

ON ALTERNATIVE MODES
OF CULTURE &
KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION
IN TIMES OF SHRINKING
PUBLIC EXPENDITURES

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INTRODUCTION

DR JAN HENDRIK
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In early 2014, Jan Brüggemeier and I conjured the idea of a *Re-structure* Symposium. At that time, the university department that employed us both was being restructured, as was the university itself, indeed as was the entire tertiary education sector. As practicing artists, we were also deeply concerned by proposals to radical restructure the government arts body, The Australia Council, whose defunding stood to significantly impact the country's creative industries and 'innovation economy'. Under these circumstances, an event addressing the notion of 'restructure' seemed appropriate for the times.

Developed throughout that year and presented in late 2014, the *Re-structure* Symposium gathered together artists, business leaders, researchers and academics to discuss funding cuts to the public sector and to explore their impact on the creative industries. But the discussion went much deeper. Participants considered the role of the arts, the significance of finance, the impulse of restructure, and strategies for surviving it. In an energetic exchange of disparate ideas and common ground, participants compared experiences and shared strategies to ensure ongoing inventive practice during unstable political conditions. With so many creative workers employed in not-for-profit, education, arts and social service roles, the spate of restructures threatened irreversible damage to Australia's creative identity, profile and creative workers themselves.

In an irony that would reveal itself several months later, the same government pushing these pervasive restructures was itself restructured before the bulk of their plans took hold. Prime Minister Tony Abbott was expelled from the leadership in a humiliating coup, and George Brandis was replaced as Minister for the Arts. The then newly constructed coalition leadership appeared to have reversed at least some of the worst of the changes proposed by the Abbott led party, and looked towards the arts with a rejuvenated complexion. The government now claims to promote and 'innovation' agenda, an entrepreneurial culture of business invention led by the creative thinking that the arts foster. While the dramatic about-turn brings relief to some arts workers and creative practitioners, the new ideology of innovation has not improved conditions, and support for genuine creative endeavours remains as diminished as ever. In some ways everything has changed, in others, nothing has.

We explain this brief history to establish an important context – to inform the reader that the essays collected together here were written under the shadow of the extraordinary changes proposed by Brandis and Abbott. The following texts in this special issue are based on presentations delivered at that *Re-structure* Symposium in 2014. However, their historical situation in different times does not diminish their relevance or importance today. These essays interrogate the ongoing culture of restructure and examine the impact across the many territories into which re-structural thinking has bled. Rather than simply rejecting the notion of restructure, they excavate a larger set of ongoing problematic ideas, most specifically the notion of reframing culture, education, health and other key pillars of civil society as resources to be monetised.

The corporate liberal thinking that drives these restructures misses the point; not only of societal values, but of finance, too. A successful economy, after all, is not a cultural, political or societal end, but a means for success in the collective pursuits of a society. Here the conference also invited speculation on how cultural production could look in a “post-public”

sector.

Stephen Healy opens the discussion with focus on the political terrain. He examines the ways relationships between the Australian state and society are being restructured in deeply neo-liberal terms under the coalition leadership. Exposing the intrinsic links between austerity practices and capital-centric thinking, Healy not only dismantles the logic behind current neo-liberal systems but offers something beyond it. By emphasising the commons as a community economy framework, he proposes an alternative economic structure that includes both capitalist and non-capitalist approaches.

Thinking about the health of Australia's arts from a ground level viewpoint, Maria Miranda uncovers the indirect and complex effects of funding cuts in the public sector on artists. Researching a range ARIs (Artist Run Initiatives), Miranda reveals the passion, commitment and camaraderie that allows these spaces to flourish, but also demonstrates how many artists who fund their work through public sector roles struggle to continue in the face of government cuts to family, health and particularly higher education, where many find casual employment. Across these areas where restructure regularly occurs, sustainability is shown to occur not because of, but in spite of organisational reshuffles from above.

Shifting focus from the local to the global, but maintaining the perspective of professional practice, Grace McQuilten and Anthony White discuss how the arts - as a collection of aesthetic pursuits with pathways into creative industries - play a key role in the global development agenda. Citing contemporary examples of how art can be created and 'monetised'— or made financially independent—at community, national and international levels, McQuilten and White reveal how the links connecting the arts with global economics and cultural development brings about both promising and problematic implications.

Taking direct aim at Senator Brandis' restructure of the Aus-

tralia Council of the Arts, Jon Hawkes offers a critique the-then art ministers' plan, describing it as a "quasi-medieval personal gifting process". Yet Hawkes's paper goes deeper to radically question the entire proposition of artists having a right to state support at all. Pointing to the bureaucratisation of creativity that haunts funded art, Hawkes identifies a dependency and self-censorship arising from the current model that sees artists forced into adopting governmental rhetoric. When the grant application - not the art - becomes the thing that is assessed, artists cannot help but reflect the corporate rhetoric and whiteboard values of the bureaucrats wielding the funds.

Continuing the question of state funded practice, Katharine McKinnon asks exactly what role the artist plays in contemporary society. Noting the requirement of funding applications to prove economic potential or outcomes, McKinnon interrogates the increasing pressure on artists to align themselves to an audit culture over creative, contemplative or social concerns. She criticises the way auditing cannot take account of important values for daily living and well being of individuals, communities, and the world—including "respect, care, love, affection".

Providing further weight to this argument from practice-led knowledge Vic McEwan introduces *The Cad Factory*, an artist led organisation that applies creative thinking to the decision-making processes of local everyday life. Reporting on both individual and community based projects in which he has been personally involved, McEwan's first hand experiences clearly illustrate that bringing an artist sensibility to the complex issues that real life presents, not only challenges and strengthens ones ability to listen and to adapt, but sets in motion a process that can give rise to exciting and innovative results.

Joan Staples concludes the anthology of essays by returning to the Australian governments original rationale for funding arts and not-for-profit enterprises in the 1970s. From the outset, she reveals, the intention was to nurture a dynamic and aes-

thetically literate society with diverse cultural perspectives. This governmental decision was made recognising that the fundamental prosperity and health of a society was not simply its financial position, but its social and cultural wealth. Staples then reflects on the rise of *economic rationalism* that has eroded this foundational model in recent decades. Furthermore, she finds parallels in the detrimental effects suffered by both the cultural and environmental sectors: the pervasive ideology that recasts society and the environment as businesses to be monetised. However, in a system where government plays no role in shaping, strengthening or governing the social, cultural and equitable use of resources, the inevitable question must be raised: what is the role of government here anyway?

The issues that these papers address are not confined to Australia nor to the present moment. Therefore we have included two works adding international perspectives.

Following the Netherlands' drastic cuts in the public funding of the arts alongside its investment in corporate driven 'creative culture', Geert Lovink, Seb Olma & Ned Rossiter offer a strident critique of digital capitalisms appropriation of the cultural sector. They argue that the 'business' of art making is degraded into meaningless commercial and marketing contexts, while noting that the "eerie discourse on creativity" serves a kind of gentrification of the arts. A process that they see is woven through political and economic policy from city planning to TED talks and that brings them to ask: "what is today's source of value and who owns it"?

In tandem, Mercedes Bunz observes the incorporation of high-brow art practice in semiotic capitalism via social media platforms and the business models that are so inherent to them. In these social media contexts, who can clearly define where the cultural sphere ends and where the commerce takes over? Recognising the long history of art making related to different forms of commerce from Renaissance painting to the contemporary art world, Bunz focuses upon a short film by Werner

Herzog that serves as video for a crowd-funding campaign promoting an organic salt product. Where is the line to be drawn here between autonomous artistic expression, advertising, promotion campaign and public domain?

CONCLUSION

In summary, through curating this event and publication we have understood that artists are not in principle opposed to restructure or change, but rather, they collectively question: what is it that is being restructured, how, why, and for whom? For in this epidemic of restructures, with its perpetual face-lifting of institutional operations, the problem is not change itself, but instead that the constant activity appears to mask the fact that nothing really changes at all. We continue live in a situation in which society, political representation and the economic systems keep drifting apart. In this regard, art making remains not only a cultural expression of the time, but also a shaping force that help us imagine what kind of community, society and world we want to live in.

COOPERATION AND COMMONING TO SECURE OTHER FUTURES

DR STEPHEN
HEALY

A cohesive community depends upon a strong economy that, in turn, depends upon profitable private businesses. Wealth, after all, has to be created before it can be redistributed. - Tony Abbott (2012)

Australian suburbs and towns are almost unique in the range of community organisations they spawn from service clubs to charities, the school and hospital auxiliary, the volunteer bush fire brigade and the local land care group. It's these volunteer associations, the "little platoons" of life as Burke described them, between the individual and the state, that give people a sense of wider purpose and belonging. Government can't create them but it can certainly hinder them especially if it habitually assumes that the official knows best. - Tony Abbott (2012)

INTRODUCTION

Australia under Liberal leadership is restructuring the relationship between the state and society. Fiscal austerity, reining in expenditures on the arts, education, health care and other social goods is a central part of restructuring. In countries affected by the global financial crisis austerity measures were seen as unavoidable but Australia was largely untouched by the GFC. Why pursue austerity here? In the quotes above, then minority leader Tony Abbott gave two distinct rationales in a 2012 speech. The first rationale subordinates the arts and other social goods to the interests of private business. “Private business” generates the wealth which the state redistributes; therefore the state’s top priority should be to ensure private businesses can operate effectively. The second rationale is that society can and should look after itself. Mr. Abbott expresses faith in what he calls Edmund Burke’s “little platoons” to meet society’s needs. Collectively these little platoons compose a robust “Big Society,” provided government does not interfere.

It’s worth keeping in mind that the logic that underwrites the practice of austerity has a history. Austerity is not simply a function of recent neoliberal economic policy but a consequence of framing the “economy” as something separate from society governed by a rationality that orders individuals, enterprise and markets. This idea emerged somewhere between 1830 and 1947, that is to say three to seven generations ago (Cameron Gibson-Graham 2004; Mitchell 2008 & 2014; Miller forthcoming). Prior to this period political-economy in western societies was seen to be very much bound to local environments, households, state craft, culture and religious life. Without this separation it would be difficult to practice austerity or for that matter to imagine self-regulating markets, small states and big societies.

In preparing for the talk associated with this paper I was invited to consider two things—the future of the arts in the era

of austerity and restructuring and what the arts community might learn from the environmental movement. My thoughts on how to respond to this positioning is directed by my involvement with the Community Economies Collective (CEC) an international group of activist-scholars interested in enacting post-capitalist economies.¹ And it is in this context that the concept of the Big Society provides us with an interesting point of departure.

Decades ago, Margaret Thatcher told us society did not exist (Harvey 2005). David Cameron and Tony Abbott acknowledge its reality and necessity in their concept of the Big Society. A guiding premise in this paper is the following question: what if the “the Big Society” is not a triumphant extension of neoliberalism into the everyday life and the public sector, but rather a break down in the separateness between state, economy and society and, consequently, an invitation to remake their relationship? When Cameron developed the concept in 2010 he argued that state based welfare systems not only failed to address poverty and other social concerns, they made the problem worse by creating dependent, selfish-individuals, isolated from their community context. This can be addressed through a process “state devolution” facilitated by empowering local organizations, including support for “coops, mutuals, charities and social enterprises” that will help communities to help themselves (Williams *et al* 2014).

A central tenant of the CEC, is that we need recognize the existing diversity of economic activities as a precondition for practicing new forms of economy that emphasize social and ecological interdependencies. In my view an abiding concern of the collective is the way in which “capitalism” obscures relations of interdependence and instead emphasizes individual gain. Many CEC scholars have been interested in exploring the potential of alternative economic spaces including “coops, mutuals, charities and social enterprises” to engender

(1) <http://www.communityeconomies.org>

post-capitalist approaches to development. Given the parallels I'd like to take a moment to thank Mr. Abbott for the opportunity "the Big Society" presents us with: a chance to engage in a conversation about the relationship between economies and society. I for one would like to set Mr. Abbott's little platoons to work on greater and greater tasks, to sustain arts and creative expression, to care for others and engage in reparative relations with a damaged planet, building "community economies" where ethical inter-dependence is foregrounded (Gibson Graham 2006).

In this paper I want to briefly explore the connection between austerity practices and what Gibson-Graham term capitalocentrism. Capitalocentric thinking enrols the public sector, along with households, communities and the environment in the task of capitalist social reproduction in a way that makes austerity all but inevitable. And yet a moment in history has arrived in which ecological contradictions have made it clear that things cannot go on as they have. Second, I want to consider the effects of reframing the economy as a site of intrinsic diversity, populated by both capitalist and non-capitalist actors where economic activity may or may not reproduce capitalism. In this frame it is possible to see non-capitalism but also to consider both an ethics and a politics of post-capitalism.

In the section that follows I draw on specific initiatives in non-capitalist enterprise development, collective finance and efforts at commoning. In each instance a "little platoon" is the primary economic agent generating wealth and wellbeing through its efforts. In keeping with the mandate of the Re-structure Conference, all of the examples have an ecological focus. The take home point for the "arts community" could be to identify similar initiatives or alternatively, given the enormous challenge of living in a climate altered world, to make common cause with environmentalists. I conclude by arguing that we no longer have to choose between waiting for the revolution, reforming capitalism or for that matter, petitioning the state and waiting for a response. Instead we can look towards

efforts of communities around the world to produce new econo-socialities including a new role for state government and, central to these proceedings, a new space for the arts.

AUSTERITY LOGIC, SOCIAL REPRODUCTION, CAPITALOCENTRISM AND THE END OF THE WORLD

Australia's austerity politics shares many of the same broad characteristics with austerity elsewhere—budget cuts to education, the arts, and social services, and a corresponding emphasis on privatization and marketization. The article of faith here is that the more social relations resemble a competitive market the greater the improvement to social welfare. This logic expresses itself in “the Big Society” approach to solving social problems or generating social welfare: non-profits can and should compete for contracts to engage in service provisioning and that this quasi-market will make them accountable and efficient. The state made small and released from its commits to social care and reproduction can then focus on its primary duty—framed in almost sacred terms—creating the conditions for economic growth. What's odd about austerity and the logic of restructuring is that it asks us to commit to a couple of contradictory propositions at once:

- Capitalism is to be seen as the font of innovation, growth, wealth and prosperity. In spite of these miraculous powers capitalism requires constant intersession from the state and resources from us: belt tightening in the public sector, tax incremental financing, cheap capital, cheaper utility rates. Capitalism is “all powerful” but it also constantly needs our help.
- At the same time those of us that attend to social reproduction must learn the discipline of competition from the

private sector and to operate with the barest minimum of state support.

When these propositions are read together they take their true form—our enjoyment, our security, and our lives seem to depend upon sacrifice at the altar of capitalist sector growth. Austerity is the current form of this sacrament. In Mr. Cameron and Mr. Abbot's world this sacrifice works to ensure a clear separation of powers between economy, society and the state. Capitalist firms occupying the economy are responsible for creating wealth. The small state is a conduit; ensuring private sector growth takes place and in exchange appropriates some of this wealth which is then distributed to a grateful "Big Society". Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: this is precisely an instance of what Gibson Graham (1996) describe as capitalocentric thought in action.

Drawing on the work of French feminist critics of psychoanalytic theory Gibson Graham (1996) proposed capitalocentrism as a concept analogous to phallogocentrism in psychoanalysis. Capitalocentric thinking positions capitalism as the dominant term in a simple binary opposition in which all else—the public sector, society, the environment "is positioned as either another version of capitalism—the same as, a complement to, the opposite of, subordinate to, or contained within capitalism." (6) In its subordinate position the "Big Society" is the latest term to describe that which is tasked with reproducing capitalism.

For Mr. Abbott capitalocentrism represents the natural order to things, for the left it is a condition to be transcended. But as Gibson-Graham point out, all too often left-theorizations of social reproduction continuously reinscribe capitalism's dominance in ways that leaves little or no room for contestation. All too often social reproduction becomes a term to describe Capitalism's relationship with its exteriority: its capacity to corrupt, co-opt, subsume or defeat any social or economic practices that might challenge it.

In their view the left must move beyond capitalocentric thinking as precondition for a new politics, but thinking differently is no easy task. J.K. Gibson Graham understands capitalocentrism as performative imaginary that is sustained by the reality it creates—a reality shared by Mr. Abbott, anti-capitalist critics, and everyone in-between. Capitalocentrism's power lies in its ability to shape self-conception and desire: for most of us getting and keeping wage employment becomes a pre-occupying worry. The peculiar twist here is that when capitalist economy fails and falters this attendant anxiety tightens its grip. Indeed, in the absence of a different way of thinking and acting capitalocentrism remains entrenched even as wage employment gives way to precarious, contract based employment or none at all. It persists even as the trap door of outsourcing and offshoring opens beneath our feet in community after community. It continues even as automation threatens to eliminate entire categories of employment, such as the plans by the BHP and other mining corporations to use drone technology, developed in a military context, to drive machinery (Chew 2013). Desire and fear produces a visceral attachment to capitalism and what that means is getting beyond a capitalocentric imaginary is *not* simply a matter of thinking differently, letting go or even being let go by your employer—moving beyond capitalocentric thought requires us to *feel* like we have somewhere else to go.

For go we must. As Naomi Klein (2006) pointed out in *Shock Doctrine* these continual traumas make it difficult to think differently even as she makes it clear in her newest work that the economy, in its present configuration, cannot go on as it has (Klein 2014). Australian theorist Ben Dibley (2012) asserts in his thesis on the Anthropocene that six generations worth of human activity has altered earth atmosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere, cryosphere, biosphere—transporting sediment, extinguishing life, altering oceanic and atmospheric chemistry that typified the last 10,000 years. At present we have a sustained atmospheric carbon concentration of 400 ppm, a level not seen in 2 million years, beyond the bounds of our

experience as a species. In essence, Dibley, like Morton (2013) argues that we are no longer waiting for the end of the world, the world as a stable backdrop which we measure human progress against, has already ended. It's really in this context of brokenness and bewilderment that we can begin to appreciate the critically important task of reframing—actively shifting perspective in hopes of finding a way forward.

REFRAMING

Reframing is the first step in the process of enacting post-capitalist possibilities. In our recent book, *Take Back the Economy*, we have used the familiar figure ground shift, two faces and a vase, to describe the process of reframing (Gibson Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013). In looking awry both the figures and vases are there, the shift in perspective that allows one or the other to come to fore. For Gibson-Graham, what enables this reframing process is a precise, process-based, thin definition of capitalism: "Enterprises in various circumstances that use wage labour to produce goods and services for the market place." (CEC 2001, Gibson Graham 2008)

If that's it, then capitalism becomes the tip of the iceberg and the larger economy involving all kinds of places, actors, and processes where goods and services produced, circulate and are consumed comes into visibility as the lower half of the economic iceberg. Shifting to a post-capitalist allows us to see what is already present—households, communities, the public sector, and yes even capitalist enterprises—from a vantage point where the logic of social reproduction loses its form. It is in this context that the self-evidence that directs austerity loses its shape, and capitalism is no longer becomes the only game in town. Here we can see Abbott's "little platoons" not as a part of a "Big Society" but working in a diverse economy producing a diverse econo-sociality.

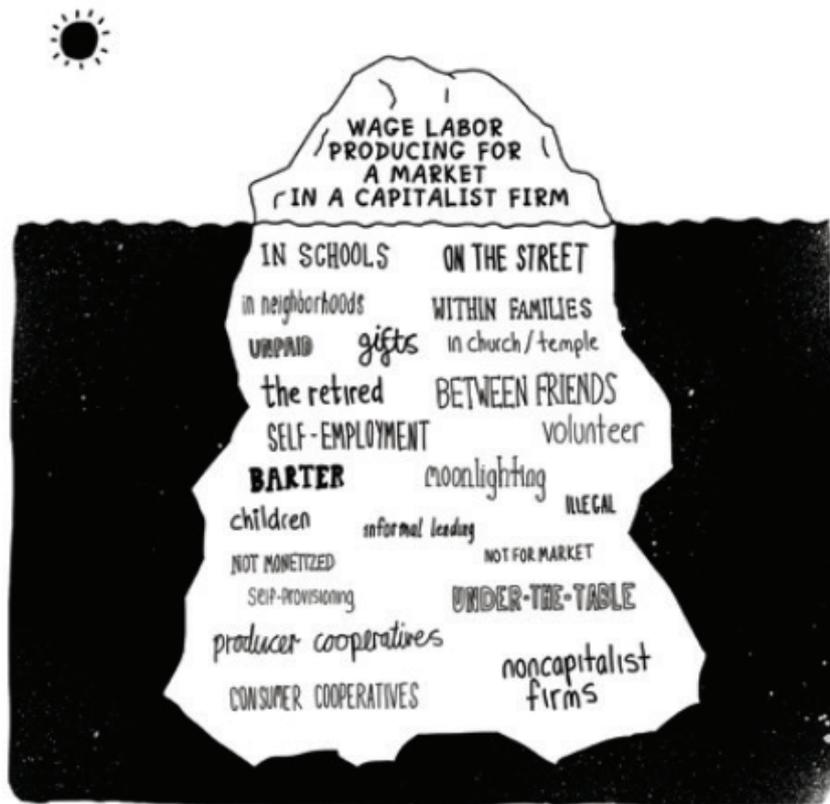


Figure 1: The Diverse Economy Iceberg.

Source: Gibson Graham, Cameron and Healy 2013:11

The figure ground shift is ultimately an intervention in to how we represent the economy—what it is, where it takes place, who is involved. Economic difference makes it possible to do something other than obey or resist the dictates of capitalist necessity, enlivening an ethics and politics of postcapitalism. Gibson Graham (2006) pursued an ethics and a politics of subjects and collective action in a Post Capitalist Politics and we develop it in further *Take Back the Economy* (TBTE).

