero Nesson's poetic reading of the experience:

It is a problem of risk taking with uncertainty about the result. One of the things that distinguishes most artists is that they trust the creative process and are willing to take risks involved to create something unique.<sup>13</sup>

In considering business the artist should work as he or she does in any other artistic venture. The identification of a problem: — you have nowhere to live or work — and the steps taken toward resolving that problem is a way of overcoming the paralysing impotence which results from not having access to capital.<sup>14</sup>

The Acme Artists Housing Association in London exemplifies the role of artist as developer. Undeniably, the skills the founder of the Association developed were necessary to their survival as artists. In the mid-70s two art school graduates, familiar with displacement through gentrification, were anxious to provide affordable living and working spaces. When they were squatting in the East End, they understood that a building marked for demolition was left vacant for two years. They approached developers responsible for the number of premises in the area and negotiated tenancy in exchange for a nominal rent and caretaking responsibilities on the condition they would vacate the building on demand. Successful in a series of deals, they formed a company funded by the Greater London Arts Association and set to work. The Association's success depended on credibility established over time. Developers now contact it if a building becomes available. In effect, the founders of Acme have become agents for artists and developers. The Acme Studios boast over 150 artists in the biggest concentration of work spaces.

In the United States, the search for artists' workspace has reached an enviable level of sophistication. The definitive handbook *Artist in Space* by Jero Nesson is a testament to the coming together of highly specialised skills co-ordinated by a methodology developed from the experience and efforts of artists and interested parties. There are thirteen artist-initiated projects in Massachusetts, some involving as many as 100 artists in one complex. The Brickbottom Artist Co-operative, the largest artist-owned building, was made possible by pre-selling a portion of the premises as market-rate condominiums. This generated \$7.3 million which Artistspace Inc, as non-profit developer, used to underwrite the funding of the artists space.<sup>15</sup> The surge in projects such as these started with the E.P.A.C. (the Fort Point Arts Community Inc)<sup>16</sup> which represents the evolution of the idea of the artist as developer. Not only does the E.P.A.C. sponsor artists to secure live/work

space, it serves as an advocate for artist tenants in addition to working with city agencies to develop policies that protect and promote the presence of the artist in the community.

Even though the arts economy in the United States is much more market driven than it is in Australia (21% of arts subsidy is from federal, state and local government sources and 79% from foundations and from the private sector),<sup>17</sup> incentives are given to companies and groups which do not exist here. For instance, in Massachusetts, grants are available to non-profit developers who undertake community or economic development projects. There are a myriad responsibilities but, starting with basics, the most crucial element is political will:

Can a ministry help develop that political will? Research and statistics produced not as an ends in themselves but to demonstrate increasing social relevance, can strengthen the politicians' arguments with colleagues. There is also a need for imaginative and effective public relations.<sup>18</sup>

In light of the recent spate of evictions, an absence of policy which responds to the realities of the necessity of providing artists with work space, indicates a failure to see the working artist as relevant to the social and economic sphere. To invest a city with evidence of a cultural life is to act on strategies indicative of cultural planning, co-ordination and investment. There is a wealth of experience nationally and internationally to draw on: all that is needed now is that political will.

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8. Los Angeles Task Force Report on the Arts, June 1988, p. 49.

9. In 1986 the Melbourne City Council also commissioned a report: *The Inner City Studio Report*, October 1986.

10. Los Angeles Task Force Report, p. 49.

11. At present this program is federally funded, but discussions have been entered into with the Housing Department at State Level.

12. The co-operatives will continue to negotiate for equity.

13. Jero Nesson, *Artist in Space: A Handbook for Developing Artists Studio Space*, Boston, 1987, p. 22.

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17. Philip Wright, "The Arts: Politics, Power and the Purse". *Art Monthly*, June 1987, No. 107, p. 12.

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# RESCUING THE AVANT-GARDE

SYLVIA KLEINERT

To be avant-garde is to be modern. To intercept current trends and take up radical alternatives in opposition to the status quo is intrinsic to the idea of the modern artist. Indeed it is possible to trace the emergence of the idea of radicalism back to the eighteenth century when artists confronted the social, economic and political upheavals of their time.<sup>1</sup> By contrast post-modernism looks back on these heroic ideals with cynicism. Carter Ratcliff in his series 'Dramatic Personae' captures the mood to which I am referring. He quotes

Hughes, Gablik, Judd, Walter Darby Bannard, Barbara Rose, Peter Plagens, Hilton Kramer (who) each pronounce on the scene with outrage, sorrow and superior detachment. Each offers a vision of the present, a static and extended moment filled with deplorable tendencies: know nothing eclecticism; careerist manoeuvring; and a market quickening to reward it; the ascendancy of naive and opportunistic collectors; a slackness that leaves art-world borders open to the encroachment of mere fashion; and, permeating all else these writers dislike hype?

Ratcliff, like many others, suggests that a radical position is impossible to justify let alone sustain in a post-modern world. Should the concept of the radical avant-garde then be considered a myth which has been exposed by current theory? Is the situation any different for Australian artists placed in a marginal position within an international art world and do the alternative art spaces play any special role within these debates? In order to answer these questions, I trace the origins and subsequent impact of these theories. I show that they were flawed at the outset by their association with the anachronistic concept of the artist as genius. The terms radical and avant-garde originally referred to political issues but with modernism they came to be used interchangeably with aesthetic innovation. Thus, Huyssen and Bürger confront the present dilemma by forcefully asserting the distinctions between aesthetics and politics.<sup>2</sup> But Diana Crane's examination of the New York avant-garde between 1940-1985 is also useful. She examines the entire set of dimensions associated with the concept avant-garde. Crane's research reveals that the idea of the avant-garde is constructed through the personal interest of artists, art critics and art historians who continually reinterpret its meaning through the changing ideas and

values of each era.<sup>3</sup> Thus the meanings of radical and avant-garde are mutable and multivalent. This ambiguity has been exacerbated by the specific and selective discourses of Australian art so any re-consideration of alternative art spaces must account for these historical discourses. Taken together they confirm that we cannot return nostalgically to a past heroic period but this does not necessarily demand that we acquiesce in the prevailing mood of pessimism. To do so would foreclose on the very strategies of resistance which are most necessary for the future.

