

It may be somewhat banal to reiterate the evergreen “two things are certain in life – death and taxes”, but while true, there is also a third – change. In the last three months there have been several that will have an impact upon the cultural landscape. The biomass that was the *Adelaide Festival of Arts* has been bonsai'd from above from seventeen days to ten, while from below it is rotting away with a million-dollar-in-the-red disease transplanted from the previous 'populist' Festival. The New South Wales Premier and Arts Minister Bob Carr announced his Government would bail out Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art with a “modest financial package” of \$3m annually for the next five years. And the Federal Government announced it would investigate the third world nature of the national visual arts and craft industry, presumably with the view of giving it much needed resuscitation. And *Broadsheet* has had a 'short back and sides'.

So, senior figures in the visual arts and craft [how did they get in here?] sector have responded enthusiastically to the announcement by the Federal Minister for the Arts, Peter McGaurin, of the Government's commitment to conduct the keenly awaited 'landmark' inquiry into the health of the visual arts and craft industry. The inquiry, speculated as a “wide-ranging and thorough assessment of the needs of the sector” will be chaired by National Gallery of Victoria Trustee and Myer Family Company Pty. Ltd. Deputy Chairman, Mr. Rupert Myer. The inquiry will “draw heavily on consultation with artists, organisations and other persons with an interest in this area”. [I'm drawing heavily on the mountain of media releases from those interested in this area – NAVA, Artspace, the Australia Council, et al]. The inquiry's terms of reference will “in the context of the creative and economic contributions made by the Australian visual arts and craft sector, identify key issues impacting on the future sustainability, development and promotion of the sector”. Furthermore it will “identify across three tiers of Government... and report on opportunities for [a] better targeting of expenditures at both organisational and individual artist level and [b] scope for improved synergies between the funding agencies to enhance the sustainability of the sector”, and be “informed” by “relevant research” undertaken by contemporary visual art and craft organisations, Australia Council research and State and Local governments.

This is all very well and good if, despite expected institutional power machinations, at the end of the day, the primary producers, that is artists, actually receive *direct* benefit from this “assessment of the needs of the sector”. But then individual artists are predominantly subservient to the machinery of the industry, like or lump, and so will have to wait 'their turn'. The phrase “the trickle down effect”, often expressed by industry types when announcements of extra funding are made, may seem to be amusing, as inherent in the equation of dollars+ artists+ “other persons with an interest in this area”, 'trickle' and 'down' are sadly too apt concerning individual artists. If the Myer inquiry results in something like a Nugent-style increase in funding to *the industry*, it should be expected that the catalysts for all this 'business' and 'cultural

goodwill' blah-de-blah, are the ones to most benefit. Also contemporary visual art organisations [whose mission is to provide opportunities to a wide spectrum of artists' experimentation and creativity on a non-profit platform] are in real terms perennially financially stressed, such that a ridiculous fraction of their post administration budget expenditure is directed towards artists, their very *raison d'etre*. With luck, they might benefit also.

Recent research by the *Visual Arts Industry Guidelines Research Project* via The University of Sydney's Power Institute, showed that the number of arts professionals has tripled in 25 years, double the annual growth rate of the general workforce. While this research also stated that arts and other cultural professionals have a higher rate of tertiary qualifications than does the general workforce, it is well known that the average artist has been on the wrong end of the food chain. The rates of pay to artists and writers suggested by the Australia Council have remained static throughout the 1990s, and remain so. Echoing this necessary re-balance of 'the equation' between artists and “other persons with an interest in this area”, former Australia Council Chair Rodney Hall recently criticised the national funding authority for its “near punitive” attitude and failure in “appropriate support to individual artists and small organisations”, as they are the very clients that “provide the only justification for the existence of such bureaucracies”. Undoubtedly, there would be no arts ministers and their bureaucratic gofers with rude salary packages, and industry powerbrokers and spindoctors, unless there were the primary producers. Like the hyperbolic success projections of the *Adelaide Festival of Arts*, the jury is out but hasn't quite left the building.

This issue of *Broadsheet* offers two perspectives on the recent MCA saga. The air has been unusually warmer in Sydney for the first half of this year, with some polemic public debate and *The Sydney Morning Herald* especially waxing hysterical. It was not only this patent animosity that disappointed MCA Director Elizabeth Macgregor in her fight for the Museum's continued existence – the lack of unified and vocal support from Sydney's artists also more than confounded her aspirations [but then one should remember the MCA's instigating cabal to understand an apathy on the part of artists, especially those west of Parramatta]. That the NSW Government has finally given a “commitment which cements the future of the MCA”, will not only allow Macgregor to do the business she has been employed to do – run a museum, but might also secure a long term domicile and point of international focus for contemporary Australian and other visual art – think non-mickey mouse scenarios like the New Tate and the Bilbao Guggenheim.

Future editions of *Broadsheet* intend to look further into the Sydney arena. This issue continues profiling South Australian artists, and their continued relationship with the international – Bronwyn Platten, who recently researched museums and collections devoted to erotic art in Japan, China, USA and the United Kingdom, and Nicholas Folland, another *Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship* recipient, who returned this year from studies in Holland.

Alan Cruickshank

EXHIBITION PROGRAM

7 – 30 September

Wallpaper Fables

Ken Bolton, Sonia Donnellan
Michael Grimm, Alison Main
Katie Moore, Jacqueline Pitman
Tim Sterling, L.E. Young
Curator Katie Moore

5 – 28 October

The Museum of Love and Romance presents The Big Horse and other stories

Bronwyn Platten

Supreme Alkaline

Warren Vance

2 – 25 November

Derek Kreckler

THE PROJECT SPACE

7 – 30 September

The Mendo Papers

Curator Alan Houghton

5 – 28 October

almost/beinah

Mark Stephens

2 – 25 November

second fix

Philip Hind, Jim Strickland,
Bianca Barling

SATELLITE EXHIBITION

Top Floor Gallery
Hindley Street, Adelaide

25 October – 4 November

Caveat

Craige Andrae, Alan Cruickshank
Jonathan Dady, Leith Elder
Nick Folland, Anton Hart
Rick Martin, Lee Salamone
Stephen Tarr

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