In TBTE we lay out in a more systematic fashion the various forms of work, non-capitalist forms of enterprise organization, kinds of exchange, private and public property but also commons and open-access resources, monetary and non-monetary means of investing in a common future. In looking at this diversity we lay out potential shared matters of ethical concern for human and planetary wellbeing:

- In relation to our **work**—what forms of paid and unpaid labour contribute to our surviving well? Here we both borrow from and modify Marx’s category of necessary labour, stretching it to think about planetary surviving well alongside our own.
- What enterprise forms allow us to generate surplus wealth that can be directed to ecological and social ends?
- How can we **exchange** goods and services with near and distant others in ways that meet our own needs and their without endangering ecologies?
- How can we enlarge and protect **commons**—biophysical, cultural, knowledge resources—that sustain societies recognizing that society in-turn must accept responsibility and actively care for commons?
- How can we marshal monetary and non-monetary resources to **invest** in a future worth having?

Around the world we see the formation of cooperatives, the formation of social and solidarity economies, efforts at community resource management and other experiments in forming what we refer to as community economies directed by shared ethical concerns.¹ In the section that follows, I would like to review three different types of post-capitalist politics centred on the formation of community economies that I and others in the CEC have discussed in the past few years before returning to the question of how we might restructure the relationship between states, societies, economies and life giving ecologies.

(1) Importantly, community is not a synonymy for the local or a sector — rather it is an open ended term that encompasses any individual, entity or organization, including the state that can be enrolled by common concerns.

POST-CAPITALIST POLITICS, BUILDING OTHER WORLDS

COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISES

Cleveland Ohio, affectionately known by the locals as the mistake on the lake has seen severe population decline over the past four decades and a corresponding geographic concentration of poverty. Like other cities in the post-industrial U.S., pockets of wealth survive in anchor institutions rooted in place, and in Cleveland most are located in the University circle—home to the Cleveland Clinic, Case Western University and other legacy institutions such as the Cleveland Foundation.

About ten years ago the leaders of the Cleveland Foundation saw that this disparity was untenable. They worked with the Democracy Collaborative and the Ohio Centre for Employee Ownership and studied what's working in alternative approaches to development. Critically, they took an inventory of existing institutional demand for goods and services and discovered the aggregate demand for laundry services, food and power was \$3 billion per Annum. It was this figure that prompted the germ of an idea.

With help from the Cleveland foundation and the Chicago based Shore Bank these institutions help to capitalize and open three industrial scale worker cooperatives that offered employee-ownership opportunities to people in the neighbourhoods that surround the university circle (Luvienne *et al* 2010). An ecological laundry, large scale green house and PV installation cooperatives were all launched in the last five-years. The idea is that as they pay back the loans used to capitalize the business they could in turn capitalize other cooperative enterprises.

Though less than a decade old the Cleveland experiment has

inspired imitators in Richmond California, Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, Springfield, Worcester and Boston Massachusetts. In the case of Springfield and Worcester, CEC members have been intimately involved documenting but also facilitating more grassroots and democratic versions of Evergreen (Loh and Shear 2015).

Closer to Melbourne a different sort of experiment is taking place brought to my attention by Dan Musil, a doctoral candidate at the Institute for Culture and Society and one of the principals behind Latrobe based Earthworker cooperative. Again the aim is to provide cooperative employment in a post-industrial region, specifically to produce the technologies that would allow Australia to transition to a post-carbon energy system. Key to its success will be creative ways of capitalizing and securing markets for its products. Earlier this year, they had a successful capitalization campaign through a crowd funding effort (Tyler 2014). They are working with area unions to get solar hot water heaters financing as part of a member-compensation package, creating a market for their products.

COLLECTIVE FINANCE

Both Evergreen and Earthworker's story illustrate the central importance of finance in securing a future. Community efforts can play a role in generating these alternative sources of capital. In 2001 a Navajo Youth Coalition began the arduous task of fighting against the Peabody Coal Corporation operating on Navajo land in the four corners region of the US Southwest (Hansen 2014). The initial concern was corporate enclosure of scarce water resources. As one activist pointed out she grew up without running water while Peabody had all the water it needed, drawn from the ground to slurry coal. By 2005 these activists had closed the Peabody Coal plant thereby leaving the Navajo community, the largest indigenous population in the US, with a familiar problem—300 jobs lost in a community where unemployment in the formal sector runs

at 50%.

The story could have ended here—jobs vs. environment with in this case the environment “winning” but it didn’t. Black Mesa activists partnered with the New Economy Coalition to make a start on a 5 megawatt solar farm. The idea here is that because the solar farm would be located on the Navajo reservation it would be Navajo property. Construction and maintenance would generate some employment but the chief benefit is steady revenue from power generated to support more traditional economic activities—from wool production to artisanal crafts.

The story of the Black Mesa Solar Cooperative intersects with other stories such as Billy Parish, the founder of Solar Mosaic (Transformative Finance Network (TFN) 2013). Solar mosaic uses peer to peer form of equity investment to capitalize solar projects including Black Mesa. Mosaic’s business plan is to capitalize only solar projects that already have built relationships with a downstream market. Black Mesa’s story also intersects with Australian born long-time activist Danny Kennedy and founder of Sungevity. Like Mosaic, Sungevity aims to connect consumers and solar cell manufacturers with sources of capital.

Danny argued in a recent address in Sydney a few weeks back that 2012 marked the year when solar power had become cheaper to produce than power from fossil fuels (Kennedy 2014). Some of this is an effect of the cost of fossil fuel subsidies but a decisive factor is the dramatic reduction in the cost of production for solar cells. During the past several years, financial incentives from the state, led to the explosion of installation here in Australia with more than 1 million homes installing solar. It is true that these incentives have been scaled back currently but I think the problem here for the “dinosaur fuel” industry is that this shift in the market place has already occurred. Here too, communities can play a role. Jenny Cameron and Jarra Hicks (2014) draw on the examples of Climate Action

New Castle (CAN) and Hepburn Wind to point out that community initiative for renewable power can be supported by the local and state government.

COMMONING

The example of Black Mesa involves the Navajo community in practices of what we call “commoning” in TBTE—restoring the ground water commons and using common space for a solar farm. I want to conclude with another example of commoning that depart from the usual narrative out of Marx’s Capital volume 1, where the fields of common agriculture were enclosed, an instance of primitive accumulation that allows for the development of capitalist industrialization (Massimo and Harvie 2014).

Enclosure is of course a real ongoing phenomenon but much of the discussion about it treats the process as fait accompli positioning physical commons as a seeming anachronism while obscuring intangible commons—knowledge commons and cultural commons—that many of us are vitally engaged with. As Anthropologist Stephen Gudeman (2001) points out, commons require a community that makes and shares it. Commons do not exist without those who common it. While it is clear that commons such as open source software cannot exist apart from the community that produces, uses and cares for it, in our view this is also true for fisheries, forests, atmosphere and ocean. In TBTE we treat commoning as a process of social relations where communities establish rules that govern access, use, benefit, care, and responsibility towards spaces, processes, knowledges or other things that are held in common (see Figure 2).

In our view, commons exist as commons when access and use are widely distributed but also where rules that govern care and responsibility for commons are equally widely dispersed across a community (Gibson Graham, Cameron and Healy 2013). Commoning focuses our attention on the sociality of

commons and this shift has implications. Commoning allows us to see how open access resources like the atmosphere are in the process of becoming objects of common concern, care and attention (in law, policy and culture).

	Access	Use	Benefit	Care	Responsibility	Ownership
Commoning enclosed property	Narrow	Restricted by owner	Private	Performed by owner or employee	Assumed by owner	Private individual Private collective State
Creating new commons	Shared and wide	Negotiated by a community	Widely distributed to community and beyond	Performed by community members	Assumed by community	Private individual Private collective State Open access
Commoning unmanaged open-access resources	Unrestricted	Open and unregulated	Finders keepers	None	None	Open access State

Figure 2: Commons Identi-kit .
Source: Gibson Graham, Cameron and Healy 2013, 148

It demonstrates that privatization is not our only option. It also means that things and processes can be partially commoned—in the U S until quite recently almost the entire state of Maine was privately owned by timber concerns but the citizens effectively commoned this private property for generations—using them for recreation and engaging in extensive efforts to care-for them as well.

It also means we can make new commons. American artist Caroline Woolard has modified the commons-identikit to identify various forms of artist commoning practices in New York’s five boroughs, adding an additional to distinguish degrees of participation (Woolard 2014). Perhaps in these common spaces one can see Maria Miranda’s (2014) ‘dark matter’ of the art world—the myriad of unnoticed actors, places and relationships that sustain the arts. Woolard’s attempt at making the sociality of art-as-common space means that arts can be cared for and supported in different ways by artist themselves and others, but also a means by which this “dark matter” is made explicit and politicized.

Going further, we can make commons, even in places where people are seemingly hostile to such efforts. Greater Western Sydney is the emergent demographic centre of the City, home to millions, including a liberal government and pronounced heat island effects with their corresponding demands upon the grid for cooling.² In Penrith, where it is “forbidden” to talk about climate change, it is possible to care for commons. As Katherine Gibson points out, there are simple, effective interventions in green space design and how we treat impermeable surfaces that can mitigate the effects of heat island. Kath has been involved with other projects where, since global warming won’t play, they are attempting to “cool the commons” by working with artists and designers to create common spaces that serve also to lower the heat (Gibson 2014). This is a way not just of bypassing the climate schism between “believers” and “deniers” but also assembling a community of people from across the political spectrum that can discern between the hot and the cool and, in so doing, make common cause in building shared space.

CONCLUSION: BUILDING A SHARED WORLD

By way of conclusion I would like to make three points in relation to the topics I have engaged with—the politics of austerity, restructuring and “the Big Society”, the building of community economies before concluding with a few thoughts about what artists might learn from environmentalists.

First, Williams *et al* (2014) observes that as the Cameron government has proceeded, their policies have become less about “the Big Society” and more about pushing the bounds of austerity. This would suggest that like President Bush’s “compassionate conservatism,” “the Big Society” is little more than empty rhetoric and that the real project is a radical renegoti-

(2) In fact during the late spring weekend after this talk was delivered (November 2014) the suburb of Penrith experienced a 45 degree day.

ation of the social compact between state and society in ways that benefit capitalism as a class (Harvey 2005). It's entirely possible we will get the same from the Abbott government. Of course even if "the Big Society" is merely a smoke screen there remains for Mr Abbott a strong argument for restructuring, grounded in the logic of capitalocentric thinking. Restructuring helps private businesses to grow and growth generates employment. This promise of "jobs, jobs, jobs" underwrites every cheap land leasing agreements to mining corporations, concessions and lower corporate tax rates. However as we look at the effects these policies engender—greater wealth inequality, a distorted political system, and an increasingly volatile labour market with higher unemployment—we might have an opening to question this logic. One wonders how the wholesale automation of the mining industry will affect the lure of the "jobs" argument. It may indeed be a moment when it becomes possible to question capitalism and to move beyond capitalocentric thinking.

Second, if it is possible to question the role of private capitalist business in contributing to wealth and welfare the examples I provided here demonstrate that they are not our only option for generating wealth. The Evergreen experiment, Earthworker, Solar Mosaic, and other initiatives like it generate employment and allow us to practice ecological repair. Perhaps states should consider supporting the construction of community economies rather than continuing to subsidize the "private business" of capitalist enterprise. Municipalities through the US are reproducing the "Cleveland Model" in part by changing municipal policy to promote cooperative development (Orsi *et al* 2013). Initiatives like Solar Mosaic are partially sustained by municipal procurement practices as is the case with other community based ventures in alternative energy (TFN 2013). Finally in the "cooling the commons" project it is largely public land that is being "commoned" in an effort to adapt to a harsher climate. Each of these efforts are directed by Abbott and Cameron's "little platoons". Just because Cameron and Abbott may be cynically disingenuous doesn't mean that we

have to be. Indeed in my view “coops, mutuals, charities and social ventures” can be repurposed to practice what Ferguson (2011) calls a leftist art of government provided we let go of a politics of the “antis” and set about the business of getting what we want.

Finally the larger point to be made here is that all of these initiatives constitute commons even if the communities involved do not know one another or are separated by great distance. Black Mesa Solar, the Evergreen cooperatives and its imitators, Sungevity, a million solar roof tops in Australia, the crowd funded municipal solar systems in Germany and elsewhere in Europe may all be discreet initiatives, but they also are knowledge commons, a repository of information about how to secure a common future. They are part of much larger effort to constitute an atmospheric commons—to care for the atmosphere through the creation of a community commensurate with the task.

In keeping with one of the central themes of the Restructure conference the examples drew on community based initiatives in the environmental movement but these practices of cooperation, collective finance and commoning. These same practices could be applied to the work and lives of artists (they are already) or, alternatively one could imagine artists, environmentalists, activists and academics making common cause in securing a different future for ourselves and, as I think about many of the initiatives discussed through the day, from the CAD factory and Fee’s big road trip to efforts at re-imagining international collaboration in the time of the Anthropocene it appears that a project of common cause is well underway.

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ARTIST-RUN INITIATIVES AND UNIVERSITY RESTRUCTURE

DR MARIA MIRANDA

So we have a clear shift in terms of the debate from the notion of an arts industry to that of a cultural economy. This is not merely a shift in language for the sake of contemporaneity, but rather recognition that the framework of the new economy is much changed from that of the nineteenth-century industrial model. - Su Baker (2009)

In recent times “restructure” has become a byword for devastating and destructive cuts across a whole range of industries and workplaces in Australia and internationally, both public and private.¹ Hidden from the more direct and obvious impacts are significant indirect effects. In the case of the visual arts in Australia the flow-on effects of restructuring and downsizing in the tertiary arts education sector will be, and is, the serious loss of job opportunities for artists. In this paper I will point to how artist-run initiatives and artists associated with them are indirectly affected by government cuts to universi-

(1) For overview of neoliberal hegemony in Australia and its effects on everyday life, see Cahill 2007. For a more specific discussion of restructure in the Australian university system and its adverse effect on equal opportunity for women see Lafferty and Fleming 2000. For further discussion on the effects of restructure on universities internationally see Ward 2014.

ties.² I will argue that this indirect effect is linked to the emergence, in recent times, of the increasing number of artists who are working from within the university sector through practice-based research and/or gaining higher degrees. This shift of art practice has spawned a creative arts culture for artists, centred on universities rather than just the art market or public art institutions. It is within universities that artists have found a haven through either employment as teachers, researchers and administrators or through further study.³

ARTIST-RUN INITIATIVES IN THE CULTURAL ECONOMY

Artist-run initiative or ARI is an over-arching term that refers to artist-run spaces and the various activities associated with these spaces. The term is specific to Australia – and quite recent – although the phenomenon is a global one.⁴ Artist-run spaces, initially referred to as, “alternative spaces” emerged 40 years ago out of the social upheavals of the 1960s, with counter-cultural ideas such as DIY and resistance to capitalism’s constant need to commodify, as well as specific developments within the art-world. In Australia the emergence of artists’ spaces are usually associated with neo avant-garde art practices that were at first unacceptable to the status quo. Artists like Mike Parr, Tim Johnson and Peter Kennedy in Sydney, for instance, founded Inhibodress, often cited as Australia’s first alternative art space. As Sue Cramer writes in her monograph

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- (2) Government Cuts University Funding to Pay for Gonski, see ABC News online. [Website](#).
- (3) For an incisive discussion on the issues facing today’s art schools and art education, in particular in Australia, see Buckley and Conomos, 2009. For an in-depth study of practice-based research see Barrett and Bolt 2007. “The emergence of the discipline of practice-led research highlights the crucial interrelationship that exists between theory and practice and the relevance of theoretical and philosophical paradigms for the contemporary arts practitioner.” Estelle Barrett, Introduction.
- (4) For a comprehensive discussion of terminology and history of Australian artist-run initiatives, with a focus on Sydney, see Griffiths 2012.

on Inhibodress, "Inhibodress was born at the beginning of the seventies as a part of that moment in Australia (1968-1972) when in the eyes of a number of young art practitioners, the implications of formalist art had reached their furthestmost extreme...This new conceptual work explored art's inextricable links with the world, with philosophy and politics with society and its institutions." (Cramer 5) ARIs today share this history with alternative spaces, however, they are now widely recognised by both artists and audiences as a significant and integral part of the arts ecology, and crucially, have been theorised as "institutions by artists". (Khonsary & Podesva 2012).⁵

ARIs, driven by artists' own passions and commitments, are not tied to any one specific economic model. Over the years many have been funded through the Australia Council for the Arts in various and different ways.⁶ However, on the whole, ARIs run on volunteer labour and strong commitments of time and energy by artists themselves. What does the current neo-liberal moment of restructure and redundancy across the public sector mean for ARIs? What sort of impact will "austerity" have on the running of ARIs and on the artists involved? Without aiming to predict the future, pondering these questions will necessarily bring into view the important broader picture of how and where artists are implicated in the public sector, particularly for this paper, in the universities, through

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- (5) Institutions by Artists is the name of an important convention held in Vancouver, Canada in 2012, accompanied by an eponymous publication. By "institutions" the writers and organisers sought to shift normalised understandings of "institution" away from a static, staid and essentially hierarchical idea of structure where "persons 'pre-exist intersubjective attunement.'" In their opening essay, Jeff Khonsary and Kristina Lee Podesva draw upon Portuguese anthropologist João de Pina-Cabral to re-imagine the term institution, a once much maligned idea that avant-garde artists, and in particular those associated with alternative spaces, sought to resist. "Thus, by institution, he refers not to a staid organization or structure, but a process of shared intentionality carried out by persons, who being mutually constituted are in the process of becoming singular persons." (16-17)
- (6) Since 2008 the Australia Council for the Arts has funded ARIs through the New Works category, with funding tied to specific projects, rather than directly funding actual running costs. Recently, 2015, the Australia Council announced a new funding model with ARIs now funded through the arts projects for organisations grant. For more info on OzCo grants see [website](#).

education and employment.

Today ARIs are very diverse and not necessarily associated with specific art movements or tied to ideologies about art. They have evolved into a recognised, sometimes even institutionalised, sector of the arts community. They are usually small, independent, non-commercial spaces where artists may create not just exhibition opportunities but cultural events, publications, critical dialogue, and in general provide an alternative to the art market. Significantly they also create a community of artists with one of the distinguishing features of an ARI being its sociality, 'situatedness' and grassroots network of local artists and audiences. As Dan Rule notes, "...the artist-led organisation's real potency and value comes down to something far less immediately tangible or quantifiable. Community may be something of a hackneyed term, but it's also a notion that has been central to the history of art making..." (Rule, 9).

It is this idea of a 'community of artists' that I would argue connects ARIs to the Community Economies Research Network – a group of researchers theorising and "enacting new visions of economy." Their project, developing out of J. K. Gibson-Graham's feminist critique of political economy, "that focused upon the limiting effects of representing economies as dominantly capitalist," seeks to understand how to build and sustain non-capitalist economic alternatives. (Community Economies Project 2009.) This is a powerful and suggestive idea for anyone seeking to understand ARIs as vital places of art production beyond enterprise capitalism's focus on the art market and the profit motive, and to what Helen Hughes, in her short talk at Brisbane's IMA, referred to as "contemporary arts assimilation with the entertainment and tourism industries..."⁷

One notable feature of ARI culture that is significant for thinking about this connection is the absence of any leaders or epi-

(7) Helen Hughes speaking in response to Terry Smith's keynote lecture, at the "What Can Art Institutions Do? Symposium at Institute of Modern Art (IMA), Brisbane, July 2015. Web.

centre. Rather, there is a loose network of these artist organisations across the globe, and looked at as a phenomenon or movement they bear some resemblance to Gibson-Graham's characterisation of "the practice of feminism as 'organizational horizontalism'." In writing about feminist organisational practice Gibson-Graham write: "[T]he movement achieved global coverage without having to create global institutions...Ubiquity rather than unity was the ground of its globalization." (Gibson-Graham 2006:xxiii-iv)

THE EXPANSION OF ART

In order to understand the link between artists involved in ARIs and their relationship to work in the public sector, in particular the university sector, it is important to note the overall expansion of the arts over the past thirty years both in Australia and globally. Paul Gladston, writing in the art magazine *Broadsheet*, in 2014, writes of the enormous expansion of art production in the United States since WWII, quoting the art historian Brandon Taylor he writes, " ...during the early 1940s there were a mere handful of galleries exhibiting modern art across the whole of the USA with little more than twenty artists of any stature regularly showing work there. By 1986... the USA had over two thousand modern art galleries with around six hundred and eighty of those galleries and one hundred and fifty thousand artists of non-amateur status producing modern works of art located in New York City alone. (Gladston 2014:27)

Similarly in Australia too there has been an increase in the numbers of practicing artists in the latter part of the 20th century and early 21st century.⁸ As Peter Anderson points out, one of the major shifts that has occurred in the visual arts over the last few decades has been the increased numbers of artists working from within universities using a "research

(8) For more information on demographics of Australian visual artists see [The Australia Council website](#).

paradigm.”

For many years the Australia Council’s grant guidelines included a long list of things that they would not fund. They still do, but now the list is a little shorter. While funding is still not generally available for the academic activities of undergraduate and post-graduate students, one of the things that has dropped off the list is the explicit exclusion of “academic research.” This is perhaps a recognition that a good deal of art practice these days functions within a research paradigm, with quite a lot of it going on in and around art schools that are now embedded within the university sector. It’s part of a shift that has been going on for a couple of decades, along with the gradual expansion of research based higher degrees in the visual arts. (Anderson, *Arts Business Practice or Practice Based Research*, 2009)

However, this increase of working or professional artists in Australia doesn’t mean that artists make a living from their art. On the Australia Council website can be found the report, “Do You Really Expect to Get Paid” from 2010, written by David Throsby and Anita Zednik. One of the many interesting and sometimes startling statistics that this report shows is that “the strong growth in artist numbers between 1987 and 2001” has actually “levelled out.” And crucially less than twenty percent of artists work full time on their creative practice. (Throsby and Zednik, 19). These figures begin to show the complicated situation that artists live with. And one of the most well recognised facts is that it is extremely difficult to make a living from an art practice alone. As Throsby and Zednik show in their report, the average income for visual artists from their practice is below \$30k per annum. Most Australian artists need to supplement their income with part-time or even full-time work.

