

Over the past forty years or so *Broadsheet* has oscillated from, at one end of the spectrum, a society newsletter, to somewhere near the other, a somewhat esoteric publication of idiosyncratic vision. In a national arts publishing arena that has sustained increased economic pressures, resulting in the inevitable disappearance of a number of publications, *Broadsheet* has in recent years accrued a greater significance – not specifically due to its continued existence – more so by its strategised development towards embracing the national visual arts industry and by way of more inviting and challenging content, alongside that of a like magazine, *RealTime*. Together, it is fair to say, *Broadsheet* and *RealTime* currently determine a succinct encapsulation of the majority sector of national contemporary art practice – of ‘cutting edge’ art and developments of currency and importance. This should be viewed by those in the industry and elsewhere as a unique and positive phenomenon. Given the problems inherent in glossy publishing – debilitating production, distribution and marketing costs, and varying policy management, it’s hardly surprising that both *Broadsheet* and *RealTime* [operating on threadbare production budgets and passionate personal staff investment], are high profile free ‘street’ magazines with targeted points of distribution, their *modus operandi* removed from the strictures of profit-making and other economic dicta – something like the difference between SBS/ABC, and Murdoch/Packer.

This aggregate cultural value is hopefully appreciated by their ‘guardians’ – the funding authorities. Terminologies such as ‘creative excellence’, ‘nurturing’ etc. are continually used by The Hierarchy in hopeful and desired projections upon The Arts and its elements. Nurturing [read at least adequate and continued arm’s length funding] is a constant reality and a bottom line necessity, as opposed to periodic interposition of politicised economics and social equalisation strategies. There has been some small comment in limited circles in recent years that *Broadsheet* might consider the publishing example set by the South Australian National Football League’s *Football Budget*, i.e. a pulp fact throwaway, with a view that sales equals income, a less-support-you-need-from-us dictum. This is to ignore the problematics [of the mechanics of selling] and the inherent positives [of being ‘free’], as stated above. For publications like *Broadsheet* and *RealTime*, ‘selling’ would be the kiss of death.

Since 2000, *Broadsheet* has been driven by a singular editorial policy that has intended to look beyond the boundaries of the parochial, to embrace the breadth of the national visual arts industry. It has endeavoured to become of more ‘interest’ to not only the visual arts mafia, but also, god forbid, the general public! It has particularly engineered the pursuit of issues of currency and relevance, engaging all other major art city centres from Perth to Darwin to Hobart to Canberra et al, in reviewing contemporary art and artist run spaces, museums and events etc. It has also exercised the firm dictum of *not* commissioning hagiography nor hyperbole upon whatever topic, from lovers, partners or equivalents, unlike other occasional sectors of the industry; therefore eschewing the pitfalls of saccharine self-indulgent ‘media release’ type texts of some past publications.

Over the past year or so *Broadsheet* has received some criticism [oh, and a little self-indulgent whining] from several ivory tower incumbents. It has nonetheless remained firm in its business – being critically analytical where appropriate, and as quoted elsewhere, has published it ‘like it is’. The latest bout of scorn, from [one of numerous] *Adelaide Festival 2002* Associate Directors, Amanda McDonald Crowley [published in this issue on page 27], suggests that *Broadsheet* exercised bias in its ‘bad reviewer selection’ and publication of its three “damning condemnations” of the *2002 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: conVerge*. Readers will remember that in past issues *Broadsheet* has covered major visual art events such as the *Biennale of Sydney*, *The Melbourne Festival* [visual arts program] and the *Adelaide Biennale* via this practice – to give each event justice by way of a number of perhaps divergent perspectives aggregating a big picture view. In this instance, of endeavouring to cover the *Adelaide Biennale* in similar manner, much like an audience that votes with its feet when it thinks something is a stinker and exits *en masse*, *Broadsheet* experienced some degree of reluctance from numerous invitees to put their names to a review – of any calibre. In securing the three subsequent writers, *Broadsheet* employed another of its quite simple policies – of not telling its reviewers what to write. At the end of the day the sum of the three expressions fairly and accurately represented what the broad industry felt. As pointed out by McDonald Crowley, one of the writers, Chris Chapman, was a Curator of the *1996 Adelaide Biennial*. Another, John Barbour, has reviewed all *Adelaide Biennials* for *Broadsheet* since 1994 while the third writer, Andrew Best, is an emerging artist/writer. Given the circumstances this result could only be seen as positive. In terms of anyone being “embarrassed to have had writing of the calibre of at least two of these reviews”, surely such mortification should be firmly located in other industry sectors and not in this “national journal”.

*Broadsheet* considers industry dialogue valuable, and welcomed McDonald Crowley’s response, despite its summons for a positive spin just because something happened. Realistically, greater concern should be exercised in the envisioning and installation of such well endowed public and like projects, rather than defensive postmortems. *Broadsheet*, like *RealTime*, has a role equally consequential in its contribution to the greater cultural landscape, and will continue to call it like it is.

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