The eighteenth century witnessed the emergence of the modern artist as a professional and specialised group within society. During this era, the status of artists underwent significant changes, but these were flawed by contradictions. On the one hand the artist was elevated above the rest of society as a creative genius, a seer who was gifted with special insights and an empathy toward nature. Yet this status alienated the artist from the very issues in the modern world which they sought to address. Artists had exchanged the personal and extended patronage of the church and the aristocracy for the anonymity of the market place. Objects of art were now traded like commodities within a capitalist world. Thus, the attention of artists, their critics and the market-place focused on the cult of the individual rather than the cultural context in which art was produced.

The origins of the radical and avant-garde are found in the political debates of this era where they referred to rigorous and far-reaching reform through progress in industry and technology.<sup>4</sup> The futurist, purist and constructivist movements of the early twentieth century used this first interpretation of radical and avant-garde. But in the nineteenth century an opposite meaning for the radical and avant-garde emerged when the Gothic Revival, the Art and Craft movement and Art Nouveau generally rejected industry and its association with bourgeois culture.<sup>5</sup> Even in a political sense then, the reform advocated by the avant-garde offers paradoxical directives.

It was inevitable that the avant-garde would be re-interpreted through the visual language of artistic style and aesthetic innovation. In his analysis of the changing interpretations of the avant-garde, Frampton begins with Neo-Classicism to show how it became a brief but evocative symbol for new egalitarian principles.<sup>7</sup> In due course the landscape tradition overrode these reinterpretations of historical themes to

1. R. Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1850*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1967, Ch. 2.

2. C. Ratcliff, "Dramatis Personae" Part 1 of a five-part series in *Art in America*, September 1985, pp. 9-16.

3. A. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1986; P. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1984.

4. cf. A. Huyssen, op cit., pp. 162-3; with D. Crane, *The Transformation of the Avant-Garde: The New York Art World, 1940-1985*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, pp. 11 ff.

5. R. Williams, *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*, Fontana, 1983.

6. D. Crane, op cit., p. 13.

7. K. Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance", in H. Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Bay Press, Washington, 1983, pp. 16-30.

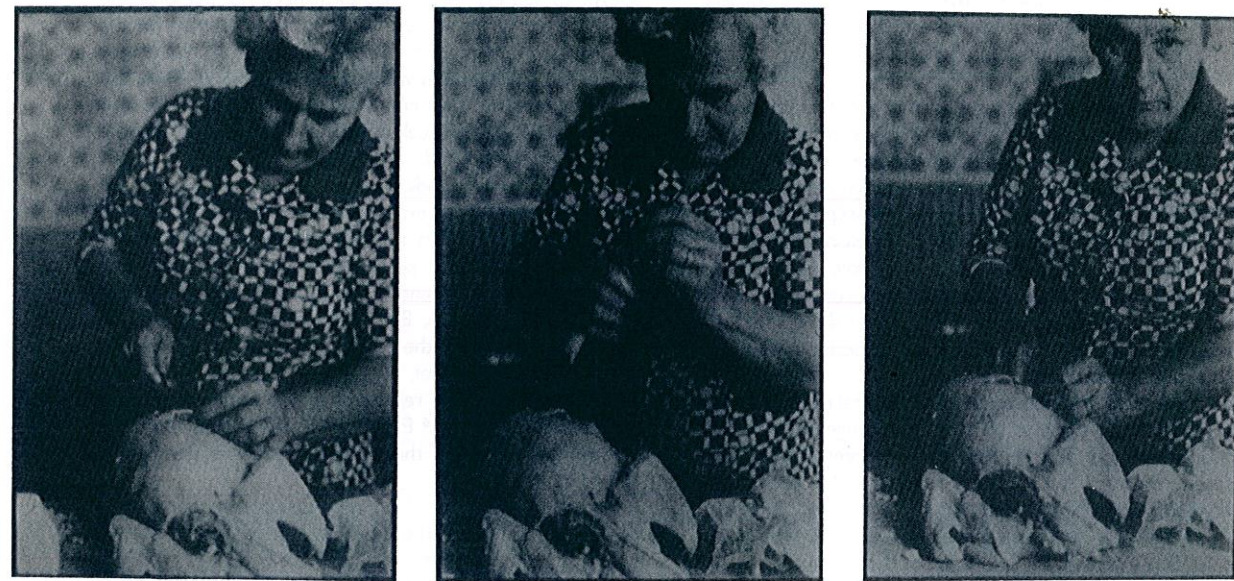
emerge as the pre-eminent means by which an artist could convey their personal and poetic response to nature. John Barrell has been able to show that the landscape can indeed convey a pointed moral and political comment on society of the time.<sup>8</sup> As already shown, avant-garde status is granted by critics and art historians. It follows that the accolades of radicalism could be granted retrospectively or withdrawn with the benefit of hindsight. Picasso, Matisse and Bonnard for instance were initially criticised for their conservatism, faint-heartedness and capitulation to capitalism when they returned to the classical theme of the nude and the interior after 1918. More recent interpretations would emphasize how this work evoked a humanistic tradition in response to the changes wrought by the War. On the other hand, Cockcroft and Guilbaut discredit the putative apolitical stance assumed by American Abstract Expressionism. Their reinterpretations reveal that the New York School was promoted as evidence of the democratic spirit of America in the post World War II, cold war period. At the time, critics contrasted this with the social realism emerging under European totalitarian regimes?

