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A love letter from afar Talia Smith

I first visited Enjoy in 2012 with the Tautai Pacific Arts Trust. I took in the work of Jude Robertson's show Illuminated before nearly taking a publication that I mistakenly thought was for free. This was the beginning of my friendship with Enjoy, across different cities and now countries.

The following year, my first post-art school, I applied for a show. As a recent graduate, Enjoy represented a well-needed accessible exhibition space. The diverse program of artists and exhibitions alongside publications—both online and physical—and public programmes was impressive. Enjoy was a place that I wanted to see my work in.

The role of an artist-run initiative (ARI) is incredibly important to artists, especially to recent graduates. It is a space to experiment, to grow and to create a bridge between the dreaded post-university art life and the real world. However idealistic, they are never free from complications either from outside forces—funding cuts, eviction, rental increases—or from within the actual model of the space—only perpetuating a certain 'scene' or showing friends of friends of friends. With their generally limited shelf life, it often means that another will pop up in its stead, challenging its predecessor.

Although there is no exact recipe for ARIs, there are also exceptions to the 'rules'—spaces that are longer lasting, Enjoy being one of them. Admirable in its longevity and commitment to providing a platform for emerging artists, Enjoy is an example of a model that is consistently changing, shaped by two staff members and a

board of trustees who change regularly, ensuring that there is always room for new perspectives.

After living in New Zealand for twenty nine years I now reside in Sydney, Australia. There are similarities between Australia and New Zealand, particularly across funding for the arts—or lack thereof. Currently, the arts sector in Australia is under attack from the government, with an estimated \$300 million lost to the arts sector since Tony Abbott was elected in 2013.

These funding cuts and the resulting changes have affected smaller arts organisations and emerging practitioners the most, as ARIs and initiatives such as Next Wave Festival in Melbourne—which supports emerging artists and curators—have received little to no funding. The defunding of these incredibly important organisations—organisations that have been strong leaders in showcasing and nurturing emerging arts practices—has had a great effect on the sector as a whole. Without these platforms where can we, as artists or curators, gain experience? Where can we make mistakes that we learn from? How can we reflect on what we make?

These questions are beginning to be addressed within the ARI community. With a focus on pop up spaces or using online channels as an affordable alternative, the traditional gallery space that we have known has started to change in response. In Melbourne recently, a group of students got together and hosted a mini art fair in an abandoned hotel over a weekend. In Auckland there was a pop up show inside of a Honda Accord, and as part of the most recent Auckland Art Fair an ARI had a stall despite not being a commercial gallery. Perhaps now the ARI will become a support network for other smaller arts organisations whose futures are now in doubt.