

# Why artist-run space?

Brett Jones

Utopia is not a kind of place but a kind of time, those all-too-brief moments when one would not wish to be anywhere else.<sup>1</sup>

It seems like an odd thing for an artist or a group of artists to do, that is, set up and run a small organisation. Most artists complain that they do not have enough time for their own practice due to other competing commitments, such as paid work. So why do they want to put more time into something that takes them away from the studio and does not provide an income source, and furthermore, can be costing them money? Why do they persist in starting these cooperatives, informal groups and small organisations loosely gathered under the banner of 'artist-run initiative'? The work of an artist-run space can be very demanding and stressful as the ambitions of the organisation increase. There are the legal responsibilities of dealing with property leases and receiving government funds, not to mention business activity statements, insurance, promotion, minding the gallery, updating the website and endless administration. So why do we do it?

The most obvious reply is concerned with creating opportunity in the face of limited opportunities as a form of self-determination. In simple terms, there are many artists and they need places to present their ideas and work; there are simply not enough commercial galleries and contemporary art spaces to accommodate everyone. But this is the obvious (and at times somewhat misleading) answer, as I believe there are other factors at work here that are more connected to the creative psyche of the artist and social processes. Setting up an artist-run space is not just a matter of supply and demand.

## EMERGENCE

Most artist-run spaces are established by artists soon after leaving art school. In this sense, artist-run spaces may also be a replacement for the peer support mechanisms found within educational institutions. The education environment is also premised on notions of feedback, mentoring and peer critique. Thus, an understanding of peer support and the importance of networks is conferred at art school. However, art schools have difficulty accommodating collaborative practices, with individual work still being the preferred mode of practice. This is at odds with the cooperative and collaborative practices common in the art world, as well as being the basis for the operation of most artist-run spaces.

Upon leaving art school — which nowadays could easily involve five years or more of study — artists understandably seek identifiable structures that will transfer some of the support networks into a professional context. These networks, formally or informally organised through artist-run spaces, provide a form of professional legitimisation in the absence of signs marking out just what the

career of an artist is meant to be. Involvement in an artist-run space can be very useful in representing the interests of its members. It can be seen as supporting and enhancing their professional development.

These issues of post-art-school support are also why artist-run spaces are often recognised by the broader industry as spaces for 'emerging artists'. Funding bodies, especially the Australia Council, view artist-run spaces (artist-run initiatives) as self-help organisations that are very effective in filling the void after art school. Because funding bodies effectively represent and implement government arts policy — which effects other institutions, such as art schools — the correlation between artist-run spaces and emerging artists has become broadly accepted. This schema fits within a business model of organisation scale and funding level. It means that because artist-run spaces are indexed to support emerging artists, their funding levels are proportionate to this career level, in the same way that there are different levels for new work grants.

There is an implicit understanding that artists will only be able to maintain their involvement in an ARI for a set period of time before they must return to their individual practices. It is of no coincidence that, in terms of art-life balance, the best time to do this is in one's younger years. This is compounded by the fact that artist-run spaces rarely pay staff wages; they are generally volunteer organisations. Thus, there is no economic future for an artist being involved with an ARI, another reason for the high turnover of members.

Artist-run spaces are, however, moving in different directions beyond this typical, industry-endorsed model. Organisations such as West Space are referring to models overseas that work more closely with artists throughout their careers to generate new ideas and experimental projects. This partnership model allows for more sustained and progressive engagement within a mutually supportive context. The emerging artists initiative model will always have an important role, but the industry must embrace the fact that artist-run organisations can be many other things as well. Constraining them into prescribed models is not healthy for Australian contemporary art.

### SPACE AS IDEOLOGY

In the 1960s and 1970s, the term 'alternative space' was used to describe non-commercial spaces that showed the newest and most experimental developments in contemporary art, frequently based around conceptual, hybrid and temporal performance practices. 'Alternative' meant an alternative to museums and commercial galleries. Alternative spaces included spaces that received ongoing government funding (e.g. the Australian Centre for Photography, the Experimental Art Foundation and the Institute of Modern Art) but also spaces that received no funding, or project funding only, such as artist-run spaces and institutional spaces (e.g. George Paton Gallery). The 'alternative space' term was also used by studio-based organisations such as Creative Space and even magazines such as *Art Network*.