For the purposes of this paper, the figures of Duchamp and Heartfield epitomise many of the contemporary difficulties faced by artists. When Duchamp positioned himself as an adversary of bourgeois culture he used readymades to draw upon the world of industrial mass-production and overturn the

traditional status of the artist as the skilful originator of the work of art. Yet Duchamp ultimately withdrew from the art world when his work was co-opted by the museums. Similarly, John Heartfield was praised by Walter Benjamin for the trenchant criticism of the Nazi regime incorporated in his photomontages. But Benjamin also acknowledged that the culture industry was able to manipulate the mass media. In drawing distinctions between the modern and the post-modern, Frederic Jameson reminds us that in the former there existed

the still very real possibility of imminent social revolution, of total systemic change, of the end of the bourgeois era itself (along with its own inner aristocratic remnants and survivals)<sup>10</sup>

whereas now, in a post-modern period, irony and cynicism become their substitute for survival within a system which cannot be overthrown. This historical evidence confirms that although the concepts of the avant-garde are central to modernist practice, the complexities and contradictions which now cluster around their meaning and usage create an apparent impasse for the contemporary artist. If reform was originally linked to technological progress, then the late industrial world is increasingly coming under scathing attack as a society devoted to the spectacle of commodity fetishism



Helen Grace, Xmas Dinner series, no. 5, 1979.

8. J. Barrell, *The dark side of the landscape: The rural poor in English Painting 1730-1840*. Cambridge University Press, 1980.

9. E. Cockcroft, "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War", *Artforum* 12 (June), pp. 39-41; S. Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War*, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1983.

10. F. Jameson, "Postmodernism and Utopia", in *Utopia Post Utopia: Configurations of Nature and Culture in Recent Sculpture and Photography*, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston 1988, pp. 11-34, pp. 12-13.

created by the mass media. The political origins of the avant-garde continue to convey a covert moral agenda but accusations of manipulation are played off against the aesthetic issues intrinsic to artistic practice.

The selective discourses of Australian art which have constantly focused on national criteria have only exaggerated these issues. It was understandable but unfortunate that the cultural production of Australia would operate as a sign of political maturity and self-determination. This explains why the landscape tradition established by the Heidelberg School came to stand for a natural and authentic image of the Australian nation in the inter-war years. By the late 1930s however, artists committed to modernism perceived the landscape tradition as nationalistic and parochial. In part this was because the landscape tradition had indeed permeated Australian society to become a popularly understood expression of an authentic national spirit whereas the avant-garde was always closely linked to high culture. We see now that the impact of these attitudes obscured regional developments like the Hermannsburg School which radically reinterpreted the landscape tradition.<sup>11</sup> By the post World War II era, a cultural cringe operated which denigrated local cultural production and demanded instead that artists emulate the international abstraction promoted by Paris and New York. Ian Burn and others point out that these relationships were increasingly discussed in terms of the dominance of the metropole over the periphery — a position of subservience justified by those neo-Marxist theories of cultural imperialism which emerged during the process of de-colonisation.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, such theories not only offered a convenient scapegoat for the perceived shortcomings of Australian artists they also deferred critical recognition for the presence of an avant-garde at the margins.<sup>13</sup> To be Australian was to be fatally cast as derivative and dislocated, perceived internationally as a naive, exotic 'other' assuaging the 'worldwide loss of confidence and nostalgic yearning for lost utopias'.<sup>14</sup> It is only very recently that we have acknowledged that 'provincialism' is indeed relative. Consequently, the regional, marginalised position in which all Australian artists find themselves becomes a constructive site which politicises a particular cultural context. But because the self-perception of Australians remains dominated by a concern with national issues the 'provincialism' debate is read largely as a dichotomy between the national and international.<sup>15</sup> Another similar shift in consciousness could occur if the myths of the 'provincialism' debate were focused internally on the microcosm of Australia. In place of national discourses and

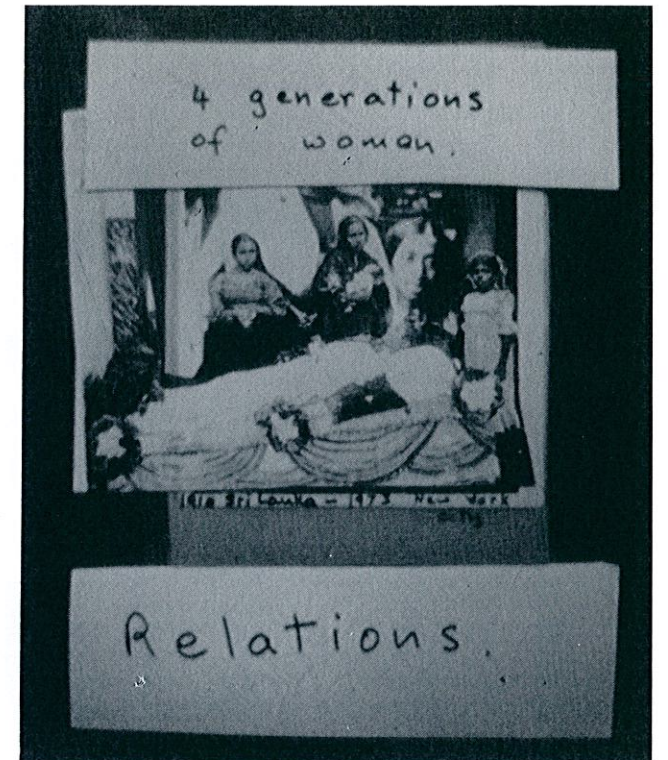
11. S. Kleinert, "Strategies for Regionalism", in *Landmarks Contemporary Perspectives in the Local Product*, Lismore Regional Art Gallery, 1988.

