

**From Then to Now:
Artist Run Initiatives in Sydney,
New South Wales**

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Art Administration, Honours at the College of Fine Arts,
University of New South Wales, Sydney.

March 2012

Abstract

Artist Run Initiatives are a firmly rooted aspect of the Australian and global arts world. Emerging with the counterculture in the 1960s, the alternative spaces movement provided opportunities for artists to explore and engage with new art practices and concepts of community. Historically influential on the development of post-object and conceptual art and the Art Union culture in Australia, ARIs are positioned right at the forefront of radical and innovative developments. Evolving into artist run spaces and coming to be known as ARIs, the evolution of the spaces and organisations has developed in harmony with art practice, praxis and local issues.

ARIs are based in ideology or community, or a blending of the two, with the practitioners employing the structure of the ARI to explore praxis with the advantages of resource and facilities sharing and collective support. Space is and has been a major aspect of ARIs - the creation of space imbued with meaning, historically and pragmatically. The negotiation of space from within the context of a constantly changing and evolving city, such as Sydney, is a continual challenge for ARIs. Starting in the “slums” of Woolloomooloo and progressing further and further west with the development and gentrification of the City, ARIs are innovators when it comes to composing and negotiating space. From actively taking a stand and claiming space till forcefully evicted, to being the sole instrument in the creative urban renewal schemes that are sweeping the globe, ARIs actively participate and are also unknowingly employed to regenerate fading urban areas with their “bohemian” flair.

In the forty plus years since the emergence of ARIs into the art world ecosystem, they have struggled to stay active and operational. They are constantly in jeopardy, at the mercy of pragmatic issues such as rising living costs, and abstract challenges associated with the “self-perpetuating cycle of invalidation”. At present there is a wide diversity of organisations,

spaces, collectives, websites, and projects that fit under the umbrella term of ARI. In the current fourth phase of evolution, ARIs are desiring to combat these challenges by coming together and creating a central site of support, from where knowledge can be distributed and experiences be shared, for ARIs to move forward and focus on what they do best, create culture.

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to my supportive and encouraging supervisor Joanna Mendelssohn, whose knowledge of the Australian art world, especially of the 1970s was an invaluable resource of facts and names. A thank you to Felicity Fenner for a period of clarification and supervision, who, during a moment of dull panic on my behalf, pulled me back to writing about the good stuff.

Thank you, Nita Athanas, Vicky Athanas, Gilles Cordey and Peta Moore, for the orbiting words of good faith, support and encouragement over the past four years. Thank you to Chris Athanas and Elia Zubani, who, in their own unique way, are responsible for me wanting to write this.

Thank you to Stella McDonald for helping me learn that, no matter what the content, someone still has to read it, so the story needs to be good.

A giant thank you to Alex Moore, without whom I would not have had the encouragement or will to finish writing what I had dubbed “The Albatross”. Thank you for listening with enthusiasm to all my unearthed historical facts about Sydney, and for coming along for the ride.

Finally, a big thank you to everyone in the greater ARI community who contributed through interviews, images, nuggets of passing information, names of people, titles of texts, historical data and words of encouragement. This thesis is dedicated to all of you.

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Introduction

This thesis is primarily concerned with opening up the avenues of discourse and research into Artist Run Initiatives (ARIs) and the culture surrounding them in Australia. It is the beginning of contextualising and including ARIs and ARI activity within a broader Australian art historical context. It is also the first step in the long process of documenting the history of the alternative arts and ARI movement, as defined by U.S.A. artist and writer Julie Ault (4), as much of the culture produced by this highly influential and important movement is ephemeral. *Writing about alternative art spaces and groups has been largely limited to articles for local newspapers, reviews and overviews for art journals, and self-published documents concerning specific organizations* (Ault 1).

In the Australian context, this statement by Ault holds true, as up until now there has been little documentation contextualising ARIs within the Australian art historical sphere. Recently, the sector has been gaining a large amount of attention and recognition, with journal articles, projects and conferences dealing with ARI culture as a whole emerging. These include the We Are Here International Symposium on Artist Run Initiatives conference in 2011; the ARIna portal by the National Association of the Visual Arts (NAVA) and subsequent ARIpedia project initiated by Crawl in 2011;¹ and the ARI project on

¹ Crawl Inc. is an online community linking Australian ARIs. It is in the format of Facebook, with ARIs and individuals creating profiles, uploading images and events and connecting directly with one another. It was started in January 2007 by Nicholas Hudson-Ellis, and became an Incorporated Association on Tuesday March 10, 2009. It is accessible at <<http://crawl.net.au>>.

ARIpedia is an online initiative by Crawl, in the format of Wikipedia, that aims to document the history of Australian ARIs. It is accessible at <http://aripedia.org.au/index.php?title=Main_Page>.

ARIna is a proposed online partnership project between NAVA and Crawl Inc. funded by the City of Sydney and the Australia Council for the Arts. It is intended to be an online resource of relevant and important shared information for Australian ARIs.

Design and Art Australia Online (DAAO).²

This timely interest in ARIs and ARI culture has not occurred by accident. The alternative and artist-run spaces movement began, globally, a little over forty years ago, and started in 1970 in Australia. In the initial early decades - the 1970s and 1980s - the movement developed and grew. In the 1990s, it gained recognition from larger cultural institutions and funding bodies. It was during this time that the Australian Council for the Arts identified the organisations as ARIs, by using the term as a funding category. Through collectively naming these organisations and projects, the Council was also able to monitor and assess them. It became recognised by the arts world that ARIs were not a trend, fashion or avant-garde fad, but developed, grew and adapted to the changing eras and global shifts that emerged, and they were/are here to stay. *Until the publication in 2004 of Alternative Art New York 1965-1985: A "Cultural Politics" Book for the Social Text Collective, edited by Julie Ault, there was no comprehensive, critical survey of the alternative or artist-run space in New York* (Cooke 5). It would be further appropriate to state that the text was one of the first of its kind, not only in the U.S.A. but everywhere.

Writing of this sort tends to focus on a particular space as unique rather than contextualizing it within a larger field (Ault 1), and although extensive, the literature that addresses the ARI and alternative movement is fragmented (Cooke 5). This thesis intends to open up the dialogue of art history by including the sociological and pragmatic factors surrounding the emergence, development and continuation of the ARI sector. To paraphrase from the *Journal of Art Historiography* mission statement, a journal edited by Richard Woodfield, a

² The DAAO is an online research tool. It is funded by a series of Australian Research Council grants and is a partnership between UNSW and the University of Sydney. In 2011 the DAAO began the project of including, and thus historically documenting, ARI culture and ARI practitioners into the DAAO.

It is accessible at <<http://www.daa0.org.au/projects/artist-run-initiatives/>>.

U.K. academic and researcher into the field of Art Historiography,

[Art historiography will] *ignore the disciplinary boundaries imposed by the Anglophone expression 'art history' and allow and encourage the full range of enquiry that encompassed the visual arts in its broadest sense as well as topics now falling within archaeology, anthropology, ethnography and other specialist disciplines and approaches.* (Woodfield)

A theme that has emerged from tracing the history of the growth of the ARI movement into a sector is the need and desire for the development of autonomous support structures. The spaces emerged as alternative and independent sites of creative exploration. Through the growth of the movement into a sector, the organisations and projects have become dependent on external funding, which is used in major part to fuel the primary need for an ARI - being space. Developing into autonomous spaces of cultural production is only achievable if ARIs unify into a sector and collectively create models and structures for how they are to interact with society and the arts world to best suit their needs. The creation of a central knowledge repository, where the history and activities of the sector can be housed for future ARI practitioners to access, and will aid in the strengthening of a healthy ARI sector.

Chapter One

An ARI Defined: Terminology, Appellation, and Nomenclature Explored

1.1 Introduction



Fig. 1.1

Artist-run. Artist led. Artists' spaces. Artist initiated. Artist centred. Apartment gallery.³

Anti-gallery.⁴ Not-for-profit gallery. DIY space. Guerrilla gallerizing.⁵ Studio gallery.

Independent space. Artist co-operative. Alternative. Artist-run adventure.⁶ Artists'

Fig. 1.1 Image of the *10% Pending Guerrilla Gallery* taken at the Critical Animals Creative Research Symposium as part of the 2009 This Is Not Art (TINA) Festival, that is held in Newcastle each year.

³ Apartment galleries are domestic art spaces particular to Chicago, U.S.A., which has a long-standing tradition of untraditional, peculiar and fleeting art spaces. This is in part due to the lack of available space and the many apartments that fill the City, the expense of living conditions, and, most importantly, it can be linked to the City's many academic institutions, which have imbued the city with a healthy cultural community.

⁴ Anti-gallery is credited to critic George R. Lansell from a 1971 review on alternative spaces in Sydney.

⁵ U.S.A. critic Peter Frank used "Guerrilla gallerizing" to label the 1970s phenomenon of artist-organised exhibitions in unexpected locations (Ault 6).

⁶ Contemporary ARI Bill and George use the title "Artist. Run. Adventure." on their blog, which is a playful inversion of the term Artist Run Initiative.

Organizations. Marginal spaces. Oppositional artists' structures. Artist-oriented service organizations. Artists' play-grounds.⁷ Artist-run enterprise. Parallel galleries.⁸ These terms, used worldwide since the late 1960s, are just some of those that have come to reference what is commonly known in Australia as an Artist Run Initiative, or ARI for short. It is only in Australia that grass roots artistic spaces and projects initiated by artists are known as ARIs. In many states of the U.S.A., they are known as alternative or artist-run galleries; in Canada, they are commonly known as artist-run centres, or ARCs; and, in the U.K., they are known as artist-run or artist led organisations. Every country has its own version of ARIs and ARI culture, even if the attending public or art-world is unaware of it.⁹ The development of ARIs occurred organically as a reaction to societal factors and the art world. ARIs are created specific to their local community and site-situated space. Although there was no geographical epicentre of the emergence of the alternative spaces movement, there is a unifying element amongst all artistic spaces, collectives and projects of this kind - their alternative and marginalised position, in the art world and in their historical context. As such, key texts critiquing international examples have been consulted in historically tracing and defining ARIs and ARI culture that are specific to Australia.

7 English critic and writer John A. Walker notes that alternative spaces have also been called Artist-oriented service organizations and artist' play-grounds in his text *Glossary on Art, Architecture and Design since 1945*, entry number 27. Phil Patton also identifies key New York alternative spaces as 'artist-orientated 'service organisations' in the article on the alternative spaces movement in New York, titled 'Other Voices, Other Rooms'.

8 Bernice Murphy wrote, in 1982 in an article in *Art Network*, that in Canada alternative spaces were known as "parallel galleries" (Murphy 46).

9 Lois Keidan, co-founder and Director of the *Live Art Development Agency* in the U.K., in speaking at the *We Are Here International Symposium on Artist Run Initiatives*, asserted that artist led initiatives in the U.K. are different to Australian ARIs. She explained that there are no ARIs in the U.K., and the existing artist led organisations have different organisational models to their Australian counterparts, with a major difference being that they are larger institutions, in terms of scope and funding. This is in contrast to documentation which identifies that there are organisations and venues in the U.K. similar to those considered to be ARIs in Australia, including those documented in the very publicly accessible list of "secret galleries" compiled by *Time Out London* magazine, which is, essentially, a list of ARIs.

Most definitions characterise an ARI as an alternative exhibition venue, alternative to commercial galleries and state funded institutions, although, over the years, the term has developed to encompass more than just an alternative site for exhibition. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the spaces first began to emerge, they did manifest in the form of exhibition venues and physical sites where new and different art could be explored and experienced. They were then known, the world over, as alternative spaces or alternative galleries. Radical and avant-garde practice and praxis were integral to the formation of these early spaces and collectives, although an ARI is not simply an extension of the avant-garde. It has developed into its own movement, sector, community and definition.

Having evolved considerably from their beginnings as alternative arts venues, ARIs are a recognised aspect of the cultural arts ecosystem. ARIs, over their history of more than forty years, have influenced culture and, in turn, have developed a culture of their own. The integration of ARIs into the art world, culture and communities has required resources, particularly space and patronage. During the late 1980s and 1990s, recognition and support from external agencies allowed the alternative spaces movement to evolve into the artist-run culture we recognise today. Space has become an important resource and aspect of an ARI, as it is within studio and exhibition space that ideas manifest into projects. Where an ARI is situated within the community and geographic locale is also important. This connection to community and space manifests itself in the projects, collaborations and ideas with which an ARI engages. ARIs have developed a strong connection to physical space, although they have expanded to encompass more than just venues where art is experienced. An ARI can be a collective of practising artists with no fixed location, such as Squatspace;¹⁰ it can be a

¹⁰ Squatspace is further explored in Chapter Three, in reference to the ARI developing into a space-less organisation, due to gentrification and a lack of available space.

gallery space in someone's living room, such as Cosmic Battle for Your Heart;¹¹ or it can be the website of an online virtual exhibition space, such as Freshly Baked Gallery.¹²

This chapter provides a definition of an ARI within a contemporary Australian context. The evolution of terminology is explored, as are the categorisations of ARIs and their significance to those internal and external to the culture. These issues are examined in local, international, historical and contemporary contexts as well as in the process of reviewing notions of the avant-garde and radical art. Definitions from external and internal agents of ARI culture are considered in an attempt to understand the changing recognition and appreciation of ARIs in the wider context of the art world. These are viewed in relation to specific examples of ARI definitions, key documents, examples of evidence of support for ARIs and perceptions of ARI activity.

11 Cosmic Battle for Your Heart was an art curating ARI that operated between 2009 and 2011 out of the director's home in Evan Street in the Sydney suburb of Rozelle.

12 Freshly Baked Gallery is a completely online virtual gallery, exhibiting images of real physical works of art. The works are for sale, and the gallery is multi roomed, with the viewer navigating around the space, similar to the way they would operate a first-person video game. It is accessible at <<http://freshlybakedgallery.com/>>, accessed 29 Mar. 2010.

1.2 The Past: The Alternative and Artist-run

In the 1960s, the “counterculture” was sweeping the globe offering an alternative to the accepted and “normal” culture. Counterculture came to be associated with a rejection of the social norms of the 1950s and focused on political issues, including anti-Vietnam War protests, feminism and racial segregation. The term “counter” means in opposition to - thus, it was a subculture that was occurring simultaneously with, but in opposition to, that of the mainstream. The counterculture manifested itself in fashion, film, music and art; it affected many aspects of mainstream culture; and was associated, in particular, with youth.

In the 1960s, art spaces began to emerge which were neither commercial galleries nor government funded institutions. These spaces came to be known as alternative spaces or alternative galleries. The word alternative was employed as these spaces were unconventional and non-traditional. In essence, they were at a variance with the dominant ideas and traditions of the art world. *In the post-Vietnam context of heightened social consciousness, pluralism, and a confident, assertive counterculture, new structural concepts coalesced within the art world* (Pomeroy 13). Brian O’Doherty, artist, critic and, at one time Head of the Visual Arts section of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), is credited with establishing the very expression “alternative space” (Patton 81; Walker). O’Doherty created the term in his position as a representative of the NEA, a major government funding agency of the U.S.A., as a means to categorise the newly emerging art spaces (Beck 262). In *Alternative Art New York, 1965- 1985: A “Cultural Politics” Book for the Social Text Collective*, Julie Ault defines alternative spaces to be *organisations claiming to fill a particular kind of void; to counter the status quo of mercantile circuits; to address needs of artists and audiences not addressed elsewhere; or to define themselves as antiestablishment, anti-institutional, experimental, artist initiated, artist centred, or any combination of the*

above (14). Ault, who views the emergence of alternative spaces collectively, as a movement (4), provides an ideological definition,¹³ although the idea of *filling a void*, a spatial metaphor, implies a physical connection to space; and, in turn, a connection to site and community, which are sociological aspects.

British critic and historian, John A. Walker, lists “Alternative Spaces” as the 27th entry in the text, *Glossary on Art, Architecture and Design Since 1945*. In this text, alternative spaces are ideologically defined as [g]alleries and other exhibition spaces providing an “alternative” to public museums and commercial arts galleries. Walker provides a practical, if somewhat limited, sociologically based reasoning for the development and formation of alternative spaces. *Such spaces proliferated in major cities, particularly in the USA, during the 1970s as the number of arts graduates exceeded the market’s capacity to absorb them* (Walker, *Glossary*). He further provides a succinct definition of their purpose. *Generally their purpose was to display new, experimental art by unknown artists* (Walker, *Glossary*).

Sociologist Batia Sharon provides sociological definers of alternative spaces analysed from her study of spaces in the San Francisco and Santa Cruz areas, in California, U.S.A., in 1979. In the text, *Artist-Run Galleries: A Contemporary Institutional Change in the Visual Arts*, Sharon employs the term “artist-run spaces” as an umbrella term to describe a variety of “artist managed exposure”. These include individual artist’s galleries, where an artist exhibits their own work, possibly from a room in their home; open studios, which sell and exhibit work to the public on designated weekends; rented spaces other than galleries, including banks, libraries and lobbies; co-operative galleries; alternative galleries; and community orientated centers. In this context, Sharon distinguishes alternative spaces as *galleries, which are collectively or individually run and exhibit art which, due to its spatial*

13 The use of the term “ideology” in relation to ARIs and alternative spaces is addressed in Chapter Two.

requirements, cannot be shown in regular galleries; for example, installation works (5). This is one of the first uses of the term “artist-run” to broadly define a range of artist managed or artist initiated activity, which opens up the definition to encompass more than a single type of exhibition space. Although Sharon is concerned with modes of exposure by artists, through recording and reporting on their sociological activities in co-operatives and open studios, ideas of practice and community are incorporated into her definition and understanding of artist-run spaces.

While the individually run galleries are organized, the collectively run galleries are organized around exposure and/or production which is focused on working together on the premises and includes collective ownership of tools and equipment... the collective aspect of artistic production often manifests itself in exchange of information, evaluation, critique and support. (Sharon 8)

Sharon lists support as a key aspect of artist-run galleries, in the forms of networks; facility and tool sharing; and through the provision of training, knowledge sharing and opportunities, a collegial benefit that cannot be equated in the commercial sector (Cooke 7). Art critic Phil Patton also lists support as an important and integral aspect of the alternative spaces established in New York in the 1970s. Likening alternative spaces to artist service organisations, he outlines how they grew to support emerging artists develop their practice, professionally and artistically, through providing cheap studio space and emergency grants for artists to mount shows elsewhere, and by bringing artists to art centers and universities (Patton 87). From a selection of papers delivered as part of The Visual Artists' Organization [sic]: Past, Present, Future (Past, Present, Future) Conference held in the U.S.A. in 1986,¹⁴

¹⁴ The Visual Artists' Organization: Past, Present, Future conference was held in the U.S.A. from 25 to 27 July, 1986. It was a meeting of a number of American arts administrators and artists who came together to discuss the history, present and possible futures of artists' organisations, or artist-run spaces. Similar conferences (which are

Trend deduced that, for alternative spaces set up in the late 1980s, support structures were one of their most important aspects. Their importance lies, not only in the sociological factors of network and resource sharing, but also in the ideological development of artistic practice and praxis through providing *a support structure that encourages dialogues crucial to the refinement and extension of their ideas* (Trend, Survey 11). In a research report commissioned by the Visual Arts Board and undertaken by Karilyn Brown in 1987, titled *Artist Run Spaces*, Brown stated

[t]he emergence of the Artist-Run Space... is not only indicative of the desire on the part of many artists for greater control over and responsibility for the production and presentation of their own work, but also reflects a strong movement towards a less isolationist and more collaborative work process, one in which skills, experience and resources are shared and exchanged. Often fundamental to this rationale of artistic collaboration is a commitment to addressing current social, theoretical and political issues pertinent to the role of the artist and the production of artwork within our society. (Brown 4)

U.K. based researcher and Art and Design Subject Librarian, Jacqueline Cooke, in researching art ephemera for her PhD, provides a generic description of an alternative space compiled from the repeating sociological and ideological elements common to the definitions provided above and elsewhere. Cooke's generic description of an alternative space's life cycle outlines the physical environment, ideology, administration and evolution of many alternative spaces.

discussed later on) were being held in Australia around the same time (1989), which is an indication of global momentum, in terms of general consensual concerns about, and changing attitudes towards, the artist-run spaces movement, particularly with regard to its evolution.

Attributes of the physical space:

An alternative space might be set up provisionally on a shoestring, possibly in a recession, and would be likely to re-use a building that was redundant for the building's original purpose, in a run-down area. The new use would not obliterate the aesthetic of the original use. It might be both living and exhibition space (Cooke 4).

Ideology:

The space might make it possible to show innovative art in new mediums, nonobjective ideas, unpurchaseable or dangerous work, process based art etc., and be fundamentally non-commercial or not-for-profit, but work would usually be for sale. It would provide artists with an opportunity to show outside the commercial gallery system. The institution itself however would not build up a collection. Artists would have control over the presentation of work; if curators were involved, they would not be invested with elitist or exclusionary power, as those involved might intend to counter these conditions and make institutional change. Those involved might also be involved in action on social and political issues. (Cooke 4)

Structure and administration:

It would probably depend on art-world patronage, and participate in the "farm system", and artists might be running two-part careers. They would form a mutual support network both intellectually and practically, often providing facilities, usually running as a collective. For political reasons, or in order to be eligible for funding, it would be organised as a group, and would encounter itself becoming an institution, and might become a charity, probably educational. It would apply for temporary public funding and this would mean it developed a bureaucratic structure, but artists would continue to act in decision-making roles. It would become involved in community development or in providing education to a wider group. (Cooke 5)

Evolution of organisation:

The organisation might become institutionalised as a “service organisation”. It would come to an end, as the bureaucratic burden became too much work, or people became involved in other things, or the lease ran out, or funding ran out, or it would continue and get more substantial funding and perhaps set up a Friends scheme. In any case, the surrounding area would have become ‘gentrified’, so the building might be taken over by a restaurant or converted to apartments.¹⁵ (Cooke 5)

The common defining attributes of the alternative spaces and artist-run galleries of the 1970s are: a physical exhibition site, generally disused or unwanted for commercial or residential use; collective and co-operative aspects of running the space; fundamentally not-for-profit but can engage in the sale of works; no permanent organisation collection; engagement in experimental and radical art, but not to the sole exclusion of traditional art forms of painting and sculpture.

¹⁵ Cooke’s generic description is provided as a block of text. The division into subject and heading has been re-ordered for the purposes of this thesis, and is not original to the description.

1.3 Avant-Garde Attitudes

Avant-gardes are fragile affairs. The moment they become established, they cease to be – success as well as failure finishes them off (Gass).

While the previously stated defining elements are true aspects of alternative and artist-run spaces, and also of the present day ARI, accounts and definitions of the alternative have relied on pragmatic rationales as opposed to radical intentions. The very term alternative is identifiable with an anti-establishment and DIY ethic,¹⁶ as being in opposition to the mainstream and having forward thinking radical ideals. Alternative spaces and artist-run culture also identify with the avant-garde through both facilitating grass roots cultural development and cutting out the lengthy refining processes of larger art institutions and the commercial sector. *Postmodernism coincides with capitalism's increased interest in culture as a resource and an increased ability and desire for global expansion delivered by new technologies. Thus between the early 1980s and the late 1990s one of the earliest goals of the avant-garde was achieved: reaching and affecting the everyday (Naylor 41).*

¹⁶ Artist and researcher Jane Naylor provides an accurate and succinct definition of DIY (or Do-It-Yourself) culture and ethics, in relation to the development of her own art practice in Australia in the 1970s to present. Naylor states that: *DIY consists of ethical strategies and tactics used by artists to take individual responsibility in creation of local culture, rejecting the elitism of the art establishment. This form of do-it-yourself may be part of gallery-based practice, and express a lack of tolerance towards a consumer-driven existence. It is a state of mind which sees culture as something you make rather than something you buy. DIY culture is [t]he practice of intuitive liberal anarchism, it can be associated mainly with youth-centred interests in art and music, practices of green radicalism and direct action politics. A DIY ethic openly critiques bureaucratic modes of organisation and consumer culture, encouraging people to reject the undemocratic structures offered and the purchase of goods as a solution, instead advocating taking technology into your own hands to solve any needs (Naylor 10).* In this context, DIY is likened to the term artist-run, as both connote an anti-institutional localised organisational model. These terms imply individuals doing “it” for themselves and artists running and creating their own culture: in both cases, taking responsibility.

In its very essence, the alternative spaces movement was a practical development of the avant-garde, although it was not simply an extension of it but a development in its own right. The key aspect of an ARI (and its historical predecessors) being understood as its own entity and not as an extension of the avant-garde or as a vanguard practice is its connection to space. It is within space that process and exposure come together; it is where the artist engages with the audience and where art is reconnected to life.

Space is really the real focus of the artist-run sector, because it's really everything we do and talk about. Space is important, as it is the primary productive capacity of our ideas and why we do what we do. Producing a space is really like our core business, and that can be online space, or physical space, or temporary space. Space is kind of what we do, and we transform space, and we make space. (Conroy, From the ARSE end of the World)

The practice of those engaged in the space can be avant-garde, as can be the art on exhibition, although this is related to a commonly viewed fallacy associated with ARIs, one which automatically links emerging to ARIs. Sharon states that [artist-run galleries] *are the spaces where avant-garde work is shown* (9); and [i]t is not unlikely that the art shown in these galleries represents future, not yet acceptable, trends in art (10). In 1956, at the World Congress of Free Artists, Asger Jorn prescribed the two conditionals a movement requires to be considered avant-garde, which are that

it must be isolated, without direct support from the established order, and given over to an apparently impossible and useless struggle... Next, the struggle of this group must be of essential importance for the forces in whose name it struggles - in our

case human society and artistic progress - and the position conquered by this avant-garde must later be confirmed by a more general development. (Cooke 16)

In this regard, the alternative spaces movement, which preceded the artist-run space and the ARI, held avant-garde attitudes as it emerged in isolation without direct support from the art world, and has been recognised as an impossible struggle.¹⁷

However, in the late 1980s and 1990s, as the movement progressed from the realm of the independently artist-run space to a state of institutionalisation and legitimisation, it no longer operated in isolation, *without the direct support from the established order*, as these spaces existed and operated with the support of grants and governmental funding. *If the alternative space movement represented an avant-garde it was a singularly institutionalized avant-garde. The artist space movement developed its own distinctive philosophies, professional etiquettes, communications networks, and hierarchies* (Kester 10). Anarchist anthropologist David Graeber has deduced that avant-garde groups are forms of organisations, explaining that artistic groups such as the Dadaists and the Situationists International *organized themselves like vanguard parties, publishing their own manifestos, communiqués, purging one another and making themselves (sometimes quite intentional) parodies of revolutionary sects* (Cooke 15). However, unlike such avant-garde movements, there was no central instigator, no key figures espousing core ideologies and no epicentre of the movement. Alternative spaces were about creating opportunities for the autonomy and integrity of art practitioners.

¹⁷ Joan Lyons, from the Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester NY, was reported to have said at the Past, Present, Future conference that *it is important to remember that what we are doing is inherently impossible, but we do it anyway. Part of the reality of that is that we have not shifted the society in which we function as much as we often think we have-based upon our own value systems. That doesn't tell me that this is a time to be frustrated because I think we sometimes lose sight of the impact we've already had ... toward a process of change* (Trend, Introduction 11).

The avant-garde is experienced in two ways in ARIs. In the first sense, it can be understood that (most) art in ARIs is vanguard, as it is the newest and most current art on exhibition, and the majority of ARIs deal in the realms of the emerging and contemporary. Through removing the “middleman” systems of management, audiences can experience the art direct from the point of artistic production. There is no interference between the areas of creation and exposure, thus ensuring a timely and true grassroots experience of artistic production. In this regard, the refining processes of the commercial art world are not present in the creative output of artist-run galleries. The artist maintains the integrity of the work and, ultimately, decides how the work will be exposed and experienced by the audience. ARIs do not hold collections of work; in this regard, they are similar to the German Kunsthallen or “art halls”; thus, stock room shows exhibiting older works are not mounted.¹⁸ In this sense, the art on display may not be the most advanced in its field or the most cutting-edge experimentally, but it is the newest and most contemporary art.

The other understanding of the avant-garde in artist-run spaces is experimentation with new technologies and mediums. In the 1970s, the commercial sector was not equipped for the radical new art movements in the ways of video, performance and conceptual art, and as such artists created their own opportunities. The commercial and institutionalised art worlds recognised the cutting edge and avant-garde developments in alternative spaces, and as such viewed these spaces as “incubators” of the new art, picking up the styles and practitioners they deemed as successful. This notion of the ARI as an incubator (or the *farm system* as described in the U.S.A. in the 1970s) is still a current understanding of the function and role of the ARI, according to those both internal and external to ARI culture, and is further explored in the context of Australian ARIs later on in the chapter.

¹⁸ However, retrospectives of established artists and graduation shows are held in ARIs, where older works on display are hand picked from a vast body of work or an exhibition depicts a recent graduate’s development over three years of study.

1.4 The Evolutionary Phases of the Movement

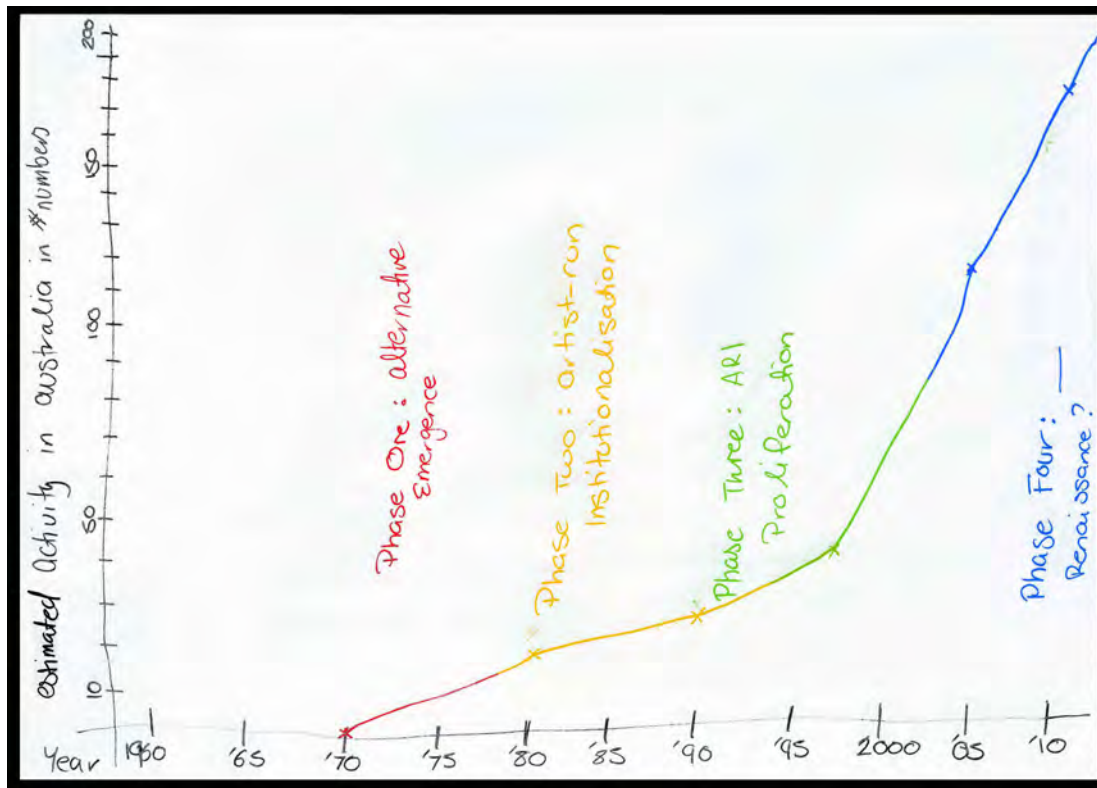


Fig. 1.2

Cooke asserts that the alternative and the artist-run space are essentially different, stating [t]here is some crossover between these as defining terms, but there are also differences; they reflect different allegiances and ideological positions (Cooke 12). While it is true that alternative spaces and artist-run spaces do reflect slightly different ideologies and alliances, this arises more from historical context than as evidence that they are different developments existing as separate entities. Sharon employed the term “artist-run spaces” in 1979 as an umbrella terminology for the multiple models of artist managed exhibition activity, including alternative spaces, which were becoming recognised. Trend, while employing different terminology to artist-run, that being “artists’ organizations [sic]”, also viewed the alternative spaces as the predecessor to the spaces of the mid 1980s, identifying that the needs of both

Fig. 1.2 An inexact graph, indicating the approximate historical development, in terms of phases, of ARIs in Australia; copyright, the author, 2012.

the alternative and the artist organised spaces were, essentially, the same. *The alternative space concept of the '60s formed the basis for the evolution of what is presently [in 1986] known as artists' organizations.*¹⁹ *The idea that artists need to have primary control over the presentation of their work and a support structure that encourages dialogue crucial to the refinement and extension of their ideas remains paramount* (Trend, Survey 11). In 1987, in a report commissioned by the Visual Arts Board (VAB) of the Australia Council for the Arts (Australia Council), titled “Artist-Run Spaces”, the term artist-run referred to those facilities, such as exhibition venues, studios, workshops, information and resource centres, which have been established and are maintained on a co-operative basis by groups of artists (Brown).

With each development of the terminology that is used to label this grassroots sector, such as alternative to artist-run, more activity is swept up by it, with the preceding term coming to represent only one aspect of the artistic activity represented by the new terminology in the new era. Stephen Kahn, in his paper presented at the Past, Present, Future conference, provides a guide to the ideological differences of artists’ organizations [sic] in the late 1980s through tracing the twenty-plus year *history of artists’ organizations informed by a sociological perspective* (12). In tracing this history, he classifies the developments of the movement as phases, progressing from the idealistic to the pragmatic, in turn outlining the linear development, from the alternative to the artist-run. *Each view [goal or ideology] seems to be loosely based on a different phase of the history of artists’ organizations: idealism on the alternative spaces of the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, and pragmatism on the more organizational solid spaces of the late ‘70s and ‘80s* (12). The alternative spaces of the 1970s were the precursors to the artist-run spaces and artists’ organizations [sic] of the 1980s,

¹⁹ The term “artists’ organizations [sic]” is an overarching term that was created by the Visual Arts Program of the U.S.A. governmental arts funding agency, NEA, and was used to cover all artist managed organisations, similar to the terms “artist-run” and “ARI” in Australia. *As the number of organizations increased, the Visual Arts Program continued to support their activities and in 1982 established the Visual Artists' Organizations category* (Trend Survey, 11).

therefore artist-run is to be understood as an extension and furthering of the alternative concept. Definitions of alternative spaces were based on pragmatic reasoning and physical attributes - they were known as alternative as they were the marginal spaces of the time.

As the alternative spaces movement grew and developed globally, it drew more attention from external agents, which resulted in reports, categorisation and research into the field, resulting in analysis and definitions based on ideological grounds as opposed to pragmatic descriptions.

In the transition between these two [idealistic and pragmatic] phases, Kahn cited five general areas of change: (1) the broadening of interest beyond performance and conceptual art to encompass other marginalized forms; (2) the shift from confrontation to cooperation with the commercial market and museum community; (3) the transformation or replacement of artists by professional managers; (4) the development of client and professional roles for artists and administrators; and (5) the growth of bureaucratic structures within organization. (Trend, Introduction 9)

In the 1980s, with more attention and activity, artist-run spaces were no longer on the fringes of mainstream culture. They became accepted and recognised spaces of artistic creation, with the defining aspect of these spaces being that they were managed by artists. Kahn asserts that a combination of external recognition and internal ambition were the key reasons for the transformation of artists' spaces from idealistic alternative spaces to pragmatic artist-run spaces. Recognition came in three forms: 1) Funding by external agencies; 2) Acceptance by the art world; and 3) Gentrification, in the context of cultural acceptance of the mainstream public displayed by them moving into the bohemian neighborhoods created by the alternative artists. *These three forms of recognition provided the movement with resources and*

legitimacy; at the same time, however, they demanded much of spaces in terms of resources and image (Khan 13). The ambition of the artists involved with the artist-run spaces made these changes in external recognition important and, in turn, the artists acted upon the changes, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of an increased need for the involvement of external agencies in ARIs.²⁰ The artists starting spaces rightly felt that they were filling an important need in the art world. If one believes what one is doing is important, one does what is felt necessary to continue doing it (Khan 13).

In the late 1980s, the activities of artist-run organisations encompassed more than exposure from within a physical site. In 1986, at the Past, Present, Future conference, Richard Andrews of NEA stated that the definition of artists' spaces was clarified and refined for the purpose of gaining further financial support. He then challenged the attending practitioners of artist-run spaces to provide a new definition of artists' spaces as *the laboratory, the breeding ground, the dynamo that makes the larger engines of culture go* (Trend, *Introduction* 10). To prove this new definition, conference attendees were asked to provide single phrase responses to the topic heading, "Art of the Eighties and its Influences on our Organizations' [sic] Structures". What emerged from the responses given were not positive examples that reinforced and emphasised the new defining statement, but, instead, concerns that centered on *an endorsement of cultural pluralism, [with] the group voic[ing] its disapproval of institutional or geographical structures of hierarchy... Further points dealt with philosophical issues of evolution, independence, iconoclasm, and the preservation of free expression* (Trend, *Introduction* 10).

What is evidenced from this exercise is that, in the 1980s, artists' spaces the world over were open to a redefinition, one that embodied a pluralistic view that included the multiple aspects

²⁰ The evolution of the self-perpetuating cycle of external involvement is further discussed in a contemporary context in Chapter Three.

of artist-run activity. Experimental and innovative projects initiated by artists, including festivals, publications, one-off events and performances all became known activities of artist-run culture, thus requiring a new descriptive term: Artist Run Initiative. The titular and descriptive terminology of the movement is interchangeable in a contemporary Australian context, with each title coming to signify more than the era in which the movement and culture existed: alternative for the 1970s, artist-run for the 1980s to mid 1990s, ARI from the late 1980s to present day, as opposed to titles representing different and separate movements and developments.

1.5 The Present: Artist-run and Initiative



Fig. 1.3

Ault states that, by the early 2000s, little to no traces of alternative culture remained in the New York art world. *In 1996 when I began this project, the notion of the alternative was not entirely outmoded. A mere six years later, the term has little currency* (Ault 90). The original concept of the alternative space was linked inextricably to its historical context, although the alternative spaces movement and culture, with its roots based in DIY ethics, evolved into the artist-run culture we experience today. While the alternative spaces, as identified by Ault, were becoming outmoded in New York,²¹ the ARI was flourishing in Sydney. Similar to the formation of the term “alternative spaces” by O’Doherty while at

Fig. 1.3 Kerr, Sean. *Run Artist Run*. Mixed media installation at 55 Sydenham Rd Marrickville, Sydney, 2011. Image copyright and courtesy the artist.

21 Although Ault asserts that the ‘notion of the alternative’ was almost outmoded in New York by the early 2000s, there is evidence to support the opposite. Threewalls, a Chicago based organisation dedicated to cultivating contemporary art practice and discourse founded in 2003, publishes a U.S.A. wide directory of ‘alternative artspace’, called *Phonebook*. In the first *Phonebook*, published in 2007/2008, sixteen entries are listed for the New York area alone, with over a hundred for the entire U.S.A.