The battle over funding for organisational space, with its associated terminology, reached a critical period with the development and establishment of Artspace in Sydney (1981–83). This was the point when the Australia Council established its policy for flagship organisations for contemporary art in each major city, to be called ‘contemporary art spaces’.<sup>2</sup> Artists fought to make Artspace artist-run but ultimately failed.<sup>3</sup> The establishment of this national network of contemporary art spaces meant that artist-run spaces would be relegated to low-level funding through project-based programs.

The important thing about this decisive period in the early 1980s is that it ushered in a new kind of politicisation of artists’ space that has set the tone for debates surrounding funding to this day. Previous ideological disputes were more about the representation of experimental art practices in public galleries. The debate then moved onto the role government had in shaping arts policy and therefore opportunities for artists. Artists realised they were now being ‘managed’ by an arts bureaucracy whose mission was to professionalise the sector. This meant artist-run spaces unwittingly became the alternative in the 1980s as a result of government arts policy.

The idea of the alternative space has now become somewhat redundant, because artist-run spaces have had to subscribe to arts policy to receive government funding, including project funding.<sup>4</sup> They are now recognised as an important part of the visual arts infrastructure in Australia. This has resulted in ‘professionalism’, once referred to in the pejorative in the 1970s and 1980s, flowing through to artist-run spaces. Yet there are those who cling to the attitude that the 1970s were the golden age of artist-run activity.<sup>5</sup> Professionalism is not synonymous with less options or freedom. It is also not necessarily akin to de-politicisation or co-option. Artist-run organisations today have evolved out of these debates, focusing their quest for an ideological space within their organisations. This internalisation can potentially lead to a more critical assessment of practice and its role in broader social and political movements. In other words, ideology has been absorbed into operational structures and artistic programs. I believe artist-run spaces can now make political statements through the art they choose to support and how their organisations are run.

While it is still necessary to engage government funding agencies in debate about funding to artist-run spaces, it is part of a discussion that is connected to a range of issues confronting artist-run organisations today. While change has been slow during the 14 years I have been involved with artist-run spaces, there have been positive developments that bode well for these organisations. The ideological challenges facing artist-run organisations now are concerned with translating the debates and lessons of the past into more sophisticated solutions. Using professionalism as a tool will allow artist organisations to support and explore more radical approaches to art practice.

## GROUPS OF INDIVIDUALS

Artists must negotiate a social duality of being both an independent agent and a collective member. Through socialisation and learning systems, they generally develop fiercely individualistic ways of relating to the world. Their identity as an artist is based on their uniqueness as an individual. Yet they are also very adept at collective work and group activity when they want to be. They may even crave group affirmation and distinguish their individual identity through group settings. These are normal socialising processes, but artists go through learning systems that reinforce notions of individuality above being a team player, as espoused in sport, for example. Even the general public expects artists to be individuals that come from a strange land they cannot fathom, yet believe this is essential to the unique imagination of the artist. Mainstream art history, to which the general public have a smattering of references, is based on the individual's creative struggle and uncompromising pursuit, i.e. Van Gogh, Picasso, Pollock and, locally, the Heide phenomenon with Tucker, Nolan and Percival.

This social duality puts the artist in an interesting position when it comes to organising a group of peers for an artist-run space while maintaining an individual practice. The relations of the group are based on individual aspirations — how their practice fits the organisation and what they get out of it — as well as group dynamics that provide an organisational or collective voice. The attitudes and values of the individual may not always be in accord with the group. Tensions may be generated between the group and an individual, or between individuals within the group. Some of these tensions may be interpersonal, while others may be ideological or practical. If these tensions can be managed and utilised productively, then the organisation can benefit. This is where the difficulty lies, as the individual may not differentiate their individualist aspirations from those of the organisation. There may be confusion as to what is for personal benefit and what is for the good of the organisation. One could argue that these issues are a natural part of any collective or organisation based on volunteer time, but in the case of artist-run spaces these tensions need to be reconciled.

Artist-developed and coordinated projects are a good way of reconciling a creative practice with an administrative framework. For example, the Organisation for Cultural Exchange and Disagreement (oCED) project asked Canadian and Australian artists to respond to a series of issues raised in a conversation between the Canadian coordinator Jonathan Middleton and I, prompting them to 'ask questions about the bureaucratic/administrative overlay on the development of creative ideas and their modes of formation common amongst artist co-operatives, artist-run centres, and corporate or institutional identities used by artists.'<sup>6</sup>

It is often difficult to distinguish between individualist intentions and organisational good, as many artist-run spaces are generally led by their founders who also perform most of the work. Given that artists expect they will receive career benefits from being involved with an artist-run space, in lieu of the volunteer

time and effort, it is hardly surprising that the interests of the key individuals are collapsed into the interests of their organisation.