12. I. Burn and others, *The Necessity of Australian Art: An essay about interpretation*, Power Institute, Sydney, 1988, Ch. 7; I discuss the flaws in these arguments in more detail in "Under the Umbrella of Regionalism", *Unreal City*, vol. 1, no. 2, Summer 1988, pp. 6-7.

13. Space precludes a wider discussion of these issues but it is significant that the critical reception to Aboriginal art continues to be characterised by these same theories denying Aboriginal people a space in which to speak of their historical struggle in their own "regional" terms. See for instance, A. Willis & T. Fry, "Ethnocentrism, Art & the Culture of Domination", in *Praxis* M. 20, 1988 pp. 16-22.

14. P. Taylor, "A Culture of Temporary Culture", in *Art & Text*, 16, Summer 1984, pp. 94-106, p. 95; B. Smith, "An Australian Contribution to British Art", in *Art Monthly*, no. 17, December 1988, pp. 1-4.

15. See for instance the current debates between T. Smith and B. Murphy in *Art Monthly* 13/88 and 15/88.

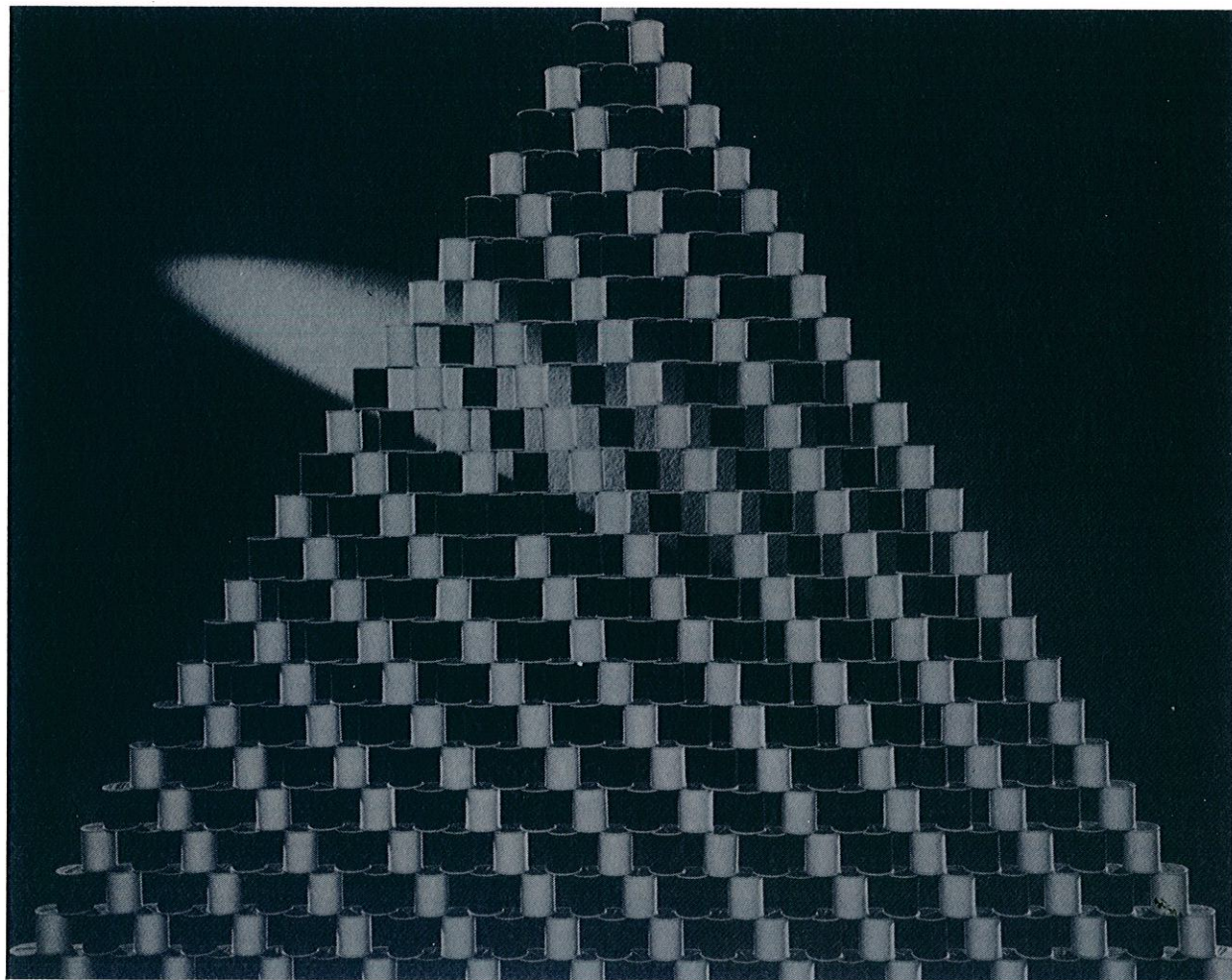


Laleen Jayamanne, slide installation from Vivienne Binns (co-ordinator), "Mothers' Memories, Others' Memories", 1981.

manoeuvring, regional sites would become invested with the same potential for reinterpretation.