In a 2009 *Art Monthly* article titled “The Numbers Game – On Counting the Arts”, Peter Anderson juggles the contradictory figures reported by The Australian Bureau of Statistics on

artist's numbers. As Anderson explains it is a complicated business with one report announcing that the number of artists had doubled, while another showed that the number had dropped quite considerably. One of the key factors that muddied the waters was the fact that many artists (at least 60%) work at "other jobs." A reason for this confusion, Anderson explains, is that as the census requires that one list the "main job" as that performed the week of the census, this may be skewing the figures, occluding the actual number of artists. This is because many artists have an "other main job" in order to survive, and the census caught them on the "wrong" week. Significantly, Anderson concludes:

Even if the overall number of artists has not declined, the census does show that the numbers who identify key artist occupations as their main job have fallen. This, at the very least, suggests a decline in the *proportion* of artists whose practice is their main job... (Anderson 2009:36).

This conclusion points directly to how and why the current redundancies will have a flow-on effect for artists working in ARIs, artists who often work as teachers, researchers or other roles in public institutions, while maintaining an art practice. Universities in particular have become a haven for artists through PhD programmes where practice-based art research has become a well-trodden route for artists to extend their practice through further study, giving them valuable time and space to pursue projects and their own practice. Given this matrix of artists and art-related work through university positions, the network of artists who divide their time between institutional employment and their art practice has created a unique and specific arts ecology.

In order to understand the flow-on effect of recent restructuring and redundancies on artists involved with ARIs and to draw out the complex networks, including the significant social as well as economic connections that make up the arts ecology in Australia, in particular Melbourne, I decided to ask artists themselves about their links to the public sector, in particular the university. Given the constraints of time and space I will

present four quite different ARIs, three based in Melbourne and one located in Sydney.

The Rumpus Room is an independent space run by artist Ashlee Laing from his home garage in Maribyrnong.⁹ It emphasises play and process, rather than finished outcomes or fully resolved work, and the space has the look and feel of a project space rather than a white cube. It is open one Saturday a

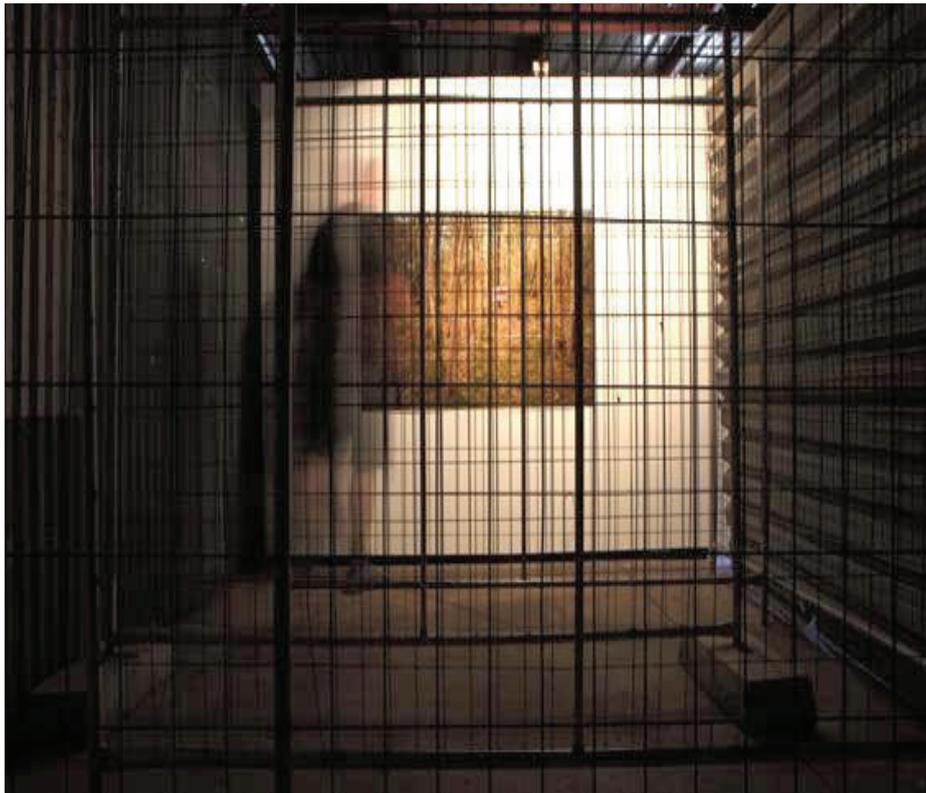


Figure 1: Ashlee Laing, *Wight Moratoria*. Image source: *The Rumpus Room* website

month for 8 months of the year “and offers visual and performance artists a space in which to simply come and play” – “or have a romp”. Significantly, for artists, there are no fees as the

(9) For more on *The Rumpus Room* see their [facebook page](#).

space is offered as a gift.¹⁰

As Ashlee welcomes artists to 'have a romp' in his garage, the experience for both artists and audience can be unexpected and open-ended. There's a sense of both intimacy and intensity to the projects, with the garage shifting and changing with each new artist residency. I've seen and experienced some impressive projects here over the past year including intense and moving performances, compelling images and sophisticated engagements with complex ideas. The Saturday night crowd creates a warm, sociable and charged atmosphere to the events, where beer and wine flow generously, accompanied by a backyard barbecue, and often followed by a performance.

In an email discussion with Ashlee he described his own institutional ties. He started *The Rumpus Room* while doing his Masters at VCA, he felt that he and fellow students needed a space to try things out and get feedback - "we needed more from each other than what was on offer at the uni" and he felt that the existing ARIs were too expensive, and "really just a third wheel in the real estate game." Ashlee also wrote that, "everyone that has shown and/or written responses to shows in *The Rumpus Room* are an associate (student) of 1 of the 4 schools I have been affiliated with: SCA, Tas. School of Art, La Trobe Uni (Bendigo) and VCA."¹¹ For Ashlee, the universities have offered connections and opportunity to meet like-minded people, rather than any financial help.

In Sydney, *Marrickville Garage* is run by artists Jane Polkinghorne and Sarah Newall.¹² In December 2012 they turned their

(10) For further discussion on the relationship between the gift and art see Lewis Hyde 2007. In his classic book on the 'gift' and "gift economy", Hyde argues for the importance of the 'gift economy' for the arts and creativity, and the difficulty for the artist or poet to reconcile and make a space for 'making' and 'inspiration' within a market-driven culture.

(11) Sydney College of the Arts (SCA), Tasmanian School of Art (Tas. School of Art), La Trobe University, Bendigo Victoria (La Trobe Uni) and Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne (VCA)

(12) For more on *Marrickville Garage* see: Marrickville Open Studio Trail is an initiative of Marrickville Council.

neglected garage into an art space. It took them the entire summer to fix it up, including repointing the brickwork, and cleaning up the outside toilet. Since then they have had an exhibition event almost every month, both solo and group shows, with a very broad range of artists inhabiting the space with singular and affecting projects. Again, there are no fees for artists who show, and to keep it manageable the Garage is only open the first weekend of every month. Like many ARIs, *Marrickville Garage* has a well designed and comprehensive website, documenting the many fascinating projects they've shown, with photos, links and information. This is a significant aspect for many ARIs – with *Marrickville Garage* an excellent example – of the way ARIs are creating a broad national and international network and public profile, with a sophisticated online presence, while at the same time creating a dynamic

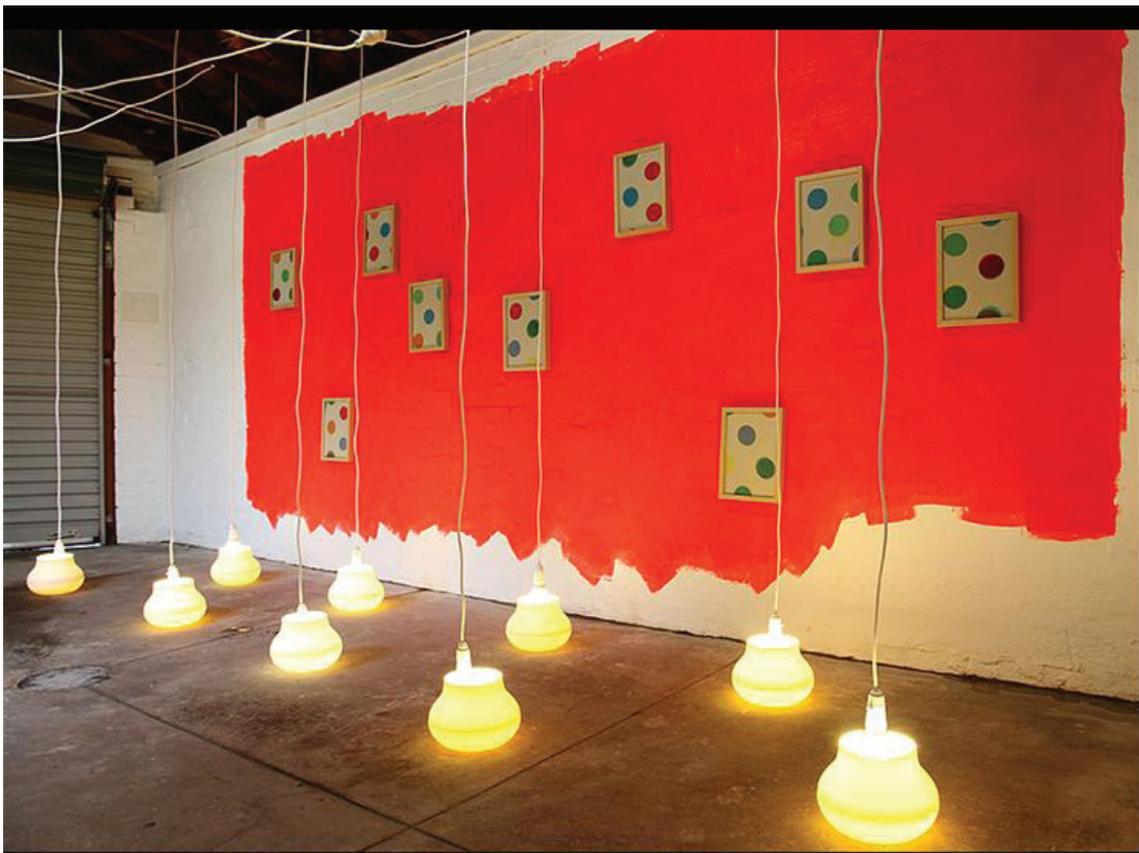


Figure 2: Francesca Mataraga, "Garage (installation for *Marrickville Garage*)", 2013. Image source: *Marrickville Garage* website

archive. The importance of the social as a significant aspect for most ARIs is also evident with *Marrickville Garage* where in 2013 and 2014, as part of Marrickville Open Studio Trail, they extended this social generosity to their local neighbourhood by organising a street art project, where they invited all the houses in their street to donate their front yards as sites for artworks.

In separate email correspondence with Jane and Sarah they described their institutional ties. They are both graduates of Sydney College of the Arts where Jane is currently a candidate in the PhD program. During their candidacy they both received the University Post-Graduate Award. Jane described this as a “crucial part of my income.” Both currently teach casually at different universities. Jane says that both she and Sarah “are reliant on casual teaching for their income.” They both have deep ties to graduates, current students and teachers at Sydney College, and so draw on these connections in forming exhibitions.

The next two spaces are part of *Docklands Spaces*.¹³

Run by artist Deb Bain-King, *The Front* is one such space, occupying a shop front on the main street of Docklands.¹⁴ It is an art space with a very unique and singular approach, focusing on large-scale installation in the front gallery and participatory and collaborative ideas as well as residencies in the back-space. On the several occasions I've visited, I've encountered some spectacular projects in the front gallery, which acts as a window gallery, when closed. There's been a wide range of work shown – often with a deep and sophisticated engagement with social issues as they impact personal stories. Open-

(13) *Docklands Spaces* is commissioned by the City of Melbourne, MAB Corporation, and Places Victoria. *Docklands Spaces* is a pilot initiative by Renew Australia to activate some of the currently under-utilised spaces in Docklands through incubating short-term uses by creative enterprises and independent local initiatives on a rent-free basis. For more information on this project see the [website](#).

(14) For more on *The Front* see their [facebook page](#).

ings are always packed with lots of good nibbles and drinks flowing. In response to my question about her own affiliations with universities, Deb replied via iPhone, “the most important aspect of education at universities is the opportunity to



Figure 3: ACAB in collaboration with Nick Hertzog, *CONCRETE TERRA*.
Image source: *The Front* website

engage with high-level thinking with a large range of other artists and practitioners and thinkers.” She also said that the artists who have been involved in *The Front* have come from RMIT, Monash, VCA and VU, and she met them through ARI networks as well as at tutorials at university. Similar to Ash-lee’s experience she thinks that universities offer connections



Figure 4: *In.ter.face*, Group exhibition presented by *Coalesce* ARI. Image source: *D11 @ Docklands* website

and opportunities to meet like-minded people, rather than any financial help.

The final space I'll discuss is *D11 @ Docklands*¹⁵ which is also part of *Docklands Spaces* and located across the road from The Front. It is run by *Second Collective* a group of very energetic and enthusiastic artists. The gallery consists of two large spaces and has an amazing range of solo and group shows - every two weeks - an incredible schedule. Opening nights usually attract a large crowd and there's usually a provocative performance event as well as plenty of good food and drinks. I recently interviewed artist Michael Carolan, the founding director, and one of the main initiators of the project. He emphasised the gallery's diversity and its commitment to collaborations between artists. In terms of public institutional connections, Michael and many of the artists associated with the gallery have ties with RMIT, either as current students or post-grads or recent graduates. Himself, a graduate, Michael was awarded an RMIT Art Link grant for a previous ARI, called Coalesce ARI.

The sociability of ARIs is prevalent with these *Docklands Spaces* as they work together to maximise their audiences. *The Front*, *D11*, as well as *The Food Court* nearby, usually hold their openings on the same evening, thus increasing audience traffic between the galleries, and creating a unique arts precinct through camaraderie and cooperation.

To conclude. As the artists interviewed above suggest, the links between artists and public sector institutions are various, complex and sometimes indirect. Nevertheless, there is a definite connection between ARI artists and educational institutions, where artists are entangled through work, education or simply networks of colleagues and community. With the severe cuts to public sector institutions, in particular universities, it seems inevitable that artists involved with ARIs will be affected, although it is impossible to say what it will mean ulti-

(15) For more on *D11 @ Docklands* see their [blog](#) and [facebook page](#).

mately for the ARIs themselves, when the dust settles. Surviving current austerity measures which cut back not only direct funding to arts institutions, but other less obvious support networks like universities and public sector educational institutions, will inevitably be at a great cost to individual artists, the arts ecology and the larger cultural economy, and the public sector as a whole will be impoverished.

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RE-STRUCTURE: ART AS SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

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This paper draws upon material from the forthcoming book *Art as Enterprise: Social & Economic Engagement in Contemporary Art*, co-authored by Grace McQuilten and Anthony White, published by IB Tauris in 2015.

Art has begun to play a key role in the global development agenda, not only because of the aesthetic qualities of art, but also because artistic practice is intertwined with economic growth and social development. This is most evident in the global rise of so-called “creative industries”.¹ The affinity of art with global economic and cultural development is both promising and problematic, and it is this tension that I will explore in this paper. I begin by discussing the relationship of art to the changing nature of public and private funding in the global economy, and I then present two case studies of art as social enterprise. These studies explore how artists are managing the multiple and at times conflicting demands of simultaneously pursuing economic, cultural and social goals in their artistic practices.

In *The Expediency of Culture*, George Yúdice presents an important critique of the way that art has been adopted to advance the interests of cultural capitalism, including its affiliation

(1) As a UNESCO report on global development in 2012 argued “culture and creativity also have a tremendous impact on social cohesion and development. See van der Pol (2007).

with the idea of “big society” instead of government support for social welfare. He also describes the instrumental role art is playing in globalisation and how the economic rationalist views of the creative industries have threatened some of the inherent qualities of art. He writes:

In this context, the idea that the experience of *jouissance*, the unconcealment of truth, or deconstructive critique might be admissible criteria for investment in culture comes off as a conceit perhaps worthy of a Kafkaesque performance skit. (Yúdice 2003:16)

In many countries, the contemporary political climate is characterised by ever-louder calls to shrink the public sector. As a result, arts organisations struggle to gain access to government funds, to a degree that philanthropic support can only partly counteract.

In this climate, artists and arts organisations are forced to become more entrepreneurial, both in seeking private sponsorship, and in engaging with commercial markets. Many artists and arts organisations are wary of reliance on corporate sponsors and the commercial market, however, for the risk of compromising qualities of independence, critical freedom and artists’ agency. This helps to explain a growing interest in alternative models of organisation including social enterprise allowing for greater independence from private and public funding. Greater independence also has the potential to provide greater artistic and critical freedom, providing more scope for the kinds of artistic practices that Yúdice refers to above. In order to understand the relationship between art and these new forms of economic organisation, it is first important to consider the broader context of art’s relationship with global economic forces.

ART AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

As the creative sector of the global economy has grown in significance in recent years, private enterprise has a newly important role in determining the scope and diversity of art practices. Historically, there has been crossovers between these fields in phenomena like art philanthropy, the art market, and community art projects. What is significant about recent developments is that initiatives linking art to social outcomes have given private enterprise a newly important role. Some examples are the development of the creative industries; the rise of public/private partnerships in the arts; and the emergence of artists who are strongly business-minded or even take business as their prime mode of operation.

The creative industries model that currently influences public policy in the arts argues that a great deal of modern economic activity has much in common with the activity of artists – the radical, creative disruption that characterises both entrepreneurial activity and avant-garde practices (O'Connor and Cunningham and Jaaniste 73; Meyer and Griffin 293-303). The fact that the term “disruptive innovation” has become a catch-phrase in business speaks volumes – the fact that it is a synonym for ruthless competition is troubling. As Jill Lepore (2014) describes, “[t]here are disruption consultants, disruption conferences, and disruption seminars. ... Disruptive innovation is competitive strategy for an age seized by terror.” The benefits of the creative industry model, according to those who advocate for its expansion, lie in harnessing creativity to spur economic growth. An inherent danger of the model is the instrumentalization of artistic activity – seeing it chiefly as an economic rather than aesthetic or social good – and the often insecure, risky and exploitative employment profile of the typical creative industries worker who belongs to a segment of the workforce known as the “precariat.” In other words, the creative economy model, which shuns traditional ideas of col-

lective labour protections, also has a significant social downside (McRobbie 2011: 33-4; Raunig 2011:191-203; Lucas 2012).

In a parallel development, the increasing profile and importance of senior business figures in the boards of major cultural institutions has brought an economic rationality and market focus to their decision-making processes. In the context of art museums, Victoria Alexander suggests that corporate sponsorship tends to negatively impact on the scope and type of exhibitions being staged. In her study of the impact of funding on the curatorial practices of major art museums and galleries in Australia, she writes:

It is clear that funders prefer to sponsor certain types of exhibitions, those that help funders meet the goals behind their philanthropy. In the aggregate, corporations fund more popular and accessible, but less scholarly, exhibitions, compared to exhibitions that museums underwrite with internal funds. (Alexander 1996:220)

This puts pressure on artists and art institutions to produce work that is popular, consumable, and marketable in the eyes of their philanthropic or corporate investors. While arts sponsorship is often measured in terms of cultural capital and social return, it is increasingly expected to translate back into business dollars. As Austin Harrington writes, “the new commercial elites have a greater interest in the short-term reconvertibility of cultural capital back into economic capital” (Harrington 2004:202-3).

The confluence of art with commercial interests is evident in global economic data. According to a report issued in 2012 by UNESCO, the value of cultural and creative production in the global economy was measured at 1.6 trillion USD in 2007 (UNESCO 2012). To put this into context, the value of the cultural and creative industries was nearly twice that of international tourism. Moreover, this is a rapidly expanding sector. While there has been some confusion about the relationship between cultural and creative industries (considered broadly) and the visual arts (specifically), this rapid economic expan-

sion has been particularly evident in the visual arts, with world export of artworks more than doubling from \$10.3 billion in 1996 to \$22.1 billion in 2005 (van der Pol 2007).

Nonetheless, It is difficult to accurately measure the scale and volume of visual arts organisations and producers due to the fragmented, individuated and informal nature of the sector. In 2007, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics issued a report precisely to address issues of inaccurate data in the creative industries worldwide. The report argued: “the cultural sector exploits an infinite raw material – creativity – which proves difficult to trace in physical form” (van der Pol 2007). This led to many “hidden or ‘embedded’ cultural occupations” that were not evident in statistics on creative industries, making it difficult to document conditions of employment and production (van der Pol 2007). This raises important questions the equitability of the arts as an industry. While available data shows that cultural industries - and the visual arts component of those industries - are significant economic activities in many countries globally, the question remains: how is this activity financially supported?