NEA, the term Artist Run Initiative has been credited to the Australia Council as a means to categorise and, in turn, monitor these (newly externally recognised) spaces. *Like the “emerging artist” tag, the term “ARI” is a funding category that emerged in response to market research and government policy directions around 1998* (Conroy, *We are here* 77). The 1998-1999 Australia Council for the Arts Annual Report states [t]his year, a special grant round was conducted to support artist-run projects as part of the Federal Government’s Emerging Artists Initiative. Funding was provided for 15 Artist Run Initiatives across Australia (37).²² This is the first documented use of the term Artist Run Initiative in an official funding capacity, although the term was in use by the artists and cultural practitioners internally engaging with these spaces and culture around a decade earlier. In 1989, Artspace, Sydney, held a forum and exhibition of works by artists who showed at Artist Run Initiatives titled *Endangered Spaces: Artist Run Initiatives in New South Wales*. In the accompanying text, comprised of published essays written by speakers from the forum, the acronym A.R.I. is used. Artist, writer and founding member of the Ultimo Project, Christopher Downie, in an essay titled “Cutting the Fringe”, states: *A.R.I. stands for Artist Run Initiatives, a loose confederation of artist groups which are involved in non profit projects* (5),²³ broadening the scope of activity beyond that of only exhibition and exposure. The Australia Council also currently recognises the broad concept of an ARI, although is still somewhat limited in its understanding of the role and function of an ARI within the arts ecosystem due to viewing of them as incubators or nurseries.

22 The 15 ARIs to receive Australia Council grants were: 1st Floor Artists & Writers Space (Vic) \$7390; Australian National Capital Artists Inc. (ACT) \$3500; CBD Gallery Incorporated (NSW) \$8000; FOYeR Installation Cafe (TAS) \$5293; First Draft Incorporated (NSW) \$8000; Herringbone Gallery (NSW) \$3500; Kick Arts Collective Incorporated (QLD) \$3500; Leftovers (SA) \$5000; Platform Artists Group Inc (VIC) \$4000; Rubik (VIC) \$2675; Seas Art Studios Inc (SA) \$8000; Stripp Gallery (VIC) \$3500; The Verge Inc (WA) \$8000; Watch this Space (NT) \$8000; West Space Inc (VIC) \$8000 (Australia Council, 1998 *Annual Report* 163). Of these spaces, four are still in operation in 2012.

23 A.R.I., established in 1987, was also the name of an organisation of representatives from NSW ARIs. The organisation was involved in organising the *Endangered Spaces* project (Downie 5).

The Australia Council currently (2012) defines an ARI to be

a collective or space run by artists to present their own and other artists' work. ARIs might approximate a traditional art gallery or performance space in appearance or function, or may take a markedly different approach, limited only by the artist's understanding of the term. There are over 100 active ARIs across Australia, working in a number of models including commercial, site specific and pop up, and acting as incubators for the next generation of arts practitioners. (Australia Council, Expression of Interest)

After the initial emergence of the alternative space in Australia, during the movement's development into the "artist-run" realm that came to encompass a wider scope of artist activity, external agencies began to recognise these spaces and artists' organisations. The external agencies included the funding board of the Australia Council; NAVA; researchers and theorists working in conjunction with the Visual Arts Board; publically funded contemporary art institutions, such as Artspace; art critics; educators and the commercial sector. Two developments occurred from this recognition. Firstly, these spaces became known as hot beds of emerging experimental activity that allowed artists to experiment without repercussions. This evolved into the view of the spaces as testing grounds or incubators propagating artists for the "professional" art world. In 1984 Martha Gever in *Growing Pains*, a NAAO (National Association of Artists' Organizations [sic])²⁴ conference report warned of the tendency for "*alternative organizations to become little league trainers for the elite cultural establishments*".²⁵ In 1993 Grant Kester also describes this phenomenon,

24 The American organisation NAAO was formed in 1982, after the NEA created the Visual Artists' Organizations funding category to support alternative spaces. It is a non-government organisation, although it often works in cooperation with government funding bodies to service artists' organisations.

25 This report was published in the January 1984 issue of *Afterimage*, a monthly journal covering independent film, video, and photography.

calling it the “*farm system*” (Cooke 10).²⁶ In Australia, the main culprit of promoting ARIs as incubators is the Australia Council, as are other government and non-government funding bodies.

The Australia Council has called them “radical incubators for emerging contemporary art”. Yet, artist-run spaces do more than just provide a seeding and propagation service to the industry (B. Jones 2); and [i]n many aspects of their operations they may be understood as incubators, providing resources, mentoring and support for emerging and mature artists whilst promoting new ideas, new forms and new practices to the broader community. (Miller 13)

The view of an ARI as an incubator, growing artists for the “real” art world, is detrimental to the growth of ARI culture and to the identity and ego of those practising within this culture. Sharon identified that, if an artist managed site of exposure is to be successful, in regards to staying active and operational, the practitioners involved with the site and the creative output (culture) generated from the site must represent an ideology particular and genuine to the artist managed site itself, one that is linked to autonomy and artistic integrity (12). The ideology or “goal succession” of the artists involved cannot be the furthering of individual “traditional” careers. In essence, those involved within the ARI cannot see it as an opportunity to gain commercial representation, as then the goal of the practitioners is removed from the ideology genuine to the ARI. In turn, if an ARI were to see itself merely as an incubator, being a progression step between art school and the commercial art world, and not as an autonomous and independent entity, it would, by definition, be an extension of the commercial art world and not an ARI.

²⁶ Grant Kester is Chair of the Visual Arts Department, Professor of Art History, and Director of the University Art Gallery at the University of California, San Diego. In 1993, when he wrote about the ‘farm system’, he was the Senior Editor of *Afterimage*.

The second ramification of ARIs gaining recognition from external agencies is the legitimisation and institutionalisation of the sector. As the movement and sector itself is defined as not-for profit, engaging in experimental (and often un-saleable) artistic works and operating with a collective and co-operative structure of shared duties and financial responsibilities, it relies, in major part, on patronage and government funding as a means of continued support. Once ARIs became eligible to receive funding, with the Australia Council creating a category specific to the sector and, in turn, defining the spaces, these spaces and organisations became legitimate in the context of the art world.²⁷ In 1986, Trend commented on the remorse artist-run practitioners felt at the institutionalisation of the field by stating that

a number of participants [of the Past, Present, Future conference] expressed concern over the increasing institutionalization of artists' spaces, comparing their evolution and redefinition to that of other countercultural groups. For example, just as many food coops have grown to become gourmet supermarkets; certain larger artists' organizations have come to resemble the museums and galleries they originally arose to challenge. (Introduction 10)

Prior to the legitimisation of the sector, many spaces operated, and continue to operate, illegally, through selling alcohol on site without the necessary permits; by not complying with fire safety and wheelchair accessible regulations due to the exorbitant costs associated with renovating the distressed spaces many ARIs occupy; through not declaring the less than minimum wage income earned via the sales of works; by allowing venues to exceed capacity, creating Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) issues; and by creating disturbances in neighborhoods through sound pollution, inspiring complaints from the (often) newly

²⁷ The legitimisation of ARIs and the issues that this has caused are explored in further depth in Chapter Three. They are explored here in regards to helping define an ARI and its role in the arts world.

gentrified community. Through operating in such subversive and counter legal parameters, the ARI can adapt swiftly due to the lack of engagement in council applications and business processes. In needing to comply with funding requirements, however, spaces, essentially, became businesses, and further developed into institutions. At Past, Present, Future, Carlos Gutierrez-Solana stated that, all too often, artists' organisations begin to “believe their con” of respectability. *They begin to look like institutions to get funding from institutional sources.* However, he did add, *the movement is still completely subversive. You have to remember that it is still providing artists with opportunities to do work that no one else is doing* (Trend, *Introduction* 10).

An ARI, in its current formation, context and understanding, is a creative initiative or project conducted by an individual or by a group of artists, curators or cultural organisers with the aim of communicating ideas and projects directly to an engaged audience. ARIs take many shapes and forms, including a website or blog (“Freshly Baked”, NSW, and “Crawl”, VIC); a site of ephemeral performance art (Exist, QLD); a traditional white cube gallery (Chalk Horse, NSW); a publication (*Runway*, NSW); a co-operative which provides services to the local arts community (Arts Alive, TAS and ANCA, ACT); a nomadic organisation which utilises other venues for its projects, such as No Vacancy in Victoria, which operated in the 1990s, and converted vacant street spaces, such as shop fronts and foyers, into art spaces; or Art Hotline which, in the 1990s, used a telecom 0055 number that the (informed) public could call to find out information about, and directions to, art activities and exhibitions. The unifying qualities of an ARI are a bypassing of the “system” and a concern with creating for an engaged audience directly, keeping all activity at a grass roots level.

For funding purposes, the Australia Council currently requires an ARI to possess these necessities: *It is managed by artists; operates on a non-profit basis; has a continuing program of activities; and accepts proposals for exhibitions on an application basis*

(Australia Council, *What is an ARI?*). Recently, there has been an increased involvement in ARIs of art workers and cultural organisers who are not practising artists, with organisations and spaces emerging without any involvement of practising artists at all. In the second phase of ARI development in the 1980s, this was viewed as a negative shift, as those involving themselves were, generally, arts administrators who, as they knew of no other business model to emulate, brought business concepts and models from the commercial and institutionalised sector directly into the ARIs, transforming the spaces into mini commercial sites of exposure. Since the proliferation phase of ARIs in the 2000s, different operational models have evolved, specific to the ideals and integrity of the ARI sector. Through the trial and error of pioneering ARIs, such as Inhibodress and The Red Rattler, new ways and means to work within the existing system and structure of the art world have emerged for other ARIs to emulate and build upon.²⁸ However, not every mode of operation has been practised, with new ARI concepts emerging constantly that cannot operate within the existing structures. One such model is Society,²⁹ a space run by curator Susan Gibb, who has shied away from the term ARI, and, in turn, the associated patronage and networking the title entails, in the specific titular reference to being run and managed by artists.

28 This is evidenced through a number of the actions and activities of ARIs. The We Are Here conference, held in Sydney in September, 2011, included a one-day business forum on different strategies and models that ARIs can take to be successful. Examples include the creation of the NAVA and the Crawl web portal ARIna, which, intends to be a gateway on information for ARIs and the creation of the City of Sydney (CoS) community placement grants, which have placed creative projects into disused council buildings, such as the Firstdraft Woolloomooloo depot. These indicate an increased awareness of playing by the rules to get the job done, and are discussed in further detail in other chapters of this thesis.

29 Society operates out of the now defunct Locksmith Project ARI site on Botany Road in Alexandria and began operation in July, 2011. It has mounted seven curated shows by both art world and ARI established and emerging artists, including the granddaddy of all ARIs, Mike Parr, Agatha Goethe-Snape and Campbell Patterson, Dan Moynihan, Gunter Christmann, Bianca Hester and Mitch Cairns. Further information about the space can be accessed from <<http://www.welcome-to-society.com>>.

1.6 The Future: Where Are We Going?

In September, 2011, at We Are Here: the International Symposium for Artist Run Initiatives (WAH), a conference held in Sydney, a discussion began on the possible re-naming and redefining of ARIs; the creation of a sector; and how the sector would impact on the future of ARIs.³⁰ The discussion was initiated by Dr Alex Gawronski, founder of BlauGrau, Loose Projects and the Institute for Contemporary Art Newtown (ICAN), and continued by Dr Rebecca Conroy, founder of the Wedding Circle and Bill and George, over the course of the four day conference.

Gawronski presented a paper titled “Out of the Past: Beyond the Four Fundamental Fallacies of Artist Run Initiatives”,³¹ where he identified four current problematic notions of ARIs and possible ways to amend them. Firstly, it is perceived that ARIs are run for and by emerging artists; secondly, they are seen as play grounds and as incubators for future arts professionals; thirdly, it is a fallacy that ARIs are fundamentally democratic; and fourthly, the supposition that ARIs should aim, like an advertising model, to reach the largest possible audience is highly evident to hold negative effects (Gawronski).

As stated by Gawronski, it is a bureaucratic view that automatically attaches the term “emerging” to ARIs, which is, again, linked to funding categories and assessment. While it is true that many newly graduated art students do engage with the art world for the first time from within an ARI context, to associate only emerging artists with ARIs is to negate the participation and association of the more established artists who initiated the spaces, which,

³⁰ The future of ARIs in relation to uniting and building a “sector” is further discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis and is only discussed here in terms of defining the role and understanding of an ARI.

³¹ This paper is due to be published, along with all the additional subsequent We Are Here conference proceedings, by NAVA in 2012.

in turn, reinforces the commercialistic conception of the ARI as a strategic means to an end (Gawronski). Emerging, like ARI, is also a contentious term with multiple and arbitrary definitions, and is only critically important for ARIs in the context of art scholarships, funding and competitions. The Australia Council links emerging artists with young artists, and provides funding for this defined demographic specifically in the context of ARIs through a \$20,000 grant titled Opportunities for Young and Emerging Artists - Artist Run Initiatives. *The Australia Council defines “young and emerging” artists as professional, practising artists who are in the early stages of their career. This can be understood in the first five years of their professional practice... generally aged 30 years and under* (Australia Council, *Opportunities*). The Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship defines an emerging artist as someone who is *within the first 8 years of their professional practice as a visual artist* (Arts NSW, *Helen Lempriere*). The National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) states *that [t]here is no standard definition of what this [emerging] means*, although NAVA categorises an emerging artist as someone who has *practised as a professional artist continually for less than 5 years and has a wish to develop their career in their chosen artform* (NAVA).³²

The limitation of viewing ARIs as incubators or *as entrepreneurial finishing schools* (Gawronski), which has been discussed above in regards to sociological indicators of success relating to core ideologies of the artist-run space and its practitioners, is cited by Gawronski as being detrimental because *from this vantage point an ARI is seen only as a means to an end... as [art critic] Craig Owen has said “a junior achieving school for young culture industrialists”* (Gawronski). Gawronski further elucidates that, rather than viewing ARIs as

32 NAVA compiled their definition of “emerging” from averaging out definitions from other organisations, including The Freedman Foundation Travelling Scholarship for Emerging Artists; The Australia Council Young and Emerging Artists Initiative Grants; and the Art & Australia/ Credit Suisse Private Banking Contemporary Art Award.

training grounds for artists, it would be more beneficial to view them as spaces and organisations of genuine affiliation.

The third fallacy currently associated with ARIs is that they are fundamentally democratic. *Although such a claim may seem well intentioned... it is disingenuous. By claiming ARIs as bastions of cultural democracy it seems to present them on a level field where blandly every ARI is perceived as the same of any cultural worth. From here it is perceived that all ARIs are all in it together, working for the same ends and the same means* (Gawronski). Local and international ARIs, according to their ideological persuasion, have natural affiliations and affinities with each other. *An artist space ideally fosters the affiliations that it attracts by supporting the work of artists whose modes in thinking about practice and exhibition it shares. Therefore rather than being totalistic-ally democratic... the politics of affiliations may be based on choice, but more importantly are also based on knowledge* (Gawronski). Gawronski asserts that affiliations between ARIs of similar ideologies should be viewed as evidence of faith in the practices of artists who have proved a commitment to what they do, rather than as a practising of the politics of nepotism (an often touted criticism of ARIs by those external to the culture), although he also emphasises that ARIs are not islands and that they do exist within an arts ecosystem. ARIs do exist within a larger art world structure, although Gawronski cites that a core difference between ARIs and other arts organisations is an ARI's connection to space, *as the artist chooses to work within the space* (Gawronski).

The final misleading conception of an ARI is centered on audience engagement. [An ARIs] *primary audience is other artists; such a realisation should not be surprising as they* [artists] *are most inquisitive as to what is happening there.* Again, funding bodies require that an ARI address the interests of the largest possible audience from a varied community. The attempt to connect with the largest amount of people possible gives funding bodies a way to

justify investing in the project as they can provide reasoning for the grant with a “value for money” defense, even though quantity does not always equate with quality.

To address these four fallacies associated with ARIs, Gawronski suggested a changing of the title to “Artists’ Spaces”, emphasising that *to utilise different terminology is also to reframe artist spaces as not so much of temporary utilitarian sites of career development but as possible sites of other methodology, production and presentation in the longer rather than shorter term* (Gawronski). He extends the suggestion of a renaming to also include a redefinition, one that is not defined along policy making guidelines (as emerged in the 1980s and still hold true today) but *based on multiple futures of artist spaces* (Gawronski). *The multiple futures of artist spaces cannot say consensus* (Gawronski) as there is no single, overarching method to achieve the desired goal. This was also identified as an aspect of ARI culture in 1987, with Brown stating *[a]s each space is developed in response to specifically identified needs, no one organizational model can be put forward as being more suitable than the other. Indeed, it is the very diversity of philosophical and operational approaches among Artist-Run Spaces which needs to be acknowledged and in turn encouraged* (Brown 4). The goal is no longer a single unified ideal of the movement, of acting in ways to subvert the system and provide alternatives, but rather a multiplicity of ideologies and methods, similar to the idea of pluralism that was devised by the artists’ organization [sic] attendees at the Past, Present, Future conference in the 1980s.

Conroy, an active participant and supporter of ARI culture who is vocal about the negative impact of non-artist involvement in ARIs, also addressed the need for a redefinition and renaming of the sector. At We Are Here, Conroy touched upon ideas regarding and reasons why ARIs should band together to form a sector, in the context of expanding the knowledge based industry, shifting definitions of the term ARI, and the impact these terms have had on

the sector. In addressing the benefits of creating a sector, Conroy, like Gawronski, suggested a re-naming of ARIs to “Artist Spaces” to reflect the most important aspect of an ARI: its connection to space.

*I think we should leave the term ARI behind. I think it's time to embark on something new, which acknowledges all the different and differencing multiple and messy threads that are arising and open up to the liminal, the moving, the geographical, the political kinds of spaces we could inhabit in the future... [ARI] is an inadequate descriptor for the broad range and diversity of things that are happening out there in artist-run spaces and artist-run projects. (Conroy, *From the ARSE end of the World*)*

Agitating for change relies primarily on the pragmatic needs of those involved in ARI culture. “I want to be able to create work”; “I need an affordable space to do it in”; “I want it to be in a certain kind of environment, of interdisciplinary practice, which is directed by my peers” (Conroy, *From the ARSE end of the World*). The pragmatic needs of the ARI sector have been addressed by external agencies since the 1980s, through the provision of grants and funding, which has resulted in the sector not completely addressing the needs of the practitioners involved. ARIs have adjusted their structure, program and ideology to fit into specific funding categories, in order to stay in operation. This blankets the sector by not allowing a divergence from the assessment criteria. Conroy, in advocating the conscious development of an ARI sector by those involved in it, stated that *building a sector enables us to choose and assemble agents and participants and define specifically what it is that we do as a whole* (Conroy, *From the ARSE end of the World*). Conroy further implored that ARIs

need to shift the conversation from business models to sustainable economic alternatives, and start a larger conversation about how we want to live in this

world... we should stop talking about “Are you professional?” and “Do you have a business model?” to “Yeah, I have an idea about how I want to do business” and putting it out there as something that people not in the arts worlds can look at and that is a different way of being in the world - but it’s the same economic model.

(Conroy, From the ARSE end of the World)

Conroy advocates for an informed and conscientious participation and consideration on the part of the artist and ARI practitioner. With the rapid rise of the creative industries of late, there needs to be a re-consideration of the role of the artist in the creation of cities and culture, not by the bureaucrats but by the artists themselves. *There is a growing network-tivity of data and knowledge based industry... capital has become social, we are working all the time. Capitalism is more an experience than a commodity, or experience has become commodified... There is a growing negativity of social capital on creation, as industries increasingly locate themselves within the creative* (Conroy, *From the ARSE end of the World*). It is common for an art-based project, such as Renew Newcastle,³³ to be picked up by strategists who amend it and use the creative capital as a means to increase property and land value. Renew Newcastle has been taken up by many councils and cities, and, although it is essentially a positive initiative, in terms of creating opportunities for artists and cultural practitioners, once it is employed by the business community *it is no longer the artist driving in concert with a community, it instead becomes an instrument in business agenda* (Conroy, *From the ARSE end of the World*).

33 Renew Newcastle is further discussed in Chapter Three, in regards to issues that ARIs face and how they overcome them.

Artist Run Spaces Enterprise, To Boldly Go...

In August 2011, 11 Sydney ARIs came together and created a syndication of spaces called the *Artist Run Spaces Enterprise*,³⁴ known as ARSE for short.³⁵ *ARSE is a cheeky way to poke fun at the entrepreneur or the creative industry that a lot of spaces are collapsing into* (Conroy, *From the ARSE end of the World*). The beginning of a conscientious move towards creating a sector, *ARSE represents a coming together of artist-run spaces and ideas to provide an alternative to cultural production economy*. In coming together to form ARSE, those involved considered what it meant to be an ARI, and in turn constructed an identity for the sector. What emerged was an identity that defined ARIs as independent spaces that generate culture and ideas, provide supportive opportunities to think differently and provide an alternative to the marketplace. *More importantly these spaces are incubators,³⁶ as they are nurturing relationships of authentic connections. And that is a key point of artist-run spaces, that there is a kind of artist driven authentic connection which is really quite hard to get anywhere else* (Conroy, *From the ARSE end of the World*).

The formation of *ARSE* is one example of the transforming energy and direction that is generating within ARIs and by ARI practitioners. This energy can be felt in the exhibitions

34 The 11 Sydney ARIs that collectively form ARSE or ARSS are: At the Vanishing Point (est. 2007); Bill and George (est. 2006); Dirty Shirlovs (est. 2008); Firstdraft Gallery Inc (est. 1986); Index Space (est. 2011); Queen Street Studios (est. 2005); The Red Rattler Theatre Inc (est. 2009); Salmagundi Studios (est. 2009); Serial Space (est. 2008); Tortuga Studios (est. 2007); and Venue 505 (underground space from 2004- 2009; current site est. 2010).

35 ARSE also operates under the title of *Artist Run Spaces Syndicate*, or ARSS. Further information about the organisation can be accessed from <http://www.combined-arts.com/>.

36 The term “incubator” is used by Conroy to represent a positive aspect of ARI culture. Instead of being employed to view ARIs as sites that “grow” young artists to eventually leave to participate in the “real world” (much like a school yard), incubator is employed to represent the nurturing and supportive aspects of the ARI, where individuals can connect within a community.

being mounted, the discussions occurring and the articles being written. This energy is manifesting as a desire to agitate the existing structure, create an alternative to the existing and “institutionalised” alternative, and to simplify and redefine an ARI. This simplification is in regards to business models, in terms of removing many of the bells and whistles that funding bodies require of ARIs, which include multiple programs for multiple audiences. There is an evidenced desire to return to the roots of the movement, roots based in being an alternative to the system, having a connection to space and possessing a practice based identity.

To achieve this, ARI practitioners are developing a new mode of thinking about their practice and engaging in an “Informed Autonomous Cultural Spatial Praxis”. ARIs have long reshaped themselves to fit the system that is already in place - a smoothing and shaving away of the edges of the ARIs hexagonal peg to fit the art worlds round hole. With the rapid rise in recognition of the value of the creative industries, ARIs are in a good position to define the structure with which they wish to engage with the community. A new phase in ARI development calls for a new name, to be conceptualised and initiated by the practitioners of the sector and not the bureaucrats, and to include the varied types and multiple rapidly emerging models of these artists’ spaces. By taking charge and renaming the sector themselves, the cultural practitioners are halting the manipulation of the sector by external agencies, and, instead, allowing it to be shaped organically by the knowledge, needs and desires of those involved. ARIs are in a new phase of development.

The desire for a reclaiming and redefinition of the movement has occurred with each transitional phase. The first phase, the emergence of the alternative, occurred naturally as a reaction to the limiting opportunities in existence offered by the art world structure. The second phase, the legitimisation of artist-run spaces, occurred outside the control of the

practitioners involved, although they facilitated it directly through their participation. The third phase, the development and proliferation of the ARI, was an attempt by ARI practitioners to integrate the spaces and projects as valid forms of cultural production into the wider arts world, and an attempt to work within the system. The new fourth phase that is currently emerging is evidenced as pointing to a return to the core values of the movement, that being a re-focusing on space and praxis. The fourth phase also indicates an end of the manipulation of the spaces and projects for external needs, as ARI practitioners are coming together and creating new modes of operation that are being learnt and picked up by agents of the existing art world structure. A main focus of this new phase is the creation of a sector; a central repository of knowledge; and informed ARI specific cultural organisers who can negotiate opportunities. Separate groups and sites are constantly in development, created by ARIs themselves (such as ARSE) or external organisations (such as NAVA with the creation of ARIna), all addressing different needs of ARI activity and culture. The lack of unification has been a constant in the history of ARIs, and thematically emerges throughout this text. The proposition of the creation of an organisation to centrally assist, inform and bridge the knowledge banks created by ARIs is put forth to aid in the furthering of this culture and the creation of a sector.

Chapter Two

History and Formation: The ARI Emerges from the Underground

2.1 Introduction

In the 40 years since their emergence two distinct types of ARIs have developed. Both are historically significant, and both have evolved from the identified need and desires of the contemporary arts practitioners. These desires have been for an alternative to existing structure and for more opportunities, which have manifested into pragmatic needs for accessible venues, different festivals, new collaborations, or means for experimental ideas to be explored.

The first tier of ARI development is identified as the ideological ARI.³⁷ These are the spaces, collectives and organisations that are dedicated to the furthering and experimentation of artistic practice and praxis. The shared and essential ideology at the core of these divergent organisations is a challenge levelled at authoritative and sanctioned contemporary institutions, a challenge shaped by addressing the need for autonomous artistic opportunity and a broadening of cultural dialogues. Collectives and venues that exemplify the development of the ideological ARI and were created to expand the cultural landscape include Inhibodress, which is associated with the introduction of conceptual post-objective art; and the Optronic Kinetics collective, which experimented with conceptual and technological experimental art. Contemporary examples include Serial Space, with its sound art exploration; Cosmic Battle for Your Heart, with its domestic revival; and Society, which has a curatorial focus.

³⁷ Even though it has been established in Chapter One that grass-roots artist initiated activity, projects and spaces have been labelled and identified by various terminology over the years, for the sake of clarification, all contemporary and historical activity, collectives, projects and spaces relating to the movement are hereafter referred to by their current terminology of “ARI”.

The second and simultaneous tier of ARI development is identified as the community ARI. Historically developing from socially engaged and politically minded and activist artistic creation, these spaces and organisations began with an ideology and developed into community ARIs due to a number of factors. In the first phase of alternative spaces, these factors generally arose from the politically charged zeitgeist and a desire to reconnect art with life; a blurring of the boundaries between art and life; and a desire to more art more relevant to the practitioners and audiences involved. More recently, factors tend to be centred on creating opportunities for people and the local community; addressing issues arising from gentrification and lack of affordable studio and exhibition space; and creating neighbourhoods of creative culture. These organisations and projects originate from the grass roots activity of artists and cultural practitioners and are palpably created to directly assist and benefit artists and their community.³⁸ While ideological ARIs tend to be populated, primarily, by practising artists, the community ARIs include cultural workers, whose practice is the preservation and creation of culture through the facilitation and generation of opportunities, as exemplified by the developing artistic practice of Ian Milliss in the 1970s, which is discussed further, later in this Chapter. These community ARIs include the politically active collectives emerging from the second evolution of the Tin Sheds Fine Arts Workshop such as the Earthworks Poster Collective; those individuals involved with the Green Bans, the Artworkers Union development and the addressing of artists' rights in the 1970s; the Queen Street/Fraser Studios complex and the provision of affordable inner city studios to artists; and the Renew Newcastle urban redevelopment scheme.³⁹

38 Creative arts workers, cultural organisers, curators and administrators who altruistically contribute to the ARI community also fit under the ARI arts practitioner umbrella. In the U.S.A. there are a number of ARIs whose mission is about creative arts administration and about finding ways for artists to realise their ideas. One such organisation is InCUBATE, which is a research group dedicated to exploring new approaches to arts administration and arts funding, <<http://incubate-chicago.org>>.

39 Renew Newcastle, Queen Street/ Fraser Studios and other contemporary community ARIs are discussed further in Chapter Three, in regards to the issues ARIs face and how they overcome them.

A similar division of artists' organisations into two distinct models and developments has been recognised previously. In 1986, Marshall Weber presented two models of artists' organisations, the *validator model and the social model* (17). Weber's models were presented at a conference in 1986, after the transitional phase of the alternative spaces into the artist-run spaces (as discussed in Chapter One), and therefore is limited to assessing the first 20 or so years of activity, halting at the point of the institutionalisation of the movement. The validator model is surmised as consisting of *Caucasian middle-class staff of arts administrators whose audiences are also Caucsaian and middle class and which often has only internal exhibition programs for its particular audiences* (Marshall Weber17). The "social" model *tend[s] to be more concerned with local and regional culture and its audiences are generally composed of this community* (Marshall Weber 17). In his account, Marshall Weber presents a highly subjective opinion of two alternative art spaces, an opinion that favours the social model. Although his analysis is flawed due to his personal view, in defining the activity of both the models Marshall Weber touches upon the distinction between the practice of creating for an art world audience, which is the beginning of the formation of the concept of an ideological ARI, and the practice of providing for a community with *social and educational benefits* (Marshall Weber, *Two Models* 17), the foundational concept of the community ARI.

Both the community ARI and the ideological ARI are vital contributors to the arts ecosystem through their generation of innovative discussion, cultural production, ideas and critical response. Though both these distinct ARI forms function with divergent ideals, convictions and outcomes, many individual ARIs embrace both community and ideological aspects, and crossover between the two is common.⁴⁰ As such, the distinction of an ARI as completely

⁴⁰ It is important to note at this point that the ideological and the community ARI often overlap, as in the case of the Tin Sheds, which began with conceptual art experimentation but later on became known for political activist art. This is discussed in more detail in this Chapter.

adhering to the definition of either ideological or community is not as clear-cut as being either one or the other. A better definition takes into account an understanding of the audience with which the ARI and its practitioners engages with. The ideological ARI can be understood as creating and directing practice and praxis for the art world, and more specifically other ARIs; while the community ARI tends to engage in activities and projects that are of interest to, and are accessible to a wider community.

Collaboration and mutual support form an important and common aspect of both the community and the ideological ARI,⁴¹ and as such, are identified as a significant criteria for an organisation to be understood as an ARI, as is outlined in the formation of early co-operatives such as Inhibodress. Both the ideological and the community ARI are political in nature,⁴² as, even though the community ARI is more overtly activist in production, the mere initiation and foundation of an ARI, with or without intent, is a political act. Initiating an ARI is an independent action of going against the status quo of the art world, a statement of choosing not to be a part, of and contribute to, the commercially oriented arts industry. Roberto Bedoya, writing about U.S.A. alternative space *Art in General*, in the alternative art anthology edited by Ault, states that *artist-run spaces serve an activist purpose, that they are in themselves an action* (Ault 3). British art critic John A. Walker has identified art to be an act of resistance, either passive or active.

For [Theodore] Adorno, making authentic art was in itself a practice of resistance and protest irrespective of political content and political intervention... Perhaps one can call the pursuit of art without political intervention a form of “passive”

41 The importance of collaboration and mutual support in defining an ARI is discussed further in Chapter One, *1.1 What is an ARI?: Terminology, Appellation, and Nomenclature Explored*.

42 A key example of an ARI being both ideological and political is *At the Vanishing Point* (ATVP). Established in 2007 and situated in Newtown, it is an ARI that operates with a political focus although it is considered an ideological ARI in that its primary ideology is engaging in artistic praxis.

resistance, and an art with political intervention “active” resistance. (Walker A Dark Art 9)

In this regard, an ideological ARI can be understood as an act of “passive” resistance against the limitations offered by the arts world, and a community ARI as a form of “active” resistance.

The ideological ARI is the first historical example of an ARI and has also been the most prolifically represented ARI over the years. It is directly linked to artistic practice, praxis and space. Ideology informs artistic praxis and vice versa, while space is vital to the exploration, creation and critiquing of the praxis. Studio and exhibition space are particularly important in the understanding and definition of an ARI, as it is the relationship with space that distinguishes an ARI as its own development, rather than simply an extension of avant-garde practice, as outlined in Chapter One.

To understand how and why ARIs have emerged and developed over the years, it is important to situate them in a global historical context.⁴³ This chapter will lay the groundwork for a theoretical and contextual historical understanding of the growth and emergence of both the ideological and the community ARI in Sydney, New South Wales.

⁴³ In his text, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, Burger stresses that acts in art have to be researched and understood in their historical context.

2.2 Art and Practice: The Ideology of the ARI

Art is changing now not merely in its superficial forms but also in its role, both for individuals and society (Brook, Task of an Art Critic 16).

The term “Ideological ARI” is used to identify the branch of ARI development and culture that is focused primarily on praxis, practice and research. A driving force behind the intent and formation of these organisations is an idea, philosophy, position, or theory structured around the furthering of contemporary art practice- an ideological basis. The term ideology is understood from the context popularised by Marxist theory as outlined in Raymond Williams’ text *Key words*. Deriving from political and social theory, ideology is defined as abstract thought with knowledge of real material conditions and relationships. *The distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production... and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic- in short ideological- forms in which men become conflict and fight it out (Marx cited in Williams 156).*

The term ideology has been used in addressing the core foundations of alternative spaces, artist-run spaces and artist run initiatives by a number of writers and theorists over a wide time frame. In a 1979 sociological study on artist-run galleries Sharon identifies the reasoning for why artist-run galleries are initially organised as ideologies. *Intensive interaction, exchange of ideas, constant deliberation regarding the mission and function of a collective gallery, a workshop or any group of independent artists (all of which has been taking place), are catalysts for formation of such attitudes or even a coherent ideology (Sharon 12).* She goes further, asserting that an ideology that is particular and true to the artist-run space itself and does not view the space as merely a stepping stone in gaining commercial gallery representation, needs to be present from the outset for the artist-run

gallery to be successful.⁴⁴ *If on the other hand, the goal succession is based on genuine ideology, it is less likely that successful artists will return to traditional patterns once they gain recognition through their own galleries* (Sharon 13). Ault identifies that the emergence of artist-run spaces and the different activities engaged in by these spaces from 1965 to 1985 embody them as a *cultural, political, and artistic movement* (4). She justifies her assertion by stating that it is the overlapping agendas, social configurations and migration of ideas and models that constitutes these spaces as a movement. Through collectively grouping and identifying artist-run spaces as a movement, Ault is also imbuing this movement with ideology, implying an *interconnectedness of principles, agendas, and practices* (Ault 4).

There are both the overarching ideologies of the ARI movement as a whole, as identified by sociologists and theorists researching the movement, then currently and now retrospectively, and the ideologies specific to an individual ARI. The ideological basis for each individual ARI is as varied and diverse as art practice itself. Recent local examples include the exploration of sound art at Serial Space; the white cube renaissance at Chalk Horse; and the domestic revival and integration of art with living at The Cosmic Battle for Your Heart. At the core of every ideological ARI is a radical and rebellious element, stemming not only from the historical contextual root system of ARI development, as will be discussed further in this Chapter, but also from the DIY attitude of breaking free from the existing structure to allow artists to make choices and create opportunities for themselves. Graeber asserts that artists have so often been drawn to revolutionary politics because [t] *here would appear to be a direct link between the experience of first imagining things and then bringing them into being*

44 In the report, the overall success of an artist-run space is identified as its continuation of operations and as its capacity to achieve the satisfaction of the artists themselves in regards to their choosing the artist-run gallery as a career path. Success is not measured in sales, positive critical reviews, visitor attendance or other such quantifiable terms. In this particular instance regarding a need for ideology, Sharon ascribes success as the artist sticking with the artist-run gallery, thus the gallery's survival, as opposed to the artist abandoning the artist-run space to return to a traditional artistic career, as provided by the commercial art world and involving national acclaim, monetary awards, socialising with people of the art world, important journal reviews, and so forth.

(individually or collectively)--that is, the experience of certain forms of unalienated production--and the ability to imagine social alternatives; particularly, the possibility of a society itself premised on less alienated forms of creativity (Graeber). Sharon deduced, from her sample, that, between 1965 and 1985, artist-run spaces as a whole, were presenting an over arching ideology, stating that *[t]his may present elements of a new ideology emphasizing the liberation of the artists from the middle person, the transformation of art from a commodity to a non-commodity, and the revitalization of the value of artistic integrity* (13).

Brett Jones, founder and long-time Director of West Space,⁴⁵ uses the word ideology in a similar context and with a similar understanding of ARIs, in an essay for the Organization [sic] for Cultural Exchange and Disagreement (OCED) in 2004.⁴⁶ Jones employs the term “ideology” in his essay on the formation of artist-run organisations in Australia as a descriptor of the foundational ideas and intentions of key ARIs. In referencing the Inhibodress gallery, Jones states that *it was individual art practices that in turn shaped the ideological position of the gallery* (B. Jones).

Rebecca Gordon Nesbit employs the term ideology in addressing the rationale of all artist-run spaces as a movement in the U.K. from their emergence to 1996. *This deliberate circumvention of the commodifiable nature of mainstream activities acknowledged a certain ideology, that the self-empowering nature of artist-run spaces could be used to shape culture* (Nesbitt 147). Through the use of the term ideology in this reference Nesbit outlines an originating, and over arching, rationale for the development of the ARI, which she sees as a breaking away from the commodification of art by society and the art world, as instigated by Dada and the Situationists International and carried forward into the era of the ARIs by

45 West Space is a Melbourne ARI that was founded in 1993, and is still in operation. Brett Jones left the organisation in 2008.

46 The OCED is part of the *Organisation* series of projects emerging from West Space’s involvement with working in exchange with international ARIs and artists. OCED, 2004, was a two-part cultural exchange project between Canada and Australia.

Fluxus. Ault also suggests this, in retrospectively looking at the alternative spaces movement, as does Sharon in the sociological study contemporary to the emergence of the movement itself. *During the 1970s and early 1980s, many artist- initiated alternative spaces and group structures were established as constructive response to the explicit and implied limitations of this commerce-oriented world* (Ault 3).

The commercial orientation of the traditional gallery, catering to particular tastes, was a source of great anxiety among the artists. They “knew” of artists who “prostituted their work,” and were reluctant to do the same (Sharon 11); and [t]he *“alternative” galleries reject the idea of art as a commodity and the art produced or shown in their space is for the most part unsaleable (performances and installation pieces).* (Sharon 13)

Post World War Two, as the focus shifted from technology as liberator to technology as controller and scrutiniser of the individual, artists began to challenge and react vigorously to the capitalisation and privatisation of the cultural field.⁴⁷ Dadaism, the Situationists International (SI) and Fluxus were all movements that sought to address this issue.⁴⁸ *The art world (comprising at that time several of the United States of America, most of Western Europe and the more aspirational of the former European colonies) had been responding erratically to the failure of modernism after World War II* (Brook, *40 years later* 273). These

47 The time span after WWII has been referenced as the beginning of the alternative/artist-run spaces movement by a number of theorists and sociologists, including Sharon who in turn cites Betty Chamberlain, 1972, and Art Letter, 1976, as two additional sources for this assertion.

48 Uniting from other theoretical groups - the Letterist movement, and the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus in 1956 - the SI was an international, yet Paris-based, avant-garde revolutionary political and artistic formation that sought to de-value capitalist accumulation arising from Modernist society, notably the realisation and suppression of art. Self proclaimed SI leader, Guy Debord, wrote the text *The Society of the Spectacle* which identifies the main ideas behind the SI, being that the Spectacle is a fake reality employed by capitalist society to mask the alienating forces that devalue life and reality. Supporting the 1968 student revolts as a means to shake up the system, they SI influenced the occupation of factories and the formation of workers' councils.

artistic movements that were responding to this failure, including Pop Art And Fluxus, have been cited as influential to seminal Australian ARIs, specifically the Yellow House and Inhibodress respectively. This thesis is not intended as a critical examination of the influences of these movements on ARI development and culture, but instead analytically picks up from where the SIs began to end in 1968, when the first murmurings of ARI culture started in Australia, to provide a historical understanding of the emergence of the ARI. To re-phrase Stephen Khan, who in writing about artists' organizations [sic] in the 1980s stated, *this is a road map of these competing ideologies at the same time that it is a history of the field, for I believe that one's interpretation of the present is based on one's view of the past* (12).