This detour through international and national modernism suggests several reasons why the pluralism of the late 1960s and early 1970s seemed assertively avant-garde both overseas and in Australia. Ephemeral art forms such as performance art and concept art, community projects and collectives rejected formalist associations between aesthetics and the avant-garde. Ideological commitments to the right and the left lost support in favour of a personal social consciousness. In due course, these new practices were sited in experimental art spaces which operated as a theatre for viewing rather than for the purchase of the art work. Yet almost inevitably the movement was short-lived. Should we presume from this that experimental art was a failure? The pessimism and apparent conservatism of many aspects of post-modernism seems to confirm that this is indeed the case. But the research of Diane Crane puts the crisis of the 1970s in a broader context.<sup>16</sup> Crane shows that governments supported these venues because they wished to become more responsive to community needs and, in so doing, they enhanced their status. But, multi-national structures and escalating costs meant that corporations, museums and bureaucracies would increasingly group together on economically viable exhibitions and projects. The reception to experimental art was predictable. The art institutions and commercial galleries accommodated their acquisition program to admit those experimental artists whose work came within curatorial policies of archival requirements of fine-art traditions. The question is raised whether this elision occurred to a greater extent here in Australia than in say Europe or America and was this because the traditions of connoisseurship underpinned national discourses. If this is the case then it would explain why post-modernism is

16. D. Crane, op. cit., Chs. 6 & 7.



Jacky Redgate, *WORK-TO-RULE I*, Cibachrome, 1986-7.

now the dominant discourse and why the pluralism of the 1970s is relegated to obscurity. The majority of artists found their work excluded from collections. With the return to fine-art mediums the rubric of 'experimental art' came to seem proscriptive. Artists themselves suggested that 'alternative art' offered a wider brief. But rising costs demanded artistic accountability. Aims altered significantly to respond to these significant shifts. Acquisition by museums, acceptance for the *Perspecta* or a stable in a warm dry gallery were the rewards for those who cleared the hurdles. All operated as gatekeepers to the status of the avant-garde. For those young artists straining eagerly to reach the fabled land of Oz which guaranteed fame and fortune, the alternative art spaces became the Wizards who could expedite success, by offering a good barrier position in the stalls.

My explanation of 'the 1960s crisis and aftermath' deliberately inserts the pluralism and the history of the alternative art spaces into a broader context of political, social and economic change, in order to show that the experimental art of this era was not necessarily a failure merely because it has been largely elided from museum history. Not is it indeed necessarily defunct. It was inevitable that these spaces and experimental programs would prove ephemeral. Inhibidress, or more recently Art Unit, are merely two examples of how these

communities are always dependent on the dynamism and input of particular people in the absence of guaranteed funding. But to emphasize their elision is to lose sight of their achievements. Howard Becker's analysis of *Artworlds* reveals that the isolated maverick is destined for obscurity because the work fails to get recognition at the time of production and this is precisely how Paul Taylor has characterised the Australian avant-garde prior to the emergence of pluralism in the 1970s.<sup>17</sup> The experimental art spaces mobilised the actions and discourses of the Australian avant-garde in a totally new way. Moreover, many would argue that the precepts of experimental art continue within the cultural production of post-modernism. Ian Burn emphasizes that concept art was a period of transition rather than a style because it rebelled against the institutions of art and a 'market-dominated avant-garde heritage' in an attempt to radically transform the world.<sup>18</sup> Thus, Andreas Huyssen is led to argue that, in many ways, this crisis in art continued many of the heroic traditions of modernism.<sup>19</sup> Frederick Jameson maintains that concept art irrevocably challenged the traditional concepts of the aesthetic by transcending the former boundaries of the art object to focus on the process of production. For Jameson, these new possibilities arise out

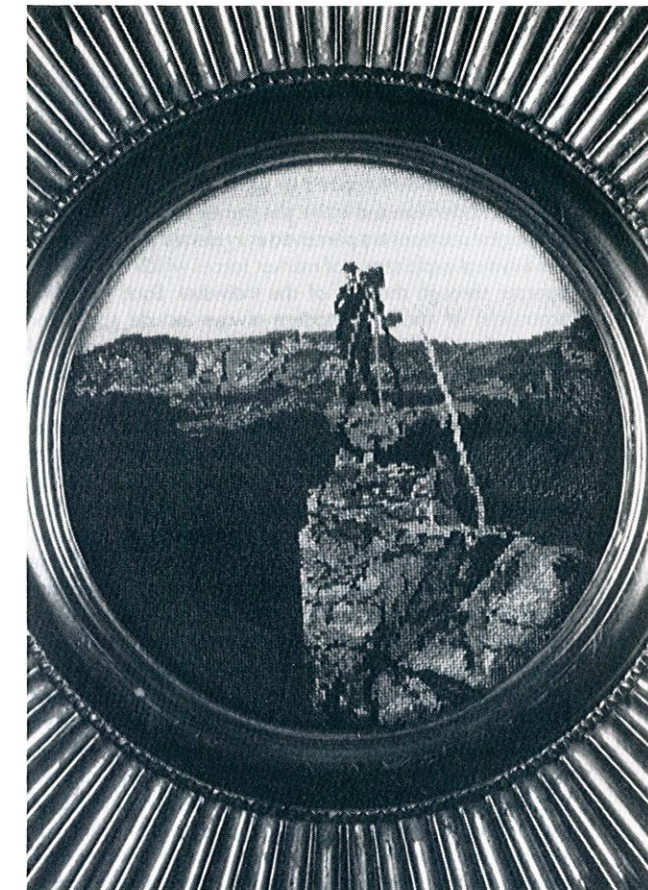
17. H. Becker, *Artworlds*, U.C.L.A., Berkeley, 1982, pp. 367-368. P. Taylor, op cit.