While the art market itself is growing at a rapid pace globally, government funding for the arts has been in steady decline (Deloitte Luxembourg and ArtTactic 2013). This indicates a growing role for the private sector in sustaining artistic practice, production, and reception. Deloitte, a major financial service operating in the art market, issues an annual *Art and Finance* report documenting trends in the international market. In the 2013 issue, this growth of the market was a pre-occupation. The report noted:

The unprecedented development of the art market over the past few years has resulted in the ‘financialization’ of the art market. Art is now seen not only as an object of pleasure, however, also as a new alternative asset class with interesting business opportunities. (Deloitte Luxembourg and ArtTactic 2013)

Notably, alongside the affirmation of the growth in the private

art market, the report acknowledges greater difficulties for arts practitioners as a result of this private expansion. It describes how “the globalisation of culture has led art organisations and cultural related companies to confront a number of strategic issues critical to reaching their goals” (Deloitte Luxembourg and ArtTactic 2013). Part of this increased complexity relates to a decline in government support for the creation and development of art, as opposed to the sale and re-sale of artworks; the primary motivator of the private market.² Although global data of funding sources for the arts is very difficult to obtain, trends on a region-by-region basis present an overall pattern of decline in government support for the arts, with a parallel spike in the growth of the private sector globally.

In the USA, government support for the arts was significantly affected by the global financial crisis of 2008. Since then, the arts have seen a continuous reduction in public funding. *The Art Newspaper* reported in 2011 that arts funding in the US had reached a record low, with local support declining 21% and federal funding decreasing as much as 30% since the global financial crisis.³ Alongside this was a rise in arts organisations operating at a deficit. Despite positive forecasting, the decline continued in 2012.⁴ This trend also appears in the UK and Europe, which have similarly suffered the effects of the global financial crisis. A policy report issued by the European Network on Cultural Management and Cultural Policy, titled “Responding to the crisis with culture,” expressed concern about a decline in both public and private support for public

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- (2) The growth in the private art market relates to auction sales – the sale of existing, high-value artworks – as opposed to financing of the creation of new artwork and emerging artists. Deloitte reports that auction sales have grown 600% in the last decade, which accounts for a large share of the total growth in the market. See *Deloitte Art and Finance Report*.
 - (3) Julia Halperin (2013) also noted, “[n]on-profit arts organisations operating at a deficit rose to 43% in 2011 from 36% in 2007, due in part to the decreased funding across all levels of government.”
 - (4) See Ryan Stubbs, “Public Funding for the Arts: 2012 Update,” *Grantmakers in the Arts Reader*, vol. 23, no. 3 (Fall 2012)

art museums, despite the growth of the private art market.⁵ The report responded to this situation by encouraging new business and governance models. Even in Australia, which was relatively unscathed by the global financial crisis, the same trend has been observed, with a decline in public funding coinciding with a 98% increase in private sponsorship in the period 2001 to 2011.⁶ As a result, the sector is calling out for the creation of new organisational models to deal with this trend. So far, however, there has been very little offered in the way of tangible alternatives to the existing binary between non-profit, publicly funded institutions and for-profit galleries and auction houses.

What this tells us is that the demands of the private art market are becoming an increasingly significant force in determining the production and reception of artistic activity worldwide. The explosion of entrepreneurship in the arts can be seen as a response by artists to their struggle for government funding. On the flipside, the resulting increase in self-employment has led to unregulated working conditions and commercial interests impacting on the types of artistic works being produced and disseminated. The uncertain boundary between entrepreneurship and exploitation in the arts provides ground for heated debate. In *Critique of Creativity*, Gerald Raunig argues that the supposed creative freedom provided by an increasingly privatised arts industry, with its attendant “precarious” working conditions including the predominance of casual and contract labour, is akin to ideological enslavement. He writes, “In the context of the creative industry it would thus be more apt to speak of a ‘massive self-deception’ as an aspect of self-preca-

(5) See “Responding to the crisis with culture: Towards new governance & business models for the cultural sector” in ENACT’s 2013 *Policy Debate Report*.

(6) See “AbaF Survey of Private Sector Support: Measuring Private Sector Support for the Arts in 2009-10” (2011).

risation" (Raunig 2011).⁷ Equally, there is criticism about the influence of government policy on creative freedom and innovation in the arts. Public policy makers have a tendency to be risk-averse in their decision making about funding, which is counter-intuitive to contemporary arts practice, stimulated by experimentation and risk.⁸

Over-funding of the arts is hardly an issue at the moment, however, where arts institutions and individual artists are adapting to a public sphere increasingly defined by competition. As David Throsby observes in *The Economics of Cultural Policy*, "Enterprises such as performing companies and public art galleries are facing greater competition for earned revenue, and sources of unearned revenue, such as donations and sponsorship, are harder to come by than they have been in the past" (Throsby 2010:4). This increasing competition for both public and private funding has a profound impact on the types of art being produced and exhibited. Annette Van den Bosch raises this in *Art and Business*, where she argues that not only does competition undermine cooperative relationships between art institutions, but that the result is boring exhibitions. She writes, "Along these lines, the research suggests that art is shaped by mundane organisational processes" (Alexander 1996:187).

It is hardly surprising in this context, that artists seek alternative opportunities for the exhibition and distribution of their work. This is by no means a recent development, and has been occurring gradually over the last several decades, partly in line with the increasing privatisation of the public sphere in the wake of global capitalism's growth and expansion. In

(7) Creative industries has taken over from the culture industry and has been seen as a positive answer because it promotes creative freedom of work / projects through individualised labour. This is a problem because it leads to self-exploitation and ideological "enslavement", where creative workers are willingly subjecting themselves to exploitation. As Raunig (2011:202) writes, "the actors in creative industries interpret the appeal as meaning that they have at least chosen self-precarisation themselves."

(8) See Heazle (2010).

Arts and Creative Industries, a report commissioned by the Australia Council in 2011, the researchers observe a gradual shift toward privatisation and individualism in arts production stemming from 1960s ideologies about creative freedom. This has led to an increasingly entrepreneurial spirit: “Independent cultural producers were acting in ways akin to small business entrepreneurs; they were self-employed and looked to take advantage of niche, emerging, fleeting markets” (O’Connor et al 68). The problem with this increased entrepreneurship, as evidenced in the same report, is a simultaneous exploitation of artists for commercial interests, and a deferral of responsibility for problems in the arts away from social policy makers and onto individuals (O’Connor et al 2011:75). So what, you ask, is the alternative?

ART AS SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

In a critique of the economic conditions of contemporary artists, Angela McRobbie invites the art community to consider “radical social enterprise” as an alternative to the existing creative economy. She writes:

I would like to propose a renewal of radical social enterprise and co-operatives. Such self-organised collectives would also be a way of providing comparable working structures across diverse occupations such as social workers/community workers and artists. (McRobbie 2011:34)

Social enterprise discourse has developed in line with an increasing convergence of public, private and non-profit sectors, in the arts. As a result of this convergence, an increasing number of hybrid organisations have developed bringing together business methods for social benefit.⁹ Definitions of social enterprise vary widely, both in theoretical discourse and in practice. What appears consistent among such definitions and instances is a convergence between public and

(9) Sabeti (2009:1) describes “[p]ioneering organizations have emerged with new models for addressing societal challenges that blend attributes and strategies from all sectors”.

private models of organisation, and an over-arching priority to privilege social outcomes over economic returns.¹⁰ The vast majority of social enterprises are organisations led by a social, cultural, environmental or economic mission consistent with a public or community goal. They trade to fulfil this mission, derive a substantial portion of their income from trade, and reinvest the majority of their profit/surplus in the fulfilment of their mission.¹¹

The effectiveness of social enterprise as a model for organising artistic practice, however, depends on the ability of such organisations to manage the conflicting demands of pursuing artistic, social and economic goals simultaneously. A number of questions arise in considering art as social enterprise. Do these new models of organisation maintain space for artistic freedom and social critique? Can they deal with the interests of the commercial market while also pursuing non-economic interests, and do they generate social benefit in a way that provides agency for those who stand to benefit? Does a social purpose reduce art's critical and creative potential?

In social enterprise, these questions are front and centre. The starting point for considering art and social enterprise together is the idea that there is no "outside" of the market from which artists can operate. As John Lloyd argues, "capitalism... is both outside of and within us, giving its present forms the aura of inevitability" (Lloyd 11). This does not mean that producers and consumers have no agency. But it does suggest that if producers and consumers want to challenge systems and structures of late capitalism, then this engagement must begin from an acknowledgement of art's embedded situation within its complex economic flows.

Two examples of art as social enterprise help to demonstrate the ways in which artists are self-organising in this context.

(10) See Dacin and Dacin (2011).

(11) See Barraket et al (2010) and Social Enterprise Coalition's (2010) *No More Business as Usual: A Social Enterprise Manifesto*.

Firstly, artist Andrea Zittel's retailing of garments by contemporary artists in *smockshop*; and secondly, the income-generating activities of artists in the Pacific Women's Weaving Circle in Australia. In both cases, the values of artistic freedom, participation, agency and economic transparency are privileged over "doing good" in terms of how art might be seen to generate social benefits.

SMOCKSHOP

In 2006, US contemporary artist Andrea Zittel launched a project called *smockshop*, enlisting a group of contemporary artists to customise a simple smock dress of Zittel's design. The resulting one-off pieces were then sold at a range of pop-up shops inside gallery spaces such as Susan Inglett Gallery, New York, Sprüth Magers, London and Berlin, and the Suburban at Oak Park, Illinois, until the conclusion of the *smockshop* project in 2010. The purpose of these gallery shows was to generate income for the individual artists involved, many of whom were struggling to support their emerging practices. The project is relevant as it presents a form of social enterprise in the art world, and because this enterprising spirit was born from a direct concern with artists' conditions in the prevailing market system. As the media release explains, "[t]he *smockshop* is an artist run enterprise that generates income for artists whose work is either non-commercial, or not yet self-sustaining" (Zittel 2014). Moreover, as a result of being involved in *smockshop*, one of the artists involved, Molly Keogh, went on to establish another social enterprise: Osei-Duro, which is discussed later in this essay.

The *smockshop* project was born as a result of Zittel's experience teaching emerging artists at the Roski School of Fine Arts at the University of Southern California, where she was exposed to the financial struggle faced by artists in developing their practices. The smocks provided a vehicle for artists to collaborate, to gain exposure in the contemporary art world, and to earn much needed money to support their indepen-

dent practices. Key to the viability of the project was Zittel's established reputation and status in the contemporary art world. While this enabled the project to get off the ground, it also played a role in the subsequent breakdown of the venture, due in part to the difficulties of creating and sustaining a "collective" identity from the foundation of a single artist's reputation.

Zittel emerged as a significant figure in the contemporary art scene of New York in the early 1990s, working at the intersection of art and design with her fictional design company, *A-Z Administrative Services*. Playing on the idea of the totality of the alphabet, and the artist's initials A and Z, the design studio became a platform for Zittel to performatively question the processes of design in consumer culture. This questioning has operated with differing levels of effectiveness and compromise, from the design of impossible products such as *A-Z Carpet Furniture*, which playfully subvert the idealistic promises of modernist design and upset consumer expectations, to the more questionable *A-Z Cellular Compartment Units* which made for entertaining cubby-houses for wealthy art collectors.¹² In all her work, Zittel expresses the artist's struggle to find freedom within the dictates of contemporary global capitalism. *smockshop* extended this exploration to the struggles of fellow artists.

Somewhat problematically, *smockshop* encapsulated the complex position of artists in the marketplace, where financial concerns motivate and complicate the creative freedom and autonomy of their practices. It also attempted to provide a new model of financial support privileging greater self-sufficiency and independence. In this way it signalled a move toward social enterprise. Zittel explained:

Much of the time I'm trying to come up with a solution that will sustain these platforms without the need to apply for grants. I have been avoiding non-profit status and funding because I want to see if I can create something that is fully

(12) See Morsiani and Smith (2005), Schumacher (2003) and Zdenek (2000).

self-sustaining in its own right. Though for now I have to admit that most of these alternative practices are funded by income that I make through my commercial practice. (Coles and Zittel 2011:4)

Here Zittel articulates the challenge faced by many artists and arts organisations trying to develop sustainable income sources that are neither purely commercial, nor entirely funding-reliant. A paradoxical facet of the project was its emphasis on supporting artists whose work was considered “non-commercial”, by enabling them to participate in a seemingly commercial art activity. This paradox was neither accidental nor cynical, and in fact exposed the very impasses that artists face when producing work that challenges prevailing social systems, while being intricately connected to those very systems. A key focus of the *smockshop* venture, in this sense, was to foreground production.

smockshop debuted in 2007 at Susan Inglett Gallery in New York. A selection of smocks was included in Zittel’s solo exhibition *Critical Space*, at the Vancouver Art Gallery, British Columbia, in 2007. There were many new incarnations and workshops from 2007-2009, including shows at Art LA, The Suburban in Chicago, and a temporary storefront in Chinatown, Los Angeles that also showcased events and screenings. The final exhibitions of the *smockshop* were in Munich and Berlin, and then London, in October 2009. The group of artists involved, also known as “smockers”, include Lisa Anne Auerbach, Maude Benson, Daphne Boggeri, Michelle Brunnick, Emily Bult, Sonja Cvitkovic, Kenturah Davis, Tiprin Follett, Claire Fong, Karen Gelardi, Hadasa Goldvicht, Kate Hillseth, Donna Huanca, Molly Keogh, Tony Koerner, Carole Frances Lung (aka Frau Fiber), Peggy Pabustan, Mark A. Rodriguez, Mariana Saldana, Ashira Siegel, V. Smiley, Sophie Tusler, and Jason Villegas. A typical display for the project, exemplified in the debut show at Susan Inglett Gallery in New York in 2007, featured racks of garments, a dressing room where viewers were able to try on the clothing and large scale photographs of the artists making the garments. The smocks had swing tags

attached with prices averaging from \$300-\$350 each. In other shows such as the exhibition at Sprüth Magers in London in 2009, artists occupied the gallery space and made garments on-site with sewing machines and worktables in the space. This also introduced a performative element, emphasising the artists' work processes to the audience. *smockshop* thereby transformed the gallery into an unusual retail space where the products were highly individualised and at times bizarre, and in so doing exposed the gallery as a commercial space of exchange dependent on artistic labour.

Distinctions between traditional works of art and broader aspects of everyday life, such as clothing, have been dissolving for many decades.¹³ A position that privileges total autonomy of arts, for example that of art historian Hal Foster, looks with suspicion upon the combination of art and fashion as symptomatic of the end of creative freedom in a consumer world. Artists such as Zittel, by contrast, occupy this space as a site for potential resistance.¹⁴ This reflects the context of a rampantly commercial art market, where such distinctions between art and commercial industry are hard to maintain. *smockshop* forced its gallery audience to confront the artwork as literal commodity, a product in a retail space. The value placed on the smocks was both logical – in line with commercial clothing, for example – and seemingly random. Could all the smocks have a similar value, if the artists were all at different points in their career trajectory, the materials and processes were different, the results so varied? Were they artworks or products? Is there a difference anymore?

The finished smocks were incredibly diverse, ranging from playful to fashion-forward to outright dysfunctional. The quality of production also varied, with some items barely stitched together and others impeccably finished. This variety reflected the eclectic interests and sewing experience of the

(13) See de Certeau et al (1998).

(14) Hal Foster (2002) argues this point in *Design and Crime: And Other Diatribes*.

artists, along with their differently sceptical and affirmative approaches to the project itself. Molly Keogh, for example, worked professionally as a stylist and fashion designer at the time. Her pieces, which included a linen jumpsuit with harem pant-legs and a 60s inspired white sundress with a fluorescent yellow zip down the front and ruffled sleeves, would not have looked out of place in an upscale boutique or fashion runway. By contrast, Peggy Pabustan's contribution was dubious in its wearability and production. Evocatively titled *Kinky unisex olive corduroy tie smock*, the geometric dress featured a narrow panel down the middle, hastily attached straps that crossed at the back and fraying edges suggesting the fabric had been torn or roughly cut. If the garment were worn on its own, it would have exposed both breasts of the wearer. It also looked incredibly fragile, as though it might fall apart if touched, thereby undermining its supposed functionality. It was precarious rather than durable, it didn't actually cover the body, and the item might not survive the process of dressing. A couple of the artists also collaborated with a drawing group known as the Sumi Ink Club, who added a playful and absurd element to the finished smocks. Kate Hill Seth's simple grey smock, for example, was illustrated with the shape of a face in profile, with spit erupting from its lips into the air. The focus on production rather than product, in this sense, enabled a greater opportunity for the project to allow for differentiation and commercial dysfunction.

smockshop also foregrounded the production processes of commercial fashion. Each garment was unique and hand-made rather than mass-produced in a factory environment. Audiences were invited to consider the process of making, either by witnessing the artists creating garments inside the gallery space, or through the curatorial devices of displaying patterns, sewing machines and dressmaking forms alongside the smocks. This presented traces of the human labour involved in garment manufacturing, a process usually purposely disguised from commercial retail spaces. One reviewer, Francesca Granata, described

smockshop fully explores fashion as a 'cultural phenomenon' and engages its performative quality. It does so in the production process, which Zittel and her collaborators are trying to reclaim as a tight network and a moment of community building. (Granata 2008:545)

This focus on production while foregrounding the issue of the artists' own low income brought into question the labour conditions of artists themselves.

The very concept of the "smock" has connotations of the artist's studio. The smock is an essential yet often forgotten garment worn to catch splatters of paint, ink and charcoal, and also relates to a spirit of childhood play. The process of making, exhibiting and selling the finished pieces as a group resisted the individualised and competitive nature of much mainstream artistic practice, emphasising collectivity over artistic stardom.¹⁵ However the commodification of the end result – the smocks in the shop – prevented the project from offering an entirely utopian alternative model. On the one hand, *smockshop* aimed to generate economic and social benefits for contemporary artists struggling with the commercial demands of contemporary life. On the other, it symbolised the demise of individual creative freedom within a consumer world, where artistic expression is absorbed into reproducible products that feed the consumer market. It was the complexity of this juxtaposition that made the project a timely provocation; exposing the issues faced by artists in the contemporary art market, to the audience of the contemporary art market. It also presented an alternative to the mass production of consumer culture by emphasising hand-made, individualised and sustainable production, while simultaneously exposing the desire for artists to create, make and work in spite of all social and economic constraints. In this way the *smockshop* realised what Deleuze and Guattari see as the radical potential of art in the context of late capitalism: its fundamentally creative

(15) Isabelle Graw (2009:13) describes these competitive and individualistic conditions for artists as "increasing economic pressure to succeed in view of the compulsive wholesale exploitation of life in celebrity culture".

and productive process, as opposed to its final message or meaning. As they argue in *Anti-Oedipus*, art is “a process and not a goal, a production and not an expression” (Deleuze and Guattari 145).

A crucial factor compromising the collective spirit of *smockshop* was the role of Zittel as “celebrity artist”. The collection of diverse items from multiple emerging artists was packaged and subsumed within the brand of Zittel, who was quite aware of the problematic tension between her own status, and that of the artists involved. Speaking in an interview with Alex Coles about the Sprüth Magers London show, Zittel shows a noticeable discomfort in claiming ownership of the project. She states:

That was a really exciting project, but I have to admit that I feel uncomfortable claiming the smockers’ energy as my own. Although I’m flattered you liked the project, unfortunately I don’t think that *smockshop* was really a show by me. (Coles 2011:4)

While she carefully attempts to evade taking credit in this exchange, the success of *smockshop* hinged precisely on her existing reputation and access to curators and galleries. *smockshop* developed as a series of exhibitions, presented by Zittel, rather than an independently functioning enterprise driven by the collective interests of the artists involved. The format enabled a complex critique of the art system from within the art system, but it did not go so far as break away from this system and develop an alternative model of practice. The *smockshop* artists attempted to address this by initiating a new version of the enterprise called, *The Group Formerly Known as smockshop*, however the project gradually dissolved in 2010.

smockshop can be seen as a gesture toward social enterprise without realising the full potential of that form of organisation. Staged within the conventional gallery structure of the art world, it was more a project or exhibition than an ongoing venture, and it was defined by the vision of one artist; Zittel. What it did provide was a provocation and premonition of

what collective social enterprise might be in the field of art, in this case, to support struggling artists with non-commercial artistic practices.

PACIFIC WOMEN'S WEAVING CIRCLE

A more developed venture, with a similar vision to *smockshop*, emerged in 2010 in Australia. *The Pacific Women's Weaving Circle* is an initiative of artists living in Melbourne who originally hail from Pacific Island nations with the aim of generating a space for social connection along with artistic and economic opportunities for the artists involved. The non-economic values of the group included artistic collaboration and skill sharing, the creation of a space in which to address experiences of social exclusion, and the opportunity for artists to reconnect with traditional arts and crafts. They describe:

We realise more and more, that by being part of something like this, we ensure that these exquisite skills of craft and design unique to our beloved Pacific Islands are maintained and cherished. By investing in local knowledge, we are able to connect with Islander life and culture in our urban realities. (*The Pacific Women's Weaving Circle* 2014)¹⁶

Their economic focus included the generation of income for artists through the making and selling of works, while at the same time encouraging a spirit of reciprocity. Maryann Talia Pau, one of the founders of the group, describes "our vision for the circle has always been to grow it and support women to create their own social enterprises based on crafts they

(16) *The Pacific Women's Weaving Circle* (2014) states: "The Pacific Women's Weaving circle is a dynamic space where Pacific Island women come together every fortnight to share traditional craft skills in a fun and relaxed environment. The Weaving Circle is dedicated to sharing cultural knowledge, continuing ancient handicrafts and building strong relationships, beginning with local Pacific Island women."

love and that have meaning for them" (Pau 2011).¹⁷ The group therefore embraced elements of commercial enterprise as a way of generating income for artists and to support their activities. At the same time they retained an element of resistance to the purely economic, linking to a history of artistic practice that has challenged the capitalist market by promoting alternative forms of trade. An interest in gifting and sharing, for example, is expressed in many of the group's communications. In a description for one of their exhibitions, the artists explain, "[h]and-made, hand-woven and hand-gifted treasures will be exchanged during the installation, foregrounding community, tradition, and history" (Miss-design 2014).¹⁸

In this sense the artists' conception of how their art might change hands conforms more to the values associated with cultures in which, as the anthropologist Marcel Mauss explains, exchange takes the form of gift-giving that embraces a much wider scope of human experience than the purely economic, implying an entire network of social, cultural and historical associations between people embedded in a network of intense reciprocity and personal interconnection (Mauss 1966). The term social enterprise is useful here, as it speaks to the possibility of generating income while also privileging non-economic goals. *The Pacific Women's Weaving Circle* describe process as taking priority over outcomes in their activities: "[t]hrough *The Pacific Women's Weaving Circle*, we remind each other that the 'making' process is just as valuable as a finished basket or necklace".¹⁹ Making, trading, facilitating workshops and exhibiting their work is a means for the artists to engage with a variety of audiences, including the contempo-

(17) Their listing in the *Our Community Arts & Culture Directory* outlines their purposes in more detail, and states one of the goals as: "Provide economic opportunities for women through arts and cultural projects, market stalls". 28 March 2014. [Website](#).