The Birth of the Idea and the Growth of the ARI

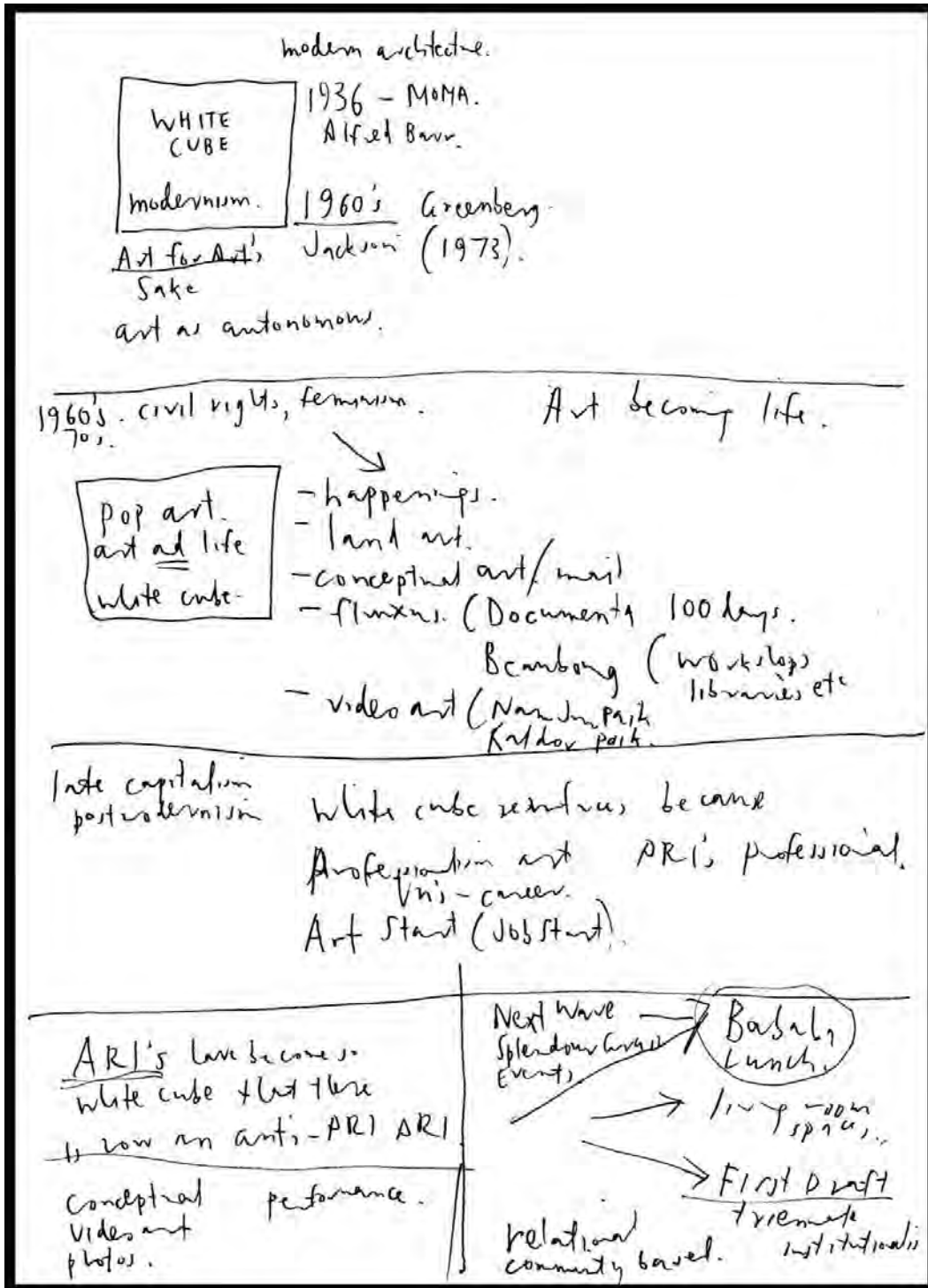


Fig 2.1

Fig 2.1 ARI historical development diagram. Drawn by Chalk Horse Co-Director Dr Oliver Watts, while in conversation with Amy Griffiths, 24 Jun. 2011.

Artist Run Initiatives are manifestations of the 20th century, catalysed from the paralleled development of Modernism and capitalism. They appeared in the world with the advent of postmodernism, with their roots based in the late 1960s, and grew globally in the early 1970s with the democratisation and dematerialisation of art. Early incarnations of ARI activity in the form of collective, studio-based electronic art experimentation, including that of the Optronic Kinetics collective working out of the Tin Sheds Fine Arts Workshop, were beginning in Sydney in the late 1960s, with Australia's first historically identifiable example of an ideological ARI, Inhibodress, appearing in late 1970. ARIs came about in the art world contexts just after the Situationists International and during the civil rights movement, the second- wave of feminism and the Vietnam War protests - all movements designed to enable the individual to make socially relevant and accountable change.

As discussed in Chapter One, an ARI is not solely defined as a venue for alternative exhibitions. Its roots lie, rather, in radical ideology and in the reclamation and reimagining of space.⁴⁹ The beginning of the 20th century saw the transformation of the exhibition gallery venue. This transformation saw the progression from the era of the art salons to the era of the modern white cube. With the advent of Modernism and Modernist architecture in the early 20th century the gallery space was revolutionised, as were the context in which we view art and the role of the viewer/spectator. The aesthetics of hanging evolved,⁵⁰ and gallery habits became conventions, which, in turn, became a system of rules. The rules dictated that the outside world be closed off; that all walls were to be painted white; and the ceilings were to be lowered, transforming the gallery into a non-space - an idealised placeless and timeless

⁴⁹ Space, in terms of issues and meanings, is further explored in Chapter Three.

⁵⁰ Paintings lost their frames, were given room to "breathe" on the wall and *entered into a dialogue with the wall beyond* [them] (O'Doherty 27).

space.⁵¹ Modernism believed that art did not need to serve an edifying, pragmatic, or moral purpose. Art was for art's sake;⁵² it did not need a meaning or purpose nor was it connected to life. Art as autonomous, aesthetically beautiful and pleasing for the embodiment of ideas, and not socially connected to the outside world, was placed in the perfect viewing repository for the spectator - the modern white cube, a pedestal for refined cultural ideals which rendered the work placeless and timeless within the space.

The ideological ARI evolved, in part, as a challenge to the white cube and its tenets. *[T]he art of the seventies locates its radical notions not so much in the art as in its attitudes to the inherited "art" structure, of which the gallery space is the prime icon* (O'Doherty 77). Much of the art created around this time was socially and politically engaged, and came in the form of non-traditional mediums. New non-hierarchical genres were emerging in the ways of video, sound, and performance art. Happenings,⁵³ Land Art⁵⁴ and Fluxus,⁵⁵ were all

51 However, no space, according to Sociologist David Chaney, is ever completely devoid or innocent of meaning. Spaces and places are imbued with meaning derived from social organisation. In this sense, the white cube created its own meaning - the elevation of every item within its walls to be considered a piece of art.

52 'L'art pour l'art', translated to 'art for art's sake', is a bohemian ideology and slogan from the 19th Century whose main exponent was French novelist and critic Théophile Gautier (Sorensen).

53 Happenings are artistic performances, events or situations that can occur anywhere, follow a non-linear narrative and require an active rather than passive audience. The term was coined by artist Alan Kaprow in 1957. Developing from "action painting" and "action collage", Kaprow saw the act and process of the physical event rather than the production of an object as the focus of his creation. Kaprow, like the Inhibodress artists, was greatly influenced by his teacher and composer, John Cage, and his Zen-inspired chance performances.

54 Land art, Earth art and Earthworks all refer to an art movement that emerged in 1968, which uses landscape and nature as the medium of the work, often represented as large scale natural environment installations. Artist Robert Smithson, who created *Spiral Jetty* in 1970, positioned the movement as a reaction and disengagement from Modernist social issues as represented by critic Clement Greenberg in his 1968 essay *The Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth projects*.

55 Conceptually influenced by the experimental music of composer John Cage in the 1950s, and thus linked to Happenings, Fluxus was a movement and network of artists that explored the merging of chance happenings and different artistic mediums, including poetry, performance art, music and film. Begun by George Maciunas in 1961, Fluxus encouraged a DIY aesthetic, had strong anti-commodity tones, and promoted positive social and community engagement. It is also regarded as the starting point of mail art.

movements of art that did not have the production of objects as a central element. The modernist galleries were not equipped to experience the new forms of radical works. There needed to be a connection to the world, a location and perception of it, to appreciate these new, socially engaging works. Alan Watts in the catalogue *Electric Art*, held at the UCLA galleries in 1969, discusses the *return to the inseparability of art and everyday life. The paintings are vanishing into the walls... In turn the walls will vanish into the landscape... And after that the viewer will vanish into the view* (Brook, *Flight from object* 15).

Additionally the commercial infrastructure in place was not suited to these new mediums of conceptual and experimental art. In 1971, *Nation* critic George R. Lansell (also known as G. R. Lansell or Ross Lansell) wrote *Making the Unbuyable - Galleries for sale, artworks otherwise*. Lansell discussed how the commercial gallery system in Australia was attempting to deal with the new ephemeral and non-objective art, such as Pinacotheca Gallery in Melbourne and the development of the non-commercial anti-gallery spaces that arose specifically to deal with such “unbuyable” art. He outlines the unbuyable nature of the work – the result of its impermanent nature.⁵⁶ In 1977, journalist Phil Patton, in an article on the alternative spaces in New York, identified that the new mediums of art, including video, performance and site and situation orientated works, were becoming increasingly difficult to define in terms of the traditional classifications of painting and sculpture and that *many people in the art world began to feel that the new type of art required new sorts of organization for its presentation* (Patton 80). These new alternative spaces were the ideal spaces to organise, exhibit and experiment with these new alternative modes of artistic creation. Nancy Foote, writer and 1977 managing editor of *Artforum*, in discussing the

⁵⁶ However, artist Ian Milliss, writing in 1972 about *Inhibodress*, stated that the unsaleability of the work was due to its “poor quality” and “incompetent marketing” as *it has been demonstrated throughout the world that “conceptual” art is much easier to market than paintings* (Milliss). Milliss’ reaction to the development of the alternative art spaces in Sydney is explored further later on in this chapter.

inaugural *Rooms* exhibition of P.S.1 in New York,⁵⁷ identifies the requirement of “crummy” space for site-specific projects and installation art and illustrated how it allowed the artists to openly engage with the space. *[T]he space can be brutalized, destroyed, completely restructured... it can serve as medium, directly or indirectly, also as subject* (30).⁵⁸ In challenging the white cube and the formal gallery dealer system, artists were in turn challenging the commodification of the art object. The new mediums required the practitioners to turn their back on the accepted and official institutions, in turn leaving them no choice but to seek and create new forums for their art and projects. Jim Pomeroy, in his paper titled “Provocative Apocrypha” presented at the Past, Present, Future conference 1986, sums up the context surrounding the emergence of the alternative space and paints the picture of the impetus for, and the idealism of, the artists involved in the movement. *Flushed with idealistic pragmatism, excited with the potential of new genres, forms, and technologies, frustrated with hierarchical confines of an anachronistic and classist market, young artists began providing themselves and their peers with venues for the presentation of work (their own and that of others) that would not otherwise have been visible* (13).

57 Before P.S.1 was taken over by MoMA in 2000 it was one of the first alternative spaces in New York, having been founded in 1971 by Alana Heiss and the *Institute for Art and Urban Resources Inc*, and officially opened in 1976.

58 P.S.1 was the first public school in Brooklyn, with Heiss took over the disused civic building and transformed it into an art venue. This is notable, and is discussed further in Chapter Three, as many alternative spaces and current ARIs are relegated to the unwanted spaces and through their actions and creation of community they transform these spaces into a desirable destinations and commodities. Also of note is the keeping of the buildings original function and history in the title, P.S.1, which is common practice amongst ARIs. This indicates a connection to site and history as expressed by Conroy and cited in Chapter One.

Experimental Art, Tin Sheds and Optronic Kinetics



Fig. 2.2

In 1968 art was most commonly defined as painting (Brook, 1968 31) and it was identified that ambitious Australian painters had two programs from which to choose. One side held mainstream modernism, and the other held *a more plaintive dirge about the imperative of hand-crafting a distinctive- but none the less marketable- Australian cultural identity* (Brook, 1968 30). 1968 was a key year in world history, with mass student revolt culminating in Paris in May, and the assassination of key political figures and displays of Black Power becoming defining historical moments. 1968 was also a pivotal year in the Australian art world. The National Gallery of Victoria held *The Field*, its survey exhibition of the best of Australian contemporary art in Australia's first dedicated temporary exhibition space, and American art critic Clement Greenberg toured Australia. The provincialism problem,⁵⁹ a

Fig. 2.2 Donald Brook sitting in his *Feathered Office*, the conceptual art intervention by Optronic Kinetics. Image courtesy of, and copyright of, Bert Flugelman.

⁵⁹ Donald Brook identifies the Antipodean vs Abstract Expressionism situation as the provincialism problem in his article *1968 and all that: 40 years later*, published in the CASCA Broadsheet in 2008. The situation had

debate on developing a distinctive nationalistic Australian style of painting in alignment with Antipodean ideals versus, the merits of following the international (American) hard edge abstraction and color-field [sic] painting style,⁶⁰ as epitomised by Greenberg, was in full swing. Greenberg was invited by the Power Institute's Director, Bernard Smith, to give the inaugural John Power Memorial Lecture at the University of Sydney.

1968 was also the year that the University of Sydney began teaching Art History and Theory at an undergraduate level. Donald Brook was a vocal critic of fabricating a national (or regional) cultural identity, as it also *smelled of literary Melbourne*, and had slightly more sympathy for modernist formalism (Brook, 1968 30), although he was *convinced on philosophical rather than geopolitical grounds that the Greenbergian story about art is* [sic] *was unbelievable* (Brook, 1968 30). The following year Brook, who was a lecturer in the history of sculpture at the Power Institute of Fine Arts, University of Sydney, was asked to give the second John Power lecture, which he titled "Flight from the Object". In this lecture,⁶¹ and his subsequent published essay, Brook did not directly target Greenberg and his position on the epistemology of art; instead he targeted the art object and proposed a new way of looking at art. "Flight from the Object" is regarded to be *the first coherent published theorisation of conceptual art written in Australia* (Barker and Green 10), and in it Brook identifies *seven principal senses that* [were] *given to the notion of art to be an object* (1).

Brook deliberately adopted the term "Post- Object" in resistance to the phrase of "conceptual

previously been titled "The Provincialism Problem" by Terry Smith in 1974 in an article of the same name which was originally published in *Artforum*.

Smith, Terry. "The Provincialism Problem". *Artforum*. 13-1. Sept. 1974. 54-59. Print.

60 The term color-field was used by critic Terry Smith in writing about Central Street artists, and was intentionally spelt with American spelling to outline its association with American/International abstraction.

61 The "Flight from the Object" lecture was delivered by Donald Brook at the University of Sydney on Wednesday, 10 September, 1969. Later published, Brook, Donald. *Flight from the object*. Power Institute of Fine Arts, University of Sydney. Sydney. 1970. Print.

art”, which was in use at the time in an attempt to remove any label resembling or referring to an artistic movement (Brook, 1968 31). The seventh aspect of object-hood was the “Immutable Object”, its contrasting element being processes. He identifies the importance of the process - the activity of creating works of art - as process art satisfies a core principle of exploration (T. Smith, *Experimentality: Theories and Practices* 6). Brook was to become one of experimental and conceptual art’s biggest champions in Australia, critically supporting the emerging artists who were engaging with the new dematerialized art. “Post object”, “conceptual” and “experimental art” were all terms used to describe the new type of artistic creation that de-valued the object for its “Greenbergian” felt qualities and essence. Art was being dematerialised and democratised through the re-establishment of the relationship between art and life.

In discussing the value of the artistic process in “Flight from the Object”, Brook also touched upon *that largely bogus institution called art education* (17), adding *one further enemy to this experimental process: institutionalization of any sort* (T. Smith, *Experimentality: Theories and Practices* 7). Throughout the 1960s, there were oppositional views on the education of artists - a division between the theoretical study of art history and the practical and technical studies of fine arts as a trade.⁶² Brook held the position that art schools should be completely autonomous and responsible directly to the Minister for Education, although having the universities involved would be considered acceptable, as it was a step in bringing art education closer to being an intellectual, rather than vocational, discipline (in S. Jones 161). Brook, along with University of Sydney Architecture lecturer, Marr Grounds, devised a possible solution to bridging the separation between art history and praxis by introducing art practice into the Australian national Universities. Grounds was a likely ally in the formation

⁶² The oppositional views extended beyond the University faculties and into the classrooms. In 1967, there was a rebellion of students at East Sydney Technical College, currently known as the National Art School, who were calling for a re-evaluation of the 19th century approach to teaching art (Jones 160).

of such an educational scheme as he had previously spent some time at the University of California, Berkeley, where it was noted that he picked up a few radical teaching methods (S. Jones 162), such as enrolling 50% female students and staff (Kenyon 18).

On 11 January, 1969, Brook and Grounds founded the University of Sydney Fine Arts Workshop in the National Standards Laboratory mechanical and electronic workshops previously occupied by the CSIRO.⁶³ Eventually becoming known as the Tin Sheds, named after its ad-hoc corrugated iron walls, the workshop was located on City Road opposite the University of Sydney. What Brook and Grounds founded, essentially, was an experimental art education laboratory where students could practise and explore creative processes with the critical guidance of more experienced practising artists. This progressive studio was the first suggestion of ARI activity in Australia; a space where artists came together collectively to collaborate and experiment on avant-garde and radical creative processes. The workshop ran 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with students squatting in nearby abandoned buildings so they could have 24 hour access to the studio space (S. Jones 163), illustrating the community ideals of the workshop and a bridging of the art-life gap. The Tin Sheds became a workshop for a mix of students from all faculties, although they were mainly from the Faculties of Architecture, Engineering and Fine Arts. Originally, students did not receive course credits for participating in workshop projects, but, following a small rebellion of students of the Faculty of Architecture, they were then credited for attending the Tin Sheds workshop in late 1976.

Tin Sheds is identified as a historical hybrid ideological and community space, as, during its life span, it has evolved through a number of phases. Initially a hot house for experimental electronic art, it progressed into socially-engaged, community and politically activist art from

⁶³ It is alleged that the Fine Arts Workshop began at 2:43pm on 11 January 1969, according to a note in Marr Ground's diary (Kenyon 11).

1972 onwards, with a notable example being the Earthworks Poster Collective.⁶⁴ The Tin Sheds *became a highly activist and largely self-organising structure, based on an infrastructure of distributed decision making in which those to whom the decisions are relevant should be the ones making them, not a centralized management structure* (S. Jones 184).

However, what limits the Tin Sheds from actually being recognised as the first ideological and/or community ARI is that it was funded and existed as part of a larger institution - the University of Sydney. It was not initiated by the independent action of artists, with Tin Sheds student, Julie Ewington remembering that the work her technology and art collective produced *was very much stimulated by Donald Brook being totally excited by everything from the moonwalk... [to the] Experiments in Art and Technology [exhibition in the U.S.A]* (Kenyon 16). The collectives and projects that emerged from the Tin Sheds formed the first murmurings of alternative and, subsequently, ARI culture in Australia, even though the actual studio lies just outside of the ARI arena, as it was an institutionalised workshop where students came to be guided in their practice through observation and education.⁶⁵ *The Workshop represents a grass roots and radical enclave tolerated within a conservative and traditional institution* (Kenyon 6).

Optronic Kinetics was a technology and conceptual art collective, consisting of electrical engineering students, David Smith, Jim McDonnell and, to a lesser extent, Julie Ewington, that operated out of the Tin Sheds workshop till the end of 1971. D. Smith recalls that he

64 The second evolution of the Tin Sheds is discussed further in this chapter at “2.2 Socially Engaged, Political and Publically Orientated: The Community ARI”.

65 It is also interesting to note that the artists involved with Inhibodress (which is identified as the first ideological ARI), namely Mike Parr, Tim Johnson and Peter Kennedy, have strong connections to the Tin Sheds, indicating the interconnected nature of the art world at the time and the importance of Tin Sheds. Kennedy became the Tin Sheds director from 1980 to 1985 and Parr and Johnson also worked at Tin Sheds and as tutors. These connections are explored further later on in this Chapter.

became involved with the Tin Sheds through responding to a notice that Fine Arts lecturers Donald Brooks and Bert Flugelman had pinned on the electrical engineering notice board. It was an advertisement, inviting engineering students to help in applying technology to an exploration of the visual arts (S. Jones 164).

According to Alec Tzannes, the Optronic Kinetics collective was the elite creative group of the Tin Sheds in the first couple of years (S. Jones 181). In those first years, they created electronic based sculptural works, including *Kinetic Kaleidoscope* (1971),⁶⁶ which was the first work in Australia constructed of digital integrated circuits. As well as creating artworks rooted in new technologies, Optronic Kinetics also created conceptual pieces. *Cubed Tree* (1971) was a eucalyptus tree at Cottage Point in the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park which had hundreds of two-inch wooden cubes glued to the base, with the work evolving over the years as the glue disintegrated and the cubes fell to the ground.⁶⁷ The other notable conceptual work the Optronic Kinetics Collective created was *Feathered Office* (1971). The collective filled the walls of Donald Brook's University office with a grid pattern of feathers, making it seem as though the office interior had grown feathers overnight.

Documentation of both these pieces,⁶⁸ along with other works that were based on systems and the random interaction of the audience with these systems, was included in *The Situation Now* exhibition curated by Terry Smith, who, at the time, was a tutor in the Department of Fine Arts. *The Situation Now: Object and Post Object Art* was a conceptual art survey exhibition sponsored by the Contemporary Art Society (CAS) and held at Central Street from

⁶⁶ *Kinetic Kaleidoscope* (1971) was purchased by the AGNSW for \$5000 in 1974 under the recommendation from curator Daniel Thomas.

⁶⁷ AGNSW curator, Daniel Thomas, was known to have returned to the Ku-ring-gai Chase National park to view the evolution of the work over the years (S. Jones 175).

⁶⁸ Most conceptual, performance and installation art is ephemeral, as no object remains as proof of its existence. What does remain is the documentation of the process or act.

16 July to 6 August, 1971. During this time, Harold Szeeman, curator of *Documenta 5* in Kassel Germany, was brought out to Australia by John Kaldor for the second Kaldor public art project, the first being the very influential conceptual work, *Wrapped Coast* (1969), by Christo and Jeanne-Claude. *The Situation Now*, along with the Harold Szeemann curated exhibition held at Bonython Gallery in Sydney and the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) titled *I want to leave a nice well done child here* (1971),⁶⁹ were two exhibitions held in commercial and state galleries (albeit progressive commercial galleries) indicating how these new forms of experimental art were entering the commercial and sanctioned art worlds.⁷⁰ This illustrated that the art world debate was no longer solely centered on American abstraction versus a distinct provincial Australian style. The debate had evolved and Australia wanted to connect to the rest of the world and explore the new genres of art that were emerging.

The first documented exhibition of conceptual art in Sydney, titled *Known Systems, Anonymous Gestures*, was held at Central Street Gallery (Central Street) in 1970. Central Street was a space known for its alternative running methods and ideas. In 1965, artist Tony McGillick returned to Australia after a few years of living abroad in the U.S.A. and U.K., and, in 1967, opened Central Street in a first floor loft at No.1 Central Street in downtown Sydney. Modelled on such international commercial galleries as Kamin and Fraser in London and the Green Gallery in New York, the idea was that, for the first time, a Sydney

⁶⁹ Exhibiting artists in *I want to leave a well done child here* included Aleks Danko, Neil Evans, Tim Johnson, Peter Kennedy, Mike Parr, Ian Milliss and Alec Tzannes. According to art critic James Gleeson, it was considered to be the conceptual art equivalent to *The Field* (1968) exhibition. Kaldor had hoped that, while out here, Szeemann may have selected some works to be included in *Documenta 5*, but he did not do so.

⁷⁰ The distinction of a commercial gallery as being progressive is based on the organisation's exhibitions and support of emerging artists and avant-garde works of art. These spaces have included Gallery A Sydney (1964-1983), Watters Gallery (1964- present), Barry Stern Gallery (1962-present, now operating as Maunsell Wickes), Central Street Gallery (1966-1970), Bonython (1967-1976) and Rudy Komon Art Gallery (1959-1984) in New South Wales, and Pinacotheca (1967-1970) in Victoria. They are differentiated to alternative spaces as they engage, primarily, in sales and the commercial aspect of art, and are not organised and initiated by artists.

gallery would have a policy to show works of similar style together, contextualised by international works (McGillick 3). This space was known as the artist-run gallery of hard edge abstraction. Although still having commercial sensibilities and promoting the geometric abstraction colour-form art for which it was known, this space did not emerge as a radical challenge to the established institutions of the time; instead, it found a way to operate as a non-threatening gallery offering alternative ideals and methods. It operated under the benefaction of Harald Noritis and John White, who funded renovations,⁷¹ rent, rates, freight, salary for a gallery manager (painter Royston Harpur) and all other associated costs. Central Street was founded on international and exploratory values, and even though it was, essentially, a commercial gallery promoting colour field abstract painting, it did set the scene for other, more independent and alternative spaces. The physical site of the gallery was also dramatically different from the commercial galleries that littered the Paddington back streets, which were described as *lopsided claustrophobic spaces with corners like crumbling shortbread - the result of rising damp - and there were... oatmeal carpets or chocolate walls* (Anderson 256). Central Street was positioned in a warehouse and described as *a severe white cavern with its ceiling beams and slender verticals painted white to match... It had been the idealised exhibition space for a generation of young artists* (Anderson 256). Central Street aimed to pose questions through their exhibitions. In *The Situation Now* exhibition catalogue, Terry Smith and McGillick state *[w]e are probing, exploring, manifesting physically our thinking about how art is changing, and how these changes are affecting Australian art* (in Cramer 8). Central Street presented questions that other alternative spaces and collectives, such as Inhibodress, sought to answer. *Central Street established the ground upon which Inhibodress would build... [and by] reacting against the 'formalist' tenets of Central Street, Inhibodress was rejecting the work of artists who hitherto ha[d] been the most advanced, the nearest thing to a local avant-garde* (Cramer 8).

71 White and Noritis owned a graphic design business on the second floor of the warehouse.

Inhibodress

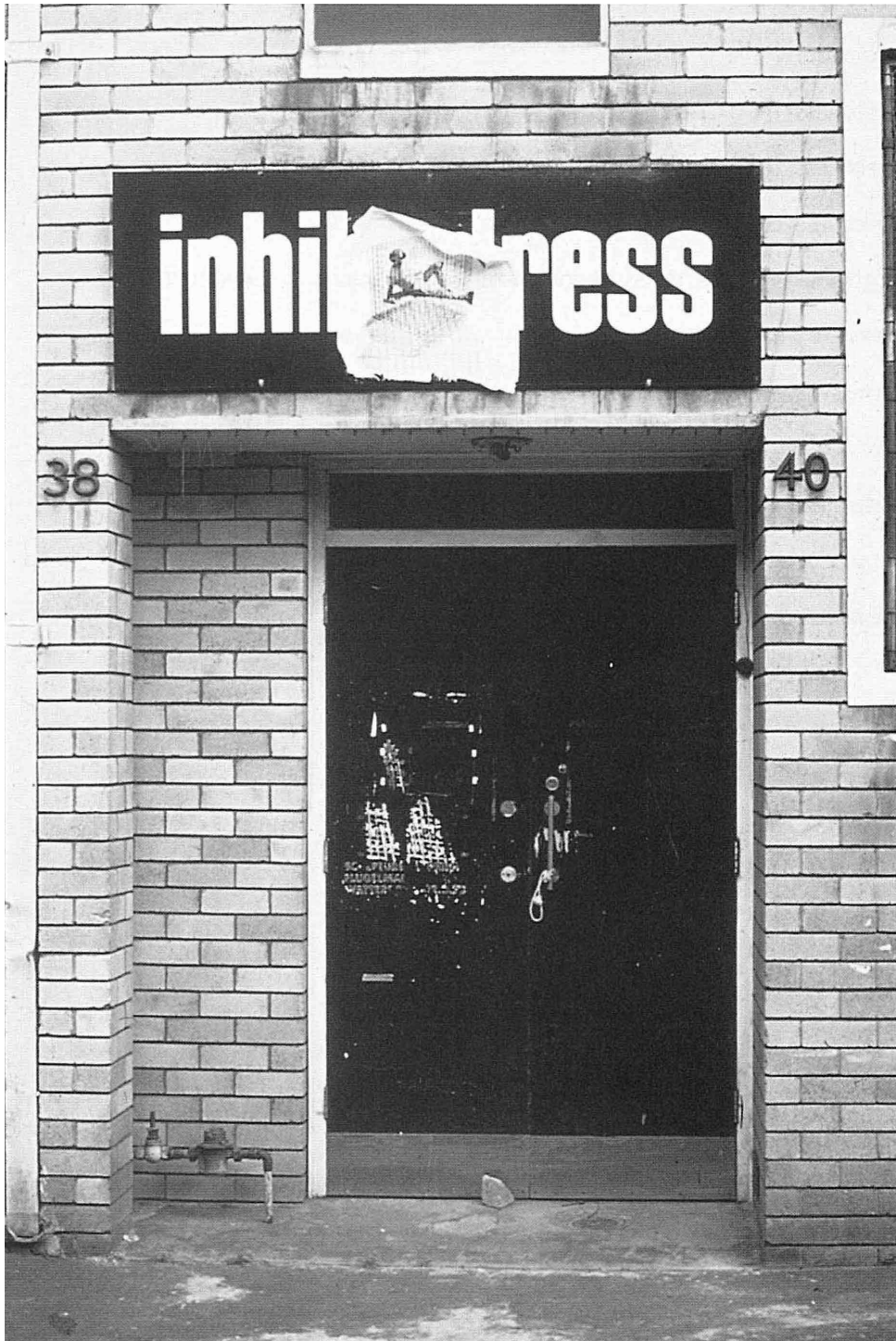


Fig. 2.3

Fig. 2.3 Inhibodress entrance, 38 – 40 Charles Street, Woolloomooloo, Sydney, 1971. An exhibition poster by Bert Flugelman obscures the sign. Image permission Mike Parr.

The first documented ideological Artist Run Initiative in Australia was established in late 1970 in the inner city Sydney suburb of Woolloomooloo. Inhibodress was an artist collective and alternative exhibition space that operated out of a physical location for two years, from 7 November, 1970 to 20 August, 1972, and then developed into an international spaceless concept from 1973 to 1974. Curator and National Director of Museums Australia, Bernice Murphy, argues that Inhibodress was one of the first spaces of its type to be founded anywhere in the world (Murphy 47). The Inhibodress gallery was an 18 x 9 metre (approx) space on the second floor of a building located at 38-40 Charles Street, Woolloomooloo, Sydney, rented at a cost of \$30 a week.

The title of the gallery came from the previous occupants of the space, the *Hibodress Blouses Factory*,⁷² with the 'in' being added for no apparent reason and giving the gallery a non-descript title. It is now common practice for ARIs to reference their locale and the history of the buildings they occupy in their name and title, as opposed to adopting an individual person's name as is the tradition of commercial galleries. Similarly to Inhibodress, Imperial Slacks took the name of the warehouse building they occupied in Surry Hills (which was another disused garment factory), as did the Wedding Circle. In titling themselves as such, the ARI is emphasising its connection to its space; positioning itself historically within this space; indicating the lack of hierarchy amongst its practitioners and emphasising the collective ownership of the space and its ideology. Central Street, which was a progressive gallery, took the name from the venue's locale, rather than the proprietor or the financial backer, an indication of the gallery's avant-garde direction and progressive attitudes.

The idea behind Inhibodress was conceived, according to co-founder and artist Mike Parr, from impatience with the contemporary Australian art world, a founding impetus that

⁷² The Hibodress Blouses Factory was founded by Holocaust survivor, Olga Horak, and her husband, John Horak, who immigrated to Australia in 1949. Hibodress blouses are now sought after vintage garments.

connected this alternative space to other similar international spaces.

In mid-1970 I was living in Cooper Street, opposite the Readers Digest building, and I was friendly with Peter Kennedy. So I sent out a letter, I was responsible for this, and it seemed really idealistic, because Peter and Tim Johnson both had commercial galleries. They were both showing with Gallery A. I had approached Watters earlier that year and Frank Watters said come back in 18 months, but I was young and impatient and I said I wasn't interested in that. (Parr)

The letter Parr sent out was an invitation to a meeting held at his Cooper Street residence in Surry Hills. The invitation was sent to around fourteen emerging artists, some of whom had previously exhibited with the CAS and a couple who held gallery representation,⁷³ with the majority, Parr included, having no affiliation with a commercial gallery. What was offered in the meeting was, according to Parr, a break from the limiting and somewhat formal ambience of the constraints of the traditional art-making and taste-making system that was the Australian contemporary art world. Co-founder Peter Kennedy recalls that with *Inhibodress* [w] hat was being proposed was not so much an alternative to the existing gallery-dealer system, but a means by which a number of artists, who were not represented by a gallery, might have the opportunity to show their work (42).

There were originally eleven subscribing artists of *the somewhat naively conceived idea of a "collective"* (Cramer 5), being John Armstrong, Bill Brown, Terry English, Niels Elmoos,

⁷³ Mike Parr knew the artists to whom he was writing to, as he had previously exhibited with the CAS earlier in the year at the CAS space in David Jones. Included amongst the artists who attended the meeting were Ian Milliss and John Armstrong, although John Armstrong and Ian Milliss didn't end up joining the *Inhibodress* collective. Mike Parr recalls that Milliss actually stood up and walked out of the meeting early, *giving off the clear signal that we were not quite to his standard* (Parr). Armstrong, although he listened intently all evening, was represented by Watters gallery, and did not want to put that in jeopardy through being part of *Inhibodress*.

James Elwing, Michael Gifford, Orest Keywan, and Rolla Primrose, with Peter Kennedy, Mike Parr and to a lesser extent Tim Johnson, being the three central figures who, on reflection, produced the most seminal experimental works and administered the daily operations of the gallery.

The thing was that many of these artists were possibly never going to produce experimental work, really. They were young artists, but the milieu in those days was that if you weren't a painter or a sculptor, well people didn't know what you were if you weren't a painter or a sculptor. There wasn't that option to be something other than a painter or a sculptor. But I had had this background where I studied law at Uni, was very involved in the anti-Vietnam movement. I was a draft dodger, I was very politicised in Queensland, and I also did a lot of writing. So my background was very different. (Parr)

Inhibodress was initially run in a co-operative spirit, with each member paying \$10 a month, which contributed to the rental and running costs of the venue and additional exhibition expenses. The \$10 monthly contribution entitled each member to one solo exhibition per year,⁷⁴ and they still had to assist with the gallery's operation.⁷⁵ Inhibodress was not a club, with a formal committee and rules taking annual membership like the art societies; it was formed in the spirit of a late 1960s collective such as the Yellow House, albeit a more intellectually rigorous version with an organised intention and ideology. Yellow House artist Albie Thoms, in responding to Lansell's review on *Making the Unbuyable* in 1971, expands on the Yellow House's notion of the co-operative spirit by stating that [c]o-operative activity

74 According to the Reserve Bank of Australia's inflation calculator, \$10 in 1970 is the equivalent of \$101.54 in 2011 (Reserve Bank of Australia), <<http://www.rba.gov.au/calculator/>>.

75 Collective members had full time jobs, thus the gallery opening hours were out of business hours, being weekday evenings between 5:30 and 9pm and weekends between 10am-6pm. This is another way in which alternative spaces opposed the commercial and business gallery model.

is not a “crutch”, but an exploration of a different type of human activity to the individualistic and competitive pursuits [that Lansell] advocates (17).



Fig. 2.4

The Yellow House, although an alternative space, was more reminiscent of a hippy commune than a structured and organised studio and exhibition space. Even though the establishment of the Yellow House preceded Inhibodress by a few months (Martin Sharp exhibited at the disused Clune Galleries space in late 1969; and Yellow House developed at the venue in May

Fig. 2.4 Image of the Yellow House on Macleay Street, Potts Point, 1970s. Image copyright and courtesy Greg Weight.

1970), and engaged in new art forms such as video and performance art, it is still not considered the first ideological ARI due to its un-structured beginnings and lack of artistic direction as opposed to the intention and ideology presented by Inhibodress. The site itself on Macleay Street evolved into a 24hour living installation, with artists living there and transforming the building itself into a work of art. It was a non-authoritarian communal environment from which other collectives and groups emerged, including the Sydney Filmmakers Co-Op. There was no rivalry between the Yellow House and Inhibodress, as they did not view each other as competition, with Thoms even collaborating with Kennedy to document the activities of Inhibodress. Johnson recalls that the

Yellow House was like a circus and it didn't really have much theory to it. It tended to be an extravaganza that was there to entertain people rather than change them (Cramer 54). Parr recalls that [t]he Yellow House didn't seem relevant at all! Peter, Tim and I were certainly completely opposed to their self-indulgent amalgam of Sixties Happenings and tired Surrealism. (Cramer 66)

The initial ideologies motivating Inhibodress were collectivism and the exploration (and exposure) of the concept of art through the new dematerialised mediums of film, sound, performance, video and text. Curator and writer Sue Cramer indicates that with Inhibodress *there was the desire to establish a type of exhibition and gallery practice appropriate to the new dematerialized and conceptual paradigms of art (5).*

Parr viewed the co-operative as the ideal context in which to create experimental works, seeing the collective working situation as superior to the traditional separation of studio and gallery. In writing to Brook in December 1970 Parr discussed his views on the possibilities

that the co-operative could provide while also touching upon the importance and connection that Inhibodress was developing with space, stating

I am inclined to regard it [the co-operative] as a matrix in which ideas will be formed. This is a decided advantage... it offers an imaginative alternative to the studio/gallery set-up... in fact it could be regarded as both situations: It does away with the hermetic studio syndrome in favour of group situations, and at the same time provides an accessible created space. (Cramer 7)

In retrospectively looking at the impact of the collective on the creative output of the gallery, Parr saw the importance of the open, if not easy, dialogue between the members, stating *[t]he tensions between us were fundamental to the process of the clarification of our ideas* (Cramer 67).

Collectivism was not the most successful aspect of the Inhibodress project, *fail[ing] as a collective in both ideological and financial terms... [but succeeding] for a time in supporting a co-op ideal* (Cramer 8). Inhibodress was an independent space offering exhibition opportunities for any willing member, and collective support in an environment where artists could take control of their own creativity, but this was not the essential desire of all of the subscribing members. Nine of the original members exhibited in solo shows at Inhibodress in the first year, with Armstrong not returning after the initial meeting and B. Brown withdrawing from the collective soon after the inaugural group show. Inhibodress cited a key foundational motivation as the desire to provide exhibition opportunities for artists outside of the commercial gallery sector, which, according to a displeased selection of members, gave inference that the artists were not “good” enough to show in “regular” galleries. Other contributing factors to the unsuccessful collective aspect of Inhibodress were issues with

regard to funding and the lack of shared responsibility and shared ideology. *The non-commercial aspect of the gallery was very much a part of its emerging raison d'être* (Cramer 8), with the co-operative system offering a practical and much needed means to finance the gallery.

