

The situation seems to be that although the economic hard times have hit the art buying public, the dole is being used as a sort of mini-arts council grant by artists who might otherwise be working full time at something else on pay, and who now work full time art making on subsistence level. This goes for new spaces too.

There's not enough gallery space for the young and experimental artists and there is the dole to keep a body while it runs an alternative space. It is difficult to know if the emergence of confident new work which breaks from the rather conservative 'get a style and sell it' attitude which prevailed until recently is a result of the recession or whether the work and spaces would have emerged in any case.

The Spaces:

Closet Artists Gallery

April 1980 - October 1982

520 Queen St, Auckland - that's the main street of the city. Rent \$50.00 a week but halved because the site was an old house and gallery man, Ray Castle lived upstairs. He ran the place alone till end of first year and was joined by Grant McIntosh.

A quote: "A lot of traditional dealer galleries relate to art like some kind of sacred object. The human quality is often missing; these art houses have become disconnected from the real purpose of the socio-economic community, from which authentic art results."

And another: "The word closet relates to the mostly locked-up nature of this country. There is a lot of feeling and pioneering creativity here - but it is repressed and locked away." 4.

The gallery space was not a neutral environment but like a living-room - highly coloured walls and visual distractions of fire-places, window frames and stairways. 2

Shows at the gallery include: 'Funny Picture' - local adult cartoon and animation (with video display)

Work by prison inmates; by patients in psychiatric hospitals, art clothing, Phrophets of Taranaki - museum like piece on inventors and mystics. Taking art to the people: shows at the Globe Hotel - an Auckland bar, and in the Lido Cinema in a suburb.

The Artists' Co-op

31,000 square feet in an old wool-store building in Wellington functioned as artists' studios and art space from late 1978 to 1980. With an establishment grant from the arts council, mostly involving performance and conceptual work with seminars and workshops and the provision of space for visiting artists, this was the brainchild/storm of Ian Hunter, helped by Barry Thomas, Eva Yuen, Ross Boyd and Terry Handscombe. (based on New Zealand EAF)

Barry Thomas planted a cabbage patch, in such a way as to spell the word 'cabbage' on a demolition site in the centre of town: it grew, engendered other activities on the site, and was ceremoniously harvested during a week long festival.

ANZART 1

Grew out of the Woolshed idea as Ian Hunter expanded his dream of connecting New Zealand artists to the rest of the world. Took place in August of 1981, in Christchurch, and hosted many Australian artists. The Exchange continues, obviously, here in Hobart, and also in The Geoff Lloyd Exchange with South Australia. These enterprises have nothing to do with the economic climate and everything to do with the desperate need for communicating art ideas with a greater number of colleagues than is possible in a small population such as exists in N.Z. Mixed reaction from the artists - for some fear the loss of their individuality and the creep of some terrible international virus "sameness", into their work.

F.I.

An art event in November 1982, Wellington. In a factory space, stimulat-

ing interesting responses by artists unaccustomed to designing works for spaces other than the trad white wall gallery; and a welcome opportunity for exhibiting with others for those installation and performance artists who generally have to create their own work environment outside the system - for instance Andrew Drummond, who has done work before in a factory: a meat-works, or in outdoor sites, such as the marshes of Aramoana - the threatened land near Dunedin, projected as an aluminium smelter.

The impetus for Ian Hunter, was, as before, the recognition of the lack of communication between artists in the country - no artists' newsletter, no artists' union which attracts artists from all over. Plus the feeling that artists need spaces in which to present their ideas without the restrictions of a curated space, and therefore must take responsibility for raising funds and organising. F.l. therefore became a training experience for artists to learn to negotiate with the business community. Administrative costs were kept to a minimum, artists received the bulk of the budget.

Anzart and Fl and now Anzart II, provide a much needed arena on the artists' own terms for debating as well as exhibiting, something that doesn't seem to happen to the same degree in discussion following talks at the public galleries.

