

National Cultural Policy submission

I am a fine artist balancing my time between my creative endeavours in putting together bodies of work (paintings) for competitions and exhibitions, a part time job, and being a Mum to three young adults. I am dedicated to my art practice and have been fortunate to have been a finalist in several exhibitions, won a few awards and commendations and am successfully selling my work.

My art practice is a very important form of expression providing me with the ability to communicate my observations, reflections, and love of nature and humanity.

I read widely, stay abreast of political issues both in Australia and overseas and have travelled extensively. As such, I stay informed and delve beyond surface level “sound bites”. My art has and always will be informed by what I am feeling, observing and fearing. I can’t fathom a notion that artistic expression is not political. For example, if I paint something as simple as an Australian native flower, I am inviting the viewer to reflect on its beauty and necessity for biodiversity. My artistic statement will discuss this. My goal? If we love and appreciate precious flora, how can we not want to protect it – hence my message is an environmental one.

Over recent years, I have felt a growing sense of restriction, oppression and unease about what I can put forward in exhibition submissions. As a humanitarian, I am horrified and deeply distressed by the genocide occurring to the Palestinian people, however, it would be artistic “suicide” to present any work reflecting these views in a competition due to government interference, political alliances of wealthy corporate donors and likely fall out in the Murdoch dominated media landscape.

For example, every artist would know they are unlikely to be selected as a finalist in the [REDACTED] Prize if they were to paint an identity from a movement that highlights the suffering of the Palestinian people. Why? Because the [REDACTED] is a co-sponsor of this prize, and the [REDACTED] cancelled the Council’s \$20k sponsorship of a music award because the winning piece of music was dedicated to Palestinians!

Other high profile examples of political and corporate interference sending a warning to artists include the cancellation of the Dr Randa Abdel Fatteh’s appearance at the Adelaide Writers Festival leading to the demise of the entire event, Jason Gillman’s Melbourne Symphony Orchestra performance cancellation, the removal of Khaled Sabsabi from the Venice Biennale, and the NGA covering Palestinian flags that were part of a large tapestry by a Pacific Indigenous art collective due to “security concerns”.

At a time when society urgently needs expressions of humanity, we are being warned to be silent. This sense of artistic oppression, fear of cancellation, and, for many artists, their livelihood, feels dystopian.

Many of the world’s greatest artworks, pieces of literature, and music were created during the world’s darkest times. Artists need to be free of censorship to create for humanity.