Around this time, it became apparent whom, exactly, the central figures were that were keeping the Inhibodress gallery functioning. Parr and Kennedy were looking after the gallery administration, Tim Johnson was curating international shows, Tess Stefanitsch (Parr's wife) was looking after the accounts and Kennedy's wife, Barbara Hall, was generating all the publicity. Johnson recalls that Parr, Kennedy and himself all desired careers as artists, and were interested in radical exploration, while the other members wanted to try art before they found alternate careers in the art world (Cramer 53).⁷⁶ Sharon has deduced that failure of co-operatives and other artist-run spaces in the 1970s was due in major part to the decision-making of, and division of labour amongst, their members. Sharon identifies that *[d]ecision making structures oscillate between "representational" or "oligarchical management", where a few elected or nominated people run the organization, and "democratic" or "consensual management" by the whole membership with rotating assignments* (Sharon 16).

Even though Inhibodress claimed a democratic management structure, stating in the initial gallery opening press release that *all decisions [were to be] settled by majority vote* (Cramer 8), in actuality, it was run by a representational or oligarchical management system. It became evident early on that the main driving forces behind the gallery were Parr, Kennedy and Johnson, with Parr taking on most of the operational duties. In looking at co-operatives in general, Sharon observes that *[t]he role of the membership, though it has the right to call*

⁷⁶ The interesting aspect of this is that, nowadays, arts practitioners and cultural organisers join ARIs for the purpose of gaining experience for alternate careers in the art world, as practical hands on experience is invaluable in learning the day to day functions of running a gallery or cultural organisation.

general meetings, make comments and participate, appears to be one of “lower participants” in the sense of having less power or less involvement individually... As a result they are also less inclined to be actively involved in the gallery’s events (17).

Sharon also cites competition amongst members in co-operatives as a factor in an organisation’s failure. Although Sharon did not observe overt competition in the spaces in her study, there did seem to be passive indicators of competitive aspects. These were in the areas of quality control; *the issue of internal competition among members as another factor that may deter high quality, emphasizing that good artists are resented and eventually leave (16);* and a lack of critical dialogue between members. *In none of the places studied do artists engage in systematic critique of each other’s work. Such practice is so crucial to quality control that its absence may very well imply a covert competitive mood (Sharon 16).*

Parr recalls, in an interview with Cramer, that competition was a factor in the demise of the cooperative, stating that *by 1971, real tensions had emerged. Tim, Peter and I had each a very successful one-man show and this put the others under pressure. We were winning the argument for our own ideas by the example of our work... “Activities” [exhibition]... was so clearly a “manifesto” or “movement” show that people felt forced to declare themselves. The truth is that we three [Parr, Kennedy and Johnson] were developing much more rapidly than the others. The resultant sensitivities were almost impossible to manage... (66)*

Sharon identifies that the main aspect of the failure of a co-operative or artist-run space is not subscribing to an authentic ideology orientated for the space. *Inhibodress did not remain viable as a collective much beyond 1971; the reason largely being a lack of shared ideological objectives (Cramer 7).* With only Parr, Kennedy and Johnson subscribing to the gallery ideologies which they had initiated and created, and truly believing in the space and

in what it stood for, they became the successful participants of the co-operative and stood to gain the most from it.⁷⁷ Kennedy recalls that a number of the members dropped out after having their solo show, as they *may have been predominantly motivated by self-interest as opposed to the ideology of collectivism* (Cramer 59). This can be seen as evidence for Sharon's proposition that those involved in an ARI need to subscribe to a genuine ideology based, not on self-interest, but on the values of the space.

In 1971, there was a shift in membership. The Optronic Kinetics collective, dancer Philippa Cullen and David Ahern from AZ Music were regulars at the gallery, and, by the end of the first year, Johnson had left (on good terms, to travel abroad for the period spanning the Australian summer months from 1970 to 1971), leaving Kennedy and Parr as the sole administrators and financiers of the gallery. Inhibodress did receive a \$1500 grant from the Australian Council for the Arts (Australia Council) in 1971, which allowed the gallery to continue to 1972. In 1971, the Australia Council was not as we currently understand it to be. The current Australia Council was formed in 1973, previously *there was an Australian Council for the Arts and that had been set up whilst John Gorton was Prime Minister in the late 1960s. However, its brief was solely the performing arts. It did not address the visual arts* (Cramer 62).

Kennedy recollects that, with advice from a very helpful project officer, Trevor Griffiths, Parr and himself were able to pitch their application to conform to the Australia Council's performing arts brief and, as a result, received the grant. Even though they did not have to change their programming because the nature of their work could be understood as performance based, they did need assistance on how to address and word their application to

⁷⁷ Success is used here in the sense previously outlined by Sharon – defined by an artist's own satisfaction with their choice in the alternative and by their being genuine in their choice, rather than as the result of seeking success in the commercial sector.

“play the bureaucracy game”. This is possibly one of the first documented cases of an ARI having to adjust and conform to fit into the category brief provided by a funding body. This grant, which permitted the gallery to function without the need of financial contribution from multiple members, was the catalyst for the different direction it took in 1972, as Parr and Kennedy were able to completely immerse Inhibodress in their own creative concepts.

Even though Inhibodress did not become the bastion for artistic co-operatives in Sydney it may have initially desired to be, it did succeed in its other ideologies - furthering the exploration of new, experimental and conceptual art; connecting this art internationally; and educating and involving the public through information and communication. These ideologies evolved as Inhibodress did,⁷⁸ and it has been identified through artist correspondence that these ideologies had become solid and clear by April, 1971 (Cramer 8). Through developing and clarifying the core ideologies of Inhibodress, another central (although unrecognised at the time) ideology emerged, one that continues to inform the ARI movement in Sydney - a connection to site and space. *Conceptual or post-object art turned away from the valuing of the object for its uniqueness... and thus its political relations to capital, ownership and the economics of scarcity... This opened a space both in the gallery and in the conceptual-theoretical structure of art for the use of experimenters* (S. Jones 158). The works that came out of Inhibodress were truly experimental, with Parr becoming involved with linguistics and situation systems based performance and Kennedy exploring sound and film technologies. In writing to American artist, Lucy Lippard, Kennedy elucidates upon the freedom that alternative spaces provided for artists, explaining that *Inhibodress has no profit motive, financed by members, no sales capability and is therefore free to promote all aspects of the avant-garde* (Cramer 8).

78 The Inhibodress cooperative was not based on any overseas or pre-existing models, and as such it was a hit and miss learning experience for those involved. Parr states *the whole thing was essentially ad hoc and was worked out as we went* (Cramer 68).

The very first exhibition held at Inhibodress in November, 1970 was a member group show. The inaugural exhibition was a critical flop and was not a triumph for post-objective art, although arts writers and supporters of the new developments in the art world saw the potential Inhibodress held and critically championed the new gallery. Supporters included *The Sun-Herald* critic James Gleeson, Donald Brook, Daniel Thomas, Bruce Adams and Terry Smith. In 1972, Artist Ian Millis wrote, for the CAS Broadsheet, that *Donald Brook, probably the most consistently intelligent art critic in Australia, saw Inhibodress, at first, as his own baby, since it claimed to embody most of the attitudes to art which he had for many years preached* (17). Brook encouraged Inhibodress to develop its central ideologies beyond the initial establishment of an alternative independent space, stating in a 1971 review in *Studio International*, that it is *important for Inhibodress to work out their raison d'être at a much more radical level, than the impulse to show commercially-rejected work* (Cramer 7). Parr states that he does not believe that Inhibodress would have survived as long as it did without the support of the critics, although *[t]he great advantage of Inhibodress was that we felt beholden to no one. Neither to government money, commercial galleries, nor to critics, though critical support reinforced the position of the innovatory few* (Cramer 68).

By 1971, the gallery was exhibiting strong conceptual works, many with a focus on the relationship between ideas; art and action; and Art and Language. Key exhibitions included *But The Fierce Blackman*, solo exhibition of Kennedy, 7-28 March, 1971; *Out of the Gallery, Installation As Conceptual Scheme*, solo exhibition of Johnson, 29 March-17 April, 1971; *Activities, Performance, Participation, Art By Instruction*, international group show curated by Johnson, 10- 29 May, 1971; *Word Situations Two*, solo exhibition by Parr, 19 July-7 August, 1971; *Trans Art 1, IDEA Demonstrations*, joint exhibition of Parr and Kennedy, 23 May-10 June 1972; and *Trans Art 3, Communications*, an international group show organised by Kennedy, 11-29 July, 1972. The trajectory and evolution of the works created at Inhibodress saw a shift from language and installation based works in 1971 to an interest in

art as action and performance works based on ideas in 1972. The three solo shows by Johnson, Parr and Kennedy in 1971 underpinned the conceptual direction of the gallery, while the desire and belief in connecting Australia to a wider international context was evident in the international group shows.

Parr, Kennedy and Johnson also viewed the collective's role in educating and informing the public on the "new art" as central to the Inhibodress ideology, and created the publication, *Inhibodress Information* (which had three editions, two in 1971 and one in 1972), and a "new information service". The collecting of information to share amongst other artists and ARI practitioners is a common aspect of ARI culture, with K. Brown noting in 1987 that [s]everal... artist-run spaces... have made efforts to collect resource material relevant to their interests and activities, for use by their members and the wider community (K. Brown 7). Bill and George, a contemporary ARI, houses *The Librarium*, which is a small library, or curated bookshelf, of small press publications on artist-run spaces available for any curious individual to access.

On the subscription form for the Inhibodress new information service, dated 15 April, 1971, Parr states

it is necessary to relate all local effort to the wider international context (the new art is significantly non-nationalistic and non-commercial and therefore particularly vulnerable to the sort of isolation that obtains in Australian cultural life). The new art also required the support of an involved or at least interested public, much of it is created out of participation and actual dissemination though the media and public communications system... it is not elitist and hermetic, but extrovert and educational.
(Cramer 8)

In discussing the audience and attendees of Inhibodress, Johnson recalled that it was mainly made up of an art world crowd, which included critics, artists, administrators, art students from the Fine Arts department of The University of Sydney (in particular from the Tin Sheds) and a few other interested people.⁷⁹ The “new art” at Inhibodress required the participation of an active and engaged, rather than passive, audience, both for the support and continuation of the new art movement and for the creation of specific works themselves. Audience involvement is a key aspect of an ARI, and, at Inhibodress, was an essential part of the gallery’s alternative concept. Parr states that it was the audience’s reaction that informed and helped shape the works, with viewer participation response being informed by a strong sense of self-awareness, an essential component of the art-life relationship.

⁷⁹ The audience of Inhibodress, the first ideological ARI, is an important aspect, because, in the forty years of ARI development, the audience and attendees of the ARI has, essentially, not changed. It still remains a destination and interest of the “art crowd”, even though external funding bodies and agents of cultural production desire and push for ARIs to connect with wider audiences and communities. This concept is expanded further in Chapter Three.

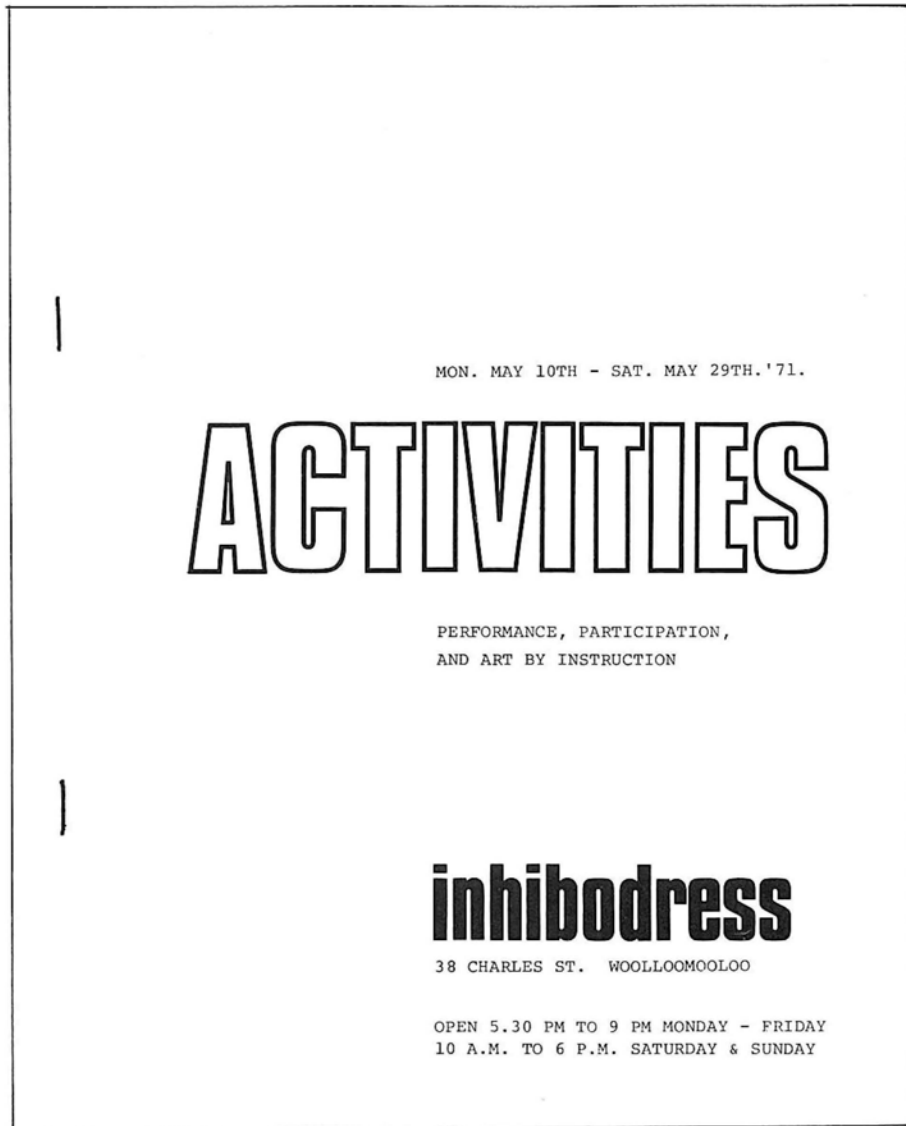


Fig. 2.5

For me, [Parr] and certainly for Peter, the audience was of fundamental importance... I realised that these were works [the early performance works] that tended to establish a bizarre pact with the audience and which were somehow or other extended by their response... the audience was of course implicated directly, formatively since they in a very real sense allowed the piece to occur. (Cramer 69)

Fig. 2.5 Exhibition catalogue cover of *Activities, Performance, Participation, Art By Instruction*, held at Inhibodress gallery May 1971. Image reproduction permission by Mike Parr.

Communicating directly with the public, via audience participation and the creation of publications on the new emerging art, further intensified the breaking down of the divide between art and life, as they were *trying to take art to the streets, trying to make art about people instead of culture. It was realism* (Cramer 56).

The international aspirations of Inhibodress were generated, firstly, by looking to the rest of the world for exciting new inspirations in art, and, secondly, through wanting to connect to a community of artists with similar ideas and ideologies. International exchange informed much of the creative output of Inhibodress, originally derived from reading about art developments and activities in journals and magazines such as *Studio International*, *Art & Artists*, and *Avalanche* magazine (New York); and later from a much more direct form of dialogue.

Kennedy states that it was an article that Brook wrote for *Studio International* in 1970 that generated the connection with the wider international art community.⁸⁰ This article, which focused on the art of a handful of emerging Sydney artists, including Kennedy and Parr, attracted the attention of David Briers, the editor of a London avant-garde magazine, who began a correspondence with Kennedy, Johnson and Parr, essentially instigating Inhibodress's involvement with mail-art and opening up the artists to an international dialogue. The dematerialised nature of the works (*Trans Art* was aptly titled as the art was *trans*-portable; it could be sent in a suitcase or the instructions could be mailed through the

80 Kennedy recalls, in an interview with Cramer, that the *Studio International* article by Donald Brook was published in 1970, although it is more likely that the article to which Kennedy refers is one from 1971, titled "Sydney Commentary: New Art in Australia". In the February, 1971 issue of *Studio International*, Brook wrote about Mike Parr, Tim Johnson, Peter Kennedy, John Armstrong and Ian Milliss; and in the July, 1971 issue, he wrote about David Smith, Noel Hutchison, Joan Grounds and Optronic Kinetics.

Brook, Donald. 'Sydney Commentary: New Art in Australia'. *Studio International*. 181:930. Feb. 1971. 76-81. Print.

Brook, Donald, 'Sydney: Art in the Universities'. *Studio International*. 182:934. Jul. 1971. 9-13. Print.

post) allowed for a cheap and easy way to create a direct dialogue with the international art world. Parr states

[b]y 1972, this direct contact with other spaces and with individual artists with whom we shared close affinities was perhaps our major source of information. This unmediated dialogue enormously enhanced our sense of our own independence and the essential rightness of our work. We were by-passing the critics, the interpreters and the stage managers and information was coming to us as the work was being produced. (Cramer 68)

In recollecting about the gallery site itself, Johnson stated that *[t]hat the space we found was ideal because it didn't look like a gallery. At the time a gallery was usually something that had a big sandstone fence out the front and 500 lights along the walls and carpet, but this was a factory space which suited our idea that art was a functional thing and had to be demystified (Cramer 54).*

Inhibodress developed a strong connection to space, both physical and conceptual, with the gallery space - an environment where exploration and experimentation occurred - becoming a vital element in the creation of works. In 1970, Parr, in a correspondence with Brook, states *[the environment] implies a familiar attitude to the place that is not possible with a commercial gallery. In line with the gallery as a created environment, I find that I now have little interest in forcing self-reliant objects into the gallery, rather I opt for the gallery as a context in which objects or rather situations and ideas are formed (Cramer 7).* This breaking down of the divide between the studio and the gallery space was a vital aspect of Inhibodress's development, where the *work exhibited at Inhibodress was conceived and made within the gallery (Cramer 7).* The gallery space had become a lab, where works were

experimented with through collaboration with the audience and with each other, rather than polished for final exhibition and public consumption.



Fig. 2.6

The connection to space evolved further with the concept of Inhibodress becoming a space-less entity. This was brought about by the pragmatic realities of the financial burden being the responsibility of the last two remaining members, and also as a natural evolution of the ideologies themselves. The art practised at Inhibodress was ephemeral and transitory in nature, based in ideas and not objects. The evolution of Inhibodress as a non-physical concept by 20 August 1972 was a natural, if not intentional, progression, and is evident in a tracing of the activities that led to the closure of the gallery.

Fig. 2.6 Image of 32-36 Charles Street / 79-83 Forbes Street, Woolloomooloo, taken on 6 Sept. 1960. Image copyright and courtesy of City of Sydney Archives.

The Hibodress Blouses factory, next door at 38- 40 Charles Street, the eventual site of the Inhibodress gallery, can be viewed in the context of its surroundings, being an industrial inner city back street accommodating warehouses and factories.

Connecting with an international community, accessible only through correspondence and mail art rather than physical interaction, also informed the space-less and non-physical evolution of Inhibodress. “*Inhibodress Information*” was conceived as a means of extending dialogue and participation in the activities and ideas of the gallery outside of the physical confines of the gallery space (Cramer 9).

Inhibodress continued existing as an international and space-less “concept at large” till 1974. After the closure of the gallery, Kennedy travelled to England and the U.S.A, and Parr to Europe, taking the ideas of Inhibodress to the global art community. Parr established the Inhibodress Archive/Department upon his return to Australia, with the *Information Centre 1* and *2* becoming parasitic organisations that set up shop in the Contemporary Art Society Gallery, Adelaide and Central Street Gallery, Sydney, respectively.⁸¹

In its short but influential life span, Inhibodress accomplished a number of important achievements, many of which became foundational aspects of ARI culture today. Amongst these achievements was an impact on the “system”, in other words, the commercial gallery structure; the eventual VAB⁸² of the Australia Council; the modes of operation of art institutions; and the perceptions of local audiences. Johnson states that

81 Parasitic ARIs are a common model, as space is a rare commodity and resource for ARIs in Sydney. A notable contemporary example is the half doz. collective, who labelled itself a parasitic ARI, taking up host in a multitude of Sydney venues. This included hosting a film event at the Hoyts cinema complex on George Street; curating a sculpture exhibition at The Palm House at the Royal Botanic Gardens; and hosting an Australia Day performance at the Museum of Sydney. Half doz. evolved into Chalk Horse gallery in 2008.

82 Kennedy explains, in an interview with Sue Cramer, his views on how Inhibodress directly influenced the VAB, stating that *Inhibodress... systematically helped broaden the attitudes of the Visual Arts Board which was established in the mid-1970s as to what could be considered as art requiring public support... Inhibodress actually helped to create a receptive climate for public support which facilitated the understanding and accommodation of a variety of new forms of art practice* (Cramer 65).

Inhibodress interacted with the system although as a model it challenged it... It took a stand inside the art world by opposing it... It actually started achieving things that the art world was trying to achieve but was failing at- such as promoting young artists, getting them public attention and getting critics to interrogate the nature of art in public... not that we were going to inform the system or have a revolution... We were just going to work outside the system. We didn't need it. But then we found it needed us because it was waiting for change. (Cramer 58)

Identifying with the ideology of operating outside of the system, but then becoming a recognised and needed part of the art world, Inhibodress could no longer ascribe to the ideology of the alternative. Naylor sees this trajectory as an example of the death of the avant-garde, stating that *[i]t seems all avant-gardes have an inbuilt fatal flaw... For example, the original avant-garde act of exhibiting outside the institution has over time been valorised and now museums actively seek out these types of work. This is one way an avant-garde strategy might cease to function* (Naylor 43). This fatal flaw is recognised by Johnson, who states *[y]ou can lose an avant-garde by popularising it* (Cramer 53). Johnson further explains that *Inhibodress was about controlling the context for our own art and when we lost control of the context, we didn't want it anymore. When it became popular we had to drop it* (Cramer 58). The Inhibodress group essentially disqualified itself from the alternative by genuinely believing in, pursuing and validating it, which began the self-perpetuating cycle of invalidation for ARIs.⁸³ Brook, in reflecting on the Australian art world around the time of the emergence of ideological and community ARIs, states *[t]he problem is that, to the extent that the evidence of such delinquency - and indeed the culprits themselves - survive, they owe their very survival to the art galleries, the art schools and the art literature from which they had dissented. Thus preserved, they paradoxically disqualify themselves* (Brook, 1968 35).

⁸³ The self-perpetuating cycle of the invalidation of ARIs is further explored in Chapter Three.

2.3 Socially Engaged, Political and Locally Orientated: The Community ARI

The development of art groups and projects established to directly engage and benefit the community occurred almost concurrently to that of the ideological ARI and resulted from the same impetus - to reconnect art with life. Murphy identifies that, in the U.S.A., alternative spaces grew out of community art based organisations, being an example of the non-hierarchical and interconnected nature of ideological and community ARIs. *The immediate roots of the American alternative spaces of the 1970s may be found in the artists' co-operatives... and in the neighbourhood programs and common development organisations established by artists in the 1960s* (Murphy 47).

The beginnings of the community ARI in Australia are less definitive than those of the ideological ARI. This is, in part, due to the community ARI focusing primarily, not on art practice, but, instead, on using the mediums of art to pursue a cause or statement; thus, the community ARI has not established the same immediate connection to space as the ideological ARI, and its history is lacking in quantifiable documentation. Although many community ARIs may not operate out of a gallery or site, they do often involve a critiquing of space and an addressing of the issue of bringing space back to the needs of the community. The community ARI also encompasses a wider scope of activity than the ideological ARI, due to the nature of community engagement taking many forms, such as community gardens, political zines or festivals of community directed events.

The community ARI originates, historically, from political and activist ideals combined with artistic activity. One example is the activity of self-proclaimed “conspicuous radical activist” Ian Milliss (Grace 4), who was a central figure in urban preservation through his involvement with the Green Bans movement and in the artists’ rights movement through his

involvement with the Artworkers' Union. Always linked to the creation and preservation of culture, and to benefitting the greater or more localised community or neighbourhood, the community ARI is as historically significant as the ideological ARI, even though it can and has been overlooked and misjudged due to its unmeasurable nature and lack of focus on practice-based exposure, in other words, art exhibitions.⁸⁴

In 2011, at the *Hand In Glove* conference on American independent art spaces and culture, Lane Reylea, Chair of Art Theory and Practice at Northwestern University in Illinois, in the introductory address of the *Archiving Artist-run History* panel, identified the Boston Visual Arts Union (BVAU) as a lesser-known, yet equally important, organisation in the history of the alternative spaces movement. The BVAU operated from 1970 to 1979 and was influential in the pioneering of artists' rights in the U.S.A., particularly in protesting against application fees for survey shows and in promoting the need for an artists' health care system. The BVAU was so influential that other alternative spaces and organisations in the U.S.A. emulated it, including *N.A.M.E. Gallery* in Chicago and the Chicago Artist Coalition in 1974. The BVAU was similar in ethos to the Artworkers Union in Australia. The inclusion of such an organisation, which was non-practice based but was structured around the promotion of artists' working rights and the politics of working within the arts, is, according to Reylea, indicative of the wide scope of the movement and analogous to the recognition of similar activities in Australia as acts towards the development of community ARIs.

Historically, these political activities informed the direction and the formation of the alternative movement and were extensions of the artists seeking to reconnect art with life.

Johnson made the connection between the ideological ARI and political activism via the

⁸⁴ This is also because the history of the community ARI is linked to political activism, and as such the community ARI is often mistaken as a political stance or protest.

mediums of art, which are identified as community ARI activities, in writing about conceptual art.

Since its [conceptual art's] real value lies in its location of an expanded range of art activities in a context away from galleries, the gallery as a studio space must remain an intermediary step. A host of art related activities have followed the liberation of art from galleries but presumably galleries will be expanding to include some of them. The Art Worker's Union, the women's art movement, worker's art movements, community groups, Aboriginal art organisations, publications, alternative galleries, curatorial practices...all share common ground with conceptual art. (Johnson 5)

As well as pursuing better conditions for artists, community ARIs are also non-discriminatory organisations where anyone is welcome to engage in activity, successful or not. While ideological ARIs tend to be populated by dedicated and practising artists, community ARIs allow for wider audience engagement and participation. However, a community ARI is not simply a neighbourhood centre running painting workshops for any interested individual. They are organisations, spaces and projects that offer accessible opportunities to an interested public, focusing on issues that engage, and are of interest to, an audience wider than the art world crowd, such as the redevelopment of neighbourhoods or women's rights.

Contemporary examples of organisations and projects that exemplify the community ARI's ideals include the Squatspace gallery and collective; the Renew Newcastle urban redevelopment scheme; *There Goes the Neighbourhood* exhibition and project initiated by Zany Begg and Keg de Souza; and the Red Rattler theatre. These specific examples of contemporary community ARIs are further explored in Chapter Three. The following section

of Chapter Two addresses the social climate and activities surrounding the emergence of the community ARI, and its participants and ethos in the Sydney art world.

Community, Gardens and Local Action: Altruism and Activism via Art



Fig. 2.7

While the artists involved in the Inhibodress collective and gallery were creating a new opportunity for engagement with post-objective and conceptual art, other artists in the late 1960 and early 1970s were focusing their attention on other avenues of change. The site of the Inhibodress gallery no longer exists, as it was demolished to make way for the Woolloomooloo viaduct, a concrete railway under-bridge that was in construction between 1970 and 1972, and was opened for public use in 1974. Artist Jo Holder, in her capacity as

Fig. 2.7 Image of Forbes Street, near Cathedral Street, Woolloomooloo, taken on 8 Jan. 1973. Image copyright and courtesy of City of Sydney Archives.

This image is of the site reserved for the “Peoples Park”, which was used as a car park under the newly constructed railway viaduct. It is the site where Dave Morrissey planted his “art garden”.

co-convenor of Action City East (ACE), in a letter addressed to Fred Nile as Chair of the Joint Select Committee into the Cross City Tunnel in 2006, states that *Residents of Woolloomooloo (ROW) was formed in 1973 to fight for a people's park on an area between Palmer and Bourke Street (1)*.⁸⁵

In 1973, artist Dave Morrissey took a position of civic activism and, in the area reserved for the “People’s Park”, which was bookmarked by city planners to be known as Linear Park and was in use as a makeshift car park at the time, planted a garden consisting of corn, carrots and a few trees. Morrissey and his helpers posted notices to the cars’ owners asking them to cooperate and not use the space as a car park and also wrote letters to the local government officials requesting they keep their promise of creating a “People’s Park”. This activity was noticed by neighbouring artists, with Parr regarding it as arising from the same politically charged zeitgeist of the era and impetus that informed his performances, and the development of *Inhibodress*, explaining that

[a]s Peter and I, together with Tim, assumed control of Inhibodress, our process of politicization was extended. By mid-1971, we three were beginning to produce our first performances. They were a form of “direct action” and went beyond art as we had thought it up to then. These actions seemed to establish their crucial implications outside the domain of art... Dave Morrissey made his “art garden” in the slums of Woolloomooloo. There was a kind of extremism in the air. (Cramer 68)

⁸⁵ Records from the NSW Government Office of Environment and Heritage indicate that a “People’s Park” project was initiated for Woolloomooloo in 1977, for which the Green Bans pylon murals were painted in 1982, as part of the Woolloomooloo Renewal Project (1975-1981). The Green Bans Art Walk “Civic Survey” map, Jul. 2011, states: *[W]hen Residents of Woolloomooloo called for a people’s park and began planting under the pylons, planner George Clarke proposed a “linear park” as an east-west walkway in the 1977 City Strategic Plan... CREATE LINEAR PARK!* (Holder, *Green Bans Art Walk 2*). These two pieces of information indicate that, five years after the formation of ROW, some action was taken, in the formation of a government project, but it was not enough, as the park never eventuated.

Donald Brook also took notice of the Woolloomooloo art garden, and questioned whether or not Morrissey's civic activism in creating a hand-made park constituted an act of art. Brook included his musings on the matter in one of his last *Nation* essays in 1973, when he quoted the English sculptor, Eric Gill, who quoted the Sri Lankan poet, Anada Coomaraswamy, stating that a work of art is a thing made and that all things made are works of art (Brook, 1968 34).⁸⁶ In his essay, Brook included an excerpt from artist Ian Milliss, which was originally included in the National Gallery of Victoria's *Object and Idea* exhibition catalogue.⁸⁷

Once the monopoly of "artists" over "creativity" and "culture" is broken, it becomes possible for people to create real history and real change from their own personal experience. This is what "art" really is, and for obvious reasons it cannot be found in "art " galleries nor in exhibitions nor in books; only by discarding the concept altogether and then, acting on our own awareness, changing our lives, does the concept gain meaning. (Milliss, Object and Idea)

Milliss took the basis of reconnecting art and life, which had informed the formation of the alternative spaces movement, and pushed the concept even further by attempting to completely remove the idea of art, and the artist, from the equation. In 1972, Milliss stated that

86 Johnson, in an interview with Sue Cramer, explained how Inhibodress, and other similar spaces at the time, contributed to an increase in the understanding of what art is and how it functions in society. He stated [i]t was done at the time of Inhibodress by questioning... By asking what art is? The answer was that art is life. But it doesn't mean that life is art. It doesn't mean that all life is art, but it means that anything you call art is just part of life (Cramer 58).

87 *Object & Idea: New work 6 Australian Artists* was an exhibition held at the National Gallery Of Victoria from 12 September-21 October, 1973.

I think art should disappear because I think my work is about me coming to terms with my life... Everybody is an artist in some way or another... I think Daniel Thomas knows this very well, Daniel was talking about a woman who made really lovely pumpkin soup and he said she was one of the best artists he ever met, and this is right. (De Berg 7)

Naylor identifies that *radical theory tends to grow unpleasantly narcissistic when deprived of a political outlet... [with] the theory then com[ing] to stand in metaphorically for what it signifies* (Naylor 42). Milliss, finding the emerging art scene narcissistic and too centered on individualistic promotion, followed a different path of artistic community development through bringing the focus back to local community and environmental issues.

Milliss was a recognised emerging artist at the time, having had his first exhibition while still in High School, at the 1986 CAS Annual Exhibition, where his work was purchased by Central Street Gallery funder, John White, and then having progressed into process-triggering installation works (S. Jones 346). These works included *Walk Along This Line*, which was exhibited alongside the works of other notable conceptual artists, including Parr and Kennedy. Milliss stated that

[t]hings like “Walk along this Line”, which was shown in the Transfield in 1970,⁸⁸ which was a sort of kinesthetic work relating to balance... just manipulate parts of people’s lives, the way they feel, this is the way everything I’ve been doing has developed, it’s hard to try and relate to more and more complex parts of the way

88 The Transfield Art Prize, which ran from 1961 to 1971, was an acquisitive art prize established to promote emerging Australian artists. It was the richest art prize in Australia in 1961 and, by 1971, it had become one of the most important art prizes. It was run by Transfield, a company founded by Franco Belgiorno-Nettis, who then transferred his support of the arts to create the Biennale of Sydney in 1973.

people live their lives. (De Berg 3)

In 1970, Milliss made *Art Forms*, process-triggering works that consisted of *a series of several hundred sets of instructions, xeroxes, newspaper cuttings and lists or fragments of information...* Milliss says *these works convinced him that conceptual art could become the perfect institutional art and therefore a dead end that he did not wish to pursue further* (Exhibition).

Milliss was struggling to find an avenue where he could pursue his new concept of artistic practice, being one tied to life and positive community actions. [T]owards the end of 1971... *I knew what I wanted to do and I couldn't think of ways to make it happen, just to make real straight real-life situations of some sort, how to make them art, how to make them just not an ego thing for me, you know, to belt someone around or force them to do this or that* (De Berg 3). In 1972, Milliss decided to stop exhibiting conventionally through the traditional avenues of galleries altogether, stating that

*[r]eal creative activity is so natural and unselfconscious as to be invisible. The true artist is unrecognized even by his or her self. It would be nice to say that everybody is an artist in the real sense, but given the nature of capitalist society, it is not true, although in certain circumstances or in certain other societies it may be true. In our society, almost everyone, worker or boss, leads a life of sterile alienation, but there are exceptions. They are the people who directly tackle basic problems of everyday life, and come up with simple, beautiful, workable alternatives, solutions which are radical whether analysed in sound political, economic or aesthetic terms. If we work in this way to destroy not only art, but industrial technology and formal hierarchical politics, we can create a real culture. (Carlson, *The Invisible Artist*)*

By this point in 1972, Milliss had pushed his practice to such an extent that it transformed into positive social action completely tied to life. Milliss's first foray into political action and artistic social change was through the CAS. He states:

[t]his is how I got involved in the CAS, I decided that obviously you had to be in a political situation, because that's what politics is all about [life]. Art politics is a nice little subsection of politics on its own; it's safe - nobody gets killed, nobody gets mowed down in the street or anything... it seemed the perfect place to move in and start operating, make them rub against each other in some way or another, make them act things out and set up situations that they had to resolve and that I had to resolve. (De Berg 3)

It was around this time that Milliss became involved with the "Green Bans" movement.⁸⁹ It had occurred to Milliss that the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) was achieving what he wanted to achieve in his art practice - influencing the way in which people move within space and interact with each other.

They were achieving these things, but on a really massive scale and with much more point to it. I developed this whole theory on what it is artists should do; and it was a theory that artists should be involved in cultural change, in one shape or another, and use whatever was available to do it. You could use unionism to do it, and it suddenly struck me the Builders Labourers... were probably the best artists in the country. (Interview with Ian Milliss on the Victoria St. Squats)

The Green Bans movement involved the action of residents and engaged community

⁸⁹ The Green Bans movement's key period of activity was from 1971 to 1975, with the artistic period lasting from 1971 to 1984, which included the creation of the Woolloomooloo Viaduct Pylon murals.

members to preserve the heritage and community of neighborhoods and save them from being redeveloped by government and corporation. A “green ban” is a form of strike action usually taken by a Trade Union or a Labour Group.⁹⁰ Green bans were first conducted in Australia in the 1970s by the New South Wales Builders Labourers Federation (NSWBLF, also known as the BLF).⁹¹ Key union leaders included Jack Munday, Bob Pringle and Joe Owens, although a green ban was never instigated by the BLF.

All green bans were at the request of, and in support of, resident action groups. The first green ban act to save Kelly’s Bush - undeveloped bushland in Hunters Hill - was at the request of a group of local women (Burgmann, *Power and Protest*). In reflecting on the movement, Munday states that *I think the interesting thing about it was that the Builders Labourers green bans brought about a change in the thinking of the middle class* (Munday). It proved that people, through petitioning, lobbying and taking action, could make an impact and a difference in their neighbourhood.

The great strength was it was really a people's movement... Because there's no doubt that the laws that now exist on heritage and the built environment wouldn't be there had it not been for those ordinary citizens, that extra-parliamentary action that came together... Of course, eternal vigilance is required. But I think that it shows that, when people do come together, ordinary people can make a difference.

(Munday)

90 Jack Munday coined the term ‘green ban’ in February, 1973, *to distinguish it from the traditional union black ban imposed by workers ‘to push their own issues’*. Munday argued that the term was ‘more applicable as they are in defense of the environment’ (Burgmann and Burgmann). Verity Burgmann further argues, citing an address by Bob Brown to the Senate on 21 March, 1997 as evidence, that the integration of the term ‘green’ to represent environmental issues in the world’s political idioms is considered to have come from the term ‘green ban’ (Burgmann, *Power, Profit and Protest* 172).

91 The NSWBLF, or BLF, is now known as the NSW Construction Mining Forestry and Energy Union (CFMEU).

The BLF refused to contribute to the demise of the cultural landscape caused by projects that were detrimental to the environment or undesirable in the eyes of neighborhoods and local communities. *In May, 1970, the executive of the NSWBLF resolved to develop a “new concept of unionism” encompassing the principle of the social responsibility of labor: that workers had a right to insist their labour not be used in harmful ways* (Burgmann and Burgmann *Green bans movement*). The formation of the “new concept of unionism” was important, as it emphasised what Parr had labelled *the extremism in the air* (Cramer 68). The labourers of the BLF were losing out on jobs and employment because of their protests against the construction of redevelopments, but they saw themselves, primarily, as having a responsibility to society, not to themselves, and felt that they had a role to play in the preservation of culture. Munday explained the Union’s position by stating *[w]hat would we have said to the next generation? [T]hat we destroyed Sydney in the name of full employment? No, we wanted to construct buildings that were socially useful* (Burgmann, *Power and Protest*).

By 1974, it was recorded that 42 green bans had been successful in saving Sydney’s cultural landscape, with an estimated \$3000 million worth of redevelopment having been held up, and over 100 buildings having been saved (Burgmann, *Power and Protest*). Some of the most notable areas preserved by the green bans include The Rocks, Centennial Park (which was going to be developed into a sports stadium), the Botanical Gardens (bookmarked to become a car park for the Opera House), and Woolloomooloo (Burgmann, *Power and Protest*).

The preservation of the Woolloomooloo area through the prevention of \$40 million worth of high-rise developments was one of the most controversial and publicised green ban efforts. The Victoria Street Squats and the preservation of Victoria Street became the most colourful green ban to emerge from the movement’s history. From 1970 to 1972, real estate developer

Frank Theeman purchased most of the houses on the northern end of the western side of Victoria Street with the intention of creating a row of high-rise developments. Victoria Street, Kings Cross, was (and is) a colourful and eclectic bohemian community - home to artists, musicians, writers, migrants, pensioners, workers from the nearby docks and seamen. The National Trust has compared it to Montmartre in Paris (Powerhouse Museum). By April, 1973, most of the 400 tenants of the Theeman purchased properties - all except twelve - had been evicted.

