

CONFIDENTIAL BUT CAN BE MADE PUBLIC

We are practising artists working mainly in the public realm although we have exhibited in some galleries either solo or as a group exhibition.

We would like to address two of the 'pillars'

1. First Nations First

The question we have is how does this work for the reality of the non-indigenous artist. It seems that we are now in a situation where ordinary artists have to somehow solve the whole post-colonial situation and over 250 years of oppression.

We have put proposals and artworks in for EOIs and similar and sometimes the feedback has been that we need to get a First Nations perspective. Why is this? Why is our experience of being born and growing up in this country somehow not valuable. Is the artwork still ours if we get First Nations perspective or does it belong to someone else? And does this not lean into possible cultural appropriation or a token gesture. If artists want to say something about their own experience why is this not acceptable?

This is quite different to projects where the aim is to work in collaboration with an indigenous artist or knowledge person from the beginning.

The second issue is the how. How does an ordinary person get this perspective – particularly as each region has its own culture. We have contacted Land Councils and tried to reach out from time to time. These people are busy and I think it is unfair for there to be a burden for First Nations people to be constantly involved in all artworks. One of my colleagues who is married to an Aboriginal man has commented on this ongoing pressure.

There are many opportunities for First Nations artists to have their work exhibited. I am personally pleased for them. But do they need to be involved in everything.

Currently many non-indigenous artists are wondering why bother when their own point of view is of such minor importance. We cannot solve the whole colonial project - a burden not put onto other fields of endeavour.

2. Strong Cultural Infrastructure

Whilst there has been investment in major museums (such as the Powerhouse and AGNSW) in NSW in particular there is very little in the way of entry level opportunities. We are actually mid-career but note at the paucity of opportunities for a reasonable

cost. An example is the recent closure of the Australian Design Centre. We are not connected with this organisation but note the programs allowed for artists at all levels, makers and craftspeople to be present work.

Additionally, smaller galleries could also be funded to exhibit work through some specific programs.

Why are institutions like the AGNSW and Powerhouse totally closed off to the majority of artists? Where are the opportunities for a short residency, some space and a possible exhibition? This seems typical of many institutions in Australia. In contrast to a country like Finland where there is greater access to public institutions for artists at all levels and continuing support.

<https://camd.org.au/finnish-museum-creates-a-new-and-radical-support-model-for-artists/>

Here in Australia the directors and curators are gatekeepers rather than reaching out and developing art practice.

We suggest that there is a good look at how these elite organisations operate – they take many funds but don't really contribute at any grass roots level. We understand they may not consider that their main role however, if they won't do that who does?