As Australian artist-run spaces mature, we are witnessing the development of better internal protocols and a higher expectation of their accountability to artists, audiences and funding bodies. This is most clearly visible with organisations that are moving into recurrent funding programs and subsequently can pay staff, but it is also visible in spaces running for longer periods on a purely volunteer basis. What has not been stemmed is the rate at which artists leave their organisations. Generally, artists will stay involved for about three years before moving on, and yet, positively, this no longer necessarily represents the demise of the organisation. Importantly, the founders are prepared to hand on the organisation to another group of artists who may take it in a new direction. Over the last couple of years amongst Melbourne artist-run spaces, there have been entirely new committees taking over at BUS, Seventh, Blindsight, TCB and Platform. Importantly, four of these spaces have been running for more than six years. This understanding that the organisation has a life and role beyond the founders' aspirations demonstrates that artists are recognising that artist-run spaces are not simply vehicles for individual aspirations, that they have a responsibility to artists *per se*, and to the industry itself.

So how do artist-run spaces deal with key members leaving, with regards to the organisations' ongoing development and the passing on of organisational knowledge? If there is overlap of members departing with those arriving then the knowledge can be passed on, yet the history of more established artist-run spaces around the world indicates that a stable board or committee membership will enable a more robust and sustainable organisation to be developed. It does depend on the history of the organisation and what its intentions are. In the case of First Draft in Sydney, it is constituted that a new board of 'artist directors' will be appointed every two years. This has ensured new networks flow through the organisation, but it has also kept it at an operating level that cannot evolve. This level of operation could be considered commensurate to exhibiting primarily emerging artists, which in turn fits government funding policy towards artist-run spaces.

### TRUE BELIEVERS

It is ironic that there are workshops<sup>7</sup> and professional practice classes devoted to establishing your own artist-run space. Ironic, in the sense that the DIY approach of the unskilled (in terms of administration/business skills), spontaneous and reactionary formation of an artist-run space now has prescribed curricula like: 'How to make a kids' cubby house' at Bunnings. What often escapes when you start giving artists instructions on setting up their own artist-run space is *belief*. Why are you doing it? I mean, why are you *really* doing it? This is not to deny that artists may not be in a position to fully understand why they set up their space until it has been running for a couple of years. Yet setting organisational goals



from the outset — even though they will evolve — gives the members reference points, ballast, if you like, when the honeymoon is over and the going gets tough; when devotion and goodwill gets stretched. If the members know what the organisation holds as its core values and the members live these values, then it will survive through tough times. As artist-run spaces move into the realm of artist-run institutions, the need for robust and well-articulated beliefs and values is paramount.

When West Space was established in 1993, we were reacting against a system that had become overly centred on the commercial gallery. When the recession hit around 1990, the art economy went into withdrawal with the associated pain, especially for artists. Because I emerged into this climate in 1991 with little expectation and enormous distrust of a system premised on ‘art as commodity’, many of my peers and I went about constructing our own support systems. We were reacting against the excessiveness of the 1980s, while challenging the role commercial galleries played in the support of contemporary art. In fact, we were often openly oppositional to commercial galleries, generally dismissing them outright. Setting up in the western suburbs, we were also challenging the geographic centre of art in Melbourne that was based in the inner-east and southeast; areas that were connected to the same socio-economic groups that had sown and reaped in the good times of the 1980s.

These reasons boiled down into a call to action; for artists to take responsibility for their modes of reception. We believed artists could make a difference to a system that demonstrated it was not capable of representing their best and truest interests. One has to remember the climate in which these values developed in respect of their legacy to West Space. But most importantly, these embedded values provided West Space with a belief system that continues to evolve and sharpen as the organisation matures.

An oppositional perspective also pervaded the formation of Inhibodress in 1970. Though in this time, the arguments were concerned with the indifference of public galleries, especially state galleries, to new practices in contemporary art. Additionally, the absence of a serious commercial gallery sector fuelled this group of artists — led by Mike Parr, Peter Kennedy and Tim Johnson — to establish a space that challenged conventions by presenting experimental and hybrid practices, and tested the boundaries of what goes into a gallery. Moreover, it challenged audiences to engage in process-based and cross-artform work in an environment that looked very different to other galleries then operating — the Inhibodress space was previously used as a factory for garment making; it was very unusual at that time to run a gallery in an ex-industrial space.