Some of them had lived there for over forty years, but most were unfamiliar with their legal rights. When Theeman's agents told them the buildings were condemned and shortly to be demolished, they moved, either to the outer western suburbs or to smaller and dearer rooms in the inner city. (Milliss and Brennan 1)

Milliss, in an interview with Ian McIntyre on Community Radio 3CR, stated that many of the tenants were elderly and frail and physically unable to resist *Theeman's thugs, and they were given alternative housing, which meant they were shoved into really crappy boarding houses around the place without their stuff; they just got dragged out* (interview with Ian Milliss about the Victoria Street Squats). A green ban was imposed to save Victoria Street, but the result was that the National Trust approved a revised plan to save the façade of some of the buildings that would become the frontage to low-rise developments. This was not a satisfactory outcome for the Victoria Street Action Group (Action Group) as they were also concerned with preserving low rent and accessible housing for the community.

An important aspect of the green bans movement was the emphasis on preserving working-class residential areas from attempts by developers to cater for a more lucrative market. Munday argued that ordinary people were being driven out of

inner-city areas because of the government's lack of courage to tackle the “sole right” of the developer. He insisted governments and municipal authorities should face up to their responsibility of ensuring that urban dwellers paid reasonable amounts of rent for decent housing. (Burgmann and Burgmann, Green bans movement)

The Action Group decided that the best way to draw public attention to their cause – the preservation of low-income inner city housing - would be to squat. The squatting began on 10 June, 1973. Milliss, who, at the time, was living in St Neot Avenue, just off Victoria Street, was asked to join the protest by the Head of Action Group, Arthur King; artist Joseph Szabo (a neighbour of King's); and Szabo's girlfriend, Bonnie McDougall (Szabo and McDougall both knew Milliss from exhibiting together). The following account is provided as evidence of the sense of community that was achieved through the Action Group.

Many of the early squatters were associated with the Push,⁹² but as the struggle continued, they attracted a wider range of supporters and occupants. Elvis Kipman was an ABC employee with a long-time aversion to political activity who jogged by every day, until he was curious enough to ask what was going on, and soon moved in.⁹³ He would later say that, “I've felt alienated all my adult life and for the first time here I began to feel closer to people.” A woman named Ruth moved in somewhat reluctantly with her partner and their son. At first, she said, “I found myself becoming

92 The *Sydney Push* has been described as a predominantly drunken gang of logorrhoeac [sic] left-wing intellectuals operating in Sydney pub culture from the late 1940s to the early 1970s, who conducted meetings in the backrooms of pubs, including the Royal George in Sydney CBD. The “gang” included manual workers, musicians, lawyers, criminals, journalists, public servants and University students (Franklin).

93 In an edition of *The City Squatter* from 1974, Milliss, with Teresa Brennan, wrote an account of the evictions of the squatters, titled *In Memory of Victoria Street*. This account mentions how, on 4 January, Elvis Kipman climbed onto the chimney of Number 113 Victoria Street. He was the last remaining squatter left in the protests.

quite aggressive and intolerant and very confused.” But as she got to know those around her, “a communal spirit was well and truly established and nothing, not even the harassment from the agents and police, was going to destroy it.” (McGrath)

The squatting situation escalated over a six-month period, during which King was kidnapped and held for three days (the culprits were never identified as being related to the Victoria Street situation). On Thursday, 3 January, 1974, 200 police and hired associates of Theeman, who were labeled as “controllers” in a press release issued by Theeman at the scene (Milliss and Brennan 2), began to evict the squatters. Arrests were made, fires were lit to smoke the tenants out, ceilings were demolished to access tenants in apartments below, sing-along’s were conducted from the rooftops of buildings and the Action Group continued to protest against the development of Victoria Street. Milliss wrote articles for *The Sydney Squatter*, a newspaper published by the Action Group in memory of the protest action, in which he described the situation and the extent to which the residents and community went to protect the street from development.⁹⁴

The protests continued for several more years, during which Juanita Nielson, a local publisher and Heiress to the Mark Foy’s department store disappeared and corruption occurred within the NSWBLF. A 1983 inquest into Nielson’s disappearance determined that she was deceased. The eventual outcome of the green ban was the preservation of most of Victoria Street from demolition and redevelopment.⁹⁵ However, [b]ecause the ban was

94 The Action Group also published another newspaper, *The Victoria Street Rag*, which was associated with Juanita Nielson. Nielson was known for publishing *NOW*, an alternative newspaper in Kings Cross.

95 For a detailed history of the Victoria Street Green Ban refer to:

Burgmann, Meredith and Verity Burgmann. *Green Bans, Red Union: environmental activism and the New South Wales Builders Labourers’ Federation*. Sydney: UNSW Press. 1998. Print.

The abridged historical account presented in this thesis is for the purpose of exploring the involvement of communities and local artists in the preservation and creation of culture.

broken at a crucial stage, the ultimate beneficiaries of the attractive streetscape saved by the ban were the “yuppies”, the middle-class gentrifiers of the inner city (Burgmann and Burgmann, *Green Bans, Red Union* 214).



Fig. 2.8

Involvement with the Green Bans Movement and the BLF inspired Milliss to initiate action towards the formation of the Artworkers Union in 1979. It originally arose from a concern focused on the inclusion of women and Australian artists in the Biennale of Sydney,⁹⁶ with

Fig. 2.8 Image of Ian Milliss (far left with the microphone) out the front of Number 118 (developed) and 116 (preserved) of Victoria Street, Kings Cross, speaking on the events of the 1973 Victoria Street green ban as part of the Green Bans 40th Anniversary “Green Ban Walk” held on 20 August, 2011. Next to Milliss is artist Lucas Ihlein, holding a copy of *The City Squatter*, the publication in which Milliss wrote in memory of the Victoria Street squats.

Image taken by Amy Griffiths.

96 In an article written in conjunction with Vivienne Binns, Milliss presents an account of why Franco Belgiorno-Nettis transformed the Transfield Art Prize into the Biennale of Sydney, stating that [i]t was rumored that Franco

Milliss stating

[p]ersonally, I wasn't opposed to international exhibitions; I've always been an internationalist rather than a nationalist, but I also think you have to work with the mores of the society where you actually are. It's not very helpful having people cart in stuff from overseas and tell you this is how it should be done. (Grace)⁹⁷

Milliss and artist Ian Burn set forth their ideas for an artists' organisation in an article included in the publication, *Sydney Biennale, White Elephant or Red Herring: Comments from the Art Community*. In this article, Milliss and Burn outline reasons why such an artists' organisation should be created, stating that artists are workers, often employed by the government through grants and funding or other forms of bureaucracy, and need a community and organisation to lobby for their rights. *The only way this [corporate] involvement can be controlled and kept democratic in its operation is by a strong artists' organization [sic] keeping pressure on them* (Milliss and Burn, *White Elephant or Red Herring*).

A key aspect of forming an artists' organisation was to keep progress moving swiftly forward, as it was noted that many ad hoc and informal groups had been set up by artists over the previous five years (1974- 1979) with the intention of creating change, but had been temporal or disorganised in nature. Thus, any change or action taken by them was either not documented or not made available to other artists, [s]o that the next time some action is

Belgiorno-Nettis was not happy at the radical nature of the "post-object" works which were awarded the prize in the last few years, and so the money was instead to be put into what he saw as a more prestigious international exhibition, a "Biennale" of art produced around the "Pacific Rim" (Milliss and Binns).

⁹⁷ This quotation is also provided to illustrate the local ideals of community ARI action. While many artists of this time, including the artists at Inhibodress, left Australia to connect with international artists and expand their practice within the global artistic community, Milliss stayed focused on addressing local cultural issues.

needed, we have to start from scratch once again. It makes absolutely no sense to continue this way (Milliss and Burn, *White Elephant or Red Herring*).

A common argument for the creation of a contemporary ARI sector is a need for a central site or repository for knowledge sharing, as, over the past 40 years, ARIs have found themselves re-inventing the wheel with each development and coming up with new innovations to survive and operate, as opposed to building upon the previous knowledge of, and actions taken by, artists.

Milliss continued his artistic career through involving himself in the creation and preservation of culture through positive social action. Activities included prison activism through the Prison Action Group and Women Behind Bars (1975-1979); the Art and Working Life Program with Ian Burn; the Media Action Group (described as *a large floating group which produced slide shows around media and political issues* (Milliss, *A Tribute to Ian Burn*)); and Union Media Services. In a tribute to Burn in 1993, Milliss posited his view on the art world, stating that

[t]he art world represents the ideology of individualistic consumption, the dominant ideology of the century... We have been fighting for an ideology of communal production, the notion that we all build our shared culture through our daily work, whatever that may be, and that all discussion around cultural development issues should focus on the promotion of arts activities at the grass roots level and the development of work practices which allow the creative intervention of workers.

(Milliss, *A Tribute to Ian Burn*)

In the introduction to his 2008 compendium of writings on Art and Social Change, Will

Bradley states that artworks are the products of *moments at which the desire for social change has led artists working within the sphere of modern art to align themselves with wider social movements or to break with established institutions of art* (Naylor 15). Milliss's chosen artistic career path of utilising the mediums of positive social action to create the cultural products of community and social change embodies an authentic spirit of the community ARI. This has been identified by other artists as well, with Johnson stating that *[t]his was the prevailing ideology amongst an emerging generation of artists in Sydney in the early 1970s and Ian Milliss expressed it perfectly* (Johnson).

Political Posturing: The Second Phase of the Tin Sheds

The Tin Sheds Fine Arts Workshop has had many evolutions over its continuing 40 plus year history. In 1973, Guy Warren was appointed as the workshop's inaugural director, with the workshop evolving into a gallery in 1987. Therese Kenyon, in her text on the history of the Tin Sheds, titled *Under a Hot Tin Roof*, which is a history to its point of publication – 1995 - divides the activities and evolutions of the Tin Sheds into five key periods, identifying the Earthworks Poster Collective (1972-1979); the Women's Art Movement in Australia (1973-1980); Peter Kennedy's involvement and the professionalisation of the Tin Sheds (1980-1985); the creation of a new public image and the Tin Sheds Gallery (1986-1989); and Kenyon's own period of directorship (1990-1995).

In July, 2004, the Tin Sheds moved premises and is presently a white cube university gallery that still engages in socially and politically engaged art, as well as fine art exhibitions. The current Tin Sheds Gallery director is Zanny Begg. The Tin Sheds Fine Arts Workshop (Sheds) originated as a workshop where artistic practice and praxis were explored. It began as a space that was associated with the formation of the first ideological ARI, as previously discussed in this chapter. The second phase of the Sheds, 1973-1980, saw the artists involved take an interest in political art. *Many artists took to a politicised extension of the art and life idea inherent in conceptual art, bringing to it the notion of working within a community through women's art, community arts, some aspect of performance art and the art and working life movement* (S. Jones 160). As previously asserted, the Sheds themselves are not identified as an ARI, ideological or community, even though the Earthworks Poster Collective, which originated out of the Sheds, is identified as one of the first community ARIs.

In 1974, at a National Seminar on Education, Warren stated that [t]he growth of the

Workshop [Sheds] has been organic. Its genesis came about because of a need; its growth has been constant and healthy because of the continuing pressure of needs and demands and healthy community within which we find ourselves. It was not set up in order to achieve somebody's aim (Kenyon 18).

After Warren left the Sheds in 1975 to become Head of Painting at the new Sydney College of the Arts, the two main contenders for the appointment of Director of the Sheds were Parr, who was often a guest lecturer, and Joan Grounds (Kenyon 23). The appointment of the second Director was important, as it cemented the evolution of the Sheds. J. Grounds encouraged *openness and collective decision making; awareness of the connections to the local community, wanting to give something back to the community; political questioning; feminism; and artists' rights* (Kenyon 44) and was appointed the Director in 1975. If Parr had been appointed the Director, the next phase of the Sheds would probably have been a further exploration of conceptual and experimental art. Instead, the Sheds played host to political activism and community awareness demonstrated through the arts.

The next generation of political artists and activists took over and left the established art practices behind. This group was more galvanised into more public expression by the Whitlam sacking in 1975 (Kenyon 23). The art, in a sense, came second to the cause. The exploration of the craft of poster making was used as a cost effective means to pursue political activism. The work became directed largely towards community and political activism and the production of artworks that aided those activities with minimal costs and maximum impact (S. Jones 184).

At the time, the production of posters was growing in popularity globally, and was a tried and tested means of political communication, as it gave artists and activists a means of direct

public expression.⁹⁸ Michael Callaghan, an Earthworks member, stated *[y]ou could solve almost any problem with a poster in those days!* (Kenyon 46).

The May revolution in Paris in 1968, when art students occupied Ecole des Beaux Arts, was a watershed in poster making activity. The students and poster makers ran a print outlet to keep people informed of issues and information - as an alternative to the tightly controlled mainstream press - by speedily producing simple, powerful, political posters to be immediately circulated on the streets of Paris. (Kenyon 36)

The Earthworks Poster Collective (Earthworks) period at the Sheds occurred from 1972 to 1979. In 1971, the production of posters began at the Sheds, with an 18 year-old Colin Little initiating the Earthworks Poster Company, which expanded into a collective in 1972. The original members were Little and Mitch Johnson, with peripheral contributors, who were not strictly members, including Mostyn Bramley Moore, Sam Bienstock, Tim Burns and the Optronic Kinetics Collective. In 1974, the Earthworks members changed, with Chips Mackinolty, Toni Roberts and Mark Arbuzz taking over the collective as Little prepared to depart for Japan. In 1976, Callaghan joined; 1977 saw Marie McMahon, Jan Mackay and Ray Young join; and, finally, in 1978, Jan Fieldsend joined Earthworks. The Sheds provided a community for the political ideas promoted by Earthworks and an environment where artistic activity was completely connected to life. Fieldsend stated *[t]here was a large vibrant community that Earthworks was part of... it was not just a political thing, it was a total social environment. People lived there; we went to dances together; we ate together;*

98 Milliss also discusses the importance of banners, posters and pamphlets in Union culture, from the practical need to communicate to being an identifiable visual language, stating *[a]ll significant forms of union culture occur within those processes, from the humble campaign pamphlet to the resplendent banners carried in marches* (Milliss and Burn, *Art and Working Life*).

partied together (Kenyon 42).

The Earthworks members called themselves workers, not artists, with the original members being proud of the fact that they were not trained artists. This concept of the Earthworks members seeing themselves, primarily, as cultural workers and not artists is important, as it acts as evidence of the ethos and situation promoted by Milliss of getting artists to view themselves differently. Milliss states:

My personal agenda was to break the whole way artists thought of themselves. Even thinking and speaking of art as an industry was a major conceptual break; before that, being an artist was a "vocation", like being a nun or priest, and then, as now, the main politics practiced was about identity posturing and self-advancement through style cliques. I thought that the only way of breaking this was to try and demystify it, to get people to recognise that they were all just producing objects for sale like everyone else. (Grace)

None of the Earthworks members signed their posters; instead, the Earthworks logo was used, adding to the collective nature of the group. *The idea behind the screen-printing collective was that anyone who wanted to make a poster could do so and use the earthworks symbol - the triangle enclosing the eye - if they wanted* (Kenyon 42). The strong face of collectivism was another aspect of the breaking away from the “artist as hero” concept and from the romantic idea of the sole artistic creator. It was in keeping with the concept, promoted by Milliss, of artists as cultural workers and agents of social change. Everyone was paid the same - designer, printer and stacker – and, often, if the group for which the poster was produced could not afford the cost, the poster was created for minimal or no money.

The posters were originally psychedelic in design, influenced by popular culture and music, including Beatles album covers, and oriental and eastern mystic symbolism, such as the use of Egyptian symbolism in the earthworks logo, inspired by the Aquarius Festival held in Nimbin from 12 to 23 May, 1973.⁹⁹ In 1975, influenced by the change in Government, the posters adopted a much more political sway, reflecting the broad social concerns of the time. They were often inscribed with slogans such as *Another social reality by Earthworks Poster Collective*, or *Earthworks for the good of the community* (Butler). At the time, the main Earthworks clients were the Anarchist Movement, International Socialists, Socialists Workers Party, anarchist feminist groups, and the Communist Party (Kenyon 47). Mackay and McMahon both lived in a building on Victoria Street in Potts Point. In 1975, Mackay made a poster about the proposed development in Victoria Street.

In 1977, between 14 September and 1 October, Mackinolyt and Roberts held a survey show of political posters at Watters Gallery, titled *Walls Sometimes Speak*. The exhibition was also shown at the Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide and at George Patton in Melbourne. The exhibition was used as a means to mollify the University of Sydney, which was noticing that aggressive political posters were being produced from a University-funded workshop. *Earthworks thought something could be gained by putting them into a “respectable” art context* (Kenyon 49). Even the rationale behind the exhibition - that of creating a situation to justify the “radical” nature of the posters as artistic liberty - was intended as an effort to subvert the University from shutting Earthworks down. This, in fact, aided in the self-perpetuating cycle of invalidation of the collective through the promotion of the poster as a commodity, with the posters themselves becoming collectables that increased in value with

⁹⁹ The Aquarius Festival was a counter-cultural arts and music festival organised by the Australian Union of Students. There were four festivals from 1966 to 1973, held in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Nimbin (Kimball).

age. *Consequently, one could argue that the poster-makers have bought into the gallery system and all that represents* (Kenyon 49).

This is presented in contrast to an earlier attempt to exhibit posters. In late 1972, Little and Aleks Danko, a lecturer at the Sheds, created *The Laughing Wall*, a project in keeping with Dadaism, for which the front fence of the Sheds was covered with posters for “public appreciation” (Kenyon 38). *The repetition of the word as image, with alternating positive and negative backgrounds, sets up “the laugh”. It took the screen-printing process away from the usual didactic message and into a conceptual area* (Kenyon 38). The collective and political concepts, which so completely informed Earthworks and, in essence, became their ideology, coupled with the elimination of a distinction between art and life, acted as disqualifiers once the collective became an accepted creator of collectable cultural commodities, adding to the self-perpetuating cycle of the invalidation of ARIs. In 1979, Earthworks disbanded. The complete immersion of the collective with life left the members exhausted, as work became life and life was work, with Callaghan stating

I think Earthworks was at a point where everyone was exhausted - we had no money and, in some cases, no homes. It was getting hard to cope without material possessions... Ultimately, the main reason why I left the Sheds was that I thought Earthworks was just going around in circles and I couldn't stand it! It was chewing us up. It wasn't how we wanted it to be and we had tried hard to avert it, but it's how organic structures tend to go. (Kenyon 51)

This concept of life becoming work was asserted by Conroy at WAH when he stated that

Capital has invaded the social. Whereas before it was tied to a working class and restricted to waged labour, now it has become de-territorialised and pervades a never-ending field of supply, where we are perpetually fuelling it. In other words, it has converted all of life to labour. Not just the 9–5. (Conroy, From the ARSE end of the World)

Through the desire to connect life and art completely, and through the alteration of the conception of the artist to that of a worker creating culture, life essentially became labour. In an interview in 1993, Milliss, in reflecting on the Artworkers Union, saw the benefits in holding onto some romantic ideas about art, stating *I used to be opposed to those romantic notions about art - that you had to be mad to be an artist. But I'm reconsidering now; some reckless romanticism is not a bad antidote now that it's swung so far the other way that artists behave like junior executives desperately building voluminous CVs* (Grace 7).

Chapter Three

The Administration of an ARI: Cause and Affect

3.1 Introduction

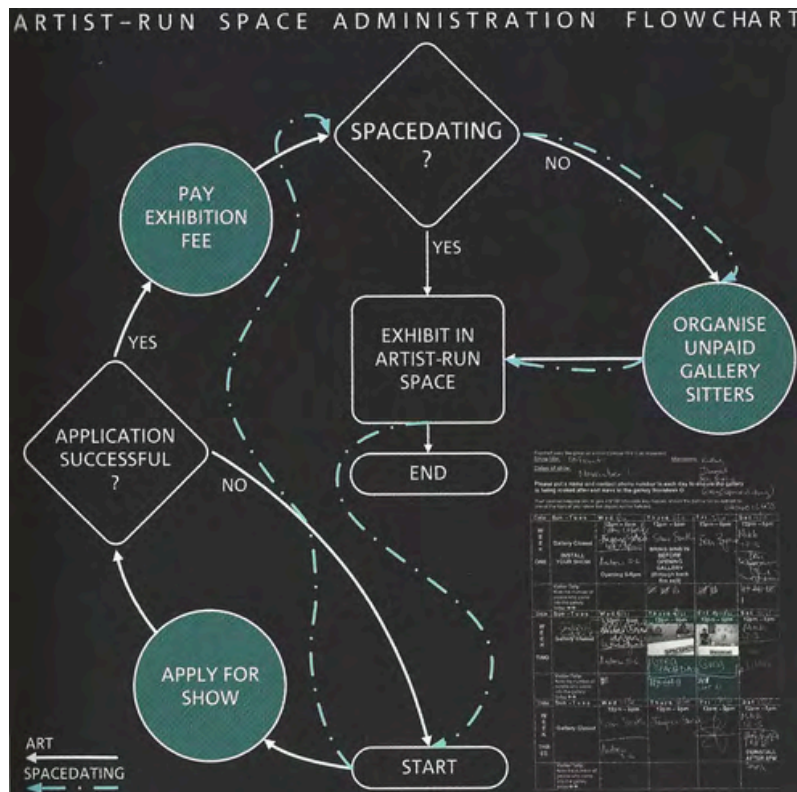


Fig. 3.1

ARIs are a firmly rooted aspect of the Australian arts eco-system. Through their forty or more years of growth, establishment, and development as part of the Australian art world, they have evolved and changed with the times, reflecting the needs, desires and issues of contemporary arts practitioners. ARIs are in a state of constant flux. They are faced with challenges on a daily basis, and are constantly struggling to operate in the face of these

Fig. 3.1 Grzegorz Gawronski, *Artist-Run Administration Flow Chart*, 2006. Self-adhesive vinyl, 150 x 130cm.

Image copyright the artist and cited from the University of Sydney <http://hdl.handle.net/102.100.100/3109>.

For a further explanation of Gawronski's concept of *Spacedating*, a form of invigilating and 'hooking up' while gallery minding an ARI, please view the accompanying YouTube video at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCMGOiSxKBg>.

difficulties, demands and obstacles, which challenge the organisation's ultimate goal and ideology.

A constant issue has been space, and the lack thereof, which is directly linked to funding, and results in the temporary nature of ARIs. The increased demand on the professionalisation of the artist is another issue, as the artist is now needed to up-skill in competencies of business knowledge, which detracts time, effort and energy away from creative projects. Burn out of ARI practitioners and the closure of spaces due to increasing demands are constant threats to ARIs and ARI culture. It is a culture driven by ambition, concepts, opportunities and naivety, which has continued to thrive and grow despite constant challenges and setbacks. ARIs and ARI practitioners are very industrious, entrepreneurial and creative in the way in which they navigate themselves through these issues and adapt to new challenges.

The ingenious business ideas and innovative nature of the creative sector have been widely recognised as important contributors to the economic world, as outlined in Richard Florida's popular text, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, in which he profiles his theory of urban regeneration. In short, Florida identifies that metropolitan areas containing elevated concentrations of creative individuals, including artists and musicians, record a larger level of economic output. In Australia, this has been proven in relation to the Renew Newcastle projects and expansion into Adelaide and beyond, initiated by Marcus Westbury. ARI and ARI cultural practitioners have been identified as making an important contribution to the cultural life of, not only the artistic sector, but also to local communities and society as a whole.

This can be qualified by the increased attention ARIs have received from government funding agencies, including the City of Sydney and the Australian Council over their 40 plus

year history. Initially, this attention was deemed as positive, as the increase in financial and infrastructural support for the growing ARI sector was accepted and desired by the ARI community. However, recently, there has been cause for reflection on how the attention and input of external agencies have impacted the growth and future of ARIs. This chapter addresses the challenges that ARIs have faced; how they have creatively adapted and transformed these challenges into opportunities; and the possible implications of the involvement and support of non-ARI agencies for the development of ARIs and ARI culture.

3.2 The Space Race

A city without artists is a city without soul (Zelinka and Hodinott 22).

As discussed in Chapters One and Two, an ARI has a fundamental connection to space. In pragmatic terms, it is where artists create, congregate and explore. In abstract terms, ARIs create and negotiate space - physical or intangible - through imbuing meaning, derived from history and conceptual exploration, into areas. Space is the biggest issue that an ARI must face. Affordable and human-supportable exhibition and studio space is and has been a constant struggle for the inner city artist. The rising costs of rental properties and the re-development of existing sites and spaces into gentrified residential zones is a battle that is constantly being fought between developers, councils, residents and artists. As artist and Tin Sheds director, Zanny Begg, and Squatspace member, Keg de Souza, outline in *There Goes the Neighbourhood*, a reader on the politics of space, *gentrification has never been so fashionable* (Begg and de Souza 7). The term gentrification was first used by sociologist Ruth Glass to describe people from wealthier backgrounds moving into inner city working class suburbs, as occurred in the suburb of Islington, London, in 1964 (16Beaver 61).

Today, the term is used to describe the same phenomenon, but on a global scale. Artists are intrinsically involved in playing a direct role in stimulating gentrification through their creation of desirable and bohemian communities. As artist and activist, Lucas Ihlein, states in his essay on the “Tour of Beauty”,¹⁰⁰ *[a]rtists are thus the avante-garde of gentrification* (47). American geographical researcher, David Ley, states that *gentrification instigated by artists involves that exact same trajectory as the classic Duchamp transformation of garbage*

100 The tour of beauty is a bus/ bike/walking tour, initiated by artists’ collective Squatspace in 2005, which takes groups of people on a half day tour around the suburb of Redfern. While on the tour, people interact with the local community and listen to local speakers talk about changes taking place in the area and issues related to development and space.

into found objects: the movement of [...] a place, from junk to art and then onto commodity
(Ihle 49).

However, gentrification is a paradox, as, once the gentrified community move into a suburb, it is no longer affordable for those who originally created its desirable and fashionable bohemian community. Florida has termed the concentration of practising artists, musicians, writers, designers, and entertainers in an area as the “Bohemian Index”. The term “Bohemia” was coined in 1838 by Balzac and gave reference to

marginal communities living in more or less voluntary poverty, seeing themselves as dedicated to the pursuit of creative, unalienated forms of experience, united by a profound hatred of bourgeois life and everything it stood for. Ideologically, they were about equally likely to be proponents of "art for art's sake" or social revolutionaries.

(Graeber)

The romantic picture painted of the bohemian is presented as a contrast to how the term has developed to be used as a classification to measure the creative capacity of a city.

The issues of gentrification have been around for decades in one form or another; decay and regeneration through gentrification and redevelopment are part of the cycle of cities.

Gentrification is, and has been, a significant issue for Sydney ARIs. It means seeing artists being pushed further and further out of the city, as the large warehouse spaces that were traditionally used by artists for studios and exhibitions, such as Central Street Gallery, are converted into smaller units and apartments. Melletios Kyriakidis, an artist and co-founder of Space 3, an ARI that was located in Chippendale a few doors down from the Wedding Circle and Lanfranchi’s Memorial Discotheque, cites gentrification as the reason why all the

spaces in the area were shut down. Kyriakidis states *[i]t's a classic case - move the artists in, the area gets gentrified; apartments get built up; the artists move out. It happened in Surry Hills ten years ago; it happened to Paddington. It's global* (Creagh 17). In 2005, journalist Sunanda Creagh wrote in *the Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH) that *[t]he closure of Space 3 and the Wedding Circle isn't the end of the Chippendale arts revival, but it does indicate the way the wind is blowing - and that's west* (17). Creagh was giving reference to the suburb of Marrickville becoming the new area inhabited by ARIs. In fact, Marrickville, Leichhardt and South Sydney were already identified as appropriate suburbs for artists to populate in a 1989 Accommodation for Artists report prepared for the Artworkers Union.¹⁰¹ Also, in the seven years since the publication of the article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the wind has blown even further west, with the Parramatta area becoming increasingly populated with ARI practitioners and studios.¹⁰²

More often than not, the battle to keep up with the rising demands of rental prices is lost and this often leads to ARIs closing, contributing to their temporary life span. Artists have reacted to the lack of available space in a multitude of ways, developing new, experimental and visionary space-creating strategies. Examples of these imaginative and desperate strategies include finding abandoned properties and “squatting” till forcefully removed, such as in the case of Squatspace, NSW; creating a national urban regeneration program to breath fresh creative life into emptying cities which began with Renew Newcastle; and grouping together and, collectively, getting into exorbitant amounts of debt by purchasing a venue, as did the founders of the Red Rattler in Marrickville.

101 This report is discussed in more detail further on in this chapter.

102 The Parramatta Artist Studios (building launched in 2006, program launched in 2007) and Pop Up Parramatta (launched in 2010) are provided as evidence to support the claim that ARIs are being pushed further into Western Sydney. The creation of council funded artist centres, which are not the result of artist initiated action, is also indicative of external and corporate agents' use of artists and “bohemians” to gentrify an area.

The phenomenon of the lack of available and affordable space is a current, but not a new, issue.¹⁰³ In 1979, a Sydney based group was formed called *Creative Space*. Based on the organisation S.P.A.C.E. (Space Provision Artistic Cultural and Educational), in the U.K. and founded by artists Bridget Riley and Peter Sedgley in 1968, Creative Space sought to battle the “crisis” situation which saw artists being forced out of the city.

Urban redevelopment is slowly forcing creative people, dependent on work space, out of the city... With... overseas models in mind a group of Sydney artists joined together this year to form an organization to find cheap working space... Creative Space is a non-profit making, non-political organisation which finds working space for artists within the inner city. (Downie, Space Race Now 13)

Creative Space identified the many empty buildings in the process of re-development in the inner city (which, at the time, included the Haymarket building that belonged to the University of Sydney) that could function as temporary working spaces for artists.

Speculation and redevelopment within Sydney has brought about a very fluid situation whereby buildings often remain empty for long periods of time. Many of these buildings would make suitable working space for artists with no alteration whatsoever. It is strongly felt that the renting of such spaces would have many advantages, not only for the artists, but also for the owners... By the mere fact of the

103 Milliss, while working in the 1980s for the Artworkers Union, recalled a meeting between Artworkers Union committee members (artists) and union officials during which the issue of workspace and site was misinterpreted, stating *several of the artists launched into this nonsense about how they wanted to enter into a dialogue with the union movement about the concept of the word “site”*. When the unionists pointed out that a site was just a workplace the artists argued against this in *bizarre fashionable French-pseudo-philosophy gibberish* (Grace 5). As well as providing an interesting look into the Artworkers Union at the time, this provides evidence that the debate on site and space has been an ongoing one.

building being occupied, destructive vandalism and deterioration through neglect would be thwarted. (Downie, Space Race Now 13)

Another recommendation of Creative Space was to generate communication and connections with overseas organisations, such as S.P.A.C.E., in order to share knowledge issues faced by artists globally, such as the lack of working space.

In the 1987 VAB report titled *Artist Run Spaces*, K. Brown outlines the issues ARIs faced at the time as identified by external funding agencies, namely the Australia Council. This report outlines examples of types of spaces and was a pragmatic and sociological examination of the physical sites and community contributions of artist-run spaces. It provides a wide cross section of the many different types of artist-run spaces existing all over Australia. Amongst the identified areas of concern were the lack of available studio space, exhibition venues, information and resources and the lack of available funding to address these issues. K. Brown identified the desire for an information network amongst ARI practitioners as a central need, stating:

for many spaces the process of development has been, and continues to be, carried out in isolation. In this respect, establishing contact with similar groups (particularly for those spaces in non-metropolitan areas) can reduce the need to “reinvent the wheel” through access to the experience and knowledge of others... many spaces contacted in this review consider it essential that efforts be made to overcome this isolation by establishing an information network amongst artist run spaces. (K. Brown 58)

The provision of an “information network” for emerging artists has also been cited as a need by contemporary arts workers. In September 2009, Virginia Judge MP, in her then position of Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts, initiated a series of Creative Industries forums that were held over a series of months between late 2009 and early 2010.¹⁰⁴ These forums brought together key arts practitioners and organisers to speculate and discuss the then current situation of the arts in New South Wales. The second forum in the series of five brought together those working in the visual arts, including individuals representing ARIs, commercial galleries, Universities and other areas. In the visual arts creative forum ten groups, of around ten individuals each, representing a wide aspect of the visual arts, broke off to discuss issues and ideas regarding how to support the creativity already being developed in the community. A desirable and common solution that evolved amongst the “think tank” groups was the development of “one-stop shops”. These one-stop shops were outlined as organisations that would provide accessible and relevant information to aid the transition from emerging to professional arts practitioner.

In the late 1980s, ARIs were gaining much attention, from both external and internal sources. As well as the VAB report in 1987, [i]n 1988, *the Australia Council commissioned the National Association of Visual Arts, in Association with the Victorian Ministry of the Arts to produce a report on Assistance for Emerging Visual Artists* (Bateman 11). The NAVA report, titled *The Emerging Artist Report*, was specific to Victoria and the city of Melbourne, but the issues identified were relevant nationwide. The report was conducted by Sue McCulloch, with Rose Lang, Director of 200 Gertrude Street (now known as Gertrude Contemporary), acting as consultant on the needs of emerging artists in the visual arts and

104 The first Creative Industry Forum brought together practitioners working in the live music industry (with a focus on jazz); the second on the visual arts sector; the third focused on the performing arts and theatre; the fourth explored the film and screen sector; followed, importantly, by an all-in gathering of representatives to discuss the implications of the forums on government arts policy and strategies (Baxter).

craft sector. An excerpt from Lang's report was published in the September issue of the 1989 NAVA newsletter. *This document and a policy paper for the visual arts and crafts in NSW both pinpoint the lack of affordable space as a critical issue* (Bateman 11).

In April 1989, Artspace held a public forum centred on the issue of securing housing for artists and arts organisations. It was a component of the project *Endangered Spaces: Artist Run Initiatives in New South Wales*, which outlined the then predicament of ARIs as experienced by the practitioners. Representatives from the Australia Council, the Office of the Minister for the Arts, artists and ARI practitioners attended the Endangered Spaces forum (Zelinka and Hodinott 1). The keynote speaker at the forum was Jero Nesson, an urban planner and Director of Artspace Inc. in Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A., who had recently published a book titled *Artists in space: A Handbook for Developing Artists' Studio Space*. Nesson was known for his efforts in assisting artist co-operatives to buy real estate and obtain secure and affordable living and working space.

Contributors to the accompanying Endangered Spaces forum publication included Downie (also a member of Creative Spaces); founder of April films, Phillippa Bateman; Indigenous Art, history and anthropology researcher, Sylvia Kleinert; artist, Adrienne Doig; and artist, writer and founding co-director of First Draft, Tess Horwitz. *The presence of this range of people testified to the severity of the problem of suitable accommodation* (Zelinka and Hodinott 1). The Endangered Spaces forum was an influential and significant occasion on the ARI calendar, as it was the catalyst for the 1989 *Accommodation for Artists* report prepared for the Artworkers Union, and was also mentioned in the September issue of the 1989 NAVA newsletter, previously cited. In the Endangered Spaces catalogue, Downie states that [t]he life of many [artist-run] initiatives is dictated by planning agendas (5). The past 20 years have seen the urban planning agendas sway, primarily, from commercial to

residential, yet the result is still the same - *an accelerated process of large-scale evictions of artists' studios and galleries for redevelopment purposes* (Downie, *Cutting the Fringe* 8).

In 1989, the Artworkers Union (NSW) commissioned the creation of a report titled *Accommodation for Artists*. The research team who carried out the research and compiled the findings was comprised of Sue Zelinka and John Hodinott (The Research Team). This report provided practical advice on obtaining rental space and ways to combat rising property prices in Sydney, which Nesson had deemed as being *more volatile even than Boston's, which he claimed was "the hottest" in the U.S.A.* (Zelinka and Hodinott 2). The report identified that there were, and still are, essentially, only three ways an artist can obtain property on which to live or work, which are: to lease it; to buy it; or to have it given to them for free or in exchange for some service. The third way to obtain property to work in - being granted access to free studios in exchange for services - was a pre-emptive discussion on the concept of artists being involved in urban renewal.

Tim Jacobs, then Director of the Visual Arts/Craft Board of the Australia Council stated, in speaking at the Endangered Spaces forum, that the VAB, *during the 1970s and 80s, assumed that the major need of a visual artist was time to work* (Zelinka and Hodinott 26), thus the VAB had created and structured policies to provide grants for artists to "buy time". [T]he *last two or three years [1987, 1988 & 1989] had shown that the need for working space was emerging as the major need facing artists* (Zelinka and Hodinott 26). Jacobs also recognised that artists need certain requirements for space, and cannot be placed just anywhere, and *that a move to more outlying areas of Sydney would not be a viable option for artists* (Zelinka and Hodinott 27). Artists need to be located within a city, close to transport and resources. According to Jacobs, the best long-term solution to the problem of artist obtaining space was

to develop a political and cultural context which sees artists in cities as a valuable asset. If this were the case, building owners would make space available to artists as a socially conscious and desirable act; local government would also require developers to make some provisions for artists just as they have to make provisions for cars. (Zelinka and Hodinott 28)

The research team put forth the proposal of employing a building projects consultant, which would be the best method of using the VAB's available funds *to lay the foundations for a lasting solution to the problem of accommodation for artists (Zelinka and Hodinott 27).*

The issues of space extend further than the pragmatic need of artists requiring space to create. Space is also how communities are formed, neighbourhoods grow, and where culture is created. *You Are Here* is a Sydney based art collective and community ARI, founded in 2006 by Begg and de Souza, which focuses on social and spatial mapping. In 2008, *You Are Here* initiated the project *There Goes the Neighbourhood*, which culminated in an exhibition, and an accompanying text of the same title, which was launched at Performance Space at Sydney's Carriageworks in May, 2009.

There Goes the Neighbourhood was the ironic chorus to the 1992 Body Count song which lamented the invasion of the once poor (and Black) into the neighbourhood of the rich and white. But an alternative destruction of "The Neighbourhood" can happen when the poor get pushed out of their local community as part of the process of gentrification. (de Souza and Begg 130)

The exhibition focused on the inner city suburb of Redfern, which is, and has been, home to a large Indigenous and working class population for a number of decades. A varied

programme of community based events and discussions ran concurrently with the exhibition, including the Squatspace organised “Tour of Beauty”.¹⁰⁵ The four-hour plus walking/biking or bus tour began five years ago as a means of informing people about the Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA), which was formed by the New South Wales government in 2004. A key concept that the tour wished to impart was the idea of urban redevelopment at the cost of local communities. Redfern is a desirable area, as it is close to the inner city, has good transport systems that service it, including multiple train lines and buses, and still has a relatively large amount of undeveloped properties and assets, such as the Rachel Forster Women’s Hospital that was sold to be developed into a 150 capacity residential dwelling valued at \$70 million upon completion. Historically similar to the situation that instigated the Victoria Street green ban in 1973, *There Goes the Neighbourhood* wished to communicate the sense of community the Redfern area already held without the need for redevelopment.

105 Squatspace uses the medium of community walks and tours frequently to highlight local historical and contemporary issues. Squatspace co-curated five unique walks to accompany the 2011 Green Ban 40 year Anniversary exhibition which highlighted different aspects of the Woollahooloo area and the Green Ban movement.

Squatting and Space

Squatting has been used as a campaign of direct political action for decades. From the student sit-ins of the 1960s to the 2011 Occupy Wall Street movement that has spread globally, occupying a space for protest in order to incite awareness and change, squatting is a proven and effective form of political action. The term itself - to squat - is referential to a grassroots activity - assuming a posture close to the ground, and adopting a position close to the action. Australia has a colourful squatting history, which includes the 1946 Squatting Campaign (a national movement, initiated by the Communist Party Australia (CPA), to address the post war housing shortage); the Victoria Street green bans squats; the Darlinghurst squats of the mid-1980s (which, according to former resident and artist, Simon Hunt, *extended along Palmer St from Cathedral St in Woolloomooloo all the way up to Stanley St, with much of Bourke St between William and Stanley St also included. This community was home to many artists and musicians* (McIntyre and McGrath); and the University of Sydney student squatting actions of the 1990s.¹⁰⁶ Squatting also occurred at the Tin Sheds, as a means of undermining the authority of the landlord, in this case the University of Sydney.