18. I. Burn, *The 1960s: Crisis & Aftermath*, in P. Taylor (ed.), *Anything Goes: Art in Australia 1970-1980*, *Art & Text*, South Yarra, Victoria, 1984, pp. 8-25.

19. A. Huyssen, op cit., pp. 191-3.



Adrienne Gaha, "The Vision" from "The Crossing"; Charcoal on paper, 1987.



Narelle Jubelin, "The Photographer" from "The Crossing"; Petit point, 1987.

of the completion of the process of modernisation itself and the new spatialization it imposed. Thus the 'spatial field is the only element in which we move and the only "certainty" of an experience.'<sup>20</sup> Concept art operates in a different manner from the autonomous art object. It sets up 'perceptual paradoxes that we cannot think or unravel by way of conscious abstractions, and which bring us up short against the visual occasions.'<sup>21</sup> Jameson cites the exemplary praxis of Hans Haacke to show how a political variant of concept art can redirect 'the deconstruction of perceptual categories' to the institutional structures of the art world.<sup>22</sup> Taken together, the theories of Burn, Huyssen and Jameson point to the paradox that pluralism marked the end of modernism, yet it continued many of its traditions. Its achievement was to reinterpret the avant-garde through an intellectual process which was committed to utopian possibilities thereby offering the avant-garde a separation of the political from the aesthetic.

I now want to take some of these assertions and test them out against evidence of the Australian context. Performance art such as Dale Frank's 'The Brady Bunch Colouring Book' staged at The Art Gallery of South Australia in 1979 confronted the invited audience with the need to question the structures and beliefs of which underpinned the conventions of the art world. That such an artist is no longer working in performance is not necessarily a sign of capitulation to conservatism nor should it necessarily be inferred that the work was ineffectual because it apparently failed to achieve radical social change. The importance of such work lies in the consensus of

20. E. Jameson, op cit., pp. 14-15.

21. *ibid*, p. 15.

22. *ibid*, p. 16.

new ideas and values which are communicated through the work to a wider audience. Similarly, Vivienne Binn's project 'Mothers' Memories, Others' Memories' of 1980-81 aimed to raise the consciousness of ethnic and gender groups previously excluded from the art world. In this instance it was imperative that this material be sited in community halls in opposition to the institutions of the art world. Such a project could easily be dismissed as transitory and peripheral. But for one participant, the film-maker, Lalenne Jayamanne, this project was a catalyst which instigated a return to ethnic origins as the source for a personal direction.<sup>23</sup>

In many ways the return to fine-art traditions by contemporary artists appears to confirm the demise of pluralism but in fact this work is predicated on the same concerns and values of earlier process work. In this way indirect links can be found between Vivienne Binn and the collaborations of Narelle Jubelin and Adrienne Gaha in 'The Crossing' which interject a feminine presence into the writing of history and travel and question the romantic response to the landscape.

Similarly, the photographs of Helen Grace's 'The Xmas Dinner Series' of 1979 focused on the meaningless repetition of domestic rituals and Jacky Redgate, in the photographic series 'WORK-TO-RULE', exposed the duality of sterility and beauty present within mass production. From this discussion we see that the artists of the 1970s took a radical position in opposition to the status quo and this indeed gives a particular style to their work. By contrast the practice of contemporary artists can choose either to follow this tradition or use decon-

23. L. Jayamanne, pers. comm. 17 March, 1989.

struction theories to infiltrate existing systems. Hence, a position of radicalism is chosen by artists but the style of radicalism will be determined by the context in which the artist is working.

The post-modern appears to signal the end of the heroic ideals of modernism and with it the demise of the avant-garde. Ideological positions are perceived as irrelevant and in place we see a cynical exploitation of market forces which continue to operate through the cult of the individual. Such 'totalising account(s)' of the post-modern always include space for various forms of oppositional culture: those of marginal groups, those of radically distinct residual or emergent cultural languages.<sup>24</sup> As a cultural dominant, post-modernism co-exists with these 'other' resistant heterogeneous forces which it has the vocation to subdue and incorporate.<sup>25</sup> Yet this paper has also brought forward evidence which suggests that the practices of conceptual art evade these paradigms because it is post-modern yet it can also be political and oppositional. Conceptual art offers an alternative to the return to nostalgia and the reworking of cultural traditions. It brings with it the possibility that the utopian could be re-invented to leave behind its original association with left-wing socialism to take up a personal responsibility for the future. This kind of cultural production would work within the tradition of Heartfield and Haacke to devise selective strategies which would concern themselves with aesthetic, moral and political intervention, continuing to critically question the distinctions and links between high art, popular culture and mass production, to assert feminist and ethnic alternatives which may alter any aspect of everyday life: nature, cities, culture, or education for instance.<sup>26</sup> Of course, this kind of work would necessitate that artists abdicate from the cult of the personality modelled upon the *flaneur*. Instead artists will need to continually shift position to adopt strategic guerilla tactics, sidestepping and infiltrating bureaucratic and institutional procedures in order to gain space for ideas. For this they will need the continuation and co-operation of the alternative art spaces.

24. E. Jameson, op cit., p. 17.

25. *ibid.*

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## CATALOGUE OF Artist Run Initiatives IN N.S.W. IN 1989

# CATALOGUE OF Artist Run Initiatives IN N.S.W. IN 1989\*

## A.R.I.

• A loose organisation of representatives from artist-run initiatives in N.S.W. who meet for the purpose of networking and discourse • Established in 1987, it meets approximately once a month at different venues • Currently involved in organising the Endangered Spaces project and events during Perspecta.