I asked Peter Kennedy<sup>8</sup> about the kind of impact operating an artist-run space early in his career had on the development of his practice and his attitudes to the art system. He had ‘followed an independent course of action’ that had been largely outside the commercial gallery sector. He uses terms such as ‘non-conformism, resistant perversity, residual radicalism and persistent iconoclasm’ to

describe his practice. These are provocative terms that indicate the kind of values to which Inhibodress was founded, and that continue to manifest in Kennedy's work.

The influences and experiences artists obtain from establishing artist-run organisations can have a large bearing on their practice and attitudes to the art world. As Kennedy states, 'drawing identity as an artist' is a powerful function of an artist-run space. My unequivocal experience has been that West Space has had the most significant influence on my attitudes towards the art system and, in turn, to my practice. Kennedy's claim that 'Inhibodress embodied innocence and naiveté on the one hand, and on the other political and natural cunning' rings very familiar to the founding of West Space, and probably other artist-run spaces.

I am unsure whether artist-run spaces today recognise that 'generating a friction through rubbing up against something' can be constructive. The socio-economic and political conditions of today are quite different to those of the early 1970s or early 1990s. However, there are still plenty of things that generate friction for artists both in the art system and their practice. The possibilities for artist-run organisations responding to specific issues as their reason for existence is underdeveloped in this country.<sup>9</sup> It's still up to artists to make the difference.

#### NOTES

- 1 Susan Sontag, *In America*, Picador, 2001, p 175
- 2 For more on the history of the alternative spaces and artist-run spaces in Australia see: Brett Jones, *An Ideology of Space: The formation of artist-run organisations in Australia*, 'Organisation for Cultural Exchange and Disagreement (OCEd) 2004', West Space. Also at: <http://www.westspace.org.au/editorial>
- 3 Christopher Downie, 'vAB calls scrum Spectators Delirious', *Art Network*, No. 6, 1981
- 4 Australia Council Artist-Run Initiative funding, see: <http://www.ozco.gov.au>. Also see: *Report of the Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry*, 2002 (especially pp 202–206 for how the Australia Council views artist-run organisations), [http://www.dcita.gov.au/arts\\_culture/consultation\\_and\\_submissions/cvac\\_inquiry/report](http://www.dcita.gov.au/arts_culture/consultation_and_submissions/cvac_inquiry/report)
- 5 Pat Hoffie, 'Less Options, More Expensive', *NAVA Newsletter*, March/May 2004
- 6 Organisation for Cultural Exchange and Disagreement (OCEd) 2004, West Space, p 51. This project was the second organisation project, the first being 'Organisation for Cultural Exchange and Mishap (OCEM) 2003', which was an exchange project with Para/Site Art Space in Hong Kong. For more information see: <http://www.westspace.org.au/archive/projects>
- 7 See, for example, the 2006 Adelaide Festival workshops on setting up an ARI: <http://runartistrun.blogspot.com>  
<http://www.anat.org.au/projects/mediastate/partnerprojects/ariworkshops.html>
- 8 Interview by the author with Peter Kennedy, 2 February 2007. All quotes from this interview.
- 9 See relevant organisations overseas such as:  
Superflex, <http://www.superflex.net>  
Temporary Services, <http://www.temporaryservices.org>  
N55, <http://www.n55.dk>  
AVL, <http://www.ateliervanlieshout.com>  
Tribe, <http://www.tribeinc.org>

# Conversation with Jonathan Middleton, January–February 2007

Brett Jones

**BRETT JONES:** One of the things that has been occupying my thoughts of late is the tension between individual practice (personal) and collective organisational practice (public) with artist-run spaces. Most artists necessarily have an individualist agenda that does not always sit comfortably with the group dynamics of an organisation. We witness this most directly in the limited amount of time artists will stay involved in an ARI/ARC before they must 'get back' to their practice. Even though I have written much about the notion of ARI practice being an extension of artistic practice, I understand that artists need to return to individual pursuits. Does this mean that ARIs will always be 'part-time' organisations? How can artists reconcile their organisational practice with a system that wants individuals for marketing and commodity purposes? These are rhetorical questions, but I want to ask you, in your knowledge of Canadian ARCs, how long do artists stay involved with ARCs, especially in the director/curator role? What do they do once they leave?

**JONATHAN MIDDLETON:** I'm not sure if I have a very accurate answer for your question, regarding Canadian centres. Certainly some people stay involved in ARCs for the long term (e.g. Hank Bull with Western Front), others do little stints and practise in between, and still others stay only briefly involved as staff members but then support them in other ways, sometimes sitting as board members. I would say that there is a natural turn-over/burn-out at about three to five years, but there are many exceptions to that rule.