In February, 2000, a collective of individuals from the Sydney Housing Action Collective (SHAC), including plumbers, musicians and artists, following an eviction from a building owned by the Shell corporation, entered and transformed the run down and long-time empty South Sydney City Council-owned buildings on Broadway into habitable spaces and began creatively living in them. These buildings became known, collectively, as the Broadway Squats (Squats), and consisted of four buildings - The Keep, The Garrison, The Citadel, the

¹⁰⁶ Squatters and artists, Iain McIntyre and Shane McGrath, curate a blog dedicated to archiving and documenting Australia's squatting history, where information on the above mentioned squatting activities can be found. Titled the *Australian Museum of Squatting* it is accessible at <http://www.australianmuseumofsquatting.org>.

female squat, and The Yo-Yo, named in honour of the difficult staircase one needed to manoeuvre to enter the building. Each building was an autonomous home for its inhabitants. Each building could look after its own situation without any need for large-scale meetings across all four buildings to address living needs. This also created a sense of community amongst household members. A collection of artists and activists - Mickie Quick, Lucas Ihlein, Danae and Arlene Texta Queen - from the Squats cleared out an old run down and messy locksmith shop located on street level, under The Keep building, and opened an art gallery in December, 2000, after the Squats had been discovered and become public), called Squatspace. An information shop was also opened under The Garrison building, along with a café called *Recuisine Machine*.



Fig. 3.2

Fig. 3. 2 Image of the Squatspace Gallery on Broadway, taken in 2000 and featuring the plywood title of the inaugural Squatspace exhibition, *Don't Board it Up, Live it Up*.

Image courtesy: Lucas Ihlein.

They carved the name of the exhibition in 3D letters; they stayed up till 5am sawing up in the street while their fellow squatters screamed at them to knock it off and go to bed. When the crowd started arriving at six, only the top half – Don't Board It Up - was visible, but around seven - with the huge crowd already milling around on the pavement - the women of Broadway broke down the door, exposing the rest of the message (McGrath).

The reason why the group named the gallery Squatspace was discussed in an interview between squatting enthusiast, Shane McGrath, and Squatspace members, Quick, de Souza and Ihlein, with Ihlein stating that [e]very fucking space in Sydney had “space” in its name. *Artspace... It was an imperative* (McGrath). The Squatspace gallery opposed the standard “pay-as-you-show” system used by many ARIs in Sydney. Exhibiting was free, with artists becoming involved in the life of the squatting community in one way or another. The gallery implemented a policy that required exhibiting artists to leave the gallery as they had inherited it from the previous exhibition and add to it, as opposed to painting the walls white and deleting the history of the previous occupant. What developed was a six-month programme of artists who created site-specific works in the Squats community. *The art was explicitly political, or otherwise at odds with art world orthodoxies* (McGrath). The inaugural exhibition was called *Don’t Board It Up, Live It Up* and included wall projections of the history of the Squats, which featured council plans of the Squats and images of the squatting community. *The Squats not only provided housing and a social space for a variety of activities, but also created a vibrant and highly visible symbol of resistance to the gentrification caused by the 2000 Olympics* (Squatspace).

The Squats, and, consequently, the Squatspace gallery, became involved in a long and drawn out eviction campaign, which concluded when they were granted a caretaker’s lease and evicted in July 2001. Being located on a high-density traffic road in the city, prior to being evicted, the Squatters used their location to promote their cause, creating large-scale banners emblazoned with pro-squatting slogans such as *Squatting: It’s as Safe as Houses*.¹⁰⁷ After the eviction, Squatspace evolved into a space-less organisation, similarly to the evolution of

107 Reminiscent of the Earthworks Poster Collective and their political slogans, other commonalities between the two ARIs, although occurring 30 years apart, are the elements of Squatting, and using the mediums of printing, as Quick and Ihlein are both members of Big Fag Press, an artist-run printing collective that operates out of the Firstdraft Depot.

Inhibodress into a spaceless concept in 1973, and turned to organising events, co-ordinating projects, and hosting websites focused on the politics and pleasures of space in the urban environment. In 2002, Squatspace initiated a project as part of the *This Is Not Art Festival* (TINA) in Newcastle to draw attention to the disused buildings that were becoming more and more available in the Newcastle CDB.

Renewing a City



Fig. 3.3

Newcastle, a coastal city north of Sydney, has seen the closure of many city centre shops. Once a thriving inner city shopping district, the Hunter Street Mall, and the entire length of Hunter Street, has been slowly closing down over the past couple of decades. In 2009, 150 boarded up buildings and closed down businesses were counted along Hunter Street in the Newcastle CBD.¹⁰⁸ The closure of Hunter Street is due to a number of factors, mainly the development of large-scale shopping malls outside the city in surrounding suburbs.

Fig. 3.3 Image of an abandoned and boarded up building along Hunter Street in Newcastle, NSW. It was taken while attending the 2009 This Is Not Art (TINA) festival held in Newcastle each year. Image by Amy Griffiths.
108 This figure was personally counted by Marcus Westbury walking along the length of Hunter Street and reported on his blog *Marcus Westbury. My Life. On the Internets*. 9 Oct. 2010. <http://www.marcuswestbury.net>.

In 2002, Squatspace initiated a project titled *unReal Estate*, which addressed the issue of the many empty properties in the Newcastle CBD and the potential opportunities these properties offered. The Squatspace collective erected a real estate storefront along the Hunter Street Mall, in front of a boarded up shop, advertising abandoned properties that could be occupied for nothing, as long as you were willing to Squat (Gadd).



Abandoned unREAL ESTATE

DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH!

This gem of a building located in the gothic precinct of West Newcastle is the jewel in the crown of the city's empties. Classic post-art-deco styling up top, grungy postor wall on street level, and, out the back, a fully secluded nature space to call your own. This one was hewn from the same blood sweat and tears as Newcastle itself, and you, too, may have to carve out your own way - note that the owner has removed half the rear staircase!

Hunter Street; Newcastle West

Don't Let Houses Rot!

Figs. 3.4 & 3.5

Figs. 3.4 Fig 3.5 *unReal Estate* in Newcastle Mall. Squatspace. 2002. Web. 25 Nov. 2009.

<<http://squatspace.com/history/postcards8.php>>. Image permission: Lucas Ihlein.

The project *UnReal Estate*, through a tongue-in cheek manner, was a pre-cursor to the Renew Newcastle urban redevelopment scheme. Marcus Westbury, a Newcastle born self-proclaimed initiator and founder of TINA, does not consider himself to be an artist, yet he has consistently, over the years, worked with artists at a grass roots level to initiate ideas and provide opportunities for them. Westbury saw an opportunity in the vacant buildings and a possible solution to the slow closure of the Newcastle business district. Similar to the Squatspace concept, but developed with Rod Smith from the Commercial Law Group at Sparke Helmore Lawyers so as to ensure it was within legal parameters, the Renew Newcastle project was initiated by Marcus Westbury in 2008.



Fig. 3.6

Fig. 3.6 Image of the Renew Newcastle Headquarters, located at 3 Morgan Street, Newcastle, in a newly revitalised and once disused Church building, St Marks. Image taken while attending the 2009 This Is Not Art (TINA) festival held in Newcastle each year.

Image by Amy Griffiths.

Renew Newcastle is a project that involves landlords and owners of abandoned buildings lending their properties to artists and arts groups for free, on a thirty day rotating contract. This means that, if a commercial party becomes interested in the property, the landlord can ask the Renew Newcastle occupant to leave after a 30-day bracket. This achieves a number of benefits for the landlords, artists and the community. Firstly, the abandoned buildings become occupied, which is the beginning of creating a community. Secondly, they are occupied by a creative industry, promoting a cultural centre that generates visitors and tourism and does not detract from the purely commercial businesses operating in the vicinity. Thirdly, the buildings are maintained and cared for, which reduces the landlord's costs from vandalism, and makes the properties more appealing for commercial lease. Fourthly, artists and "creatives" who have the ambition but not the means get a leg up; they have a gallery to exhibit in, a studio to work in and a venue with which to engage with the community.

By August, 2009, Renew Newcastle had placed 36 projects in what were 24 formerly empty buildings. They included art galleries, studios, web and graphic design businesses, publishers, film and video studios, retail shops, fashion designers, jewellery workshops, milliners, photographic studios and a food co-op. Westbury states that the city is being redefined through how it is used, not through policy, planning and bureaucracy (Westbury, *Renew Newcastle Forum*). In the 2011 Lonely Planet annual guide to the top ten cities in the world, Best in Travel 2011, Newcastle was listed as number nine, with Renew Newcastle cited as a main reason for the city being included in the guide. According to Best in Travel 2011 author, Catherine Le Nevez, Newcastle has seen

an explosion of artists taking advantage of the cheap living costs. Newcastle now has the most artists per capita nationwide and the most galleries - from acclaimed regional centres to independent, artist-run spaces and dozens of disused city-centre buildings

occupied by photographers, fashion designers, digital artists and more as part of the inner-city regeneration scheme, Renew Newcastle. (Le Nevez 127)

As part of the Creative Industries forums, initiated by Judge MP and held at the Parliament House of New South Wales from 2009-2010 Westbury was invited to host a brain storming session forum on ways to apply the foundations of Renew Newcastle in a wider context all over New South Wales. On 7 June, 2010, Judge MP, in her capacity as New South Wales Minister for the Arts, launched the Empty Spaces Project and Toolkit at Fraser Studios.

The Empty Spaces Project aims to encourage the pop-up and short-term reuse of empty spaces for creative and community development. The tools and online social network we are launching will support local leaders and facilitate contact between landlords who have vacant, disused or soon-to-be-redeveloped buildings in town centres and high streets, and tenants who can temporarily fill those “empty spaces” for creative and community uses. (Fox)

The Renew Newcastle model has been applied in varying forms to a number of other Australian cities. These include Renew Adelaide (established in 2010, South Australia); Renew Townsville (established in 2010, Queensland); Pop Up The Rocks (originally set for the period from May to October 2011, but still continuing in March, 2012, New South Wales); Create Innovate Gosford (launched early 2011, New South Wales); Art at the Heart of Lismore (launched 2010, New South Wales); Empty Spaces (launched 2010, New South Wales); Made in Geelong (launched December 2010, Victoria); Pop Up Parramatta (launched 2010, New South Wales) and, of course, nationwide with Renew Australia, launched on 1 October, 2011.

Urban redevelopment via the arts and through the introduction of “bohemian” culture into a neighbourhood is a well-established global process. In August, 2009, a once abandoned seafood market area in downtown Seoul, Korea, became home to a large craft gallery and workshop space known as Sindang Creative Arcade (Kyeong-jin).

[T]his isn't some guerrilla Bohemian operation - it's a government program, made possible thanks to the support of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and the Small and Medium Business Administration, part of a national campaign to preserve and revitalize Korea's traditional markets. According to Culture Minister Yu In-chon and SMBA Director Hong Suk-woo, the organizations agreed to start the Creative Arcade project in late 2009. (Kyeong-jin)

The arcade is focused on connecting with the community, providing classes and workshops for a small fee, as well as selling creative crafts. *The artists and new shop owners are also doing their part to give back to the community, collectively deciding to donate all of their earnings to low-income families struggling with everyday expenses (Kyeong-jin).*

In March 1996, Charles Landry and François Matarasso, published a document titled *The Art of Regeneration: Urban Renewal Through Cultural Activity*, for the not-for-profit U.K. organisation, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The document states that *cultural projects have played an increasingly important role in British urban regeneration since the mid-1980s, but recent developments have focused less on capital projects, and more on the capacity of arts activity to support community-led renewal (Landry and Matarasso 1).* Also, since the publication of Florida's text, many cities in the U.S.A. have been experiencing an influx of creative urban renewal initiatives, as have many areas in Canada.

As previously discussed in Chapter One, Conroy, in her presentation at WAH titled *From the ARSE End of the World*, touched upon the need for creative projects and practitioners to be aware of their situation in regards to external agencies utilising them for their own agendas.

*Richard Florida banged on about the rise of the creative class in the '90s. Sadly, this is still trotted out by those deluded into thinking it means artists will ascend the economic ladder. However, this doctrine is more symptomatic of finance capitalism, the rise in speculative capital and the financial-isation of every aspect of our lives. What Florida fails to do is place the Bohemian index alongside the growing disparity between those who produce surplus value and those who own and redistribute the surplus value. (Conroy, *From the ARSE End of the World*)*

Accommodating Artists

The City of Sydney Council is very supportive in their capacity of lending disused spaces for creative projects as part of the Accommodation Grants Program, initiated in 2008, and the Affordable Creative Spaces Program, initiated in 2011, which has opened up spaces along Oxford Street for creative use.

At a Sydney Arts Management Advisory Group (SAMAG) seminar, titled *Making Space for Creative Communities*, and held on 22 February, 2010, Kiersten Fishburn, Manager of Culture and Libraries at City of Sydney Council (CoS), discussed how the CoS has been facilitating creative projects.¹⁰⁹ This has been achieved by lending many of the newly discovered unused properties in the city centre, such as the 13 toilet blocks and the street sweeper's depot in Woolloomooloo, out to creative producers, and by facilitating negotiations between corporations and creative's, such as Queen Street Studios/Fraser Property for successful Accommodation Grant placements.

Fishburn identifies problems that have arisen since the employment of the Accommodation Grants Program, with the largest area of concern being that there are no organisations or entities to facilitate negotiations for the artists. The CoS states that they do not have the resources to negotiate sites for 20 plus artists and landlords and realtors of unused properties. There are many individual artists ready to utilise the empty spaces, but no entities ready to take on the management of the sites, in the way that Renew Newcastle manages the spaces and acts as the middle man between the artists and the realtors in regards to insurance and amenities, and the Arts Workers Union in the 1970s negotiated working sites for artists.

There are organisations such as NAVA and the Arts Law Centre of Australia, which are both

¹⁰⁹ Other speakers at the 22 February SAMAG seminar were Marcus Westbury, founder of Renew Newcastle; Penelope Benton, co-founder of The Red Rattler; and Tugi Balog, founder of May's Laneway Art Project.

available to assist with issues regarding contracts and the rights of artists, but there are no ARI-specific organisations equipped with a complete understanding of the history and needs of the developing sector, that are available from the onset to negotiate issues of space.

This was also identified as a problem in the 1989 “Accommodation for Artists Report”. A recommendation was put forth for the creation of a Central Studio Register, a part time consultant position that would, essentially, locate studios for artists, performers and crafts people through newspapers and liaise with realtors on negotiating spaces.

This is to no way belittle the efforts in this field that have been made to date by artists committed to helping their colleagues. It merely recognises that property searches are an ongoing and time-consuming business, and practising artists do not have the sort of time this endeavor demands without sacrificing their own work. (Zelinka and Hodinott 12)

One of the first successful Accommodation Grant Placements in Sydney was Fraserstudios. An initiative between Frasers Property, the City of Sydney Council and the performing arts organisation, Queen Street Studios, Fraserstudios was originally only meant to be placed and exist within the space for two years, but the time frame was extended to four - from September, 2008 to June, 2012. In mid-2007, Frasers Property purchased the old Kent Brewery site, on Broadway in Ultimo, from the Foster’s Group. While in the development-waiting period, Frasers Property has allowed three warehouses on the site to be transformed into a temporary creative hub managed by Queen Street Studios.

James Winter and Samantha Chester, co-founders of Queen Street Studios, decided to set up their own studio space for performers after experiencing the lack of studio space available to

performers in Sydney over the past 15 years. At *The Space Race* forum, held as part of Creative Sydney on 28 May, 2009, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Winter stated that

Queen Street began as a space when Sam and I looked at each other and said, "Let's stop whinging, and let's do it ourselves".¹¹⁰ And much to the protest of friends, family, lovers, partners, we foolishly decided to go for it. The most defining moment was after we'd met with our pro bono solicitor and she told us that we'd go bankrupt in three months. Sam and I sat in the car and bawled our eyes out because of what we were embarking on. We'd signed a \$50,000 commercial lease for four years. You know, we're independent artists. That kind of money spooks the hell out of us. We were sole guarantors as well, so if anything screwed up we were going to have to sell our assets if we had to pay it back. (Winter)

In 2011, Chester, in speaking at WAH, stated that, after the initial spooky moment of going into debt to fund their business idea, and beginning to become successful, the best thing about the whole adventure was that businesses and external agencies approached them with opportunities, such as the Accommodation Grant placement with Frasers Property, and their second placement in Heffron Hall in Darlinghurst. This directly supports the claim made by Conroy, at WAH, spoke of ARIs being in a position to state the terms with which they wish to engage with businesses and funding agents.

110 This statement is very similar to the title of a 1979 article by Milliss and Burn titled "Don't Moan, Organise!" in which they address the need for an arts organisation, which later became the Artworkers Union. Milliss, Ian and Ian Burn. "Don't Moan, Organise! (with apologies to Joe Hill)". *Sydney Biennale, White Elephant or Red Herring: Comments from the Art Community*. Sydney: Student Representative Council of the Alexander Mackie College of Advanced Education. 1979. Web. 7 Feb. 2009. <<http://www.ianmilliss.com/documents/DontMoanOrganise.htm>>.

We need to look at our business models as an extension of a sustainable creative practice in redistributing our shared wealth using hybrid models that include the audience as active participants and our art workers as important social and political capital. We need to recognize, not just the distinction of our business model, but we need to be part of a much larger shift which is putting forward a different way for the business community to behave. (Conroy, From the ARSE End of the World)



Fig. 3.7

Fig. 3.7 Creative Sydney, part of the Vivid Sydney festival, “The Space Race”, held 28 May, 2009, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. Left to right: Penelope Benton (co-founder of The Red Rattler), James Winter (co-founder of Queen Street Studios) and Rebecca Conroy (Moderator).

Image copyright and permission: Dee Jefferson for BRAG magazine, 2009.

The Little Engine that Could



Fig. 3.8

In a reaction to venues consistently being closed and shut down by police, council regulations and property developers, a group of female artists and activists - Penelope Benton, Teresa Avila, Patsy Black, NDY and Meredith Williams - came together and formed *The Red Rattler* in 2008. *The Red Rattler* was named after the noisy old trains that used to run around on the Victorian and New South Wales train lines, which were phased out from the 1960s. The venue, which opened its doors to the public in October, 2008, is near to Sydenham train station (in Marrickville) and is also located in an area that, at the beginning of the last century, was called Tramvale Estate. Location was not the only inspiration for the name, as the five artists and activists who, in their own words, *have hocked themselves into major debt*

Fig. 3.8 Image of The Red Rattler interior main stage. Image taken on 5 December 2009; depicts artist Mark Shorter as Tino La Bamba addressing the audience just prior to embarking on an 800 kilometre journey, on a modified bike called "Palatanito", from The Red Rattler in Sydney to Lismore Regional Gallery in NSW, for his work titled *A Spaniard's Journey to Lismore*.

Image by Amy Griffiths.

to buy a quaint old factory in Marrickville (Red Rattler About Us) want to “rattle & shake things up” on the creative space and accessible venue scene, while the colour red is used for its association with left politics, revolution and anarchism. The five founding women purchased the bricks and mortar, renovated the space themselves (with the help of many volunteers) into an environmentally sustainable complex and complied with very expensive fire regulations,¹¹¹ getting themselves into excess of \$1 million in debt in the process.

In an environment of high rents and property prices, the alternative Sydney arts, performance and grassroots community scenes have been operating on a system of unofficial venues (warehouses) that run without relevant licenses. As such, police and councils have systematically shut them down... [The Red Rattler is] a space to address the need for a permanent community venue, which operates legally and can be “depended on” to stay open. (Red Rattler About Us)

Operating on a not-for-profit philosophy, and adhering to a sustainable and eco-friendly energy plan, The Red Rattler is a professionally equipped venue available direct to the community. The five founders do not intend to make a profit off the venue. They have taken on the mortgage as their own personal expense, and none of the funds generated from the venue, from neither bar sales nor venue rental, go to paying the mortgage off. Instead, all the generated income is invested back into the program and space. Once the founders own the building outright, it will be a permanent site for alternative and ARI events, essentially given back to the community.

¹¹¹ Complying with council regulations has been an issue for ARIs since their beginnings, with Parr recollecting that at Inhibodress [w]e also had a running battle with the council who wanted us to spend vast sums on firestairs (Cramer 67), which was cited as an influencing factor in the galleries closure in 1972.

The founders learnt the processes involved with commercial property ownership as they progressed. Legally owning and operating a venue requires permits, compliance with regulations, and business rigmarole not generally associated with the creation of artistic culture. Door frames had to be moved six inches for accessibility and safety regulations, door handles had to be raised and lowered, and a very expensive fire safety system had to be installed before The Red Rattler could open its doors to the public (Benton). As the founders are essentially pioneers in the process of legally owning their ARI venue, there are no provisions in place to assist the process. The founders were unaware of the costs involved in complying with commercial property fire safety regulations, which reportedly cost The Red Rattler more than \$50,000 to install (Benton). There are no grants or funding programmes available for the establishment of such venues or to cover the cost of complying with regulations, as, even though The Red Rattler is a not-for-profit, the founders are still commercial property owners. The founders intend to create a “how to manual” for other ARIs wanting to go down the same path of ownership, which will outline some of the obstacles and hidden issues they had to face in establishing The Red Rattler.

In the 1989 Accommodation for Artists report, The Research Team put forth their recommendations on artists buying property. *Although the idea of artists buying a communal property may still seem somewhat radical, there are many good reasons such a possibility to be taken very seriously* (Zelinka and Hodinott 3). The Research Team put forth models on how artists could buy property, although in the model there was an assumption *that there is a co-ordinator to oversee the negotiations* (Zelinka and Hodinott 16).

We have identified the need for a two-year position, funded preferably from a grant from the Ministry for the Arts, which we have called a Building Project Officer (BPO). This person would have a background in town planning and/or architecture,

strong negotiating skills, access to the financial sector and contacts within the commercial real-estate area. The person would play the role in Sydney that Jero Nesson played in Boston, but with the advantage that many of the initial problems have been identified by Nesson, and we feel that the momentum which seems to have started should not now be lost. (Zelinka and Hodinott 16)

The Research Team also put forth the idea that the Australia Council and the Ministry for the Arts assess how much governmental grant funding is used by artists to subsidise rents, and make provisions for the money to be better spent, and possibly put towards property ownership.

We are aware that property buying is not included within the scope of the Council, but with a considerable portion of the Council's grants money being used for rent or lease, it must be a consideration to try to stem this constant outflow. (Zelinka and Hodinott 17)

Lanfranchi's Memorial Discotheque

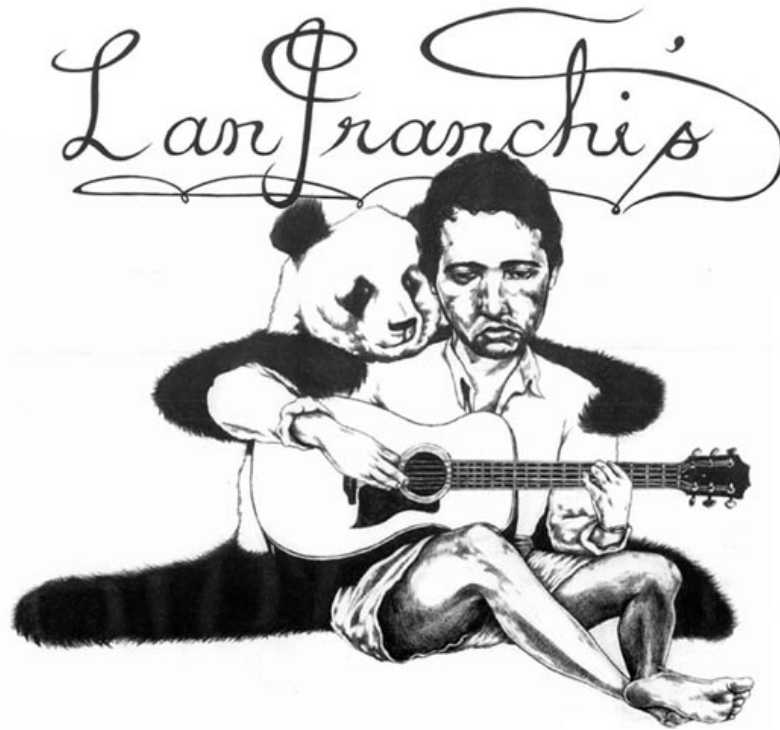


Fig. 3.9

In discussing the issues and impetus behind the formation of The Red Rattler at a public forum at the College of Fine Arts in 2009, Benton cited the closure of *Lanfranchi's Memorial Discothèque* (Lanfranchi's) as a direct catalyst for the creation of The Red Rattler.

Lanfranchi's was an ARI and residential warehouse, located at 140-144 Cleveland Street in Chippendale, in a building known as The Chocolate Factory,¹¹² which operated from 2002 to 2007. The founding members were Alex Davies, Lucas Abela, Brendan Phelan, Dave Harris, Hana Shimada, Joni Taylor and Michael Potas. The impetus behind the formation of Lanfranchi's was the closure of another ARI, called Imperial Slacks. Davies states that,

Fig. 3.9 Image of the *Lanfranchi's Memorial Discotheque* logo, featuring Warren Lanfranchi playing a guitar with a panda bear.

112 The warehouse that housed Lanfranchi's is known as "The Chocolate Factory" from the building's original tenant, *MacRobertson's Steam Confectionery Works*, who produced chocolates, including the Freddo Frog (Baron).

when Imperial Slacks closed, he decided to start another space instead of exhibiting in a commercial gallery. The name *Lanfranchi's Memorial Discothèque* was given to the space as, stated by Abela in Richard Baron's 2010 documentary titled *Lanfranchi's Memorial Discothèque, everyone was pretty heavily into Blue Murder*,¹¹³ *Neddy was floating around the house, everyone was reading that*,¹¹⁴ *so I thought Lanfranchi's Memorial Discothèque* (Baron).¹¹⁵ This is another example of an ARI referencing the space and history of its site in its title, positioning itself within a social and historical context.

The venue was home to a number of people from the creative industry and accommodated studio space, living spaces, sound nights, film screenings and events on a regular basis. There were issues associated with the space being a venue, as well as being a space in which people lived, although there was a constant rotation of residents willing to participate in the community. Lanfranchi's resident, Phoebe Torzillo, states that

the events occurred because of the people who lived there, like the Cab Sav stuff... Cabernet Sauvignon is a collaboration between around 30 people who are making theatre and comedy and performance and we wanted somewhere to perform. We wanted something that wasn't the sort of short works nights we were applying for and performing at in bigger institutions, so we started Cab Sav at Lanfranchi's.

(Baron)

113 *Blue Murder* is a two-part television miniseries from 1995 that was based the relationship between former detective Roger Rogerson and criminal figure Neddy Smith. It is set in 1970s and 1980s Sydney and depicts Neddy Smith's associate Warren Lanfranchi being shot, in front of other officers, by Roger Rogerson in the alley behind the Lanfranchi warehouse.

114 The book referenced as influencing the naming of the space is Smith, Arthur Stanley and Tom Noble. *Neddy: the Life and Crimes of Arthur Stanley Smith: An Autobiography with Tom Noble*. Melbourne: Nobel House Enterprises. 2002. Print.

115 Warren Lanfranchi was allegedly shot and killed by Roger Rogerson in the street behind the building in which Lanfranchi's was housed.

The objective of the ARI was *to create and facilitate interesting new projects, which cannot afford to hire conventional spaces, or which simply don't fit the restrictions normally imposed* (Lanfranchi's Memorial Discotheque). Originally known as a sound venue, Lanfranchi's hosted many alternative and imaginative performances and one off events, including *Wonka! A Live Cinema Remix* (Wonka!),¹¹⁶ mixed gender jelly wrestling matches organised by the Marrickville Jelly Wrestling Federation and Dorkbot.¹¹⁷ Phelan recalls

the first gig was in October, 2002. The first gig was Suicidal Rap. You're not going to get them on down at the local wine bar; that's not going to happen. They have been described as "evil, stupid and wrong", and that's a really accurate description I think, but it's good they happened. (Baron)

Many groups and collectives, such as Cabernet Sauvignon and the Marrickville Jelly Wrestling Federation, have cited Lanfranchi's as being the only venue that would support their activities. The most important aspect about Lanfranchi's was that it was non-discriminatory space available to any and all experimental events. It was a venue for bad performances, amazing and popular shows, and strange and experimental sound nights and was also a place where a variety of sub-cultural groups could meet. The culture supported at Lanfranchi's did not have to be successful or popular to gain access to the space.

¹¹⁶ Wonka! was a very popular performance developed and performed at Lanfranchi's, where the performers, being Mark Bradshaw, Zoe Coombs-Marr, Erica Englert, Charlie Garber, Kenzie Larsen, Eddie Sharp, Xannon Shirley and Phoebe Torzillo, removed the sound from the film *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and performed a new script live in front of an audience (Baron).

¹¹⁷ Dokbot is an international collective of groups of "people meeting who do strange things with electricity". There are factions of Dorkbot all over the world, with Dorkbot Sydney beginning at Lanfranchi's in 2006, and it is currently supported by Serial Space. Dorkbot brings together artists, designers, architects, engineers and anyone else interested in electronics, much like the Optronic Kinetics collective that operated out of the Tin Sheds in the early 1970s brought together artists and engineers.

The Lanfranchi's venue was shut down on 25 June, 2007, as were the four other residencies that were housed within the old Chocolate Factory warehouse.¹¹⁸ The eviction of the site was not a friendly affair, and was reminiscent of the situation at the Victoria Street squats in 1970s, with the landlord's representative, who was known as Simon, coming daily to turn the electricity and power off to impel the tenants to vacate the building (Baron).

Lanfranchi's was considered by the ARI community to be one of the last affordable and unrenovated warehouses in the inner city of Sydney. Benton, in discussing the closure of Lanfranchi's and the gentrification paradox, stated that

Lanfranchi's... was shut down, just like so many other ARIs have been shut down over the past ten years as rental prices become unaffordable and landlords kick them out [with the idea of] wow, this is a cultural hub now - let's turn it into something else, and then realise it doesn't work out and the space becomes empty again.

(Benton)

¹¹⁸ At the time, 2007, it was believed a Development Application had been submitted to convert the Lanfranchi's building into backpacker accommodation, although in 2012 the complex instead houses design studios and companies ranging from fashion model casting agencies to professional commercial photography studios.

3.3 Artist Run Initiatives: They Come and They Go

The challenges an ARI faces in trying to secure space in which to operate adds to the temporal nature of ARIs. Other contributing factors to the brief life span of an ARI include the confines and scarcity of accessing funding, which is directly linked to the limitations of voluntary man-hours. Burn out is a key factor in the closure of an ARI, as is the shutting down of venues due to the increased awareness of external agencies, such as local councils and the noise complaints of neighbours, which arises from the often-illegal nature of the establishment.

Begg, co-founder of the ARI the *Wedding Circle*,¹¹⁹ believed it was noise complaints from neighbours that caused the CoS Council to shut down the Chippendale ARI in 2005, although it was reported that [t]he official problem was the holding of "illegal assemblies" (Creagh 17). This is particularly true of the neighbourhood of Marrickville, Sydney, in the late 2000s, which saw the systematic closure of venue after venue. The final closure of Maggotville (MGTVLE), an alternative music venue, in November, 2009, saw the suburb cleared of all alternative cultural venues for a period of time.¹²⁰

Although the closure of a space is not initially deemed as a positive result, the temporary nature of an ARI has been seen to possess intrinsic benefits. Primarily, if the space is closed-down by external agents, the ARI escapes the self-perpetuating cycle of invalidation. The

119 Located at 16-18 Meagher St in Chippendale, the Wedding Circle was a collective exhibition and screening room space that brought together the visual art groups RAW and Subito, media organizations, Pabrik Productions and Cine Esperanza, and a live performance company, Redhanded Projects. It operated for 10 months.

120 Mess + Noise, an Australian music community website, has an archived forum discussion addressing the closure of Maggotville. In the discussion the nature of the venue being illegal is addressed, as is the closure of many venues and not enough opening up to replace the void. It is accessible at <<http://www.messandnoise.com/discussions/225838>>.

self-perpetuating cycle of invalidation, which has been previously discussed with regard to the historical ARIs Inhibodress and Earthworks and the avant-garde, is amended by the theory put forth by Khan of the self-perpetuating motivation system of an artist-run organisation, as cited in Chapter One.

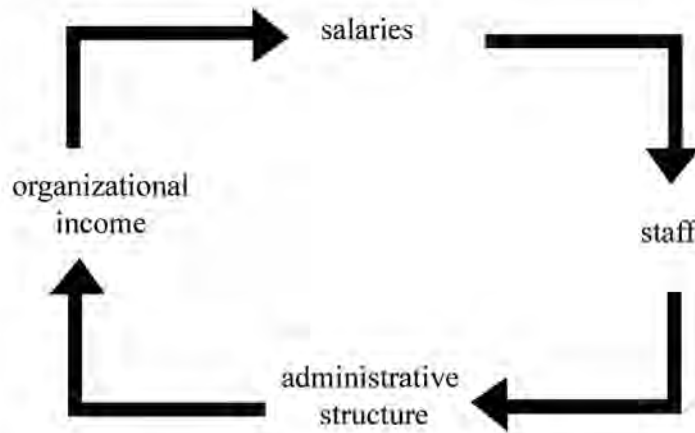


Fig. 3.10

Khan’s theory of alternative spaces of the 1970s becoming institutionalised, and essentially emulating the organisations they originally sought to be an alternative to, in the 1980s is based on the chain of motivation for funding of an artist-run organisation. *The ideal of the alternative spaces was to be an expression of self-responsibility by artists. In the new organisations this became the organization’s responsibility “for” the artist* (Khan 13). According to Khan, when the ARI gains recognition by external agents,¹²¹ (the recognition comes in three forms: 1) funding; 2) acceptance by the art world; and 3) from being instigators of gentrification), this inspires a sense of importance and justification of the ARI, which begins the self-perpetuating cycle of motivation. The motivation of needing funding to continue to operate is derived from the space viewing itself, and being viewed by others, as

Fig. 3.10 Self-perpetuating motivation system of an ARI, re-drawn from a diagram by Stephen Khan. Originally published in:

Khan, Stephen. “Communities of Faith, Communities of Interest”. *Afterimage*. 14.3 (Oct. 1986): 12- 13. Print.

121 Recognition from external agents is inevitable, and possibly why Milliss sought to be “the invisible artist”.

an important resource to the community, and in turn having a responsibility to stay in operation. Batia deduced that self-satisfaction on the part of the artists and participants in the artist-run space is the ultimate purpose, or goal, of these spaces, and that exposure (of their art and practice to the largest audience) is the ultimate source of satisfaction. She also states that *[t]he satisfaction these galleries derive from their activities and independence are crucial to their survival. It is this that keeps their motivation and commitment high enough to continue working toward their goals despite their difficulties* (23). The organisation becomes institutionalised when those involved lose the sense of community original to the organisation and develop different interests and personal ideologies.

As the organizations [sic] grew, the artists staffing them found it increasingly difficult to simultaneously pursue art and administration. Thus many gave up doing art - some permanently, some temporarily - to become administrators. Once this occurred, they discovered that they had different interests than the artists showing in the spaces and no longer constituted a peer group. (Khan 13)

The self-perpetuating cycle of invalidation is based on the ideology of the ARI, as opposed to motivation. While the ARI may or may not have an agreed upon ideology, its activities constitute its central ideology, such as Lanfranchi's playing host to the avant-garde of performance art, and this ideology is generally rooted in the organisation's provision of an alternative opportunity for artists. Once the ARI gains the recognition of external agents via funding or media attention, and becomes an accepted, popular and desirable destination for those external to the ARI, the ARI has invalidated its original ideology of being an alternative as it is now the accepted norm. If the ARI progresses past the cycle of self-invalidation, it will then need to navigate itself around the self-perpetuating cycle of motivation, which sees the ARI become institutionalised.

Torzillo, in discussing the closure of Lanfranchi's, states that she was (almost) glad it shut down when it did, due to the amount of press coverage it had been gaining in the last few years of its operation. Lanfranchi's was cited in publications, such as *The Sydney Morning Herald* and magazines published by the General Pants fashion label, as the space to go to see "hot young bands" (Baron). *Wonka!* was a particularly popular performance, with Torzillo stating that queues of audience members would wrap around the building waiting to enter to watch (Baron). Lanfranchi's was evicted before it had the opportunity to invalidate itself from its original ideology of being a freely accessible and open site for experimental performance and events, and transform into a venue with rules, regulations and structure. Also, Lanfranchi's never received any form of funding for its program of events, not from lack of trying, but because it didn't fit into the prescribed funding guidelines. The space was never applicable to receive funding due to the Australia Council having a policy position that funds are not to be applied to capital expenditure. In this sense, Lanfranchi's never participated in the self-perpetuating cycle of motivation either.

B. Jones has stated that the average life cycle of an ARI in Australia is three years.¹²² *Three years is about as long an artist-run space can sustain unpaid energy with constant financial pressures especially with increasing rents and running costs* (B. Jones). Being temporary means constant closures and constant openings; shorter life cycles generate new growth, new initiatives and new organisations with fresh ideas and new directions, keeping the ARI culture in a cycle of constant regrowth and development, and, most importantly, keeping it relevant and contemporary. When one ARI closes and disappears into remembered history

¹²² The average life cycle of an alternative space in the U.S.A. is much longer, with many reaching the ten-year anniversary mark. Lane Relyea identified that many alternative spaces that survive ten years often publish a ten-year anniversary publication, and this is the best document to discover the history of the alternative spaces outside of the "sanctioned" alternative institutions.

another often pops up to replace the void,¹²³ much like The Red Rattler being formed after the closure of Lanfranchi's, which was formed after the closure of Imperial Slacks.

However, without a central knowledge repository for ARI history, much of the activity and “paved pathways” created by one ARI are unavailable for new ARIs to build upon; instead, they are left to “reinvent the wheel” and re-navigate themselves through the same obstacles.

Westbury has cited destruction, which is to be understood as the end of one organisation and the creation of another, as an important element in the creation of culture. In an article originally published in *The Age*, on 27 April, 2009, Westbury states that

*finding a way to let things die is vitally important in the realm of creativity... Culture is in flux all the time, yet arts funding is often paralysed and fixed. A healthy creative ecology is one that actually encourages variety and change... In Australia, culture is largely resourced and funded in retrospect... Systems to identify, nurture and take risks on new things are inconsistent and poorly designed... Creativity and culture – perhaps more than any other area of our lives – is in a state of constant reinvention. When we act as though culture is the product of fixed organisations and structures to be preserved and defended, we miss the point. Culture isn't just about preserving the legacies of the past. It's also about us. It's about realising the unique possibilities of now. Sometimes creativity needs a little creative destruction. (Westbury, *Creativity needs Creative Destruction*)*

123 Remembered history is used in replacement of recorded history or art history, as documentation of the history of ARIs and alternative spaces is only just now beginning through the work of independent researchers.

Jacqueline Cooke asserts that [u]ntil the publication in 2004 of *Alternative Art New York 1965-1985: A “Cultural Politics” Book for the Social Text Collective*, edited by Julie Ault, there was no comprehensive, critical survey of the alternative or artist-run space in New York (5).