(18) For further discussion of art and gift-economies, where alternatives modes of transaction are explored including barter and gift-giving, see Purves (2005).

(19) *The Pacific Women's Weaving Circle's* [facebook page](#).

rary art world. This reflects the interests and practices of the group's founders, artists Lisa Hilli and Maryann Talia Pau.

Lisa Hilli's practice engages a range of contemporary media including video, sculpture and installation, while maintaining a dialogue with traditional art forms relating to her Papua New Guinean cultural background. In her video and performance work *Just Like Home* (2008-2010), she documented the ways in which her mother had adapted traditional Papua New Guinean cooking techniques in Australia. She filmed her mother preparing a meal of *Ai gir*, a vegetable and chicken dish traditionally cooked in banana leaves. In Australia, her mother prepares the dish using tin foil, creating a disjuncture between indigenous life and industrial modernity. For the exhibition of the video work, Hilli constructed large banana trees from tin foil, under which the video was screened. Alongside the exhibition, Hilli and her mother prepared and shared the traditional meal of *Ai gir* with audience members. The exhibition travelled to a variety of galleries in urban and regional venues across Australia including the Brisbane Powerhouse, Nexus Multicultural Arts in Adelaide, Colac Otways Performing Arts and Cultural Centre, Elcho Island, Footscray Community Arts Centre and Darwin Community Arts Centre. In projects such as *Just Like Home*, Hilli explores the ways in which social and geographic conditions influence identity, while also conscientiously traversing the boundaries of what is seen to be contemporary and traditional cultural practice. Similarities can be drawn between Hilli's work and Rirkrit Tirivanija's acts of hospitality, as championed by Nicolas Bourriaud in *Relational Aesthetics*. An important difference, however, is the way in which Hilli's work explicitly foregrounds the loss of cultural identity in Western society, and the conflict between modern industrial processes and indigenous culture.

Maryann Talia Pau similarly confounds the distinction between contemporary and traditional in her practice, where the artist hand-crafts elaborate body adornments using traditional techniques from Samoa and across the Pacific. In her installation

work *Find your memories, Find your stars*, Pau engaged with both pop culture and cultural tradition. The work was exhibited as part of the exhibition *Meleponi Pasifika* at the Footscray Community Arts Centre, part of the Contemporary Pacific Arts Festival, Melbourne in 2013. The focal point of the installation was a simple white dress-form mannequin sitting on the floor of a small gallery, near the wall. This kind of mannequin is usually used by dressmakers to pin and shape work in progress, rather than in the display of clothing in retail stores, and evokes the process of making. Pinned to the mannequin was an elaborate chain of crisp white ribbon, tightly woven into geometric shapes. Each shape was the size of a human face, evoking the form of a flower, and was woven to connect to the next piece in the chain. The negative space at the heart of each shape was that of a star. Strung across the mannequin like an elaborate couture dress in the making, the chain then spread out across the floor and crept up along the wall to create an intricate web of white shapes against the white walls, barely discernible yet striking in its subtle texture. Catching the light, the network of shapes, with their interplay of frame and space, star and shadow, alluded to the natural formations of wildlife and stars, while also connecting to the seemingly random nature of the creative process. In such works Pau draws upon traditional form, with its links to ceremony, place and identity, and brings this into dialogue with the aesthetics of contemporary fashion, drawing attention to the process of making rather than the end product.

The Pacific Women's Weaving Circle was less about the individual artistic goals of Hilli and Pau, however, than about forming a space for emerging artists and makers, with a goal to increase opportunities for income generation for women in their communities. The origins of the group were somewhat organic, beginning with the foundation of fortnightly and monthly gatherings which included anywhere between a handful and a dozen women. As people became aware of the group, the numbers increased and additional weaving circles were formed in different geographic regions. The group also shifted

to a more enterprising model as their work attained interest and attention from the general public and art world. They began selling items and running public workshops to fund the growth and development of the group. From here, they rented a studio and started employing project and administration staff to support the development of mainstream exhibitions and public projects. A key project that accelerated this growth was the exhibition *Pacific Trade: Occupation & Exchange*, which involved collaboration with independent fashion label Alpha 60 as part of the 2011 Melbourne Spring Fashion Week .

In *Pacific Trade: Occupation & Exchange*, the artists inhabited one of Alpha 60's high-end fashion retail stores, repurposing it for public weaving workshops, activities that promoted an economy of gifting and an art installation featuring a range of hand-woven objects displayed throughout the store. The artists made stars from woven ribbon, for example, which were gifted to customers who entered the store, transforming the usual economic exchanges of a commercial shop. They also gifted knowledge and skills by providing free workshops for members of the public to learn how to weave the stars, which also provided an opportunity to experience the social and relational qualities of the weaving circle. Their installation in the store referred to Pacific Trade routes and migration. This included traditionally woven mats, a hand-made woven canoe, and an array of baskets, interior furnishings and adornments. Woven stars were suspended from the ceiling to hang over the canoe, referring to navigation by night. The front window of the store was transformed with a hand-woven dress made of brightly wrapped sweets, a play on the ideas of consumption, consumer desire, value and the superficial aspects of fashion. It was also referring to a traditional Samoan gift of sweets woven together.

The Alpha60 retail store is known for a minimalist, slightly gothic aesthetic. The interior design of this store, for example, included a large reproduction of the dead face of Laura Palmer from David Lynch's 1990s television series *Twin Peaks*.

The Pacific Women's Weaving Circle installations and activities were a strange juxtaposition in this context. Their living presence and vibrant objects, along with their focus on processes that subvert the usual economic exchanges of clothing retail, drew attention to the lifelessness of retail stores, spaces in which the end product is elevated and production is usually disguised. The incongruity highlighted the ways in which the contemporary consumer landscape alienates human interaction. Karl Marx described this commercial landscape as a world that becomes strange and de-humanised for the ordinary worker, where the commodity becomes "an alien object exercising power over him", extending to the whole world which becomes "an alien world inimically opposed to him" (Marx 1961:71).

The artists physically occupied this de-humanised and transactional space, carving out a territory from which to raise questions of cultural exclusion and class divisions in fashion. The use of the term "occupation" pointed to histories of colonisation in the Asia-Pacific region that continue to be played out in both political and cultural terms. Here the power-dynamic was reversed, with Pacific artists becoming the occupiers, teachers and traders, while privileging alternative forms of commerce such as gifting and exchange. They did not simply create an image of social harmony, however, instead providing a space in which to attend to political and social differences. Tensions arose for example in the process of imparting traditional knowledge to members of the public, where the artists had to negotiate the boundaries between what they considered to be sacred knowledge and the information that they wanted to openly share, addressing issues of cultural appropriation and emphasising cultural difference rather than homogeneity (Pau 2012).

After a period of rapid growth in 2011-12, the collective scaled back their operations to reconsider their original purposes, pointing to the difficulty of negotiating the competing goals of social enterprise. Pau describes this questioning process,

stating “[a]s a collective, it is good; it is the whole dealing with complexity and acknowledging it. What is this space for, who is it for?” (Pay 2012). In 2013 they returned to the simple original premise of meeting on a monthly basis in an informal way, without the pressure to exhibit, pay rent and overheads that had emerged through their expansion. This was a purposeful decision to prioritise artistic and social goals. The group describes, ‘Some things though are absolute and consistent each time we meet: we share a great feed, we enjoy hearty laughter and we grow a deeper appreciation for the skill and ingenuity of our ancestors and peoples around us’.²⁰ Somewhat unexpectedly, this shift away from mainstream art world exhibition and profiling enabled the artists to have more time to make artwork. They were able to return to a process of making, according to each artist’s individual interests, as opposed to collective exhibition making. Similarly, a reduced focus on economic goals also unexpectedly enhanced the economic potential and benefits to the artists, by reducing overheads and expenses. Artists were able to sell their wares independently and as a group at markets and through their own networks, while the costs of regular workshops were funded by the artists themselves contributing materials (Pau 2012).

The Pacific Women’s Weaving Circle is an example of the possibility for art and social enterprise to come together without compromising the qualities of artistic independence and critical engagement with social context. However this has relied upon an ability to navigate complex terrain, including adapting and scaling back the model over time when economic and artistic motivations started to compete. Staying small and focusing on opportunities for artists to earn income without huge financial risk has led to a more sustainable model; the group is financially sustainable without the need for, or dependence upon, external funding. However a tense relationship with commercial economic value remains. Pau describes the ways in which artistic, social and economic values coincide in her

(20) *The Pacific Women’s Weaving Circle’s* [facebook page](#).

individual artistic practice:

Getting my work acquired by NGV really set the bar for me. That got me thinking, "Wow, if I can make a breastplate and sell it for this much, then maybe that is how I could make some money for me and my family". But it is deeper than that; it is more complex than that. It is so much about the process and about community and culture and identity and my worth as a woman, my work and how I use these hands. (Pau 2012).

Pau's description of the cultural and social facets of her artistic practice, along with the economic benefits that are simultaneously intertwined within this practice, points to the complex position of the contemporary artist in relation to the market.

CONCLUSION

The examples of *smockshop* and *The Pacific women's Weaving Circle* show artists adopting entrepreneurial strategies without necessarily being profit-seeking or indeed profitable. Both offer hybrid models – mixing funding from various sources and carefully negotiating the tensions between production, reception and economic requirements. These tensions and complexities indicate that enterprise, and social enterprise, is certainly not a holy grail in the search for funding and managing arts production. What both attempt, however, is to navigate the market in a way that privileges art's agency in society, and the artist's agency in the market.

What we now see is that all aspects of art, both small and large scale, "high" and "low", popular and elite are of interest to business. As David Cropley (2010:363) writes in *The Dark Side of Creativity*, "creativity and the process of exploiting creativity – innovation – are essential ingredients of competitive business". While the creative and culture industries are pushing art to have an ameliorative social role and economic utility, what George Yúdice describes as "expediency," art also has an important rebellious function, a capacity to engage with and

expose social problems.²¹ The question now is how we can sustain this problematic relationship between art and society at a time when the forces of globalisation are smoothing out important social differences under the umbrella of a big society. It is in this context that the model of social enterprise is emerging as a means to navigate this complex territory.

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Andrea Zittel, *A-Z Administrative Services*, 1991

Pacific Women's Weaving Circle, *Pacific Trade: Occupation & Exchange*, exhibition at Alpha 60 retail store, Melbourne, 2011

Lisa Hilli, *Just Like Home*, multimedia installation, 2008-2010

Maryann Talia Pau, *Find your memories, Find your stars*, installation at the Footscray Community Arts Centre, Contemporary Pacific Arts Festival, Melbourne in 2013.

THERE ARE MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS¹

JON HAWKES

I was asked to speak on the topic of possible responses to the reductions to government outlays in arts subsidy.

The speech I made at the time (November, 2014) was extemporaneous and largely autobiographical, attempting to draw, from my own experience, some conclusions about the impact of state support and the possibility that advantages might be found in the new situation. What follows is not a record of those anecdotes. Apart from anything else, since then, more radical changes have been made to the amount of, and ways that, Federal funds will be distributed to the arts community. These changes have provoked a vigorous response, largely focused on the prospect of the current Arts Minister becoming a de facto Arts Czar.² A hideous thought, and one worth actively struggling against.

But the proposed transformation of Federal arts support into a quasi-medieval personal gifting process also offers the chance, indeed the necessity, to reflect on some fundamental issues that, whether we are conscious of them or not, will profoundly affect the actions we take. 'Make it like it was before'

(1) Homage to Johnny Nash and his 1972 hit

(2) This refers to George Brandis and his National Program for Excellence in the Arts (NPEA), initiated in May 2015. In November 2015 it was re-named into *Catalyst — Australian Arts and Cultural Fund* by the succeeding Arts Minister Mitch Finsfield.

is unlikely to come true, and is that really the best, or even a vaguely likely, outcome? It would be useful for us to be able to be clear around questions like:

- Why should the state support art-making? In what parts of the art-making process could support be most usefully applied?
- Who should receive support?
- How should support be delivered?

I'm not about to suggest answers to these questions. But I do propose an approach that could lead down some fruitful avenues. This situation gives us the opportunity to think carefully about at least the following matters, and to find expressions in these areas that are accessible and inspirational:

- The function of art and artists in society. What is contributed? What is the relationship between art-making and human development? How important is diversity and dynamism for ways of seeing? What place does story-telling have in identity formation? How does the value of making art compare with the value of witnessing art? Do artists have a responsibility to pass on their skills? What other responsibilities might they have? What is so special about an artist? How does one become one? Does everyone have the right to be an artist?
- The relationship between artists, between artists and their communities, between artists and their governments (politicians, public servants and entities), between artists and their employers: how do these relationships foster or inhibit art-making?
- Reasons why and where state support is useful / necessary; from the earliest of ages skills need to be learnt, curiosity encouraged, expression facilitated. Where better to start than with art-making?
- How support might be applied (from money to regulations,

from grants to investments ...)? The state can do way more than write cheques.

- The relationship between art-making and work / commerce (making a living). Is an artist's relation to her work different from that of participants in other industries? In what ways may one's artistic practice be compromised by applying one's skills to money-making activities?
- Other ways, not only of organising how governments provide support, but of organising art-making – other economic relationships between artists, and between artists and their audiences.
- History – today's behaviours have been seen before (from both major parties and certainly arising from similar intent). How they were responded to then, what the results were, what the differences are, what alternatives were considered. Such reappraisal would surely benefit current planning.
- What one imagines the current government might be wishing to achieve through its support of the arts – imagining how these wishes might be subverted / transformed / exploited.
- Our confidence that the value / power / affect of our work outweighs whatever conflicting value / power / affect our financial supporters may have achieved or hope to achieve through being associated with our work (perhaps this is the bottom line).

And, as important as revisiting these basics, is re-evaluating the very thing that caused this event – state support of the arts.

I must admit that I've never totally accepted the proposition that artists have a right to state support (fact is, most of my life, I've operated on the basis that wheedling money out of the state is a challenging scam – one aspect of such a scam

is to claim funds as a right, but that's all, for me, it ever was. Other scam lines included guilt tripping and making massive claims as to the kudos the state might accumulate through its support). These days, I've come to suspect that the effort, responsibilities and compromises that surround government funding (as it is currently delivered) may be massively counter-productive (not least in the dangers arising from coming to believe the fabricated rhetoric being used to pull the funds)

Here are a few of the downsides, as I see them:

- Bureaucratisation on both sides: the development of specialist administrative superstructures within arts groups that are focused on relations with government; specialist public servants who write policy, develop programs and distribute funds.
- Competition / Individualisation, 'divide and rule': the submission system inhibits co-operative initiative – it cannot help but put people against one another. 80% of applications to the Australian Council for the Arts are rejected; those who 'win' are struggling with each other over tiny pieces of a small pie.
- Taking the rhetoric (government's and one's own) seriously: e.g. the excellence nonsense, but also much else. Coming to believe one's own advertising tracts is the beginning of a very slippery slope.
- Energy and time wasting: having to massage one's ideas into submission mode, successful & unsuccessful applications, acquittals, KPIs, 'support the arts' campaigns.
- The art of application: it is the 'submission' that gets assessed, not the art. This new 'art' has brought forth yet another branch of specialist professionalisation. One hires one of these folk to make one's submission.
- Dependency: 'we can't do anything without a grant'; in certain circles it is assumed (but unspoken) that the only

'legitimate' art is that which is subsidised; 'how can we get government funding for this?' And also the weakening other co-dependencies. As groups become increasingly dependent on government support so do they lose touch with their other original / potential supporters.

- Self-censorship, quietism, whose tune is played, cutting one's suit to fit the cloth: to obtain a grant, one must demonstrate commitment to their assessment criteria. If engaging with this system, one cannot help but adjust. One of the adjustments is to not rock the boat. The strings may be almost invisible but there's no question they are firmly in place.
- Acceptance / legitimisation of the current system: and not just of the system (which has many flaws), but of the demands the system makes upon its dependants – e.g. appropriate governance structures and the makeup of Boards.
- Assumption of rights: that artists have a unique right to undertake their activity of choice and be supported by the state in so doing. Because of what?
- Follow the money: apart from the obvious focus on maintaining the canon, it would be interesting to test the following assertion that the major financial beneficiaries of government arts funding are probably:
 - » The bureaucrats that are responsible for delivering it.
 - » The bureaucrats that are responsible for receiving it.
 - » The organisations and individuals who provide materials and services to the 'arts industry'

My bet is that the actual creators are at the bottom of the list. Is this how it should be?

And then there's room for a critique of the mindsets that inform current arts policy (on both sides):

- 'Industry assistance': an industry produces commodities

for sale. This industry is unable to recoup its costs through sales. It needs assistance that is justifiable because of the number of jobs there are in this industry (and, faintly possibly, because the commodities are suspected of having a value that exceeds their unprofitability)

- 'Preserve the canon': there are traditional rituals that embody and transmit the values of our society, these rituals should be embraced by all peoples
- 'Give them what they want': 'them' meaning the Liberal and National parties' power base in Australia, 'what they want' meaning the live presentation of costly archaic art-forms, 'give' meaning massively subsidised seat prices. As payback, the politicians gain access to a foyer environment supremely suitable for photo opportunities, informal networking, being seen (and with whom), being out amongst one's supporters, etc.

This is all pretty unpleasant, but most of all, the changing environment offers new possibilities of connection – ones that are more interdependent, mutually respectful, actively co-operative and open than the rigid hierarchies through which we currently work.

And despite my reservations about the intent, methodology and distribution patterns of current government arts subsidy systems, I do think that the state has a range of undeniable responsibilities vis-à-vis the arts, chiefly in the areas of education and training, community development, creative research and experiment, and perhaps in heritage conservation and animation. From which level of government support should emanate, and how these responsibilities might be most effectively exercised also need examination and debate.

I have previously written that 'the largest items of public investment in the arts are usually for the development, upkeep and management of facilities for the storage and presentation of traditional artefacts and rituals; next is usually subsidy of

the industry that makes content for these facilities; third is the training of personnel for employment in these fields; and fourth is often schemes to increase consumption of the products available from these facilities.

'If it is there at all, the smallest item is always for the support of community-based, community-envisioned and community-implemented arts activities.

'These investment priorities may make sense if arts production is viewed through an industrial or commercial lens. But they start to look a bit threadbare when other points of view are brought to bear. If art also describes a social process, a creative process, an experience, as well as an industry that makes stuff for consumption, then some other priorities raise their heads.'

And truth is, even from an industrial perspective, these priorities are a bit musty. For any industry to remain healthy, there has to be significant investment in continuing research and experiment. The making of work in which the prime motivations are curiosity, exploration and discovery rather than showing to an audience, are an essential and non-commercial aspect of the industry.

Furthermore, this is an industry in which a massive amount of the output is produced by individuals and small groups, few of which have the capacity to survive solely off the fruits of these labours. Consequently, an arts industry support policy/program is bereft without a serious focus on small business.

I do wonder how long the 'industry' model will prevail. I acknowledge that it is a model into which some areas of arts production fit (movies, commercial musicals, publishing, aspects of musical, theatrical and dance production). But there is much it does not see (perhaps thankfully), in particular ... I was going to rabbit on about art-making in communities, participatory art and so on. But I came across the conclusion to yet another extemporary speech in Winnipeg, November

2010. I was clearly on a roll:

We are all our own narratives. We all create our own stories. We cannot exist without having constructed the story of our existence around ourselves. And we do that virtually from the moment we're born. And the very first way we do it is artistically, and then through faith, and then into science, and then into philosophy. But it is with art that we create our stories; it is with art that we place ourselves in the world. And to deny people that, on the one hand— and I think in a way this is even worse — to delegate that function to others, is tragic. To think that you have to get an Artist with a capital A to write your own story is deeply shocking. And if government has a function, its critical function has to be not to have the Artist write the story for us, but to have the Artist liberate that capacity in ourselves. In terms of the public function that should be supported by government, that is the critical function of artists. They are the ones that have the fluency in these languages. And that fluency needs to be democratised. And it is artists that can do that. (Hawkes 2010)

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BEYOND THE BARKING OF WILD DOGS: COMMUNITY ECONOMIES, CALCULABILITY AND THE MAKING OF ART

DR KATHARINE MCKIN-
NON

This paper was originally presented to a gathering of academics, artists and entrepreneurs who gathered in late 2014 to consider the challenges thrown up by the re-structuring of the arts, culture and creative sector in Australia under the then Tony Abbot led Liberal government. I had been asked to reflect on the role of art making in civil society and to speak to how community economies might present “alternative modes of culture and knowledge production.” I thought to begin by getting a bit better connected to the cares and concerns of artists in my wider community. I turned to the first ‘art maker’

to hand: my seven-year-old daughter. What is art for? I asked, and she responded that art tells stories, it takes you on adventures, and it helps you learn stuff. Casting out to my wider community of art makers I asked, what do they think their art is for? How do they see the relationship between art making and the work of civil society? These grown ups mostly agreed with the seven year old: art is about finding expression, about making magic, about taking journeys. It is "about making the space and time for us to reflect on the past and present, to celebrate, to challenge and to actively create the future... To feed each other, to listen, to watch, to wait... To think, to feel, to laugh and cry. To be alive together".