**BJ:** So what do you think compels an artist to stay involved with an organisation that clearly competes with time for their own practice? How did you manage for the six years you were the exhibitions curator at the Western Front? How did this work impact on your own practice?

**JM:** Yes, well my own artistic practice was more or less put on hold during the six years I was at the Western Front, which I'd more or less come to terms with, especially as I was interested in curation as a form of artistic practice. But it was also one of the reasons I left the Western Front in the end. I mean there are many interesting and enjoyable aspects to working at an ARC/ARI. You're in a daily conversation with artists about art, you can meet people from all around the world and you have the opportunity to work on some really interesting projects. I believe it can be just as satisfying as any art career, so it's not surprising to me that some people would opt to stay with it for a longer period. In many ways, I haven't *really* left artist-run centres myself. The difference is that I have more time for my own projects, but of course the flipside is I don't have that steady pay cheque or quite the number of resources that the Western Front afforded.

**BJ:** I was speaking with a senior Australian artist today, Peter Kennedy, about



his involvement with what is widely regarded as the first artist-run space in Australia, Inhibodress (1970–72). This is the organisation that worked on mail art projects with several Canadian artists who became members of the Western Front. A point came up in relation to Peter's practice, that it has largely developed parallel to the commercial gallery system. He has a dealer and sometimes sells work, but does not show in commercial galleries very often, preferring contemporary art spaces, public galleries and museums. This has not been an economically prosperous path to take, but he has achieved enormous critical recognition and respect. He says that 'economic independence has amplified [his] aesthetic freedom'. By this he means that because his work has been largely outside the conventional art market — i.e. regular commercial gallery shows that sell work — he has pursued an approach to practice that he describes as 'non-conformism, resistant perversity, residual radicalism and persistent iconoclasm' and he attributes these attitudes and understandings as emerging during his time running an artist-run space. Thus, my thinking is that for artists who establish their spaces in the formative years of their practice, their experiences with negotiating the art system through their organisational practice has left an indelible mark on how they see and respond to the art world — in particular the political and bureaucratic aspects of the art system. In other words, it is quite possible that one's relationship with contemporary art and its infrastructure can be significantly shaped through one's involvement with an ARI. Moreover, one's own practice and creative ideas may also be shaped by these same experiences. These claims may provide a different understanding of the impact of ARIs than conventionally discussed. That is, artists' involvement with ARIs generate potentially a more politically savvy and skeptical relationship with the so-called art industry, and that may also be played out in artists' work. This is different to the normal career-building/professional-opportunity framework into which they are usually slotted.

**JM:** I think this plays into some of the discussion around the term 'alternative' as applied to artist-run spaces. I must confess a certain skepticism towards that term — not because I don't believe ARI/ARCs don't provide alternatives, but rather because it carries a certain dogma, and indeed even an aesthetic, that I find potentially limiting. But yes, I think that as 'parallel' systems without such direct market pressures, ARI/ARCs do allow artists to develop their practices somewhat closer to their own terms. This is incredibly important at early stages in an artist's career, but also later on. It might be interesting to note that there is a fairly widespread recognition of this role ARCs play in Vancouver, even among Vancouver's commercial dealers. When Catriona Jeffries came to speak to my class of graduating art students last semester, her message was not to rush to be represented by a dealer, but rather that the students spend some time developing their practice. Her concern was that without learning a degree of autonomy, a premature association with a dealer might ossify one's practice. Now Catriona is one of Vancouver's most successful dealers, so she may have the privilege of not rushing artists into her gallery, but it was refreshing to have that message expressed by

someone who works directly in the 'market'. As I think I've mentioned before, Vancouver has historically had a very soft art market and this has given artists a bit more space to develop their work, and I think continually raises the question of national and international exposure, since it's really not viable to maintain a practice within the city or region. ARCs here have similarly engaged and facilitated an international conversation.

**BJ:** Given that Melbourne is even further from the various conventional centres — and even de-centred centres of art — than Vancouver, the imperative for international connections for ARIs and artists should be prominent here. Yet it is curious to note that most Australian ARIs only look nationally, and perhaps to New Zealand, for their networks. I have read criticism by some Australian writers of the conventional and non-radical model to which Australian ARIs subscribe, being one based around a physical space with hire fees. While there is some substance in the notion that other models should be developed as witnessed overseas, I also think that the issue is not necessarily primarily about space when it comes to radical practices, both organisationally and artistically. It is more about providing opportunities and support mechanisms for so-called radical practices to be generated and presented. These spaces may be gallery-based, online, in public or anywhere else. My point is that it is the organisational structure that matters here, not necessarily where the organisation primarily locates its activities. New models should not just be developed because we need new models — which we may or may not — but because artists identify a different operational model to support the activities they deem important, radical, under represented, and so on. Do you have any examples in Canada where groups have responded to such a call and created different organisational structures to the recognised ARC model? How well have they been recognised and supported?