The other important aspect is the mixed-media one: artists from the field of dance and music working in an informed and experimental way, combine with visual artists so that all can expand the possible limits of their own work areas. F.l. also included a women artists' seminar, of a kind ^{occurring} ~~seen~~ only within the well established Women's Gallery, or Assoc of Women Artists, in Auckland, prior to this.

TACO

Formed in 1981 in Taranaki by artists, in response to the system of adjudication by the local public art gallery for its exhibitions.

I quote Tom Mutch, one of the artists of the co-op: "As people came to

to collect their rejected works from the Govett ^{Brewster's} ~~water's~~ ^{aranaki} Review they were asked on the footpath at the gallery entrance, would they like to exhibit their work at St. Josephs Hall in 'Renonsense I'". TACO became legal, was gifted a factory in which to work, membership up from 9 to about 14 now, and an exhibition every 6 months. Now a studio/ art space has been rented right in town. Documents relating to the life of TACO have been brought to Hobart by two of the artist members.

100m²

Until 100m², 51 Federal St, Auckland was opened by Frank Stark in February 1980, artists gave performances in either dealer or public galleries: this space was used mainly for performance and installation works, yet changed its function depending on how the artist wished to use it. Frank funded the space himself with a small establishment grant from QEII Arts Council, of \$1500.00. This policy of giving establishment grants allow for a shortfall in the budget, but such spaces are not funded in an on-going way. The artist/organisers burn themselves out after a year or two and the whole process has to be initiated again by a newcomer. In the case of 100m² it continued to function under the direction of Frank Stark until December 1981, after which he moved to work in Wellington and Mary-Louise Browne took over as caretaker of the space until its inevitable closure in March 1982. It had always operated as a breakeven proposition with the shortfall coming from Frank's own pocket. The main factor in closing 100m² was to do with a lack of time rather than a lack of money ie. Frank was unable to mind the building during the day and earn a living at the same time.

The Womens' Gallery

Exhibitions were co-ordinated by the Christchurch Women Artists' group (started by Haether McPherson back in 1974). Three of the group: Marion Evans, Anna Keir and Bridie Lonée, who met at Joanna Paul's directed exhibition of Diaries in 1977 opened the Womens' Gallery in Wellington in 1979.

The activities have been very wide, every media, and a range of workshops. Also, importantly ^{for} from the artist who is attempting to find ways to articulate a language to cover experiences not previously communicated in art forms, the gallery presented ^s issues which concern women as themes about which to work. This ^{gives} gave women, and not

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only those who considered themselves "artists" permission to delve and express and to search out new forms for that communication. Some of the exhibitions: Women and Violence, Maori Womens' Art, Mothers, Sexuality, Political Posters, Take the Toys From the Boys (an anti-nuclear exhibition).

The Gallery has had changes in its collective and a change of venue. After a period given more to meetings by women outside the arts, the gallery is commencing a programme of exhibitions which examine changes in the images of women in the last decade.

The criteria for art in which the formal qualities are of top priority has been challenged by the Womens' Gallery in a deep and radical way, that has not been of great significance to artists not involved with it. They realise that womens' experience is relevant, but not that the process of identifying and analysing that experience is changing the way in which art is being made.

There is some questioning as to the need for the gallery's continued existence in Wellington. In Auckland the women artists have the use of regular gallery venues (Outreach, funded by the town council, and other spaces rented for specific projects especially installations made by collectives) but the Gallery has seen the return of Marion Evans and seems set to continue its unique work: making womens' experience visible in whatever form the women choose (as opposed to the choice of what regular galleries call "art")

The Gallery is involved in book publishing ventures both children and adult.

A full description and photo document is available at Anzart.

Red Metro

A new space in Dunedin opened last year - another instance of dole income being put to use a grant - the government gets value from its lowest paid workers - it is conceived as an alternative space and yet is covering costs by sales. Artists are eager to work in the space - a number of artists at Anzart have been the first to exhibit in this space.