Added to this was the shared perception that art is worthwhile because it is also about having something that exists beyond (and in opposition to) a "purely economically orientated society". In this paper I consider what a community economies perspective can lend to the work of making art as we, in Australia, enter a period of neo-liberal government.

In conversation, playwright Cath Ryan wrote "It is because art often rightly stands in contradiction to the main paradigm, that it is there like a wild barking dog, or a quietly sobbing child in the background – that it must be heard" (personal communication). This is an image of artistic work standing outside the dominant social paradigms, wild and barking, forcing us to see that something is wrong, forcing us to see that there are other ways of being. It is an important role, and brings to mind the ancient Cynics, (kunikos) an ancient Greek cult whose proponents scorned the rules and conventions of Athenian society. Foucault wrote about the Cynics as being 'guard dogs of the true life' (Hardt 2011:31). They attacked social norms in order to transform, living against and outside the conventions of society. They lived a militant life of struggle against self and for the self, against others and for others: living "a life transformed, [so as] to transform our world, to make of this world another world" (Hardt 2011:31 citing Foucault). While the Cynics did this through scandalous and

provoking acts, many contemporary artists do it through presenting confronting work, work that is difficult to like, that is grating and uncomfortable, works that place audiences under 'attack'.

But challenge and change does not always come through modes of attack and disruption. We can be lulled and seduced into radical difference and the discovery of a new, different, life. The changes being introduced by the Abbott government in 2014-15 follow such a model of seduction. Abbott's government, as with any democratic government, had the job of constantly constructing and reconstructing the hegemonic entity that grants it life and power.

Democratic politics operates through the formation of hegemones. A hegemony is something broad enough and loose enough, something *empty* enough that it can contain us all and carry us all with our different values and faiths and ways of living. In the Abbott government, part of their job was to seduce us to feel part of this hegemony, to feel part of 'Team Australia' even if we insisted on thinking of ourselves as its critics. Thus lulled into being (at least) resigned to (if not enthusiastic about) the neo-liberal ideology that driving the restructure, of funding to arts and education, we allowed ourselves to be carried forwards by the good ship Australia. We do not revolt.

How then to disrupt the trajectory of the ship? How to bark and bite with effect, or to conduct our own alternative seduction? Revolution is no solution anymore. But luckily hegemones themselves contain the means of their own dismissal. Any hegemony relies always upon having edges, and upon having something that is beyond and outside it, something that is different. No matter how dominant the dominant paradigm might be, it always contains it's own contradiction. The hegemonic cannot exist without it's Other (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Laclau 1996). The new revolution is to find these Others, foster the ones that are desirable, open up cracks in the false domi-

nance of, for example, neoliberalism.

The problem with encountering neoliberal hegemony is that neoliberalism is such a monstrous presence in the contemporary world. It is an easy habit to see it as enormous, global, reaching clawed fingers into every crevice of human existence. Against the monster the critics of neoliberalism, and those who advocate for other ways of doing things, are relegated to an embattled and very small gathering on the edges: fighting for alternatives, but destined to always be losing the battle. There is honour in martyrdom, pleasure even in being the struggler who knows they are in the right and speaks the voice of truth and justice. Habits are dangerous things however. It becomes easy to see in the world *that which we expect to see*. And habituated to what Eve Sedgwick refers to as the 'paranoid stance' of the embattled subject, it becomes difficult to open ourselves to the possibility that other realities might exist.

One of the contributions of community economies is to teach us the discipline of looking for those other realities and to combat that habit of seeing the monster in everything. The habit of looking for the monster teaches us to see it everywhere. The more we see it the more power we give it and the more disempowered we the little people become. But when we look carefully, so J.K. Gibson-Graham teaches us, we can see that the world is full of a proliferation of different ways of being, already with the potential to be fostered and to grow. Look carefully at the world we live in, examine closely the economic relationships through which we sustain ourselves and, so J.K. Gibson-Graham (1996) argue, we can see that neoliberalism exists alongside a myriad of other capitalist formations. Not only that but capitalism itself is far from being the hegemonic force of contemporary society. It exists alongside a plethora of other economic modes that are vital for sustaining our collective existence. And while we are habituated to representing these as alternatives, Community Economy perspectives show that these are not mere alternatives to dominant

modes – they are co-existent, prevalent and essential. While the Cynics might have founded their philosophy on a rejection of and an attempt to live outside of the dominant norms of Athens, in fact they could never stand outside and beyond. None of us ever can. We are, inevitably, here, in the now, and it is in the here and now that we must begin (Gibson-Graham 2006).

We can begin by asking: *where is* global capitalism? Does it cover/smother us all? Is it like the toffee apples that my daughters brought home after the kindergarten fete – the globe like the apple smothered in sticky red toffee? Of course it is not. That toffee ended up in sticky deposits all over the floor of my house. It felt like it was everywhere, but actually it was more like a network of localised refuse sites. Rather like neoliberalism: tacky, with artificially enhanced colour and sweetness, and very difficult to get rid of. On my floor it formed a network of localised actions and effects. Global capitalism, far from being a blanket of toffee, is a network of individual people, in particular locations, speaking and talking and

thinking together, making decisions and shaping certain kinds of systems and transactions. We might all be affected by those decisions and transactions, and drawn into them in different ways. But they are not everything, and they are not everywhere.

But what about when I have to play the neo-liberal game: to obtain my next grant by putting in a competitive bid that sells a 'product' and justifies the investment? After all, here and now what we are living in is not just a Liberal Government hegemony of neo-liberal restructuring. We are living in an audit culture, where the worth of anything has to be calibrated against a neoliberal formulation of value-for-money. To give you an example: Women's Action for Change is an NGO that uses community based theatre to address fundamental gender equity issues in Fiji, like working with communities to change attitudes about violence to women. Their funding is

contingent on demonstrating that they are delivering results. They need to show that the aid money they are given is empowering women and creating change. But how on earth do you measure empowerment? How do you quantify the changes in people's hearts that might come of witnessing a piece of theatre? (The fact that WAC has had to cease operations for lack of funding demonstrates that perhaps, under the current form of accounting, you cannot). In fact, how do you count so many of the things that human communities need in order to live a good life?: Respect, care, love, affection, the quality of commitments and engagements and communications with each other and across the world we live in.

Calculation, the argument goes, is fundamental to all aspects of human life. We are decision makers, we make decisions on the basis of calculations of costs and benefits, sorting through our options, implementing an assessment criteria, obtaining a result (Callon and Law 2005): do we buy this or that brand of cereal? Do we take the freeway or the back road? Do we send our child to this or that school. Understanding such decision-making as a process of calculation assumes that we are governed by a particular kind of rationality, a logic of choice (Mol 2008) if you will. And it is this logic that, amplified and empowered by econometrics, governs the way funding for civil society is structured – whether it is funding for the arts or funding for international aid programs. Decisions are based on calculations of return for investment.

It is hard to see the Other that we could amplify and empower in place of this hegemony of calculation. But it is there. It is there in the bark and bit of artworks that discomfit and challenge. It is there in the magic making, emotion grabbing, perception shifting, and bodily transporting power of art. It is there in the moments of ordinary everyday life and living when we are transported, transcended, overtaken. These moments are often referred to as moments of irrationality or non-rationality, and dismissed as such: who would want an irrationality to replace the logic of calculation and accountability? It is not

the case, however, that magic, emotion and transcendence are not rational. They are a different kind of rationality. And like all other Others to hegemonic constructs, this Other rationality is not side story to the main game of calculation and accountability. It is not an alternative. It is already, always, within and fundamental to it.

Another example from research I have been doing recently on women's experiences of birth highlights the role of the uncalculable. An obstetrician who manages a maternity unit in the affluent Eastern suburbs of Sydney spoke to me at length about how important it is to care for a labouring woman with love, but how impossible it is to speak of love among his colleagues and co-workers at the hospital. Instead he has to speak of other things that will help them to see and to experience the importance of acting with love. Love is needed to care for a woman well, but it has no place in supposedly rational decisions made by doctors and the clinical outcomes they are accountable for. Good medicine shares something with the world of art: to do its job well it must engage with the emotional, the spiritual, the instinctive sides of humanity, but I bet you can't ever use that as the foundation for a grant application in the arts, any more than you can openly acknowledge it in the midst of clinical practice. Even though it is artists who are so adept at mastering tools of the uncalculable, finding a language in movement, in poetry, in colour and line, in sound, to speak the un-rational, to do magic, to keep us human.

Through a community economies perspective, these engagements with love and instinct leap out as part of a different world – part of the here and now which needs to be seen, valued and amplified. This is because it disciplines us to think of economies in terms of how we provide for a 'good life' – not just a life of material affluence or comfort (although that is part of it– we all need good shelter, enough food, a reliable income and so on). An essential part of what provides for a good life extends to that which is uncalculable and unaccountable.

The community economies approach invites us to begin our search for a better future in the here and now, in the everyday, with a search for difference. In this act of beginning now, we are in every moment birthing the future. And, as when a woman gives birth to a child, it is best if that birthing is supported through loving care. So while it is important to bark and bite, let's not forget that change also comes through our love and care for the world. In finding languages for the uncalculable and unaccountable, and making us all attend. In finding the niches of difference, and using the skills of civil society groups and organisations to foster and amplify them through creating our own networks and connections, spreading like trails of sticky toffee across the globe.

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THE CAD FACTORY

VIC MCEWAN

The Cad Factory is an artist led organisation creating an international program of new, immersive and experimental work guided by authentic exchange, ethical principles, people and place.

The words “international” and “ethical” embody the cornerstone of our vision. International refers to *The Cad Factory* hosting an international artist once a year to allow them to collaborate on a work in regional Australia far from city centres. It refers to the fact that we make work locally as well as internationally and it refers to the fact that we make work of an international standard, refusing to accept our remote location as a barrier to quality.

Ethical describes the concepts deeply embedded in our projects, processes and communication. We believe that the purpose of art is to uncover universal and personal truths, to break down hierarchies, and to aid communication. We have discovered through the unfolding of our practice that the place where this has the opportunity to develop real significance and truths can be far from the traditional arts institutions and networks.

The underlying philosophy of *The Cad Factory* and the foundation from which we develop our arts practice is that we create our artistic outcomes in partnership with the sectors that form our communities. These include health, education, the justice system, social planning, welfare, business, and many other areas.

We do not consider ourselves to be community art practitioners and we do not provide arts based therapy. We engage

as experimental contemporary artists with the belief that the real world is a gallery, a performance venue and that ordinary everyday people are our audience – and we bundle artists, arts bureaucrats and cultural gatekeepers into this audience. Our outcomes are for “people”.

We do engage with traditional art spaces, with galleries and theatres, but the majority of our practice is based in partnerships with various community sectors that form the inter-linked mechanisms and cogs that keep life turning.

To explain our approach, the highlights of a few recent innovative projects developed by *The Cad Factory* in partnership with business, health, education, resource allocation and the justice system are presented here.

Each of these projects, which are only a small proportion of artistic outcomes delivered by *The Cad Factory*, highlight the possibility for experimental arts practice to exist within various sectors across our society. In fact, they show that art is a perfect medium to thrive away from art institutions and co-exist across all sectors of our society.

The Cad Factory is working towards making arts practice accepted as a fundamental tool inherent in all the decision making of bureaucratic and practical aspects of life.

SUNRICE = A NIGHT OF WONDER

The *SunRice* and *The Cad Factory* Contemporary Arts Partnership was a collaboration between artists Vic McEwan, Iwai Shigeaki and Mayu Kanamori and *SunRice* at their recently re-opened rice mill in Coleambally.

Working with the local rice growing community and town people, these artists travelled from Japan, Sydney and from within the Riverina, to explore the cultural meanings of rice

and rice growing and to use the mill site and nearby rice fields as a site for contemporary art installation and performance.

This project came about from a cold call to *SunRice* about our desire to work within the rice mill. The idea took traction quickly and within a short period of time it went to the CEO for approval.

Before approaching *SunRice* we reviewed their business plan, vision statement and other governance documents so we could highlight the benefits we thought we could deliver for their organisation using contemporary arts. In return we asked that *SunRice* allow access to staff on staff time, so that if we conducted workshops with mill workers, they were paid for their time.

Over several months we made visits to the mill, worked on site and created a large scale event that presented 12 installations and performances around the entire mill site.

Coleambally has a population of 600 people and over three quarters of them came out to see the final artworks. This project was a great success in terms of contemporary arts practice as evidenced in a positive review and extensive documentation by *RealTime Magazine*. It was a success in terms of work place relationships as evidenced by reports from *SunRice* management of renewed engagement with the workplace by the mill workers and from direct response from the mill workers themselves. It was successful in sharing community stories as evidenced by the inclusion of many local community members and official letters of thanks written by community groups praising the project. It was also awarded the *Coleambally Event of the Year Award*.

The following video was created by *RealTime Magazine* and outlines all 12 installations and performances that were made on site at the *SunRice* Mill including an interview with the author.

[Watch the video externally.](#)



Figure 1: *SunRice - A Night of Wonder*. Installation Photo.
Photographs by Mayu Kanamori



Figure 2: *SunRice - A Night of Wonder*. Audience Photo.
Photographs by Mayu Kanamori

YENDA RAIN

After a natural disaster hits a town, what happens once all the support agencies leave and the community is left to pick up the pieces?

In 2012 the small town of Yenda was hit by an unexpected flood. The flood was unexpected because the town is not on the river system; it sits on the irrigation channels that are managed by Murrumbidgee Irrigation.

The flood arrived quickly and without notice. People went to work one morning and by the afternoon were receiving text messages saying that their town was flooded, no one could return. People didn't have time to protect valuable items, collect precious memories. Houses and emotional keepsakes were lost. No one expected to ever have to deal with such a disaster and few residents had appropriate insurances in place.

Throughout 2013 I worked with the community of Yenda and the Griffith Regional Art Gallery exploring how a town recovers from such flood disaster. This project was a major commitment to the town of Yenda and to exploring the impact the arts can have on working with trauma recovery.

I spent time with many different groups within the community, hearing their stories, running workshops and learning about the many different challenges the town's people faced - the shared stories and the unique ones.

This year long project explored the different stages that people were dealing with in their recovery and resulted in a special event being held throughout the town where community members could walk the streets together, as a community, to see their stories told in innovative ways.

The outcomes were diverse, from large scale projections that attempted to "burn away" the fears and negative residue from the town, to positive outcomes that reflect on a new future.

[This link](#) will take you to a catalogue that outlines all of the works created as part of *Yenda Rain*.



Figure 3: *Yenda Rain* - Projection on Sand. Photograph by Vic McEwan



Figure 4: *Yenda Rain*: The Grapevine Trio, Video Still (*The Cad Factory*)

LOUD VOICES

The Cad Factory and the Greater Kengal Network of Small Schools partnered to allow students and the surrounding communities to participate in contemporary arts practices to explore issues that affect regional Australia. These issues ranged from the impact of nature, population drift and the ageing population to the impact of local people on the regional environment.

The opportunity for these school communities to engage with contemporary arts practice or to consider their own sense of place and community through creative exploration are few and far between.

Using face to face workshops, interactive remote video networking and exploring site specific process, the students explored the potential that the arts has in helping them to understand their reasoning, solutions, fears and hopes around these important issues.

The outcome was a large image driven performance event focused on community concerns where the big picture is explored by putting a spotlight on little voices made loud in big spaces.

Workshops were held in music using experimental sound making techniques, such as, using your home or school as an instrument and different processes for audio manipulation. The artists worked with the students to create illustrations, animations, and videos. The students participated in an excursion to a recording studio and created a performance with huge video projections in the last weekend of October 2012 at the Tootool Silos.

This project allowed a contemporary arts outcome to be delivered with *The Cad Factory* artists in partnership with school children to explore important issues pertinent to their location and was a great example of arts practice having diverse outcomes across multiple curriculum areas.



Figure 5: *Loud Voices*. Site Photo. Photographs by Greg Pritchard



Figure 6: *Loud Voices*. Performance Photo. Photographs by Greg Pritchard

TIPPING POINT

This project was commissioned by the Canberra Centenary One River project which explored the Murray Darling Basin.

For us, the project was about the different relationships people have to the river system. It looked at the argument that existed around the release of the Murray Darling Basin Plan that resulted in mass protests and farmers burning copies of the plan in the town of Griffith outside a Murray Darling Basin Plan meeting.



Figure 7: *Tipping Point*. Site Photo.
Photographs by Lindy Allen.

This project became about exploring the issue and providing an opportunity for discussion without conflict.

Tipping Point took as its starting point the border land, the

divide between the two catchment areas of the Murray and the Murrumbidgee. In between these two rivers lies a subtle, sometimes invisible line. When rain falls on one side it flows into the Murray River; when rain falls on the other it falls into the Murrumbidgee. A few centimetres or a slight gust of wind could change the fate of the water's journey and the impact on the lives of those in these catchment areas.



Figure 8: *Tipping Point*. Site Photo.
Photograph by Lindy Allen.

Tipping Point looked at these literal tipping points and it explored the psychological, environmental and social tipping points of people living within these catchment areas.

We created this project by working with five people with different relationships to the river system. They were an elder who grew up on missions by the river, a water lawyer involved in water as a tradable commodity, a farmer involved in industrialised farming practices, an ex-town mayor responsible for making major decisions during times of drought and a farmer exploring environmentally sustainable farming practice.

[*View a short video documentary externally.*](#)

THE CONTINUUM

The Continuum was a project made in collaboration with six inmates at a juvenile prison school in Wagga Wagga, NSW. At the time of this project, 80% of the school's young inmates had diagnosed mental health issues with many more suspected of having undiagnosed issues.

This project came about through a request by Eastern Riverina Arts for the students to have an opportunity to participate in the Dramatic Minds Festival, a festival for school students to explore issues to do with Mental Health.

The students inside the juvenile facility had never participated in the festival before as they had the major stumbling block of not being able to attend. So, I was asked to work in the prison to create a short video over six visits, through workshops and experimentation.

The process included time to gain trust, to allow the young people in the group to be comfortable and to find their own voice as we touched on very personal and difficult topics. When I arrived for week three, there had been a major bashing in the prison the day before. The students in my group were unable to work, instead they wanted to relive and talk through the events of the day before. Even the teachers and staff joined in, everyone needing the opportunity to debrief. This highlighted to a great extent the flexibility needed in working in this type of setting. Although I had a very tight

deadline of six weeks to work with these students, ethically I had to allow them the opportunity to spend a week talking through their recent experience. My role was to honour their work and to use all of my skill to create an ever-changing process that could facilitate the difficult situation we were in.

The students were very receptive to the project and over the course of the six weeks we were able to engage in many deep conversations about art and about life. The prison reported that the process was hugely successful in terms of engagement and participation by the kids and the artistic outcome was awarded second place in the Dramatic Minds Festival which was webcast into the prison.

[*View the final video externally.*](#)

CONCLUSION

The real world is a fascinating and rich place to make art. To engage in complex issues is a test of one's ability to adapt, to change, to review and to listen with a depth that can awaken innovation in communication and arts practice.

Recently I was asked if my involvement in projects which also tackle complex issues takes me away from my process of art making. For example, if I spend a year working with a flood affected community and during that time am confronted repeatedly by situations which require the services of someone with training in social work, mental health or welfare, then is my time spent in getting involved in that, actually taking me away from my role as an artist or from my own practice?

This was a great question as the act of answering it made me realise that this sort of situation is a deeply important, necessary part of my practice. It adds complexity, develops a deeper connection and allows my arts practice it to get closer to the bone.

My practice oscillates between working outside with various communities and working inside galleries or theatres on my own thing. Sometimes I have a greater responsibility to others and sometimes I have a responsibility only to myself.

These are completely different processes. When I am working with communities or different sectors, I am often working in a situation that places my whole process and motivations under continued scrutiny in public whereas my gallery/theatre based practice allows me more privacy and reserves public judgement until the final exhibition or performance.

Artists who work in community environments experience the life of their project in between other people's voices, opinions and expectations. It can be a place of high pressure having people with differing viewpoints on either side. It places the artist in-between, in a place where high pressure zones meet.

The community engaged artist exists in the place where thunder and lightning is made.

LEARNING FROM CROSS-SECTORAL EXPERIENCES: THE ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENT IN AUSTRALIA

DR JOAN STAPLES

The cultural sector is experiencing the effects of neoliberal economic ideology being imposed on the sector by the Commonwealth Government. This is particularly the case in relation to funding. Understanding how similar effects have been felt in recent decades by other sectors, particularly by the environment not-for-profit sector, can throw light on the current situation facing the cultural community. This paper is not intended as a comparison of the environmental and cultural sectors, but rather a look into the environment sector, giving the opportunity for those familiar with the cultural sector to draw their own conclusions.

CONCEPTUALISING OUR DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

There are many ways to conceptualise our society and how

different elements relate to one another. The following diagram is a model often used by social scientists to describe society's three democratic elements – government/state, corporations/market, and community/not-for-profits. Each sector is important in its own right, yet each depends on and compliments the other. The community/not-for-profit sector is as important as government and corporations. The diagram demonstrates the uniqueness of each sector, and that the boundaries between them sometimes merge, but that each plays an essential and equal part in the functioning of a modern democratic society.

The cultural sector sits across the 'community' sector, but it also includes the overlapping area towards the 'market' and to some extent 'government'. The former overlap represents where cultural organisations are strongly funded by payment for performances or services. The overlap towards 'government' represents where organisations are fully government funded and sit within a government structure. The environment sector sits in a similar position, except that its main focus is advocacy and is sits more clearly in the main 'community' sector. This sector in which both cultural and environmental interests are found is particularly valued for its ability to publicly advocate on behalf of the community to influence the other two sectors in their values, policies and norms.