Firstdraft, Final Draft



Fig. 3.11

There are a few exceptions to the average three-year life cycle of ARIs. These exceptions to the rule include ideological ARIs such as Firstdraft (NSW) and Westspace Inc. (VIC), and community ARI, Arc Yinnar (VIC), which have been in operation for over two decades. They function like well-oiled machines, having worked out many of the administrative kinks over their years in operation. Firstdraft has developed into an institution, possibly one of the first successful institutionalised ideological ARIs in Australia, and has been in operation for over 25 years, being *incorporated in 1985 as a non-profit artist managed organisation and established in 1986 with seed funding from the Australia council* (Horwitz 5).¹²⁴ The original

Fig. 3.11 Image of the exterior of Firstdraft gallery, during the 2010 re-launch opening.

Image copyright and courtesy of Firstdraft.

¹²⁴ *First Draft's initial grant of \$2,444.00 from the Visual Arts Board was used to renovate the existing studio into a working exhibiting space, as well as to paying for establishment costs such as incorporation, council approval and so on* (Firstdraft).

co-founders and first group of co-directors of Firstdraft were Tess Horowitz, Paul Saint, Narelle Jubelin and Roger Crawford (Moore).¹²⁵

The current operational model of Firstdraft functions with a board of eight voluntary co-directors, who are practising artists or cultural organisers, with four directors being replaced (via a general call out and subsequent interviews conducted by current directors) each alternate year, on a two-year rotation cycle. The result of this turnover is a reformation and growth in programs, functions and modes of operation with each new directorship, with the intention of breathing fresh air and new ideas into the long-standing ARI, keeping it relevant and contemporary to practising ARI needs. It also addresses the factor of the “burn out” of the voluntary directors, as they know they have a limited period of time to throw themselves into the space.

With each new intake of directors, Firstdraft grows in scope and programming. In 2009, it acquired an additional site, in Woolloomooloo, to that of the current gallery located in Surry Hills. The Firstdraft Depot was made possible by a CoS Accommodation Grant, which subsidises the rent of the oddly shaped old street-sweepers' depot in Woolloomooloo. The Depot is a complex that houses multiple studios and programs, a project space, sub-leases to an additional tenant (Big Fag Press) and requires a paid staff member to manage the space. Firstdraft has evolved over its 25 plus years from a not-for-profit single gallery space into a multi-sited complex offering multiple programs and opportunities for emerging artists, writers, curators and the local community. Firstdraft currently receives Triennial funding from Arts NSW, an Accommodation Grant from the CoS, and a grant from the Australia

¹²⁵ Originally spelt as two words, over the years Firstdraft has become one word. It is thought by the current directors to have been spelt as one word when Firstdraft became incorporated and needed a business name and Australian Business Number (ABN), and First Draft in two words was already in use. It became Firstdraft on official documentation, and remained as First Draft in art circles and discourse, until the administration phased out the use of two words (Clapham).

Council for program funding. The budgeting has grown to such an extent that the organisation requires a bookkeeper to manage the multiple grants and associated acquittals. Firstdraft hosts around 64 exhibitions annually in four gallery spaces; manages multiple emerging writers programs; an emerging curators program; an experimental curators program; creates multiple publications; manages multiple studio spaces; manages studio residency programs; co-hosts multiple mini-festivals; and manages a range of offsite projects such as WAH. The co-directors are all practising artists who also work to subsidise their artistic career, with Firstdraft responsibilities adding to their already full workload.

Over the 25 plus years, there have been close to 100 different co-directors in charge of running Firstdraft. The list of past co-directors boasts some well-known and well-established artists, and other names that have continued to work within and establish other ARIs. They include Joanne McCambridge, Astrid Kriening, Mikala Dwyer, Adriene Boag (1988-1989); Janet Shanks, Kate Mackay, Helga Groves, Vincente Butron (1990-1991); Penelope Thwaite, Simone Patterson, Rod Jacka, Linda Goodman, Ryszard Dabek (1992-1993); Virginia Ross, Sharyn Raggett, Jane Polkinghorne, Helen Hyatt-Johnston, Leanne Barnett (1994-1995); Gianni Wise, Philipa Veitch, Elvis Richardson, Sarah Goffman, Alex Gawronski, Jacqueline Millner, Caitlin Newton Broad (1996-1997); Tanya Peterson, Tess Knight, Peter Fitzpatrick, Simone Douglas (1997-1998); Nairn Scott, Tanya Peterson, Eva Morosy-Weide, Rowena Hall, Simone Douglas (1999-2000); Ingrid Mills, Brenda MacDuff, George Dann, Alex Cyreszko, Vicky Clare (2000-2001); Anthea Behm, Jay Ryves, Lydia Rodrigues, Katie Kaars, Cassy Sutherland (2001-2002); Jaki Middleton, Pascale Hastings, Nathan Dunne, Sonny Day, Cathy Nunn, Alice McAuliffe (2002-2003); Harley Ives, Emma White, Jess Oliveri, Sara Oscar, Anthea Behm (2003-2004); Adam Weiderman, Holly Williams, David Lawrey (2004-2005); Elizabeth Reidy, Katy B Plummer, Mo (Michael) Moran, Kathy Gray (2005-2006); Michaela Gleave (2006-2008), Sean Rafferty, Helena Leslie, Daniel Green

(2006-2007); Camille Serisier, Agatha Gothe-Snape, Penelope Benton (2007- 2008); Kelly Doley, Will French, Cy Norman, Di Smith (2008-2009); Connie Anthes, Debbie Pryor, Kate Scardifield, Jessica Tyrrell (2009-2010); Grace Archibald, Lionel Bawden, Georgie Meagher and Dylan Quirk (2010-2011); Julie Burke and Catherine Connolly (2011); Alexandra Clapham and Dara Gill (2011-2012); Justin Balmain, David Capra, Amy Griffiths, Tesha Jeffres, Amelia Walin and Paul Williams (2012-2013) (Firstdraft).

Firstdraft has carved out a niche for itself in the arts ecosystem, both in Sydney, and nationally. It is a known and respected space in the eyes of those internal to ARI culture and to those external. Firstdraft is viewed as the “big sister” of ARIs and ARI culture, with the organisation hosting programs and events, such as WAH, to aid other ARIs and artists. Funding bodies, such as the CoS, view Firstdraft as the example for other ARIs to follow and emulate. Firstdraft has managed to avoid the self-perpetuating cycle of invalidation, as well as developing into an institutionalised contemporary art space, dramatically different in ideology to when it began, as many artist-run spaces in the U.S.A. did in the 1980s. The rotating directorship is a key aspect to Firstdraft’s success, with the collective and voluntary structure requiring all directors to participate in decision making, resulting in a democratic consensual management structure, as outlined by Batia.

Those which emphasise a democratic consensual management tend to have weekly or monthly membership meetings (in some cases, occasional weekend retreats) when all aspects of the gallery/workshop operations are discussed and decisions are made either by a majority vote or consensus. Personal compatibility and (at times) limited membership size are seen as important to the effectiveness of such methods. In spite of the drawbacks of consensual management - lengthy discussions, persuasions, cajoling, implicit power games and high commitment levels - the artists involved reject overt non-egalitarian tendencies. (Batia 17)

Batia also cites the *Routinization of Charisma* as a possible case for why the older organisations successfully manage themselves. The Routinization of Charisma is the radical alternation of *Charismatic Authority* so the individual who possess the charismatic trait can *take on the character of a permanent relationship forming a stable community of disciples or a band of followers* (Max Weber 54). Charismatic authority, as outlined by sociologist and political economist, Max Weber, is the quality some individuals possess who are viewed as “heroes” or are *set apart from other men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities* (Max Weber 48). A newly established ARI, and its practitioners, can be considered as possessing the quality of charismatic authority, as an ARI and the quality of charismatic authority possess the following characteristics in common:

Disciples or followers tend to live primarily in a communistic relationship (Max Weber 50); *charismatic authority is radically opposed to both rational and particularly bureaucratic authority* (Max Weber 51); *there is no system of formal rules* (Max Weber 51); *in the pure type, it disdains and repudiates economic exploitation of the gifts of grace as a source of income, though, to be sure, this often remains more an ideal than a fact.* (Max Weber 52)

The temporal nature of an ARI can be also understood as an aspect of charismatic authority, as *in its pure form charismatic authority may be said to exist only in the process of originating. It cannot remain stable* (Max Weber 54). For an ARI to take on the character of permanence, the charismatic authority needs to undergo a process of routinisation. The motives underlying the transformation are

a) *The ideal and also the material interests of the followers in the continuation and*

the continual reactivation of the community; and b) the still stronger ideal and also stronger material interest of the members of the administrative staff, the disciples or other followers of the charismatic leader in continuing their relationship. (Max Weber 54)

In regards to the issue of succession, such as in the case of Firstdraft and the continuation of individuals applying to voluntarily co-direct the space, these motivational interests become conspicuously evident. To resolve these issues, either the original charismatic leader participates in the selection of the successor [b]y *the designation on the part of the charismatic leader of his own successor and his recognition on the part of the followers (Max Weber 55); or the [d]esignation of a successor by charismatically qualified administrative staff and his recognition by the community (Max Weber 55).*

It is only in the initial stages and so long as the charismatic leader acts in a way which is completely outside every-day social organisation, that it is possible for his followers to live communistically in a community of faith and enthusiasm (Max Weber 57). This holds true in this case, with Earthworks communally operating and living at The Sheds, and after six years of operation being unable to maintain the *community of faith and enthusiasm*. This also is true in the situation of Lanfranchi's, with regards to the rotation of residents living in the warehouse.

In the case of charismatic authority and the long term career trajectory of ARI practitioners, Max Weber outlines that the majority of members will eventually leave to pursue a different path of creativity, and this is essential for the continuation of the ARI movement, and for the natural progression of *the transformation of the charismatic mission into an office (Max Weber 59).*

Only the member of the small group of enthusiastic disciples and followers are prepared to devote their lives purely idealistically to their call. The great majority of disciples and followers will in the long run “Make their living” out of their “calling” in a material sense as well. Indeed, this must be the case if the movement is not to disintegrate. (Max Weber 57)

In this regard, the self-perpetuating cycle of motivation is inevitable, as for *charisma to be transformed into a permanent routine structure, it is necessary that its anti-economic character should be altered* (Max Weber 60). Much like Khan’s motivational character of the organisation transforming into a site of having a responsibility “to” artists, the ARI *must be adapted to some form of fiscal organisation to provide for the needs of the group and hence the economic conditions necessary for raising... contributions* (Max Weber 60).

The success of Firstdraft, of artists and cultural organisers continuing to apply to voluntarily run the organisation for two years with no fiscal remuneration, is due to the routinisation of charisma, as the co-directors become “authorities” within the ARI community. *With the process of routinisation, the charismatic group tends to develop into one of the forms of every-day authority, particularly... the bureaucratic... this applies to all who participate in the process of appropriation* (Max Weber 60).

The charismatic characteristic of an ARI has been identified by the ARI practitioners themselves as “naivety” (Benton), or “undiluted madness” (Horwitz 10). Regardless of the name, what is understood is that starting an ARI takes an enormous amount of effort, determination and passion. Parr states that it was *[i]deas and a certain openness... youthful inexperience, raw energy, aggression and certainly a measure of idealism gave Inhibodress*

its potential (Cramer 67).

The creation of a new artists' space is very much dependent on a high level of energy and commitment by founding members. Eager to see their objective realised, founding members enthusiastically embark on formulating philosophical and functional directions for the space. Goodwill and a strong collective sense of purpose create a constructive environment in which many problems are revolved, and activities pursued with vitality and innovation. (Brown 57)

3.4 The Economy and Success of the ARI Sector

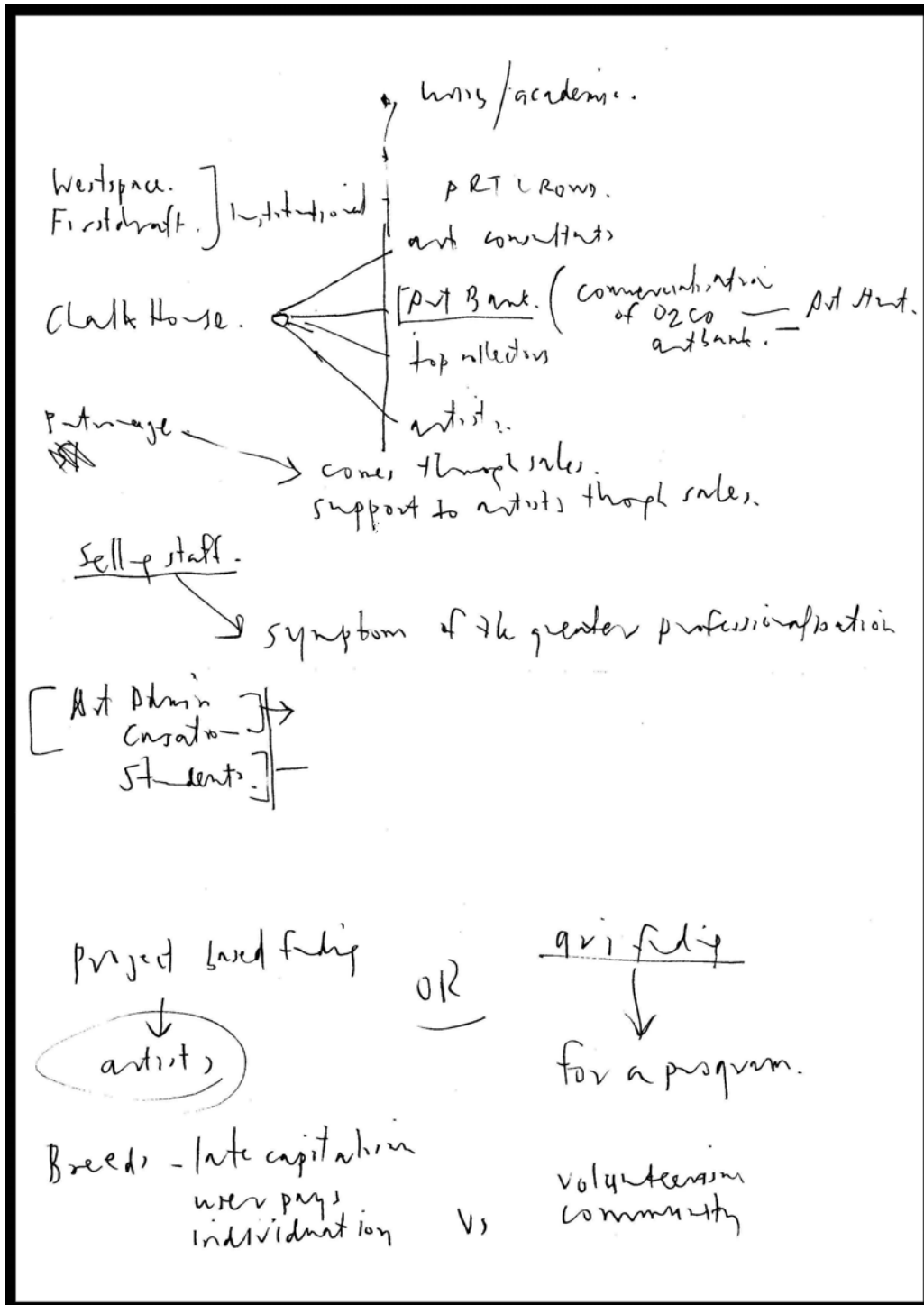


Fig. 3.12

Fig. 3.12 Current ARI funding models diagram. Drawn by Chalk Horse director, Dr Oliver Watts, while in conversation with Amy Griffiths, 24 Jun. 2011.

I[is the] best thing a government can do for artists always to fund them? A preoccupation with funding is understandable but it obscures many other things governments can do to foster a rich and thriving culture (Westbury, *Why governments should do more non-funding the arts*).

Is perpetually funding an ARI through the cycle of grant application and acquittal the best solution to creating a healthy ARI sector? As previously cited, Westbury states that *[i]n Australia, culture is largely resourced and funded in retrospect* (Westbury, *Creativity needs Destruction*). This is not a sustainable model to support the needs and creativity of the dynamic and constantly regenerating ARI sector. Once the organisation is recognised as “worthy” of support, it has already begun the self-perpetuating cycles of invalidation and motivation. ARIs are also at the mercy of the “trends” of the grant system, with funding swaying from supporting an organisation’s infrastructure; to specific programming; to by-passing the ARI altogether and addressing the needs of the individual artist.¹²⁶

The other situation created from the dependency on governmental and external funding is the placement of the sector at the mercy of manipulation, to be employed in the furthering of ulterior agendas, as in the case of urban regeneration. As Tega Brain, a former Lanfranchi’s resident, states, she believes artists are used to “soften” urban areas for redevelopment (Baron).

The Artworkers Union was an organisation that made positive steps towards artists becoming autonomous creators of culture. However, in the mid-1990s, the Artworkers Union amalgamated with Actors Equity and became the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance.

¹²⁶ The formation of the Australia Council \$10,000 Artstart grant for emerging artists, performers and writers has been called “Jobstart” by Chalk Horse ARI director Oliver Watts. *It’s derived from late capitalism again, because it’s about user pays; it’s about individuation versus community versus volunteerism* (Watts). This is provided as evidence of the ARI sector being aware of its dependency on external funding bodies.

*Australian unions face a crisis of declining membership density. An important contributor has been the increased proportion of marginal workers in the total labour force... Visual artists typify the marginal workforce. Most are employed most of the time on a commission or contract basis; their employment is intermittent; their income is appallingly low; and they are poorly unionized. A small majority of visual artists are women. A tiny Artworkers Union struggled to survive from 1979. More recently, the Operative Painters and Decorators Union has attempted to organize artists, gaining awards for them in two states, and pursuing job-creation policies in the building industry for artists. However, the Painters and Decorators' intervention has been controversial, and it has failed to attract many artist members. The new Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance seems to be a more appropriate union.*¹²⁷

(Markey)

In writing about the Union situation, Milliss identifies the creation of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) as a measure to control the art workers sector, as merging with the Operative Painters and Decorators Union (PDU) would result in the sector becoming an autonomous workforce due to the capital that would be generated from the provision put forth regarding murals and monies for creative projects. Milliss states

[i]t had turned out that the PDU in Victoria had for decades had coverage of artists working on murals etc., on building sites, so they proposed to negotiate as part of joint building union site agreements that a percentage of the cost of all major buildings must be spent on commissioned art and craft works, but the artists must be PDU

¹²⁷ According to the Australian Trade Union Archives, the Operative Painters and Decorators Union originated as a craft union in 1918 and carried forth that tradition until its amalgamation into the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union in 1993. The identification of the Operative Painters and Decorators Union as primarily a craft union further obfuscates the reasoning and justification of it not being an “appropriate” pairing for the Artworkers Union (B. Smith).

members. The other building unions agreed and the ACTU also backed it... A few agreements were negotiated which raised several million dollars and it became very obvious that the sort of money that could flow from this would massively dwarf all other forms of visual art funding combined. This horrified the Australia Council and the Visual Arts Board went into full sabotage mode, especially as at that stage the program of union amalgamation and rationalisation had begun, and if the Artworkers Union had amalgamated with the PDU they would have had access to a bonanza that would have really marginalised the Australia Council. The Australia Council then organised a large discussion meeting to promote an amalgamation with Actors Equity and stacked it with supporters. Amalgamation with Equity meant they could all be happy artists together - no money but no scruffy building types to lower the tone or provide real industrial muscle. (Grace)

Although the Artworkers Union was not successful in creating an autonomous arts workers sector, it did lay the foundations for growing awareness of the need for autonomy. In the 1970s, Milliss pursued an agenda of changing the way artists viewed themselves, so they could function autonomously within the arts ecosystem. With the breaking down of the divide between art and life, pursuing an artistic life has developed into constant labour. *In other words, it has converted all of life to labour. Not just the 9–5 (Conroy, From the ARSE End of the World).*

However, a major problem for unionization of artists is the individualism determined largely by the nature of the creative labour process. If unions are to achieve effective coverage of artists, they will need to adopt innovative approaches. (Markey)

To reiterate previous assertions, ARIs are in a position to reform the models with which they

engage with society. In order to *adopt innovative approaches* to engaging with the community, a central repository of knowledge needs to be established so that ARIs can access and share information with each other and build upon the history created by previous ARI practitioners. This will enable the development of a healthy, progressive and autonomous sector.

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Fig. 1.1 Image of the *10% Pending Guerrilla Gallery* taken at the Critical Animals Creative Research Symposium as part of the 2009 This Is Not Art (TINA) Festival, which is held in Newcastle each year.

Copyright: Amy Griffiths.

Fig. 1.2 An inexact graph, indicating the approximate historical development, in terms of phases, of ARIs in Australia; copyright, the author, 2012.

Fig. 1.3 Kerr, Sean. *Run Artist Run*. Mixed media installation at 55 Sydenham Rd, Marrickville, Sydney, 2011.

Image copyright and permission: Sean Kerr.

Fig. 2.1 ARI historical development diagram. Drawn by Chalk Horse director, Dr Oliver Watts, while in conversation with Amy Griffiths. 24 Jun. 2011.

Fig. 2.2 Donald Brook sitting in his *Feathered Office*, the conceptual art intervention by Optronic Kinetics.

Image copyright and courtesy: Bert Flugelman.

Fig. 2.3 Inhibodress entrance, 38–40 Charles Street, Woolloomooloo, Sydney, 1971. An exhibition poster by Bert Flugelman obscures the sign.

Image permission: Mike Parr.

Fig. 2.4 Image of the Yellow House on Macleay Street, Potts Point, 1970s.

Image copyright and permission: Greg Weight.

Fig. 2.5 Copy of the exhibition catalogue cover.

Activities, Performance, Participation, Art by Instruction, held at Inhibodress gallery, May 1971.

Image permission: Mike Parr.

Fig. 2.6 Image of 32-36 Charles Street/79-83 Forbes Street, Woolloomooloo, taken on 6 Sept. 1960.

Image copyright and courtesy: the City of Sydney Archives.

The Hibodress Blouses factory, next door at 38-40 Charles Street, the eventual site of the Inhibodress gallery, can be viewed in the context of its surroundings - an industrial, inner city back street accommodating warehouses and factories.

Fig. 2.7 Image of Forbes Street, near Cathedral Street, Woolloomooloo, taken on 8 Jan. 1973.

Image copyright and courtesy: the City of Sydney Archives.

This image is of the site reserved for the “Peoples Park”, which was used as a car park under the newly constructed railway viaduct. It is the site where Dave Morrissey planted his “art garden”.

Fig. 2.8 Image of Ian Milliss (far left with microphone) out front of number 118 (developed) and 116 (preserved) Victoria Street Kings Cross, speaking on the events of the 1973 Victoria Street green ban as part of the Green Bans 40th Anniversary “Green Ban Walk” held on 20 August, 2011. Next to Milliss is artist Lucas Ihlein, holding a copy of *The City Squatter*, the publication in which Milliss wrote in memory of the Victoria Street squats.

Copyright: Amy Griffiths.

Fig. 3.1 Grzegorz Gawronski, *Artist-Run Administration Flow Chart*, 2006. Self-adhesive vinyl. 150 x 130cm.

Image copyright: the artist; cited from the University of Sydney

<http://hdl.handle.net/102.100.100/3109>.

For a further explanation of Gawronski's concept of "Spacedating", a form of invigilating and "hooking up" while gallery minding an ARI, please view the accompanying YouTube video at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCMGOiSxKBg>>.

Fig. 3. 2 Image of the Squatspace Gallery on Broadway, taken in 2000 and featuring the plywood title of the inaugural Squatspace exhibition *Don't Board it Up, Live it Up*.

Image courtesy: Lucas Ihlein.

They carved the name of the exhibition in 3D letters; they stayed up till 5am sawing up in the street while their fellow squatters screamed at them to knock it off and go to bed. When the crowd started arriving at six, only the top half - Don't Board It Up - was visible, but around seven - with the huge crowd already milling around on the pavement - the women of Broadway broke down the door, exposing the rest of the message (McGrath).

Fig. 3.3 Image of an abandoned and boarded up building on Hunter Street in Newcastle, NSW. It was taken while attending the 2009 This Is Not Art (TINA) festival, which is held in Newcastle each year.

Copyright: Amy Griffiths.

Fig. 3.4 & Fig 3.5 *unReal Estate* in Newcastle Mall. Squatspace. 2002. Web. 25 Nov. 2009. <<http://squatspace.com/history/postcards8.php>>.

Image permission: Lucas Ihlein.

Fig. 3.6 Image of the Renew Newcastle Headquarters, located at 3 Morgan Street, Newcastle, in a once disused and newly revitalised Church building, St Marks. Image taken while attending the 2009 This Is Not Art (TINA) festival held in Newcastle each year.

Copyright: Amy Griffiths.

Fig. 3.7 Creative Sydney, part of the Vivid Sydney festival, "The Space Race", held 28 May, 2009 at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

Left to right: Penelope Benton (co-founder of The Red Rattler), James Winter (co-founder of Queen Street Studios) and Rebecca Conroy (Moderator).

Image copyright and courtesy: Dee Jefferson for BRAG magazine, 2009.

Fig. 3.8 Image of The Red Rattler's interior main stage. Image taken on 5 December 2009; depicts artist Mark Shorter as Tino La Bamba, addressing the audience just prior to embarking on an 800 kilometre journey, on a modified bike called "Palatanito", from The Red Rattler in Sydney to Lismore Regional Gallery in NSW, for his work titled *A Spaniard's Journey to Lismore*.

Copyright: Amy Griffiths.

Fig. 3.9 Image of the *Lanfranchi's Memorial Discotheque* logo, featuring Warren Lanfranchi playing a guitar with a panda bear.

Fig. 3.10 Self-perpetuating organisational income system of an ARI, re-drawn from a diagram by Stephen Khan.

First published in: Khan, Stephen. "Communities of Faith, Communities of Interest". *Afterimage*. 14:3. Oct. 1986. 12-13. Print.

Fig. 3.11 Image of the exterior of Firstdraft gallery during the 2010 re-launch opening. Image copyright and courtesy: Firstdraft.

Fig. 3.12 Current ARI funding models diagram. Drawn by Chalk Horse director, Dr Oliver Watts, while in conversation with Amy Griffiths. 24 Jun. 2011.

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Appendix

An “incomplete” historical list of Australian Artist Run Initiatives.

This list formed the foundation for the Design and Art Australia Online (DAAO) ARI Project that began in 2011. Accessible at <<http://www.daa0.org.au/projects/artist-run-initiatives/>>.

| Year/s | Name of Institution/ Organisation | State/ Address | Key People | Model of Institution/ Information |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| | Workshop Showroom | NSW, St. Peters, 9 Edith Street | | |
| 1900's early | Charm School Artists | NSW, Sydney, Elizabeth Bay House | Donald Friend | Group of Artists: including- Donald Friend; Brisbane born Lymburner (1916-1972) lived in Sydney (1939-1952) before moving to England (1952-1964). A 'charm school artist' and a member of the Merioola Group, he was fascinated by transience, artifice and a sense of theatrical drama. |
| 1966-1971 | Central Street/ One Central Station | NSW, Sydney | Chandler Coventry, Tony McGillick. | Progressive commercial gallery, precursor to the ARI. |
| 1969-1971 | Optronic Kinetic Collective | NSW, Sydney | Tutor: Bert Flugelman. Students David Smith, Jim McDonnell, Julie Ewington. | Collective that came out of the Tin Shed Art Workshop in the early 1970s. |
| 1969- present (2012) | Tin Sheds, Workshop and Gallery | NSW, Sydney, Chippendale | Donald Brook; Marr Grounds | Ideological and Community. Not identified as an ARI. The University of Sydney Visual Arts Workshop. Began with an exploration into conceptual and post-object art. Developed into a political space. |
| 1970 -1972: gallery. 1973-1974: spaceless concept. | Inhibodress co-operative and gallery | NSW, Sydney, 38- 40 Charles Street Woolloomooloo | Main: Mike Parr, Peter Kennedy, and Tim Johnson. Original members: John Armstrong, Bill Brown, Terry English, Niels Elmoos, James Elwing, Michael Gifford, OrEst Keywan, and Rolla Primrose. | First Ideological Ari in Australia. |
| 1970-1973 | Yellow House, The | NSW, Sydney, Potts Point, 59 Macleay Street | Martin Sharp | Key Dates: 1970 to 1973; Radical enterprise, was a piece of living art and a Mecca to pop art. Martin Sharp was frustrated by the traditional gallery scene, so he approached the owners to make use of the disused Clune Galleries space. |
| 1970-1973 | Pinacotheca | VIC, Melbourne, | Bruce Pollard | Commercial gallery, but while Bruce Pollard was overseas for a period, 1970- 1973, it ran as a co-op. |
| 1970s circa | Sculpture Centre, The | NSW, Sydney/ ACT | | Became the first visual art space funded by the VAB [Visual Arts Board] (now known as the VA/ CB [Visual Arts/ Craft Board). Documentation of a centre in Canberra in 1966, also known as the Australian Sculpture Centre. Vince Vozzo's CV documents The Sculpture Centre in Sydney in 1983. |

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| 1970s circa | IMA, Institute of Modern Art | Qld, Brisbane | | Government supported alternate space Established in mid 70s |
| 1970s-present (2012) | ACP, Australian Centre of Photography | NSW, Sydney, Paddington | | Government supported alternate space Established in mid 1970s. |
| 1970s-present (2012) | EAF, Experimental Art Foundation, | SA, Adelaide, Lion Arts Centre, North Tarrace [West End] | Donald Brook | Government supported alternate space Established in mid 1970s. |
| 1972-1979 | Earthworks Poster Collective | NSW, The Tin Sheds | | Community ARI. |
| 1975-(1989 in operation) | Women's Art Register | VIC, Melbourne | | |
| 1976- present (2011) | Addison Road Centre, ARC | NSW, 142 Addison Rd, Marrickville | | Australia's largest not-for-profit community centre. A Since 1976, the ARC has been able to develop a level of economic sustainability sufficient to provide accessible and affordable accommodation to community not-for-profit organisations. |
| 1977-(1989 in operation) | Newcastle printmakers Workshop | NSW, Newcastle | | Community Workshop. |
| 1977-(1989 in operation) | (SAW) South Australian Workshop, Artist Co-Operative | SA, Adelaide | | Communal workspace co-operative. Communal ARI. Incorporated Association. |
| 1978 Est. | SAW, South Australian Workshop | SA, Adelaide | | Studio space: Incorporated Association, Artist Co-operative. Double storey warehouse in central Adelaide. |
| 1979 Est. | Super 8 Film Group | NSW, Sydney, Kings Cross | | Began as a resource for Super 8 practitioners to pool equipment, to network. |
| 1979 Est. | Creative Spaces | NSW, Sydney, Summer Hill, Kensington Road | Christopher Downie | A non- profit, non- political organisation dedicated to finding inner city working space for artists. |
| 1979 Est. | Artworkers Union | NSW, Sydney, The Rocks, Howard O'Farrell Building, 190 Cumberland Street | Ian Milliss; Ian Burn | Began as a grassroots organisation to improve artists working conditions through drawing up contracts, health and safety, working affirmation for women, copyright etc. Voluntary organisation, in 1984 got intermittent part time staff. 1989 had a full time admin assistant, part time industrial officer, and a part time research officer on grants fro the VACB (VAB), CCDU and the NSW Ministry for the Arts. |
| 1979/ 1981 | Modern Art / Q.E.D [Questions in Democracy] | NSW, Sydney | Founder- Richard Dunn. Tony McGillick helped organise exhibitions in 1980/ 81, with a focus on artists: Dunn, Immants Tillers, Adrian Hall and John Nixon. | |

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| 1980 Est. | Studio 27 | NSW, Sydney, Chippendale, 27 Abercrombie Street | | Studios for nine artists. |
| 1980, Apr. to Dec. Re-Established 1986 | Avago | NSW, Sydney, Paddington, 13 Macdonald Street | Marr Grounds, Ruth Downes | Small window space gallery. In 1986 it was up to its fourth draft from the original in McDonald Street. It then moved to the Front fence of 162 City Road, University of Sydney, and was financed by the University, c/ - Artworkshop (Tin Sheds). |
| 1980s circa | n space | Nomadic | Immants Tillers | No fixed location for gallery idea- as first experienced at Modern Art/ Q.E.D. |
| 1980s circa | Kelly Street Collective | NSW, Kelly street Ultimo | | |
| 1980s circa | Art Empire Industry | NSW, Sydney | | |
| 1980s circa | Union Street Gallery | NSW, Sydney | | |
| 1980s circa | Art Unit | NSW, Sydney, Alexandria, 84-86 Henderson Road | Founders Rob McDonald and Juilee Pryor (Juilee and Andrew Aiken- aka Seems- are responsible for the "I have a dream mural" in Newtown). | <i>Art unit was McDonalds art school thesis put into practice; Harnessing radical energies, unlikely materials, processes anti- bourgeois aesthetics with post punk grunge sensibility, Art Unit was no Australian wing of modernist, minimalist conceptualism. Rather it had an affinity with the Situationist ethos of detournement, found object and Gutai performance. Art Unit had a radical, even destructive edge, closer to the cultures of the street, to excess, to the socio- politics of Bataille and Artaud. "art unit and performance space were ideological complements, with artists circulating across both (Finegan 14).</i> |
| 1980s circa | Q Space/ Q Space Annex | Qld, Brisbane | John Nixon | Example of radical ideas in artist-run space: Q space challenged institutional orthodoxies. No fixed location for gallery idea- as first experienced at Modern Art/ Q.E.D. |
| 1980s early circa | Camera Lucida | NSW, Sydney, Chippendale, 317 Abercrombie Street | | Began as a shop front window project. Free venue with 2 week shows. Community and socio-political relevant works. |
| 1980s to present | Artspace | NSW, Sydney, Woolloomooloo | | Located in the Gunnery, contemporary art space. Est. in the 1980s with Gov. funding |
| 1980s to present (2012) | Performance Space, The | NSW, Sydney, Carriageworks. Previously Cleveland Street | | |
| 1981, Feb.- 1986, Jun. | Media Space | WA, Perth | | Ideological ARI. An inquiry based group of people associated with various fields of perception. |
| 1981, Feb.- Studios closed in 1986, June. | Media-Space Inc. & Media Space studios | WA, Perth | Jeff Jones, Paul Thomas, Allan Vizents, Brian McKay | Studio space: Incorporated Association, developed out of the Fine Art Printmaking Studio into Media-Space Perth Inc. Media-Space is an inquiry based group of people associated with various fields of perception. Brian McKay, a member of Media-Space Studios, worked with Jeff and Allan to develop the basis for P.I.C.A. Allan went on to create Praxis M in the context of Media- Space and then to The performance Space, in Sydney. No |

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| | | | | director, no formal organisation, maximum 10 members. |
| 1982 Est. | Inner City Clayworkers Co-operative Gallery | NSW, Sydney, Glebe, Cnr Johns road and Draghan Street | | Meeting place for clay- workers, co-op of 15 members |
| 1982 Est. | Elizabeth Street Studios | NSW, Sydney, Redfern, 583 Elizabeth Street | | A working and living space for artists. Informal. |
| 1982-present | Arc Yinnar | VIC, La Trobe City, Yinnar | | More of a community centre. Art Resource Collective was Established when a group of artists renovated the disused Yinnar Butter Factory in 1982. Has studios for rent, arc is an artist-run, non-profit organisation which today houses its administration base, retail outlet, private studios and public access areas for printmaking, ceramics, metalwork, photography, painting and drawing. e.g. Open Entry group shows are open to artists to exhibit at the minimal cost of \$5.50 per artwork. |
| 1982-2001 | Roar Studios/ Roar 2 Studios | VIC, Fitzroy, Melbourne | David Larwill and Mark Howson | Patricia Anderson labels ROAR as the most successful ARI |
| 1983 to present | Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces | VIC, Melbourne | 2012 Director: Alexie Glass | Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces was founded in 1983 as a non- profit contemporary art complex of gallery spaces and studio facilities. |
| 1983-(1987 in operation) | Cockatoo | TAS, Launceston | | Exhibition gallery and workshop facility. |
| 1984 | A Room | QLD, Brisbane | | Seven member exhibiting cartel. At the end of six months A Room considered that it had achieved its goals. Ideological ARI. |
| 1984 Est. | Art Bulletin | NSW, Sydney, Chippendale, 27 Abercrombie Street | | Bi-monthly calendar of events. Collaborated with the Artworkers Union. |
| 1984, May Est. | Art Arena Inc. | NSW, Wollongong, 15/ 157 Crown Street | | Exhibition, studio space. Co-op. Darkroom facilities. |
| 1985 Est. | Sylvester Studios | NSW, Sydney, Redfern, 10 Renwick Street | | Organised by a group of 5 to 7 people. Rental space for emerging artists, with no commission. Eleven studio spaces. |
| 1985 Est. | Post- Squared | NSW, Sydney, Surry Hills, Elizabeth Street | | Began as a series of printed artwork, then a magazine "A Catalogue", then became an exhibition space. Two- person initiative. |
| 1985-present (2012) [longest running ARI in NSW; longest running ideological ARI nationally] | First Draft/ Firstdraft Inc. | NSW, 116- 118 Chalmers Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010 | Co- Founder: Tess Horowitz, Paul Saint, Narelle Jubelin and Roger Crawford. | Longest running NSW ARI. Incorporated in 1985 as a non-profit artist managed organisation. Every two years a new group of four directors is selected to administer the gallery. Began as studios in 1983. 2 nd floor, 27 Abercrombie Street, Chippendale. Gallery built in 1968. |

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| 1985-1991 | Gunnery Gallery, The | NSW, Sydney, Woolloomooloo 57 Cowper Wharf Road | Co-curators were John O'Driscoll and Ian Rose | Artist living, working, rehearsal squat space, squatting in an empty government building. Organised informally by all participants. Has a cinema and theatres for public use. The Gunnery was a squat and artists' community from 1985 to 1991. In 1992 it was refurbished under the auspices of the NSW State Government, and re-opened as a gallery and as an arts administration office space. John O Driscoll got into the alternative art space movement in the mid '80's, living in Sydney's Gunnery (1985-91). As co-coordinator (with Ian Rose) of the Gunnery gallery, he hung 20 or 30 various exhibitions including his own first solo show, in 1989. |
| 1986 Est. | Artlet | NSW, Sydney, Chippendale, 314 Abercrombie Street. | | 24hr viewing window. Based on the artist/directors self- promotion. |
| 1986 Est. | Virtual Object | NSW, Sydney, Darlinghurst | | Began to explore the relationship between science and art. Run by a collective. |
| 1987 (as an ARI) | Adelaide Central Gallery | SA, Adelaide, 45 Osmond Terrace | | Began in 1987 as an artist-run exhibition space and evolved into a contemporary non-profit gallery. There are adjoining studio and student galleries. |
| 1987 Est. | A.R.I. | NSW | | A loose organisation of representatives from ARIs in NSW. Meets once a month. Organised the Endangered Space Project. |
| 1987 Est. | Works Gallery, The | NSW, Sydney, Paddington, Albion Avenue | | Student gallery of the City Art Institute. Pre- cursor to Kudos gallery. |
| 1987-present (2011) | Ultimo Project | NSW, Marrickville, Addison Rd Centre, 142 Addison Rd Huts 24 & 15 | | Began as a pressure group on the Gov. to provide secure studio and living spaces for artists. The Ultimo Project is a collective of artists originally from Ultimo, hence the name, but now with a permanent home at Huts 24 and 15 in the Addison Road Centre, 142 Addison Rd Marrickville Sydney. |
| 1987-present (2012) | Boomalli Aboriginal Artist Co-Operative | NSW, Sydney, Leichhardt, 55-59 Flood Street Leichhardt, Sydney | Founding Artists: Avril Quail, Fiona Foley, Fernanda Martinez, Bronwyn Bancroft, Tracey Moffat, Aarone Raymond Meeks, Brenda L. Croft, Jeffreery Samuels, Michael Riley and Euphemia Bostock | Ten artists began the space in response to preconceived notions by non- Aboriginal people about what constituted authentic Aboriginal art. |
| 1988 Est. | Galerie Contantinople | NSW, Queanbeyan, 55 Uriarra Road | | Exhibition and performance space, run by two people |
| 1988 Est. | Arthaus | NSW, Sydney, Darlinghurst, 20 Palmer Lane | Nick Vickers | Established at the "Butchers Exhibition". Run by a Co-op, taken over by City Art Institute Student representative Council. Open non- discriminatory, performance, poetry, art, etc. |