**JM:** I totally agree that new models — or old ones, for that matter — need to form in response to and according to what is needed. I mean, maybe that's an easy statement to make, but it's remarkable to me how often these structures become canonised. That is, I think there is at least a perception that the 'standard' model in Canada is a small gallery space administrated by a director or coordinator, with programming determined by a board or selection committee. I should clarify that I think this is a structure that generally serves artists and art communities quite well, but I am still struck when it is used as the 'proper' model for an artist-run centre, as though such a thing exists. Living in Vancouver, where a number of centres opt to use a curator, I'm also aware of the misperception that this model — well, properly, *these models*, as they're not all the same — is a recent development. I am constantly reminding people that the Western Front, a centre almost 34 years old, has never used committees to determine programming. Also, as Keith Wallace points out in an essay for the *Vancouver Anthology*, many of the earliest artist-run centres avoided the gallery as a de facto place for contemporary art.

So, in an attempt to answer your question, I might offer up: I'm not sure, but I think divergent models are supported reasonably well most of the time. I can

think, off the top of my head, of spaces like Artexpte in Montreal which operates as a library or archive, or Art Metropole which operates a retail store for artists' multiples. A number of centres straddle the lines between gallery and media centre. There are also organisations like Tribe in Saskatoon, which quite purposefully doesn't operate its own space, opting instead to work with other centres to exhibit the work of First Nations artists.

**BJ:** ARCs in Vancouver have changes of directors, staff and board members without affecting their ongoing operation. Do you attribute this continuity to the paying of staff, in that paid staff can provide a stable operating environment? And how much do you attribute it to a sense that the organisation has a history and a role to play that must be continued? In other words, that the organisation has a function in the support of artists and contemporary art that cannot be so easily removed. What kinds of imperatives are there for an organisation to continue operating, especially when confronted with drastic funding cuts or the departure of key members? And what about purely volunteer ARCs — how do they fare in an environment where many of their fellow organisations receive government funding?

**JM:** Well, I don't believe any organisation can hope for stability without paying their staff. Without proper remuneration, centres suffer increased rates of burn-out, and/or have difficulty attracting new and talented people to renew their centre. In terms of continued operation, I think there are some factors that play into this, the balance of which determine how, and how long, a centre continues:

- 1) Centres that develop a strong reputation, or at least a reputable history, do tend to carry on as a rule. Starting up a centre from scratch is a difficult proposition, and an existing favourable reputation makes funding — both public and private — much easier.
- 2) New staff will inherently want to put their mark on a centre. Being allowed to do so also means they will put more energy into the centre's development, which is quite crucial to a centre's longevity. Not being able to do so will generally mean an earlier departure, or the person would choose to start up a new centre rather than continue an older one.
- 3) I do think that founding members and previous staff can play a positive role helping with transitions and providing advice when solicited. I do occasionally hear of centres where staff leave suddenly — at times taking supportive communities with them. This can have a devastating effect on new staff trying to rebuild support.

**BJ:** Finally, what projects you are currently involved with that are artist-led or ARC connected? I believe a national association of ARCs has been re-established. Also, are you still involved with PAARC and publishing initiatives?

**JM:** This is a bit funny considering my last response, as most of these are unpaid, but I am currently involved with Projectile Publishing — an artist-run publishing house that publishes the *Fillip Review* — and some books, plus I am involved with the Pacific Association of Artist Run Centres (PAARC) on the re-

gional level and the Artist Run Centres and Collectives Conference on the national level, of which I am president, which keeps me fairly busy. I am editing an online ARC-related project called *ARCpost.org*, and also running a little gallery space out of my house called the Bodgers and Kludgers Co-operative Art Parlour.

For more information, see:

<http://www.bodgers-and-kludgers-cooperative-art-parlour.ca>

<http://www.paarc.ca>

<http://www.arccc-cccaa.org>

<http://www.fillip.ca>

<http://www.carcc.ca> (for a schedule of fees paid to artists when exhibiting with artist-run centres)