## A.R.O.

• PO. Box 709, Lismore • Established June 1988. Current space folded, will have a new venue soon • Run by an informal group organisation of young artists and students and helped by the Friends of the Regional Gallery • Select work for exhibition by proposal • Aim to provide exhibition space for emerging artists, to connect artists and crafts people in the region with the wider A.R.I. network, to put out a publication, to create a forum for discussion of current and local issues.

## ART ARENA INC.

• Upstairs Central Chambers Building, 15/157 Crown St, Wollongong. PO. Box 1416, Wollongong, N.S.W. 2500 Thursday 4-8pm, Friday-Sunday 10am-4pm • Established May 1984, currently with 13 members and a management committee elected at annual general meetings • An artist run co-op with studio and workshop and darkroom areas for paying members as well as a gallery available to members and the community. The gallery receives assistance from the Australia Council • Nondiscriminatory policies. Aims to foster growth of the arts in the Illawarra region and act as a support group for artists.

## ART BULLETIN

• 2nd Floor, 27 Abercrombie St, Chippendale 2008, (02) 698 4439 • Established 1984 as a bi-monthly calendar of alternative art events in Sydney and produced and distributed by 2 people for its 1st 2 years. Currently produced by 5 people and containing a calendar in broadsheet poster format, an 'Open File' column for general information, and a photographic space called 'Foton' • Financed through corporate, institutional and government sponsorship of individual issues, and collaboration occasionally with other arts organisations like Artworkers Union. Increasingly financed through advertising.

## ARTHAUS

• 20 Palmer Lane, Darlinghurst 2010, (02) 33 4116. Wednesday - Sunday 11am-6pm • Established as the Butchers Exhibit in 1981, and run by an artists co-op, then taken over by the City Art Institute's S.R.C., now run by a separate committee • A gallery for exhibitions, multi-media, performance and poetry evenings • Nondiscriminatory policies, preference for group

or 2-person shows • Funded by rents paid by artists and small commission on works sold, and financial support for special projects from C.A.I. S.R.C.

## ARTLET

• 314 Abercrombie St, Chippendale 2008, (02) 699 3669 • Started by the Director in 1986 as window space gallery allowing 24-hour viewing, based on artists' self promotion • Financed through rentals.

## ARTWORKERS UNION

• Howard O'Farrell Building, Rear Suite, First Floor, 190 Cumberland St, The Rocks 2000. PO. Box A509, Sydney South 2000, (02) 27 7610 • Started 1979 as a grass roots organisation to improve artists' working conditions through drawing up artist/gallery contracts, publicising health and safety issues, working for affirmative action for women, legal issues like copyright, etc. • After a history of voluntary labour, the Union had intermittent part time staff in 1984 and 1988 and in 1989 will have a full time administrative assistant, a part time industrial officer and a part time research officer on grants from the V.A.C.B., the C.C.D.U., and the N.S.W. Ministry of the Arts • Disseminates information in various media: leaflets, Artworkers News (now quarterly), broadsheets, booklets, reports, videos, slide kits • Currently in the process of achieving official union registration.

## AVAGO

• Front fence, 162 City Road, University of Sydney, c/- Artworkshop, 154 City Road, Uni. of Sydney 2006, (02) 692 3115 • Started 1983, closed 1984, re-established 1986. The fourth version of the original Avago in Macdonald St, Paddington. A window box exhibition space for solo or group installations of any kind • Financed by Uni. of Sydney.

## BACK BAR

• Paddington Inn Hotel, Oxford St, Paddington, (02) 358 1773 • Started 1988. A gallery in a pub, open to anyone without rent or commission. 6-week shows.

## BOOMALLI ABORIGINAL ARTISTS' CO-OPERATIVE LTD.

• 18 Meagher St, Chippendale 2008 • Started 1987 • Co-operative organisation • Aims to provide exhibition space for Aboriginal artists and to present aspects of Aboriginal cultural activities to a wider audience • Finance from the Aboriginal Artists Board and the Ministry of the Arts, and the Visual Arts/Craft Board.

## CAMERA LUCIDA

• 317 Abercrombie St, Chippendale 2008. PO. Box A686, Sydney South 2000. (02) 799 6473 and (02) 339 9551 • Began in the early 1980s as a shopfront window photographic and installation exhibition space • Free venue with 2-week shows. Nondiscriminatory policies. Aims to show work with a community and socio-political relevance • No financial support.

## DISPOSALS WORKSHOP AND ARTSPACE

• 116 Fitzmaurice St, Wagga Wagga, (069) 22 2589 • Run by a 3-person collective on an informal basis. Aims to provide exhibition space for local artists plus workshop space for the collective. No funding.

## DRIVE-IN ART

• 11 Boundary St, Rushcutters Bay, (02) 360 5236 • Opening in April 1989. Informal organisation with seven members • Located in an old garage to cater for artists working in all mediums, and emerging artists. Venue for Long Bay Prisoners. Aims to be stimulating and entertaining • No funding.

## ELIZABETH STREET STUDIOS

• 583 Elizabeth St, Redfern 2016, (02) 698 1582 • Started 1982 as a work and living space for artists. Occasional informal exhibitions. No funding.

## E.M.R.

• 30 Renwick St, Redfern, (02) 698 9184 • Started as studios in 1985 and including a gallery in 1988 • Aims 'to survive as long as we can' and to provide studio and exhibition space for artists • Selection for gallery based on submissions.

## FIRST DRAFT INC.

• 2nd Floor, 27 Abercrombie St, Chippendale 2008, (02) 698 4439 • Started as studios in 1983 and the gallery built in 1986. Co-ordinated by a 4-person committee for the first 2 years, and then a new 4-person committee for the next 2 years • Selection of work based on proposals, open to variety of media, nondiscriminatory, affirmative action for women, for less established artists, and alternative to commercial mainstream • Financed by rentals and administration grants from Visual Arts/Craft Board.