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| 1988 Est. | Rondeau | NSW, Sydney, Newtown, 80 Brown Street | | Exhibition space with a 24hr viewing window. |
| 1988 Est. | Galavant | NSW, Sydney, Newtown, Crn Watkins and Wilson Street | | Began as a small window box gallery run by adjoining households for the use of friends and neighbours. Informal. "creativity is part of every day life- all art is political. 3 week shows. |
| 1988 Est. | Pig | NSW, Sydney, Paddington, Albion Avenue | | Part of the City Art Institute, modelled "Crow". Group of students who curate exhibitions of fringe and media art, and performance works. |
| 1988 Est. | Back Bar | NSW, Sydney, Paddington, Paddington Inn Hotel | | A gallery in a pub, open to anyone, six week shows. No rent or commission. |
| 1988 Est. | Street level Inc. | NSW, Sydney, Penrith, 213 High Street | | Provide opportunities for artists in Sydney's West. Exhibitions and performances. |
| 1988 Est. | Window, The | NSW, Sydney, Wynyard, 62 Erskine Street | | Began as a shop front window gallery. Experimental, installation, exposure for women artists. |
| 1988, Jun. Est. | A.R.O. | NSW, Lismore | | An informal group of young artists and students helped by the Friends of the Regional gallery. |
| 1989 circa | EMR gallery | NSW, Redfern | Neil Hawkes, Russell Barker | A large factory in Redfern, divided it into Sylvester Studio's and EMR (gallery & studio). Neil and Barker ran the gallery, which then morphed into Airspace Inc under pcd2k. Live in artists studios accommodating 40 artists. George Gittoes exhibited there. |
| 1989 circa | Post Squared Gallery | NSW, Sydney | Courtney Kidd | |
| 1989 circa | Gallerie New Art | NSW, Sydney, Chippendale, 314 Abercrombie Street. | | Working in unison with Artlet. Two people who run it to sponsor and market tour works. |
| 1989 circa | Disposals Workshop and Artspace | NSW, Wagga Wagga, 116 Fitzmaurice Street | | Run by a three person collective. Aims to provide exhibition space for the artists in the collective. |
| 1989 circa-1995 | Sylvester Studios | NSW, Redfern | David Hawkes, Neil Hawkes- brothers founded the warehouse. Maika Varaday ran the gallery | |
| 1989, Apr. Est. | Drive- In Art | NSW, Sydney, Rushcutters Bay, 11 Boundary Street | | Informal organisation with seven members. Located in an old garage. Venue for Long Bay Prisoners. |
| 1990 Est. | Platform Artists Group | VIC, Melbourne, Degraives Street Subway | Andrew Seward and Richard Holt | 15 art-deco cabinets set into 1950s pink tiled walls. The main subway space has been used for Platform exhibitions and events since 1995. |
| 1990, Nov.-present (2012) | Sydney Intermediary Network now known as d/lux | NSW, Sydney | | Showed films for a while, formerly known as Sydney Super Eight Film Group Inc. and is now known as d/lux/media/arts. Artists included Nola Farman, Liz Day, Rodney Spooner, Raquel |

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| | or dlux. | | | Ormelia. |
| 1990s circa | Shepherd and Newman | NSW, off Oxford street | Hugh Ramage, Jill Yates | <i>Warehouse with downstairs gallery, warehouse hosted many bandstand events to cover the rent: such as The Triffids and Teenie Weenies (Jill Yates was a member) who headlined the first performance by the Hoodoo Guru. (Finegan 15)</i> |
| 1990s circa | Pie Factory, The | NSW, off Oxford St.: Woolloomooloo views | Terry Burrows | \$20 a week Warehouse, burned down one Sunday morning with artist resident Terry Burrows inside, whom was later rescued by the fire brigade. |
| 1990s circa | COG gallery | NSW, Pitt Street | Founders: Hugh Ramage, Jill Yates | Hugh and Jill left Shepherd and Newman to found COG |
| 1990s circa | Airspace Inc | NSW, Sydney | | Sylvester Studios morphed into Airspace Inc. |
| 1990s circa | CBD Gallery | NSW, Sydney | | Exhibition program of one week shows. |
| 1990s circa | Gallery 19 | NSW, Sydney | Andrew Frost, Michael Hutak | Adam Cullen cites the gallery was crucial to his development as an artist |
| 1990s circa | No Vacancy | VIC, Melbourne | | Converts vacant street spaces into public art spaces, shop fronts, foyers etc |
| 1990s circa [1992 and 1995 listed on artist cvs] | Art Hotline | NSW, Sydney | Mark Titmarsh | Telecom 0055 information lines to advertise studio- based and itinerant art activities. "Art Hotline a consortium of 20 artists working mainly in ephemera and installation." |
| 1990s to present | Gunnery, The | NSW, Sydney, Woolloomooloo 57 Cowper Wharf Road | | Art Space that houses Artspace, Biennale of Sydney, NAVA, Museums and Galleries NSW. Was a squat at one stage. |
| 1991-1995 circa | Selenium Gallery at Sylvester Studios | NSW, Redfern | Terry Burrows, Ian Hobbes, David Haines, Joyce Hinterding, Ann Morrisson | Groups of artists would take over the space for a period of time up to three months. Artist groups programmed and administered their own shows, allowing artists more autonomy. Exhibiting artists included Hany Armanious, Adam Cullen, Tony Schwensen |
| 1992, Mar.-1993, Mar./1994 | Post- West/ [RE] | SA, Adelaide | | Post-West was taken over by another group in March 1993 and was re named [RE] closing its doors in 1994. It encouraged site- specific work, rent and admin covered by directors. |
| 1993 circa-present (2011) | 5000 Gallery | SA, Adelaide, Level 2/ 66, King William Street | | Aerosol artists and street artists. |
| 1993-present (2012) | Watch This Space | NT, Alice Springs, 4/9 George Cres | | Watch This Space is not a new artist-run initiative, but it is the only ARI in Central Australia and the only space in Alice Springs dedicated to emerging and experimental art. Watch This Space has a primary focus on exchange and collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian artists and international artists working across all mediums, not solely in painting. |
| 1993-present (2012) | West Space | VIC, Melbourne | Brett Jones | Ideological long standing ARI. |

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| 1995-present (2010) | Project Contemporary Art Space | NSW, Wollongong, 255 Keira Street, | | Accessible exhibition space. |
| 1996-present (2009) | Citylights Project Inc. | VIC, Melbourne | Andy Mac | An independent public art project utilising permanent light- box exhibition sites. |
| 1997, Oct. circa | Warringah Printmakers Studio | NSW, Manlyvale Cnr Condamine & Lovett Street | | |
| 1998-present (2012) | TBC art inc | VIC, Melbourne, Level 1/12 Waratah Place | Blair Trethowan, Sharon Goodwin and Thomas Deverall | In 2001 TCB moved from its original home in the Port Philip Arcade into Waratah Place off Chinatown. This space was shared with Uplands Gallery, and a unique relationship developed, which saw an artist run initiative working successfully along side a commercial gallery. |
| 1998-present (2009) | Arts Alive | TAS, Launceston | | Studios and exhibition space. Some paid staff, many volunteers. |
| 1998-present (2009) | 69 Smith Street | VIC, Fitzroy, 69 Smith Street | | Primarily a rental venue, its exhibition program includes invitational, solo and thematic group exhibitions. Has a committee of management by members. |
| 1998, Oct. Est. | Jugglers Art Space Inc | QLD, Fortitude Valley, 103 Brunswick Street | | Began as a bi-monthly music performance and visual arts event. Always included were live graffiti exhibitions with artists drawn from a broad range of experience in that art genre. |
| 1999-present (2012) | This Is Not Art (TINA) | NSW, Newcastle | Marcus Westbury, Shaun Tan. | |
| 1999-2001 | RubyAyre Gallery | NSW, Sydney, Surry Hills, Cnr Riley & Reservoir Street | Anthony Whelan- Founding Director. Artist Nell, founder: Roslyn Oxeley9 represented, Sydney College of the Arts. Mel O'Callahan, Melody Willis. | Closed: Gallery has become Wren Gallery. |
| 2000 gallery; 2000-present (2012) space-less | Squat Space | NSW, Sydney | | Was once housed in the Broadway squats, now a spaceless organisation. |
| 2000 Jul.- 2001 Jul. | Uniglory (magazine) | NSW, Sydney | Lisa Kelly | Kelly produced six editions of Uniglory during blaugrau's lifetime, a hand sewn conceptual forerunner to Runway magazine. Uniglory was part of blaugrau. |
| 2000-2004 | Imperial Slacks | NSW, Sydney, Surry Hills, Level 1/ 111 Campbell Street | Jessie Cacchillo, Simon Cooper, Sean Cordeiro, Claire Healy, Alex Davies, Lea Donnan, Chris Fox, Shaun Gladwell, Wade Marynowsky, Angelica Mesiti, Techa Noble, Emma Price, Michael Schiavello, Monika Tichacek, Melody Willis. | Run by the Imperial Slacks collective. |
| 2000-present (2010) | Allan's Walk Artist Run | VIC, Bendigo, Shop 5, Allan's | | To support the development of emerging artists, and to support the community to interact with the |

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| | Space Inc | Walk | | space and local artists. |
| 2000, Jul.- 2001, Jul. | Blaugrau | NSW, Chippendale, Meagher Street | Founders: Alex Gawronski, Lisa Kelly | <i>Critical theory and documentation was very much on the blaugrau agenda. While the party-like atmosphere of the studio- warehouse galleries easily translated to the crowded footpath outside the tiny blaugrau gallery, and sound installations replaced the bands, the new element was the critical discourse, which accompanied the shows. Gawronski produced a catalogue essay for every show with a one to three week turn around (Finegan 16).</i> The gallery takes its name from the colour of its walls, an attempt to encourage the gallery as neutral ground - white cube renaissance. Only set to run for a certain period of time. |
| 2000s | Lives of the Artists (Zine) | NSW, Sydney | Elizabeth Pulie founder; Sarah Goffman contributor | |
| 2000s circa | ANCA Gallery, Australian National Artists Inc. | ACT, Dickson | | Artist co- operative, provides low cost studio space, with the studio tenants running the gallery through a well structured board and paid administrators. The gallery is a low commission space available for hire |
| 2000s circa | Elastic | NSW, Chippendale, Abercrombie Street | Eight co-founders: Sarah Goffman, Elvis Richardson, Mark Hislop, Elizabeth Pulie, Andrew Hurle, Anne Kaye, Leah McLeod, DeeJ Fabyc | Set to run only for a set period of time. |
| 2000s circa | Pelt | NSW, Redfern | | |
| 2000s circa | Love Hotel | NSW, Sydney | | Illegal warehouse venue shut down by council or development |
| 2000s circa | Simon Barney's Briefcase | NSW, Sydney, Chippendale/ Surry Hills | Simon Barney | Portable arts lab- literally a briefcase- circulated ARIs and pubs, would appear at the Holly Wood hotel in Surry Hills |
| 2000s-present (2012) | Pact Theatre | NSW, Sydney | | Pact is an organisation dedicated to supporting young and emerging artists engaged in contemporary performance. |
| 2000s-present (2012) | Kudos Gallery | NSW, Sydney, Paddington, 6 Napier Street | | College of Fine Arts Student Association gallery |
| 2001-2003 | Gallery Wren | NSW, Sydney, Surry Hills Cnr Riley & Reservoir | Directors Melody Ellis and Vicki Papageorgopoulos | RubyAyre became Wren gallery in 2001. No longer operates. |
| 2001-2005 | Space 3 | NSW, Chippendale, 151 Regent Street | Rully Zakaria, Melletios Kyriakidis | |
| 2001-2007 Re-open in 2012 | Mekanarky Studios | NSW, Sydney | Ran Stanton, H Morgan-Harris, Dillon MacEwan, Ed Horne, Terra Reeck (Terra Incognita), Pete Strong, Terry Archer, Hiske Weijers, Herbie | In December 2007 Mekanarky Studios closed due to redevelopment. |

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| | | | Peppard, Vix Brown, Sarah Harvey, Tealia Scott and Anthony Sawrey | |
| 2001-present (2012) | BUS | VIC, Melbourne, 673 Bourke St, 3000 | | Multi faceted program. Also a dedicated sound gallery. Also houses studio spaces. |
| 2002-2007 | Lanfranchi's Memorial Discothèque | NSW, Sydney, Cleveland Street, The Chocolate Factory | Alex Davies, Lucas Abela, Brendan Phelan, Dave Harris, Hana Shimada, Joni Taylor and Michael Potas | Communal living space and experimental performance space. |
| 2002 Est. | Blackout Indigenous New Media Arts Collective | NSW, online | Jenny Fraser | New Media Arts |
| 2002-present (2009) | Breadbox Gallery | WA, Perth | | Housed in The Bakery Artage Complex. A non-profit arts organisation. Artage is closed over 2009 to for development, with support from DCA's Art's Capital Fund and Western Power. Due to re-open in 2010. |
| 2002-present (2012) | Runway (magazine published by the Invisible Inc.) | NSW, Sydney, Strawberry Hills | Jaki Middleton, David Lawrey, Natalie O'Connor, Ella Barclay, Michaela Gleave, Anneke Jaspers, David Lawrey and Sean Rafferty | Runway is an independent, not-for-profit publication managed by a group of Sydney-based artists, writers and curators. |
| 2002/2003 | Elastic Printed Project (book) | NSW, Sydney | Lisa Andrew, Andrew Hurle compilers. Assisted by Elizabeth Poulie, Sarah Goffman. Key people from Elastic contributed. | Book printed with assistance by the Australia Council. ISBN 0-646-42415-7 |
| 2003 circa-present (2012) | Kings ARI | VIC, Melbourne, Level 1/171 King St | | Ideological ARI. |
| 2003-16 Dec. 2005 | Phat Space | NSW, Sydney | | Many refer to it as why they started being interested in ARIs. |
| 2003- 2009 | Medium Rare | NSW, Sydney, Redfern, 70 Regent Street | | We like the idea of providing a space for artists across many mediums to show their work and be part of a community. |
| 2003-present (2012) | MOP | NSW, Sydney, Chippendale, 2/39 Abercrombie Street | George and Ron Adams | In 2012 Mop opened a commercial gallery from MOP, named Pom Pom. |
| 2003, Feb.-present (2009) | Cell Art Space | QLD, Cairns | Founder: Susan Reid. Deborah Cameron, Susan Dohrty, Michelle Frainey, Pam Lane | Major sponsor Ergon Energy. In the spirit of community cultural development. |
| 2004 | Peloton | NSW, Sydney, Chippendale, 19 & 25 Meagher Street | Directors: Matthys Gerber Lisa Jones, Claire Taylor, Michele Zarro Gallery Administrators: Gabi Purnell | |

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| | | | Board Members: Pam Hansford, Richard Glover, Donna Brett | |
| 2004-present (2010) | Dolls House, The | VIC, West Preston, 108 Miller Street | | A dolls house (miniature gallery) of four rooms on display in a CBD window viewable 24hrs a day. |
| 2004-present (2011) | Raw Space Galleries | QLD, South Brisbane, 99 Melbourne Street | | Raw Space began in August 2004 hosting a series of residencies for international, interstate and Queensland based artists. In September 2005 the gallery space was opened at 99 Melbourne St South Brisbane. The gallery has 3 exterior window gallery spaces, one moving image gallery and an installation gallery. |
| 2005 | Wedding Circle, The | NSW, Sydney. 16-18 Meagher St, Chippendale | Rebecca Conroy; Zanny Begg | Operated for 10 months before being shut down by the CoS. An artist-run space made up of an exhibition gallery and The Screening Room. |
| 2005 2009 | China Heights Gallery | NSW, Sydney, Darlinghurst, 257 Crown Street | Mark Drew | |
| 2005-present (2011) | SNO (Sydney Non Objective) | NSW, Sydney, Marrickville, Level 1, 175 Marrickville Road | Daniel Argyle; Lynne Eastaway; Billy Gruner; Sarah Keighery; Andrew Leslie; John Nixon; Tony Triff | Non- objective art. Ideological ARI. |
| 2006 | Network of Uncollectable Artists | | | Cited by Agatha Goethe- Snape and others as the reason they originally became interested in ARIs |
| 2006 | Run artist run blog | SA, Adelaide | Lisa Kelly, Lili Hibberd, Din Heagney | A workshop developed as part of the Adelaide Bank Festival of Arts 2006. Good list of ARIs from 2006, with links. |
| 2006 circa | International Noise | NSW, Sydney, COFA grads | Hamish Ta Me', Valentina Schultz | ARI premised on guerrilla art events, It is a paste up photocopy show. The artists have to produce an artwork on photocopy and we paste them up in a laneway in Paddington. Main show: copy- cat. |
| 2006 circa | Downtown | SA, Adelaide | | |
| 2006- 2007 | Loose Project | NSW, Chinatown, Sydney CBD, NSW | Carla Cescon, Alex Gawronski, Ryszard Dabek, David Haines, Bronia Iwanczak, Anne Kay, Lisa Kelly, Jane Polkinghorne, Mark Titmarsh and Philipa Veitch | Ideological ARI. |
| 2006-present (2009) | Wallspace Gallery | | | 2009 Wallspace gallery moved premises. |
| 2006-present (2012) | Mailbox 141 | VIC, Melbourne, 141-143 Flinders Lane | Shanley McBurney and Martina Copley | A strip of restored antique mailboxes in the entrance foyer. |

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| 2007 circa | Castlemaine Contemporary Art Space | VIC, Castlemaine, Cnr Hargraves & Mostyn Street | Ben Laycock | |
| 2007 circa | Blindside | VIC, Melbourne | Founding members: Renai Grace, Christine Morrow, Pip Haydon, Rosie Mahoney, Asim Memishi, and Simon Koger. Current members are Daine Singer, Robert Heather, Linda Good, Julian White, Natalie Kazakis, Andrew Tetzlaff and Natalya Maller | Not-for-profit. |
| 2007 circa | Box | VIC, Melbourne 351 Elizabeth Street | | |
| 2007 circa | Carni | VIC, Preston | | In a converted leather tanning factory. Music focus. |
| 2007 to present | Boxcopy | QLD, Brisbane, Metro Arts | Founders Channon Goodwin, Tim Woodward, Joseph Breikers, Marianne Templeton, Anita Holtsclaw and Daniel McKewen. | Is a contemporary art space dedicated to supporting artists in developing experimental and creative practices. Boxcopy operates on a Not-For-Profit basis. |
| 2007-2009 | 1+2 Artist Studios | NSW, Sydney, Rozelle, 483 Balmain Road | | Artist studios |
| 2007-present (2011) | Tortuga Studios | NSW, Sydney, St Peters, 31 Princes Highway | | Established by a number of people involved with Mekanarky Studios. One of Sydney's largest self-funded, artist-run initiatives. |
| 2007-present (2011) | Tinygold | QLD, Mermaid Waters | | Strengthen support networks between Queensland artists and the community via artist-run events. Voluntary. |
| 2007-present (2011) | Off the Kerb | VIC, Collingwood, 66B Johnston Street | Founded by Shini Pararajasingham | Curators, designer, sound producers. |
| 2007-present (2012) | At the Vanishing Point (ATVP) | NSW, Newtown, 565 King Street | | Coordinated and managed on an entirely voluntary basis. Political art. |
| 2007-present (2012) | Quarterbread | NSW, Sydney, Erskenville, 107 Railway Parade | | Supports and presents hybrid arts projects. |
| 2007, Aug.-present (2012) | Bill and George | NSW, Sydney, Redfern, Level 1/10-16 William Street, | Rebecca Conroy, Hosanna Heinrich, Rhoda Lazo, Clare Perkins, Mark Taylor | A creative development and studio complex available for casual hire for dancers and performers, or event specific hire. Also has a "Librarium". Began negotiations for the space in May 2006. |
| 2007, Feb.-2009 2010-present (2011) | Utopian Slumps | VIC, Melbourne: Ground Floor, 33 Guildford Lane, Melbourne | Melissa Loughnan, Helen Hughes | Utopian Slumps was established in February 2007 as a non-profit curator-run arts initiative. The gallery closed its doors in December 2009 and reopened as a curator-run dealer gallery in Melbourne's CBD in April 2010. |

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| 2007, Feb.-present (2012) | Chalk Horse | NSW, Sydney, Surry Hills, 94 Cooper Street Surry Hills. Previously at 56 Cooper St. Surry Hills, 2007-2009 | Jasper Knight, Dougal Phillips, Oliver Watts | ½ doz. collective finds a permanent space. Hybrid art space, not-for-profit incorporating commercial gallery attitudes. Paid staff, attends art fairs, charges 40% commission on sales for artists. |
| 2007, Jan.-present (2012) | Crawl | Online ARI community | Nicholas Hudson-Ellis | ARI online community- like a Facebook for ARIs. On Tuesday March 10, 2009 Crawl became an Incorporated Association. |
| 2007, Jun.-present (2009) | blkmrkt | QLD, Southport, 1/17 Harvest Court | Shayle Flessler, Bree Nairn, Wayde Owen | Not-for-profit artist run initiative. |
| 2007, Nov.-2009/2010 circa | Black & Blue | NSW, Sydney, Redfern, 302/ 267- 271 Cleveland Street | Vito Belgiorno- Zegna, Jack Jeweller | Exhibition space, studio space and living spaces. |
| 2008 circa | Reef Knot Artist Collective | NSW | Michelle McCosker and Alasdair Nicol | Reef Knot is a recently created collective formed around two of the founding directors of Knot Gallery - Alasdair Nicol and Michelle McCosker. Focusing on large- scale immersive installations. |
| 2008 circa | 4 Walls | NSW, Newport, 359 Barrenjoy Road | | |
| 2008 circa | A little white space | QLD, Townsville, The Brewery, 252 Flinders Street Mal | | |
| 2008-2009 | Gallery Blackheath | NSW, Blackheath | | |
| 2008-2009 | Gallery 44 | NSW, Sydney | | |
| 2008-2012 | Fraserstudios | NSW, Sydney, Chippendale, 10- 14 Kensington Street | Sam Chester and James Winter. | Part of the Sydney Councils community grants, part of Queen Street Studios |
| 2008-present (2009) | Melbourne Propaganda Window | VIC, Melbourne, CBD, Franklin Street | Adrian Doyle and Michael Meneghetti | |
| 2008-present (2010) | Felt Space | SA, Adelaide, 12 Compton Street | Founder Monte, Brigid Noon | In Adelaide CBD, exhibitions change monthly. |
| 2008-present (2011) | Locksmith Project Space | NSW, Sydney, Alexandria, 6 Botany Road | Kenzee Patterson, Samuel Villalobos, Kenzie Larsen, Yasmin Smith and Rachel Fuller | Locksmith Project Space is a not-for-profit, artist-run initiative located on the border between Redfern and Alexandria in Sydney, Australia. |
| 2008-present (2011) | May's Lane Art Project | NSW, Sydney, St. Peters, May Lane | | An outdoor gallery space located. Primarily for graffiti art. |
| 2008-present (2011) [launched Fri. 21 Nov. 12noon] | Freshly Baked Gallery | NSW, Online: http://freshlybakedgallery.com/ | | Online virtual gallery, Australian innovation, has a number of rooms, and a warehouse, art works can be purchased online, also has a stable of artists. Mainly deals in 2d flat works such as paintings and of the street art graffiti kind. |

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| 2008-present (2012) | Serial Space | NSW, Chippendale, 33 Wellington Street | Founders: Louise Dibben and Tameka Carter. Directors: Alex White, Tom Smith, Frances Barrett, Pia Van Gelder, Kate Blackmore & Eddie Sharp. | Ideological ARI. Sound Art and electronic experimentation. |
| 2008-present (2012) | Queen Street Studios | NSW, Sydney | James Winter and Sam Chester | Space to create. We offer non-profit creative development and rehearsal studios, programs and free residencies — all run by artists for artists. |
| 2008-present (2012) | ICAN (Institution Contemporary Art Newtown) | NSW, Sydney, Camperdown 15 Fowler Street | Carla Cescon, Alex Gawronski, and Gallerist Scott Donovan. | ARI, conceptual art practice, store front building. Does not purport to support ‘young’ artists. They are interested in good art by anyone and have exhibited work by Australian and international artists of repute, such as Pipolotti Rist & Ronnie Van Hout. |
| 2008-present (2012) | Gaffa | NSW, Sydney, CBD, 281 Clarence Street | | |
| 2008-present (2012) | Dirty Shirlovs | NSW, Sydney, MARRICKVILLE | Barry | Music performance venue. Won a 2012 SMAC for “Best Collective”. [Sydney Music Art Culture awards]. |
| 2008-present (2012) | Red Rattler Theatre, The | NSW, Sydney, Marrickville, 6 Faversham Street | Penelope Benton, Teresa Avila, Patsy Black, NDY and Meredith Williams- | 5 women who purchased their own venue |
| 2008, Aug.-present (2009) | Hand Held | VIC, Melbourne, 108 Bourke Street | Megan Herring | Hand Held is a small gallery space with a focus on the hand held object including jewellery, sculpture, glass, book and paper arts, ceramics, textiles (including small scale installations). |
| 2008, Feb.-present (2012) | Seedling Art Space | SA, Hawthorne, Main Rd & Turners Ave, Hawthorndene | | Seedling Art Space is a site-specific project. Granted a lease with the Department of Environment and Heritage. Seedling Art Space is a new artist-run not-for-profit gallery situated in Hawthorndene. Situated in the Blackwood Forest Recreation Park, Seedling Art Space collaborates with DEH and the City of Mitcham. Conceived in 2006. |
| 2008, Pre circa | Knot Gallery | NSW, Sydney | Alasdair Nicol and Michelle McCosker | |
| 2009-present (2010) | Vox Cyclops: Renew Newcastle | NSW, Newcastle. 515 Hunter St (near Union St) 2300. Property Owner: Ramesh Thakur | Nick Senger | Renew Newcastle placement. Vox Cyclops is an independent record store. |
| 2009-present (2010) | Official Sydney | NSW, Sydney, Surry Hills, 302 Cleveland Street | | Open venue space. |
| 2009 circa | Spiral Gallery Cooperative Ltd | NSW, Bega, 47 Church Street | | |
| 2009 circa | Newcastle Art Space | NSW, Newcastle, 246 Parry Street | | |

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| 2009 circa | Salmagundi | NSW, Sydney, Arncliffe | Dillon. | A few people from Menarky studios, which closed in 2008. Has resident artist and exhibition space, and DJ parties/ fundraisers. |
| 2009 circa | ESProjects & ESP Gallery | NSW, Sydney, Marrickville, 228 Illawarra Road | | Independent exhibition site. |
| 2009 circa | Little Gallery, The | NSW, Sydney, Paddington, 18.5 Glenmore Road, | | |
| 2009 circa | Workshop Arts Centre | NSW, Willoughby, 33 Laurel Street | | |
| 2009 circa | Cowwarr Art Space & the Cowwarr Arts Network Inc. (CAN Inc.) | VIC, Cowwarr | | Gallery and residential Studios |
| 2009 circa | Conical | VIC, Fitzroy | | |
| 2009 circa | Clubs Project inc. | VIC, Melbourne | | Clubs Project is currently a nomadic, project-based organisation, which utilises different sites. |
| 2009 circa | Slow Art Collective | VIC, Melbourne | Tony Adams, Chaco Kato, Ash Keating and Dylan Martorell | Their shared concern for environmental issues leads them to develop sustainable art practices that highlight the need for social change. |
| 2009 circa-present (2011) | Accidentally Annie St Space | QLD, Auchenflower, 30 Annie Street | | AASS is operated out of the suburban home of the four directors. Exhibitions are one-night only events. |
| 2009-present | Next Wave | VIC, Melbourne | | ARI Festival. |
| 2009-present (2009) | Arthive: Renew Newcastle | NSW, Newcastle. Shop 2, 111 Hunter St. 2300 Property Owner: GPT | | Renew Newcastle. Gallery and studio complex maintained by a collective of Newcastle Artists |
| 2009-present (2009) | Biami Mara art of the land: Renew Newcastle | NSW, Newcastle. Shop 3, Silk House, 200 Hunter St Mall. Property Owner: GPT | Floyd Tighe | Renew Newcastle. It is a commercial gallery offering works from local and national indigenous artists. |
| 2009-present (2012) | Exist | QLD, Indooroopilly, 18 Jenkinson Street | | Performance and live art based site. Exist is an artist-run space dedicated to performance-based art. If you want to see real, live action art happening in front of you and to be involved in the creative process as audience participation is often called for. |
| 2009, Aug.-present (2012) | Mils gallery | NSW, Sydney, Surry Hills, 15 Randle Street | Founder. Adrianno Roselli. Ida Lawrence and Erin Kelly. | A gallery for emerging artists. No commission, rental fee to exhibit, staff to help out with minding and opening night, but majority of work responsibility of the artist. |

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| 2010 | A mobile studio in Australia | Nomadic, between Sydney and Melbourne | Lucas Gross | An interdisciplinary group of six emerging artists from Australia and Switzerland produce art on Australia's roads. Live, create and exhibit in a bus travelling from Sydney to Melbourne, and then exhibiting in Switzerland. |
| 2010 | Cosmic Battle For your Heart, The | NSW, Rozelle, 138 Evans St, Rozelle | Mitch Cairns, Agatha Goethe Snape, Brian Fuata, Kelly Doley | Community and Ideological ARI. Part of the domestic revival which saw spaces opening up in homes and living rooms in Sydney in the early 2010s. |
| 2010- 2011 | Artroom5 | SA, Adelaide, Henley Beach, 5 Kent Street | Vivonne Thwaites | Living room gallery. The project was reviewed by Mary Eagle in <i>Art Monthly</i> , and Daniel Thomas in <i>The Australian</i> . |
| 2010- 2011 circa | Paper Mill, The | NSW, Sydney, Angel Place | | CoS Accommodation grant. Paper focused art. |
| 2010-present (2012) | Firstdraft Depot. | NSW, Sydney, Woolloomooloo | First Draft people | Three- year lease. Part of the CoS Accommodation Grants. Granted a three- year caretakers lease. |
| 2010, 22 Jul.- present (2011) | Db project | NSW, Sydney, Surry Hills, 19 Phelps St | Elizabeth Reidy, Christopher Hanrahan | Part of the domestic revival, living room space. |
| 2010, May-present (2011) | No No Gallery | VIC, North Melbourne, 14 Raglan Street | Roger Nelson | A not-for-profit curator-run exhibition space in North Melbourne. |
| 2011 | Death Be Kind | VIC, Brunswick, 134 Lygon Street | Elvis Richardson (Past Firstdraft director), Claire Lambe. | A twelve-month project by artists Claire Lambe and Elvis Richardson. Along with intern Dani Hakim and videographer Paul Rodgers, and still documenter Joseph Lambe. |
| 2011 circa | Electrofringe | | | Festival |
| 2011 circa | Experimenta | | | Festival |
| 2011 circa | Lo- Fi collective | | | |
| 2011 circa | M16 Artspace | ACT, Fyshwick | | |
| 2011 circa | Emerald Arts, Renew Newcastle | NSW, Newcastle | | Renew Newcastle. |
| 2011 circa | Shopfront Gallery, Renew Newcastle | NSW, Newcastle, 539 Hunter Street | | Renew Newcastle. Gallery 'window' space visible 24 hours a day, hosting exhibitions, which change monthly. |
| 2011 circa | Don't Look Experimental New Media Gallery | NSW, Sydney, Dulwich Hill | | |
| 2011 circa | In Between Spaces | QLD Brisbane | | |
| 2011 circa | No Frills* | QLD, Brisbane | | Metro Arts space was used at one point, no spaceless |
| 2011 circa | Sky Needle | QLD, Brisbane | | DIY art making clan |
| 2011 circa | Wandering Room, The | QLD, Brisbane | | |
| 2011 circa | Flipbook Gallery | QLD, Brisbane, 8 Greet Street | Matthew Howland | Opened due to lack of creative spaces in Brisbane. |
| 2011 circa | No Frills' | QLD, Brisbane, Metro Arts | | Ideological ARI. |
| 2011 circa | Inbetween-spaces | QLD, Brisbane, No fixed location | | Uses disused, transitory sites. Inbetweenspaces does not run projects from a permanent space, but focuses upon organising temporary activities that |

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| | | | | activate sites outside of art gallery spaces. |
| 2011 circa | CRATE59 | QLD, Cairns, 59 Sheridan Street | | Not-for-profit, contemporary arts space in Cairns CBD. Studios, gallery space. |
| 2011 circa | Upholstery Contemporary Arts, The | QLD, Cairns, Nomadic | Daniel Wallwork | |
| 2011 circa | Level | QLD, Newstead, 11 Stratton Street | | Dedicated to showcasing the work of contemporary female emerging and early career Australian artists. |
| 2011 circa | Vegas Spray | QLD, No fixed location | | Vegas Spray is an online org. Vegas Spray ARI also produces exhibitions in spaces throughout Brisbane as part of the Physical Space Scheme. |
| 2011 circa | Hackerspace | SA, Adelaide | | A place to hack together projects, software & hardware. |
| 2011 circa | Renew Adelaide | SA, Adelaide | Brigid Noon, Lanto Ware | Renew Adelaide is a non-profit, artist run initiative in Adelaide which, following the lead of Renew Newcastle, believes artist and community run spaces have the power to transform cities. |
| 2011 circa | Tree House, The | SA, Adelaide | | |
| 2011 circa | Format Collective | SA, Adelaide, 15 Peel Street | Joel Catchlove and Ianto War | Art collective. DIY. Renew Adelaide. Zine shop. Festival started in 2007. |
| 2011 circa | Paperhorse studios/ Gallery | SA, Adelaide, Level 2, 93 Rundle Mall | | An alternative collaborative studio / gallery which is held in the second level of Rundle Mall near the malls balls. |
| 2011 circa | Two Percent Art Collective | SA, Adelaide, No Fixed Address Adelaide | | |
| 2011 circa | Inflight ARI | TAS, Hobart, 100 Goulburn St | | Ideological ARI. In Jan. 2012 it was the only ARI operating in all of Tasmania. |
| 2011 circa | 6a | TAS, North Hobart, 6a Newdegate Street | | Artist studios and a small gallery that encourages experimentation in its exhibition program. |
| 2011 circa | Rear View | VIC, Collingwood, Rear 244 Smith Street | | Behind chemist down Stanley St - take 2 nd alley on left |
| 2011 circa | Seventh Gallery | VIC, Fitzroy, 155 Gertrude Street | | Not for profit gallery space. |
| 2011 circa | Trocadero Art Space | VIC, Footscray, Level 1/ 119 Hopkins Street | | Exhibition spaces and studios. |
| 2011 circa | NextWave Festival | VIC, Melbourne | | Festival which has many emerging and ARI activity |
| 2011 circa | Sticky | VIC, Melbourne | | Zine gallery/ store |
| 2011 circa | Twenty By Thirty | VIC, Melbourne, 20 Presgrave Place | | Not for profit. Adjoining Pushka Café |

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| 2011 circa | Tape Projects | VIC, Melbourne, Carlton, 1/81 Bouverie Street | | A collective of young and emerging artists who champion provocative, temporal, audio-visual works and site-specific performances. |
| 2011 circa | Plateau_589 | VIC, Northcote, 589 High Street | | Plateau_589 is a viewing and listening platform with a 24/7 display and sound piped directly onto the street. |
| 2011 circa | Hell Gallery | VIC, Richmond, 5a Railway Place | Jess Johnson and Jordan Marani | Ground floor of the founders house using salvaged materials from larger art institutions. Hell is open for exhibitions, launches, screenings, performances and cooking demonstrations. |
| 2011 circa-present (2011) | Monstrosity Gallery | NSW, Sydney, Woolloomooloo | | |
| 2011 circa-present (2011) | General Will, The | QLD, Brisbane | | Collective |
| 2011 circa-present (2011) | Write Response | TAS, Online | | Write Response is an online visual arts and performance reviewing blog that is coordinated and undertaken by volunteer Tassie writers. |
| 2011 circa-present (2011) | Art- Vend | VIC, Nomadic | | A vending machine art gallery where artists can submit works and everyone can become an art collector for only \$1.20. |
| 2011 circa-present (2011) | Window99 | VIC, Fitzroy, 99 Brunswick Street | | Ideological ARI. |
| 2011 circa-present (2011) | Brunswick Arts | VIC, Brunswick, 2a Little Breese St | | A non-commercial arts space supporting both the visual and performing art. |
| 2011 circa-present (2012) | Metro Arts | QLD, Brisbane | | Not an ARI- houses them |
| 2011-present (2011) | Bake Sale for Art | NSW, Nomadic | Georgie Meagher | Focus on live art, performance, sound and time based artistic practices. |
| 2011-present (2011) | Index Space | NSW, Sydney | Alex Wisser | |
| 2011-present (2012) | ARSE/ ARSS | NSW, Sydney | | Artist Run Spaces Enterprise/ Syndicate |
| 2011-present (2012) | Society | NSW, Sydney, 6 Botany Road, Sydney. Old Locksmith projects building, | Susan Gibb | Ideological. Curatorial. Resists being known as an ARI as it is organised by a curator, not an artist. |
| 2011-present (2012) | FreeFall OAF | NSW, Sydney, Oxford St | John A. Douglas, Kat Sapera | The art viewing cube at the oxford arts factory, curated by Chalk Horse associates in 2011 |
| 2011-present (2012) | Eastern Bloc | NSW, Sydney, Rozelle, 138 Evans Street | Directors: Nathan Babet (Hrebabetzky) & Dr Wade Marynowsky | Artists run gallery and event space, same venue as Cosmic Battle for Your Heart |
| 2011-present (2012) | Linden Centre for Contemporary arts | VIC, Melbourne, St. Kilda | | Not-for-profit. Converted old house, timber floors, reading room upstairs. |

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| 2011-present (2012) | Galleria | WA, Perth, 55 Wittenoom Street | | Situated in an art complex that houses artist studios, a printing press and art and design businesses, Galleria is a space that plays on the notion of shopping super-centres. With a focus on exhibiting art and developing a sense of community for local artists and curators, the future program looks to critique the commercially dictated art world by including a conceptual food court, a Cineplex and late night trading events. Having hosted only three shows since launching in September 2011. |
| 2011-present (2012) | Alaska Projects | NSW, Kings Cross Car park | Sebastian Goldspink | City of Sydney collaboration. Measuring 5x5 metres. |
| 2011, Apr. circa | Kitchen | Nomadic | Jon Hewitt and Britt Salt | The Trans-Siberian Arts Centre (T-SAC) is directed by Jon Hewitt and Britt Salt. Kitchen is a not for profit travelling art space. |
| 2011, Mar.-present (2012) | Paper Plane | NSW, Sydney, Rozelle, 727 Darling Street | Siblings run the space | A not for profit, artist run initiative dedicated to promoting and fostering emerging and mid-career Australian and International artists, designers and curators. |
| 2011-present (2012) | 107 Projects Inc. | NSW, Sydney, Redfern, 107 Redfern Street | Jess Cook, Carly Earl | COS grant. 107 Projects is the vision of seven of the driving forces behind Knot Gallery, The Frequency Lab and Token Imagination. |