PUBLIC ADVOCACY AND THE COMMUNITY SECTOR

Within the huge not-for-profit community sector there are large variations, but some simple comparisons help to show the differences in relation to public advocacy. The significance of choosing to look at advocacy is that the Howard and Abbott Governments have been sensitive to any public advocacy and have held a view on the role of the sector that is at odds with the pluralism that has dominated Australian discourse over previous decades. Their view has been that the sector should

deliver services, not critique government policies. In fact, their neoliberal ideology of smaller government sees community organisations delivering services often previously delivered by government. For example, feeding the homeless and planting trees are encouraged, while advocating policies to reduce poverty or policies to prevent climate change are to be suppressed under neoliberal ideology.

Social services, international development, environment and cultural sectors show marked differences in relation to their public advocacy. The social service not-for-profits are a huge sector, with the Australian Council for Social Services being the peak organisation representing this group. Within the group, most have tended to be strong on service delivery, with advocacy representing a varying adjunct to their work. The international development not-for-profits are similar, with the Australian Council for International Development, being the peak organisation. Service delivery to overseas communities tends to be the main aim of the majority in this group, while advocacy (for example influencing government policy and international, often UN, policy) only peripheral to their main interest. In contrast, the environment sector has been a strong advocacy sector, trying to influence public policy and governments at all levels. It has not had a clearly defined peak group. Service delivery such as revegetation has tended to be more peripheral, as opposed to work on influencing public policy.

The arts sector does not clearly fit within these two paradigms of service delivery and advocacy. It has been both advocate and service deliverer – providing a window into society's values and practices - the creative process being both valuable to individuals and to society as a whole in pushing boundaries, throwing up new views and critiquing old ways.

RATIONALE FOR GOVERNMENT FUNDING OF COMMUNITY NOT-FOR-PROFITS

The 1960's and 1970's saw government funding and advocacy valued so that funding was provided. The rationale being to:

Help people out of disadvantage, providing a more equitable and harmonious society. Provide policy advice to governments that better reflected society's needs. Create a dynamic society in which many voices enriched our culture and in which our public sphere debated policy issues from a variety of perspectives.

RISE OF NEOLIBERALISM

The 1980s and 1990s saw the rise of neoliberal policies towards community based not-for-profits. Called economic rationalism in Australia, it saw a new view of community not-for-profits promoted by conservative writers and think tanks such as the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA). Instead of not-for-profits being seen as promoting ideas for public debate, they were portrayed as interfering in the market and the public role of civil society became contested (Staples J., 2004).

The Howard Government expressed a neoliberal view in much of its language about the sector and its actions reflected the perspective of 'public choice theory' – the part of neoliberalism that is concerned with not-for-profits. As well as defunding organisations, the Howard Government's most repressive actions were placing 'confidentiality clauses' within the contracts of not-for-profits preventing them from speaking to the media if they took government money. The Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) was notable for its continual attacks both in the media and in shaping government policy and the result was a gradual 'silencing' of the advocacy of the sector (Hamilton & Maddison, 2007). Throughout this time the cultural sector was

relatively immune to such attacks.

After a brief reprieve under the Rudd-Gillard Labor Government, the repression of the community/not-for-profit sector continued under the Abbott Government.¹¹ It was under this government that the attacks on the cultural sector have become most marked. However it is notable that the strongest public criticism by Government Members has been directed at environmental NGOs who are seen as focussing on climate change and the fossil fuel industry (Staples 2014a). The right to be classified as charities and to have access to Deductible Gift Recipient status has become a contested area. As well, draconian state legislation by conservative governments has proposed heavy penalties for protesters, with the language clearly aimed at activists working on climate change/coal and gas issues. The influence of the mining sector on this government is particularly notable, being summarised in Abbott's statement that, 'Coal is good for humanity.' (Abbott 2014).

CAN THE CULTURAL SECTOR TAKE ANY IDEAS FROM ENVIRONMENT SECTOR PRACTICES?

Those familiar with the cultural sector may be able to see parallels with, and difference from, the environment movement. There are older organisations such as the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Wilderness Society that are uniquely Australian. Older organisations such as Greenpeace,

(1) The current Turnbull leadership (2015/6) has to date shown little policy change towards the repression of the sector, but the main conservative protagonists within the Government have lost influence. The Government response to a House of Representative Inquiry into the Register of Environmental Organisations due in March 2016 will be a key marker of this Government's attitude. Conservative forces in the Government have used the Inquiry to propose removing tax deductible status from environment groups.

Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) are international groups with branches in Australia. There are also a raft of diverse new groups, particularly those focussing on climate change and opposition to coal and gas such as Lock the Gate, and 350.org.

These new groups have brought dynamism to the sector with younger activists adding fresh enthusiasm to campaigning. There has been much cross-fertilisation occurring with similar activist groups in the US. A feature of the newer groups has been an emphasis on community organising for advocacy, often inspired by Obama-campaigning lessons learned from the USA. This involves making strong links into communities, building networks of supporters and focussing on those networks of individuals making face to face contacts to influence opinions. The other notable feature is an emphasis on collaborations and networks between organisations, in contrast to the earlier models in which organisations worked in 'silos' to their own agendas with little reference to strengthening their voices by collaboration.

The most exciting aspect about the new groups in the environment sphere is the emergence of groups that work across social divides bringing together unlikely allies. For example, Lock the Gate is a powerful network of rural farmers opposing coal seam gas mining and fracking, which has members and links to young city activists (Staples 2014b). Indigenous and environmental organisations are increasingly finding common ground.

Working across sectors holds great promise for strengthening progressive movements. Naomi Klein has proposed using climate change as a bridge across sectors because it affects so many aspects of our lives (Klein 2015). Hopefully, the cultural and environmental sectors can find ways to collaborate as there is promise of much benefit to both in such collaborations.

ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENT FUNDING MODELS

Politically motivated attacks by governments on the funding base of the environment sector have resulted in innovative action and soul searching by organisations during the past 20 years. Those that lost direct government funding have turned to a variety of fundraising techniques. Generally, the environment sector has welcomed the freedom from restrictions on advocacy, both self-imposed and externally-imposed, that came with government funding. The creativity of good advocacy and campaigning has also been used to address creativity in fundraising.

Information technology has revolutionised the funding models used. The GetUp model of asking for funds for specific immediate purposes has been adopted by some and a range of innovative and evolving practices integrate information technology into all aspects of running an

environmental organisation. The IT revolution has revolutionised campaigning, but it has also changed traditional fundraising making it more targeted, more efficient and more pervasive in the operations of environment organisations, both large and small. Training programs such as those run by Australian Progress focus on how to integrate IT into organisations (Australian Progress 2015).

CONCLUSION

The neoliberal philosophy of Coalition Governments has seen the environment movement facing defunding and attacks on its legitimacy for almost 20 years. The defunding of cultural organisations is a continuation of this neoliberal philosophy that treats society as a business and undervalues social goods, while actively blocking advocacy by community/not-for-profit organisations. Under this philosophy, government plays no

role in shaping or strengthening the social, cultural and equitable use of resources in our society.

The attacks on the community/not-for-profit sector are an opportunity for progressive groups to work across sectors to uphold the value of public advocacy, to promote progressive ideas and to value the creative process in pushing boundaries, throwing up new views and critiquing old ways.

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ON THE CREATIVE QUESTION – NINE THESES

GEERT LOVINK, SEB
OLMA AND NED ROS-
SITER

Culture attracts the worst impulses of the moneyed, it has no honor, it begs to be suburbanized and corrupted. - Thomas Pynchon, Bleeding Edge

We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars. - Oscar Wilde

1) GOODBYE TO CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

A creepy discourse on creativity has captured cultural and economic policy. Creativity invokes a certain pharmacological numbness among its spruikers – a special sub-species entirely unaware of how far removed their version of creativity is from radical invention and social transformation. Their claims around the science of economy are little more than a shoddy con. While ‘creativity’ is increasingly seen as a main driver of economic development, the permanent reference to creative classes, creative cities, creative industries, creative innovations and so on has rendered the notion all but meaningless. Degraded to a commercial and political marketing tool, the semantic content of creativity has been reduced to an insipid spread of happy homogeneity – including the right amount of

TED-styled fringe misfits and subcultures – that can be bureaucratically regulated and ‘valorized’. To this rhetoric corresponds a catalogue of ‘sectors’ and ‘clusters’ labelled as creative industries: a radically disciplined and ordered subdomain of the economy, a domesticated creative commons where ‘innovators’ and ‘creatives’ harmoniously co-mingle and develop their auto-predictive ‘disruptions’ of self-quantification, sharing and gamification. Conflict is anathema to the delicate sensibilities of personas trading in creative consultancy.

2) WELCOME TO THE CREATIVE QUESTION

The creative question has replaced the social question. In the 20th century the consequences and problems of industrial capitalism found a temporary solution in the class compromise of the welfare state. In digital capitalism we have to address the social question in terms of the creative question: what is today’s source of value and who owns it? We need to turn the pompous, meaningless chatter on creativity into a debate on how to come out on the positive side of the digital *pharmakon* (the nuanced combination of all things good and evil). To those who tell you ‘how we are going to live twenty years from now’, shout them down with ideas of how you *want* to live in twenty years!

3) CREATIVITY WITHOUT ABUNDANCE

We hear so much about the supposed ‘economy of abundance’ in the age of its digital reproducibility. Yet such abundance remains a phantom as long as it is a surplus for the final few. We need to talk about the redistribution of abundance. Piketty has to be updated for the internet age. We urgently need to get a better understanding of how ‘extreme inequality’ translates into digital culture. The question here is not one of

'selling out'. The new cultures of decentralised networks have turned into an Bataillian orgy of generosity: a 'sharing-by-default-economy' where the gift has lost its power of social reciprocity. Today, the economy is no longer based on abundance or redistribution of (common) wealth. Instead, there is a 'winner takes all' logic exacerbated by the speed of implementation and scaling.

4) INDUSTRY WITHOUT INVESTMENT

Overall, capital has withdrawn from the creative sectors. This, despite the predominance of the economy within the work of creativity. Creative industries were all set to enter an economy of indistinction: the arts were supposed to be no different from mining, agriculture or car manufacturing. Except this didn't happen. Though the factory did, and so the cognitariat march on. With the withdrawal of public money the sector suffered from overall disinvestment. Investments were never made, and perhaps never will be due to the prevailing Ideology of the Free. But what's our critique beyond this banal observation of increasingly shrinking opportunities? Gentrification? We know that's a key part of the story. Pumping bucks into infrastructure to support innovation? That still goes on in the IT sector. But artists aren't part of that world. Instead they migrate to 'maker culture' – an economy entirely hooked into 'supply chain capitalism' (Tsing), as much as hipsters prefer the axiom of 'authenticity'. It is the old undercover story: artists can only participate if they reinvent themselves and morph into another role.

5) THERE IS NO CREATIVE ECOLOGY

Creative industries policy started with the ambition of setting up creative ecologies where ideas and innovation can be born,

mature and thrive. However, these creative ecologies rarely materialise beyond the one-off success story. The massive invention of new business models for artists and cultural producers has not yet happened. As soon as original concepts were 'hatched', these creative ideas took flight to the highest bidder. In the digital real-time economy, prototype practices are left naked and abandoned, without the means to develop an auto-immune system to protect against the predatory speed of vulture capitalism. How, then, to proliferate the concept so that it holds a transformative effect in ways that refuse accountability? Memes, remixes and viral culture are now so well established within the repertoire of dispersal that they've become mainstreamed into oblivion. Shadow worlds without PRISM staring down your most radical gesture are now on the agenda. Invert the Right to Forget and we get a memory that cannot be contained. Storage without a trace is a key strategy for practices of anonymity and a commons beyond expropriation. USB libraries, blue-tooth networks, off-the-grid computing – these are just some of the options that register radical practice outside the stack.

6) SHADOW AND TIME

We suggest two principles here: shadow and time. *Shadow* is an unintended consequence, an event vacuum, which remains invisible for passers-by. It does not register on the development maps of the managerial class. *Time* is needed in order for the substantially different to grow. Maturation, which is creative growth, requires time. Don't be afraid of the cycle. Who's afraid of the *longue durée*? The time of creativity is that of idleness and procrastination, indeed *otium*. This turns out to be the opposite of frantic entrepreneurship and instant valorization. This is why creative industries policy can only propose fixed formats and known concepts: template capitalism. Maker labs, with their standard 3D printers and software, can only produce more of the same. Open source is not the solution to this problem. Neither is it sufficient to place the

wild, weird bohème at the helm.

7) SHARING WITHOUT CAR- ING

Right now there is a structural dissonance between the wonderful ideas of our creatives and their social and economic efficacy. The lack of creative ecology means that today's great idea for a better society turns into tomorrow's unemployed taxi drivers and homeless city dwellers. Welcome to platform monopoly capitalism. Groupon, AirBNB, Uber, MyWheels and countless others. Here, we do not witness so much a gross violation of the rules of appropriation as an attempt to reshape existing economic activities and drive labour to its bones: a disruption without a cause. Let's not delude ourselves: we are not sharing anything when we rate the last wretched soul who gave us a cheap lift with his Uber cab. We do not share anything when we drive a Hertz or Avis rental car (except our likes). Sharing only happens in the absence of market transactions. And it doesn't have to 'scale'. This begs the question: can we still speak of creative industries, which in Europe's policy world (and beyond) rests on the economization of culture? Everyone is keenly aware of the fact that Creative Industries as a policy meme has passed its use-by date. This is why we need to warn ourselves: changing labels will not help us much. This makes deconstruction of the term by itself into such an impotent gesture. The problem of economy, of life, of invention persist no matter what the paradigm.

8) SAVE OUR SOCIAL INNO- VATION

'Social innovation' is a great buzzword in the global consultancy class. In spite of its rhetoric, it means imposing innovation through market and semi-marketisation mechanisms. Design thinking is hauled in to solve problems that the existing po-

litical class is unable to deal with. Concept maps are drawn, emptied of aesthetics. Social innovation is not so much a class war instrument to destroy rebellious militants but rather a smoke screen, a theatre play. It amounts to 'social solutionism' – a Baudrillardian performance in which the signifiers are no longer autonomous, living entities but have progressed into diligent workers exhausting themselves in fervent gymnastics of simulated salvation. We should not think of Artaud or Beckett, but rather of a bureaucratic variation of a reality TV show featuring best practice examples as positive change heroes. Instead of this performative project focus on processual management we should celebrate the mystery of the social as event.

9) CREATIVE POLITICAL RECOVERY

Let's conclude that the market cannot respond effectively to the challenges presented by the Creative Question. Substituting democratic politics with collaborative design solutions exacerbates the problems. Taking 'social innovation' seriously means to think about the design of non-scalable communities, creative safe-havens and post-digital makers. These are emphatically political challenges. Circumventing politics by way of social design is a dead-end. It repeats the technocratic mistakes that have led to the incapacitation of politics in the first place. To regain efficacy requires a shift into high risk politics, a politics that has the guts to take decisions about our injured future. No more matching. No more outsourcing of liabilities to third parties. We need a creative political recovery that dreams up new organizational forms able to confront the *Creative Question*.

WATCHING A WERNER HERZOG FILM ON KICKSTARTER: ON NEOLIBER- AL CREATIVITY, THE LOGIC OF BUSINESS, AND THE REGIME OF ART

DR MERCEDES BUNZ

This text has been published at [Flatness](#), a website which tests the possibilities and limitations of the web as a creative site and space for viewing.

For one second you see the product, then Werner Herzog's voice over sets in and starts to embrace this 2:17 min short film with his rolling 'r': "Angelo Garro is a San Francisco black-

smith and artisan". We hear the scratching noise of an early recording of Italian Opera music. We see Garro at his furnace hammering some iron. Cut. We see him at the stove cooking food, and learn that he makes it all himself, "like a medieval man". Cut. The German art house film director is in his elements. Known for his obsessiveness since the making of Fitzcarraldo (1982), he seems to explore in this little film his beloved topics, the borders of our existence and what it is to be human. Apart from the length, there is no difference to his other documentaries Grizzly Man (2005) or Cave of Forgotten Dreams (2011). The film Omnivore (2013) displays everything we love about Herzog: we are confronted with raw pictures, a strong narrative, and a voice over caught between two languages. Then you hear his voice saying: "his philosophy of cooking brings us back to the timeless essentials of organic food". Flushed by the word "organic", not at all a timeless but a rather timely concept of food, you realise that Herzog doesn't explore the borders of our existence and what it is to be human. Instead, he advertises the "organic" salt "Omnivore" and the film is made for Kickstarter, a platform that helps creative projects raising money via crowd funding.

[View this Kickstarter campaign externally.](#)

As it is surely recognisable from my description, the film – or to be precise its 'mode of existence' – fascinates me. In the following text, I'll try to show that it is part of a deformation of culture we all live with for quite a while now: the rise of the creative industries. My thesis is, however, Herzog's film makes apparent that by now this deformation is taken to a next level.

THE DEFORMATION OF CULTURE SO FAR

The spell of creativity has up till now been referred to as the incorporation of artistic concepts into the 'creative industries', and a conflation between the techniques of art and business.

Trenchant studies of Angela MacRobbie (2003), Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), and others bring this to light. Simultaneously an economization of cultural institutions like museums, libraries, and universities has been critically noticed, for example in Hal Foster's book on "The Art-architecture Complex" (2011). More recently, Claire Bishop has pointed out how this shift affects artistic tendencies in "Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship", on which she comments wonderfully dry as follows: "Through the discourse of creativity, the elitist activity of art is democratised, although today this leads to business rather than to Beuys." (2012, 16). While creativity became an economic asset, however, this beautifully indefinable thingy which elusively makes its time warp through the centuries called "art", it escaped; I am not alone with insisting on this. Catalogues, blockbuster exhibitions, prohibitive auctions, and curatorial trends much like new talk of towns, Frieze art fairs, or it-boys and girls, all these will leave their marks in our view of an artistic performance, film, concept, or object. But all of this won't change that this thingy called art can't be tamed completely. Art is doomed to claim independence, a following and breaking of self-imposed rules that has often been described and performed ever since Kant discussed it in §49 of his Critique of Judgment: in order to be art, the thingy has to follow and break its self-imposed rules.

This implements an interesting withdrawal reflex within art regarding its economization. Of course, art is object to speculation. It is invested in, and can be dealt with as a financial transaction – Andrea Fraser's bold work "Untitled" (2003) for which she recorded her sexual encounter with a private collector in a hotel-room brings art's conditions of what is being saleable to a head (Trebay 2004). Still, from the perspective of art there is a problem with commissioned work. When it comes to art, the hiring and paying for the creation of a piece is delicate. Fraser's work would have been different, if the sexual encounter would be commissioned by the collector, and not part of her concept. As the circumstances and the contexts of a work play a part in the creation, it is always worth inquiring who is the

commissioner, and what is his or her intention with the commission. When it doesn't follow its self-imposed but a paid for logic, commissioned art is starting to stumble the stronger the commissioners' suggestions are.

On the other hand, a commission can deliver a useful topic: In Lucrecia Martel's film *MUTA* (2011) presented by the fashion brand MIU MIU, the commission gave the excellent Argentine director a reason to explore the idea of top models cinematically: In the 6:27 minutes long film, we find a surreal setting. We see insects, a river, then a drifting yacht on which strangely moving females appear. Their faces are hidden throughout the film by their hair, sunglasses, gas masks, or the camera that blurs the view or looks the other way. Eclectic elements of narratives appear lend from horror movies or a jealous drama, for example when one girl slaps the other. The models never speak (like in real life) but communicate in strange hissing noises. The movement of their bodies is emphasized by sounds. They strike a mobile phone that vibrates in a fabric handbag – or is it a small animal? In the end, their bodies are suddenly gone with the noise of birds that fly away as if their time has elapsed, leaving behind the clothes. Again we see insects.

[View film externally.](#)

When we compare how Herzog's and Martel's film are situated, we find a small but important difference not hard to notice. Other than Martel's film, Werner Herzog's wasn't financed and produced by anyone else. It isn't a commission but a self-commission. Maybe one can put it like this: while Martel's film is advertising made by an artist, Herzog's film is art as an advertisement. It is a reversible project situated in art and advertising at the same time. Let's look at it again and analyze how this can happen.

ART AND ... WAIT, WHICH PUBLIC IS IT AGAIN?

The Werner Herzog film was published on the digital platform Kickstarter. Kickstarter is a New York based company founded in 2009 that has created a crowd sourcing service which allows people to back but not to invest in creative projects. The approach has been controversially discussed and commented on; sites like *yourkickstartersucks* or *freakstarter* are the outcome of this. Still, it is widely acknowledged to allow cultural projects to gather funding in a new way. But there is another problem: the digital public and the artistic public are two different publics that online get confusingly mixed up. And their confusion is the reason that digital platforms are a challenge for art – that there is indeed a rift has been elegantly pointed out by Claire Bishop's essay "Digital Divide" (2012). One reason for this rift is the strong relation between art and the public in our culture, which gets mixed up when going online. The important role of publicness for our current cultural concept of art manifests itself in the public museums and art-architecture complexes that sit enthroned in the centres of our big cities, but it can also be found in each work of art: impatiently waiting for its beholder, besides journalism art has the rare power to create publicness. For this, as Rancière has pointed out, the "aesthetic regime of art" breaks down other regimes. Of course, there are works of art that illustrate the different 'publics' and explore how the regime of art works. Marcel Duchamp's notorious "Fountain" is an important piece which marks the regime of art, while a less known work is the ½ mile of landscape claimed art by conceptual enterprise N. E. Thing and Co. Founded by Ingrid and Ian Baxter in the sixties, they simply put up signs: "Start viewing" and "Stop viewing". However, with the internet the creating and marking of artistic publicness has changed. For once, now you don't need to be an artist (or a journalist) anymore to create a public. You can simply use a digital platform, and there it is. Only when artists use digital platforms, exactly this creates an interesting confu-

sion.