## GALAVANT

• Cnr Watkins and Wilson Sts, Newtown: 110 Wilson St, Newtown 2042, (02) 51 5679 • Started 1988 as a small window-box gallery run by adjoining household for the use of friends and neighbours, not necessarily artists • Informal organisation, 3-week shows • Creativity as part of everyday life; all art as political. 'Galavant is a completely unauthorised space, we have no permission for what we do, no credentials as artists or critics, no funding, no official links with any institution or authoritative body, and no need for any of these things.'

## GALERIE CONTANTINOPE

• 55 Uriarra Rd, Queanbeyan 2420, (062) 97 5481. Intermittent weekends 10am-6pm • Began 1988 as an exhibition and performance and run by 2 people • No funding.

## GALLERIE NEW ART

• 314 Abercrombie St, Chippendale 2008. PO. Box 338 Royal Exchange, (02) 699 3669 • Run by 2 people to sponsor and market and tour work. Currently working in unison with Artlet.

## THE GUNNERY

• 57 Cowper Rd, Woolloomooloo, (02) 358 1773 • Established 1985 as a large collective living/working/rehearsal/exhibition space. Squatting in an empty government building • Organised informally by all the participants • Has a cinema and theatres for public use. Not only for artists. No funding. The building's use is currently under discussion by the government.

## INNER CITY CLAYWORKERS CO-OPERATIVE GALLERY

• Cnr St Johns Rd and Darghan Sts, Glebe, (02) 692 9717 • Started 1982 to provide exhibition space for clay work • Run by a co-operative of 15 members. Operates as a meeting place for clayworkers.



The Window.

\*This listing is incomplete due to the difficulty in contacting some A.R.I.s due to shifting venues and memberships.

#### FIG

• City Art Institute, Albion Ave, Campus, Paddington, c/- Media Store, (02) 339 9545 • Started 1988 on the model of CROW, a previous student organisation • Run informally by a group of students from C.A.I. who curate and advertise exhibitions of fringe and media art installation and performance works by students and artists • About 8 events held throughout year in the media area of the Institute • Subsidised by S.R.C. and cover charges.

#### POST-SQUARED

• Top Floor, 431 Elizabeth St, Surry Hills 2010, (02) 212 2078 • Started in 1985 as a series of printed artworks, then as producer of magazine *A Catalogue*, then as an exhibition space. A 2-person initiative • 431 is for studio space, work-space, and exhibitions. Post-Squared produces *A Catalogue* and offers design consultation to other galleries • These initiatives are self-financed.

#### RONDEAU

• 80 Brown St, Newtown, (02) 550 3231. Thursday-Sunday 12-6pm • Began 1988 under its present director as an exhibition space with 24-hour viewing window frontage • A rental space for solo or group shows.

#### STREET LEVEL INC.

• 213 High St, Penrith 2750, (047) 21 4690. Wednesday-Saturday 11am-5pm (Thurs 11am-9pm), Sunday 12-4pm • Started 1988 to provide a space for emerging contemporary artists in Sydney's West and to make contemporary art accessible to local community • Exhibitions and performances, forums, fundraising events, and socials, discussions of exhibitions, workshops, participation in administrating gallery • Currently run by 3 co-ordinators and an executive committee with a supportive membership of 13 • Financed by an administration grant from the V.A.C.B. and membership fees.

#### STUDIO 27

• Top floor, 27 Abercrombie St, Chippendale 2008, (02) 698 9540 • Started 1980 as studios and continues to operate effectively with a co-ordinator and informal co-operative meetings • Provides workspace for nine artists.

#### SUPER 8 FILM GROUP

• P.O. Box 424, Kings Cross 2011, (02) 332 4674 • Started 1979 • Resource for Super 8 film makers to pool equipment, as a networking group, to tour screenings and organise festivals • Run by a management committee • Funded by the Australian Film Commission and now has paid officers.

#### SYLVESTER STUDIOS

• 10 Renwick St, Redfern, (02) 319 3218 • Established 1985 as studios and gallery started in 1988 • Organised by a group of 5 to 7 people • Rental space for emerging artists (no commissions) and currently 11 studios • Establishment and administration grants from V.A.C.B.

#### ULTIMO PROJECT

• 1 Wigram Lane, Glebe, (02) 552 1910 • Started in 1987 to act as a pressure group on the government to provide secure studio and living spaces for artists and facilities for the wider arts community • Co-operative of 20 members • Funded by the V.A.C.B. to make submissions to the Housing Department.

#### VIRTUAL OBJECT

• P.O. Box 1032, Darlinghurst 2010, (02) 264 1981 • Started 1986 to examine the relationship between science and art, to attempt to bridge the gap, and to examine the politics of the utilisation of technology in art • Run by an informal collective with working subgroups. Financed by members' contributions • Organises exhibitions and produces catalogues. Meetings act as forums for ideas.

#### THE WINDOW

• 62 Erskine St, Wynyard, (02) 290 3076 • Started 1988 as a shop front gallery with one co-ordinator • For experimental artists, installation work, exposure for women.

#### THE WORKS GALLERY

• City Art Institute, Albion Ave Campus, Paddington 2021. P.O. Box 259, Paddington 2021, (02) 339 9555 ext. 597. Monday-Saturday 11am-5pm • Started 1987 as a student gallery • Run by a 5-person committee and one co-ordinator • Aims to provide professional environment for students of C.A.I. to gain experience in gallery practices. Student shows, emerging artists, and student exchange shows within Australia and overseas • Fee charged for exhibiting plus a commission.



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