If an artist creates something in public it is art. Of course, this is still the case after the rise of the internet to a mass medium. But what happens when artists use digital platforms? Marina Abramovic, for example, who can also be found on Kickstarter. In order to create a performance and education centre, a “home to long durational work and the Abramovic Method”, the performance artist pledged for \$600,000. With the help from a naked Lady Gaga practicing the Abramovic Method, she got \$661,452. But in order to get it, Abramovic was all over the internet to promote her project, among others on the bulletin board system Reddit. There she posted “I am performance artist Marina Abramovic. Ask me anything”, and then answered questions of backers, for example about her former partner: “What passed through your head when you saw Ulay at The Artist Is Present at MoMA?”. Or what she thinks of Damien Hirst: “Good artist, incredible business man”. Or what makes her cry: “Lies.” While invoking a celebrity feeling (including the celebrity boredom), we encounter the brutal directness and exhibitionism we know from her other naked performances. Is Abramovic turning Reddit into a performance? Or is she just selling herself for her art centre? Again, the project is open to both readings: it’s reversible. If this is the case, however, we need to conclude that the regime of art doesn’t bring down the other regime – business. Art is reversible to advertisement – and this, of course, causes trouble for the regime of art.

SUMMING IT UP

As neoliberal forces warp culture, the once playful pleasure of the mind called ‘creativity’ has become entangled with business to follow the logic of the economy. Until now the work of art, however, was spared. While art was sold as a commodity and we willingly pay an entrance fee to see it, the monetarisation was ideally around it, not within it. Art might have followed trends, but until now the neoliberal monster hasn’t managed to turn the artwork itself into a more efficient and

useful tool good for business. This has changed. With Herzog's Omnivore and Abramovic's Reddit Intervention, we see that the logic of business has entered the artwork itself. Not so long ago New York art critic Jerry Saltz (2012) wrote that "art is in the process of changing, shedding dead skin, reorganising some of its structures, and steering its palliative way out of the overheated period we've been in," but for now it looks as if the heat will stay around for a little longer. Capturing an important moment in our time, Herzog's film will hopefully soon be screened in a museum displaying the art historical shift we have to be aware of from now on. The project he supported has been funded with \$141,467 (way more than the goal of \$30,000). I am one of its backers.

PS

Omnivore Salt: Yes, the project got funded. I didn't like the salt.

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SHREDDED

OUT-OF-SYNC: NORIE NEUMARK & MARIA MIRANDA



Figure 1: Out-of-Sync: *Shredded*. Airspace Projects, Sydney. Installation view.
Photographs by Fiona Susanto



Figure 2: Out-of-Sync: *Shredded*. Airspace Projects, Sydney. Installation view. Photographs by Fiona Susanto

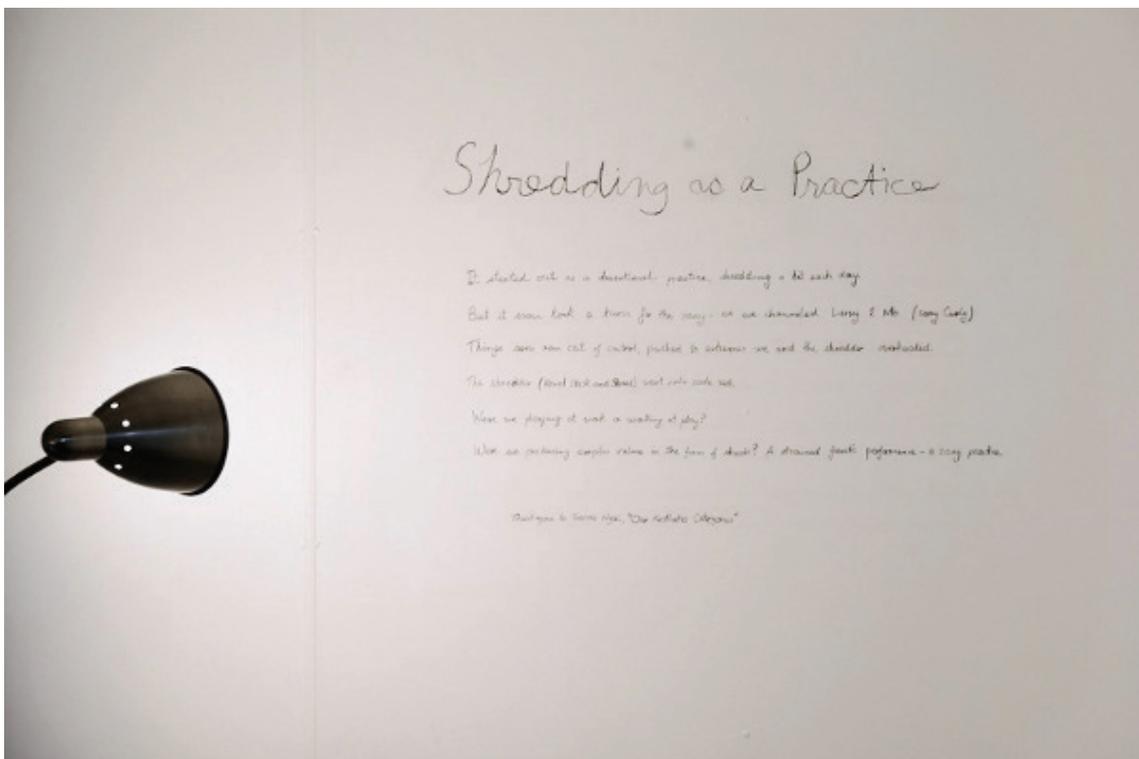


Figure 3: Out-of-Sync: *Shredded*. Airspace Projects, Sydney. Installation view. Photographs by Fiona Susanto



Figure 4: Out-of-Sync: *Shredded*. Airspace Projects, Sydney. Installation view. Photographs by Fiona Susanto



Figure 5: Out-of-Sync: *Shredded*. Airspace Projects, Sydney. Installation view. Photographs by Fiona Susanto



Figure 6: Out-of-Sync: *Shredded*. Airspace Projects, Sydney. Installation view. Photographs by Fiona Susanto



Figure 7: Out-of-Sync: *Shredded*. Airspace Projects, Sydney. Installation view. Photographs by Fiona Susanto

SHREDDED: STUPLIMITY AND THE AESTHETICS OF NEO-LIBERALISM

"*Gertrude and I are just the contrary*", writes Leo Stein in *Journey into the Self*. "*She's basically stupid and I'm basically intelligent.*" So cites Sianne Ngai (*Ugly Feelings*) as she introduces her concept of 'stuplimity,' playing around between the sublime and the stupid. Stupidity, it would seem, has been greatly under-rated. And nowhere more so than in the motion, emotion and commotion of slapstick comedy, which is animated by its own particular, zany stupidity.

Stuplimity and the Aesthetics of Neo-Liberalism is an ongoing series of short video performances calling upon *The Three Stooges* to explore/enact instances of stupidity, violence and, of course, stuplimity through the motions of slapstick comedy.

Neo-liberalism animates every particle of our everyday life, politics and culture. It is so pervasive that we take its violence and cruelty for granted, as inevitable. While theorists like Alana Jelinek (*This is Not Art*) raise the important critical question of the aesthetic effects of neo-liberalism and how to confront them, as artists we feel the need to enact them. We set out to carry the aesthetics of neo-liberalism to the extreme, so they may be visible, audible, tangible. How better to 'unmask' these aesthetics than the slapstick of *The Three Stooges* whose surreal and farcical comedies depicted heads hammered, eyes poked, hands sawed, and other physical acts of force and power – beyond the bounds of common sense. *The Three Stooges* understood the affect of humiliation and violence.

[Watch the artist video externally.](#)

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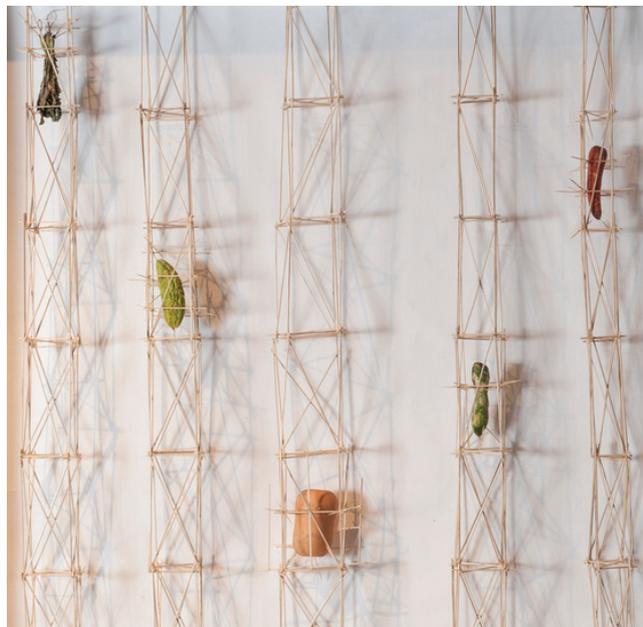
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THE CONSEQUENCES OF SUCCESS / HOLD IT

SIYING ZHOU

This work contemplates the perception of nature and the mindset of homemaking by colonisers and migrants to Australia. Here, the making of gardens is contemplated as a invasive act. Through these works, Zhou unearths the violence inscribed in Australia's history.

We witness this violence in the alteration of the native landscape leaving behind an aftermath of distortion, melting and piercing in the name of floral decoration. Zhou's work in this exhibition is informed by historical accounts of white settlement in and around Parramatta, NSW, from the late 18th to 19th century.



Figures 1 & 2: Siying Zhou: *Hold it - The Consequences of Success*. Cucumber (five weeks after the work was installed). Detail, installation view. Food Court ARI, Melbourne. 2014-2015. Photographs by Brent Edward



Figures 1 -3: Siying Zhou: *Hold it - The Consequences of Success*. Cucumber (five weeks after the work was installed). Detail, installation view. Food Court ARI, Melbourne. 2014-2015. Photographs by Brent Edward

UNIDENTIFIED CULTURAL OBJECTS

SIYING ZHOU

In the video work *Unidentified Cultural Objects*, Siying Zhou presents a dining setting that combines Chinese and Australian eating customs. The Aussie pie with sauce and VB are arranged and consumed within a traditional Chinese table setting of multiple dishes, chai and chopsticks.

The slightly absurdist staging evokes a tangible sense of cultural blending and fracture.

[Watch *Unidentified Cultural Objects* video: *Pie-pai*, act I \(externally\).](#)

[Watch *Unidentified Cultural Objects* video: *Pie-pai*, act II \(externally\).](#)



Figure 1: Siying Zhou: *Unidentified Cultural Objects*. Video stills. 2013



Figures 2 & 3: Siying Zhou: *Unidentified Cultural Objects*. Video stills. 2013



Figures 4 & 5: Siying Zhou: *Unidentified Cultural Objects*. Video stills. 2013

GO TO THE PUBLIC / SIGN IT LOUD SIYING ZHOU

Sign it Loud is a work that was specifically created for *Art on Wheels*, a public art project in Darwin, NT.



Figure 1: Siying Zhou: *Go to the Public / Sign it Loud*. LED light, paints, silver glitter. 2400 x 400mm (additional artwork by Lisa Wolfgramm). 2012. Photographs by Daniel Hartley-Allen

GO TO THE PUBLIC / SIGN IT LOUD

Adopting the slang word that is widely used in the Northern Territory: “Gammon” - means being silly, untruthful and informal. Siying created an outdoor sign installed on the top of the van.

In the way of being in favour of the local culture, Siying aimed to draw attention to localism that is embedded in the societies of the Territory. The sign delivers a dazzling personal comment towards the lack of formality in Darwin culture.

Sign it Loud was part of the *Art on Wheels*, an public art project in Darwin, NT.

In 2012, connecting the practice of the artists with people’s daily activities, *Art on Wheels* transformed a 1985 van into a portable venue for immediate engagement with local residents.



Figure 2: Siying Zhou: *Go to the Public / Sign it Loud*. LED light, paints, silver glitter. 2400 x 400mm. 2012. Photographs by Daniel Hartley-Allen



Figure 3: Siying Zhou: *Go to the Public / Sign it Loud*. LED light, paints, silver glitter. 2400 x 400mm (additional artwork by Lisa Wolfgramm). 2012. Photographs by Daniel Hartley-Allen

BIOGRAPHIES

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Dr Stephen Healy is founding member of the *Community Economies Collective*, co-author of *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical for Transforming Our Communities* (2013) with Jenny Cameron and J.K. Gibson-Graham and currently a Senior Research Fellow in the Institute of Culture and Society at the University of Western Sydney.

Geert Lovink is Director of the Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences & co-organiser of conferences like *My.Creativity Sweatshop: A Reality Check on the Creative Industries and MoneyLab 1 & 2*.

Vic McEwan is an artist, producer & co-founder of *The Cad Factory* – an artist-run-space located in the Riverina in Regional NSW which presents high quality and current contemporary arts practice.

Dr Katharine McKinnon is Senior Lecturer at the Community Planning and Development Program, La Trobe University & member of the Community Economies Collective. Her work engages with issues around international development, community economies, gender, and the politics and practices of social transformation.

Dr Grace McQuilten is founder of the *Social Studio* in Melbourne, author of *Art in Consumer Culture* (2011) and at present Vice Chancellor's Research Fellow in the School of Art, RMIT University.

Dr Maria Miranda is a DECRA Research Fellow at Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne: The Cultural Economy of Artist-Run Initiatives in Australia, an artist (Out-of-Sync together with Norie Neumark) and author of *Unsitely Aesthetics: uncertain practices in contemporary art* (Errant Bodies Press, 2013).

Seb Olma is Professor for Autonomy in Art and Design at Avans University for Applied Sciences in Breda and Den Bosch, The Netherlands and author of *In Defence of Serendipity - For a Radical Politics of Innovation* (2016).

Ned Rossiter is Professor of Communication in the Institute for Culture and Society. He is author of *Software, Infrastructure, Labor: A Media Theory of Logistical Nightmares* (2016).

Dr Joan Staples is an academic, public commentator & vice-president of Environment Victoria. Her publications focus on the democratic role of non-government organisations (NGOs), their relationship with government, and what constitutes effective public advocacy for social change.

Dr Anthony White is Senior Lecturer in Art History at The University of Melbourne and former curator at Harvard University's Fogg Museum in Cambridge and the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra.

ARTISTS

Norie Neumark & Maria Miranda have maintained a collaborative art practice for over 20 years, calling themselves *Out-of-Sync*. Engaged with questions of culture, place and memory, their work takes many forms, but mostly video, sound, installation and the internet. They live and work in Melbourne, Australia.

Siying Zhou, born in China, is an artist, who maintains an interdisciplinary practice addressing subjects such as religious practice and cultural traditions of the nomad, the identity of the individual and the relationship between the land and its dwellers.

RE-STRUCTURE CONFERENCE 2014

Budget cuts proposed by the Abbott government have instigated a proliferation of restructures across the public sector. These restructures will have far reaching impacts on culture and education.

The Centre for Creative Arts at La Trobe University is organising a conference to discuss the current re-structuring in the arts, culture, creative sector in Australia.

This conference looks at the current state of the arts, and considers alternative modes of culture and knowledge production within times of shrinking public expenditures. Featuring participants from performance, fashion, creative arts, gaming, media and community intervention, the event explores both broader sustainable strategies as well as “clever partial solutions” to cultural and knowledge production in a post-public sector environment.

In seeking alternatives, the *Re-structure 2014* looks to the proliferation of smaller scale community economies worldwide, in both on and offline environments, and to the modes of cultural production and knowledge exchange with other sectors such as environmental NGOs.

[Watch the videos from the conference live streaming externally.](#)

Venue:

20th Nov 2014

11am – 7pm

La Trobe University (City campus)

215 Franklin Street

Melbourne 3000

THEMES

With budget cuts and restructures impacting on culture and education institutions in Australia, the themes and panels explore how knowledge sharing and art practice might be maintained and organised differently.

PANEL 1: ARTIST RUN INITIATIVES - HOW GETS ART INTO COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY INTO THE ARTS?

This panel discusses contemporary examples of Artist Run Initiatives that engage with community economies, and introduces emerging modes of cultural production that operate at cross-sectoral junctures.

Panelists: Dr Maria Miranda, Siying Zhou & Dr Grace McQuilten

PANEL 2: INTERNET AND CULTURAL PLATFORMS

Here *Re-structure 2014* looks at the merits and disillusion in regards to the Internet. Although the Internet offers means for networking and self-organisation, two question remain: can we come up with alternative platforms to what current crowd-funding websites already offer, and under what framework can we achieve that?

Panelists: Trent Kusters, Rick Chen & Fee Plumley

PANEL 3: LEARNING FROM CROSS-SECTORIAL EXPERI- ENCES

This panel compares the environmental and cultural sectors. Issues surrounding the environment and sustainability are – like arts and culture – far from the top of the list in terms of government funding priorities. The environmental sector in Australia, however, seems to have a longer tradition of “going independent” in terms of (a) funding and (b) the development of more independent organisations, for instance, as member-based businesses.

Panelists: Dr Joan Staples, Angharad Wynne-Jones & Vic McEwan

PANEL 4: CULTURE & CIVIL SOCIETY

Lastly *Re-structure 2014* ventures into related political waters pondering questions of cultural production as a part of civil society and the role of the state as a facilitator of these. Do we need to refresh our big picture view here, or do we just get better at picking up the pieces while society moves on?

Panelists: Jon Hawkes, Dr Grace McQuilten & Dr Katharine McKinnon

PANEL 5: MY.CREATIVITY SWEATSHOP: A REALITY CHECK ON THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

– a skype conversation with Geert Lovink, director of the Institute of Network of Cultures, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences and Seb Olma, Fair City Amsterdam & Avans University for Applied Sciences (NL): conference co-organisers of My.Creativity Sweatshop: A Reality Check on the Creative Industries.

[Watch the videos from the conference live streaming externally](#)

SCHEDULE

11:00-12:00 — Keynote by Dr Stephen Healy (co-author of Take Back the Economy, Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney)

12:00-13:00 — Panel 1: Artists' Initiatives with Dr Maria Miranda, Siying Zhou & Dr Grace McQuilten

13:00-13:45 — Lunch break

13:45-14:45 — Panel 2: Internet / Cultural platforms with Trent Kusters, Rick Chen & Fee Plumley

15:00-16:00 — Panel 3: Cross sector experience Dr Joan Staples, Angharad Wynne-Jones & Vic McEwan

16:00-16:30 — Afternoon break

16:30-17:30 — Panel 4: Policy / Civil society Jon Hawkes, Dr Grace McQuilten & Dr Katharine McKinnon

17:45-18:15 — Summary / final discussion

18:15-18:30 — break

18:30-19:00 — Geert Lovink & Seb Olma via Skype (Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences & co-organisers of My.Creativity Sweatshop: A Reality Check on the Creative Industries)

[Watch the videos from the conference live streaming externally](#)

SPEAKERS

In order of their appearance:

Dr Stephen Healy is founding member of the *Community Economies Collective*, co-author of *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical for Transforming Our Communities* (2013) with Jenny Cameron and J.K. Gibson-Graham and currently a Senior Research Fellow in the Institute of Culture and Society at the University of Western Sydney.

Dr Maria Miranda is a DECRA Research Fellow at Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne: *The Cultural Economy of Artist-Run Initiatives in Australia*, an artist (Out-of-Sync together with Norie Neumark) and author of *Unsitely Aesthetics: uncertain practices in contemporary art* (Errant Bodies Press, 2013).

Siying Zhou: Born in China, Zhou maintains an interdisciplinary practice addressing subjects such as religious practice and cultural traditions of the nomad, the identity of the individual and the relationship between the land and its dwellers.

Dr Grace McQuilten: founder of the *Social Studio* in Melbourne, author of *Art in Consumer Culture* (2011) & at present Vice Chancellor's Research Fellow in the School of Art, RMIT University.

Trent Kusters: artist, independent game designer & co-director of League of Geeks.

Rick Chen: co-founder of *pozible.com* – an Australia-based crowdfunding platform and community-building tool for creative projects and ideas.

Fee Plumely: artist (*reallybigroadtrip.com*), digital nomad & former employee of the Australia Council for the Arts, where she worked on the “Arts content for the digital era” program.

Dr Joan Staples: academic, public commentator & vice-president of *Environment Victoria*. Her publications focus on the democratic role of non-government organisations (NGOs), their relationship with government, and what constitutes effective public advocacy for social change.

Angharad Wynne-Jones: creative producer at *Arts House*, a contemporary performance centre in Melbourne & director of *TippingPoint Australia* and *The Climate Commissions* – where she develops international and local projects with artists, scientists and communities energizing the cultural response to climate change.

Vic McEwan: artist, producer & co-founder of *The Cad Factory* – an artist-run-space located in the Riverina in Regional NSW which presents high quality and current contemporary arts practice.

Jon Hawkes: co-founder of *Circus Oz*, policy analyst & author of *Fourth Pillar of Sustainability – Culture’s essential role in public planning* (2001).

Dr Katharine McKinnon: Senior Lecturer with the Community Planning and Development Program, La Trobe University & member of the *Community Economies Collective*. Her work engages with issues around international development, community economies, gender, and the politics and practices of social transformation.

Geert Lovink (via Skype): Director of the Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences & co-organiser of *My.Creativity Sweatshop: A Reality Check on the Creative Industries*.

Seb Olma (via Skype): Professor for Autonomy in Art and Design at Avans University for Applied Sciences in Breda and Den Bosch & co-organiser of *My.Creativity Sweatshop: A Reality Check on the Creative Industries*.