

Editorial:

THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS

The formation of the new Council for the Arts has caused a fair amount of comment, mostly unfavourable, in the press, and consternation in many quarters, yet beyond vague complaint about "bureaucracy", very few facts have been presented.

The new Council is basically the old Council for the Arts, which was mainly concerned with the performing arts, expanded to cover a larger range of cultural activities. It consists of a Council, and seven substantially independent Boards, covering separate areas of activity.

These replace the fragmented series of advisory boards, previously existing. Each of the Boards has its own budget, staff etc.

On the Council itself, the members most involved with the visual arts are: -

Dr. H. C. Coombs (Chairman)
Australian Council for the Arts,
P.O. Box 302,
North Sydney, N.S.W. 2060
PH. 90-2866 (home)
920-1271 (Office)
49-6620 (office-Canberra)

Mr. H.R. Bonython
Romilly House,
1 North Terrace,
Hackney, S.A., 5069
PH. 32-2664 (home)
42-4660 (office)

Mr. John Bailly
Directory
National Gallery of South Australia,
Adelaide, S.A. 5000.
PH. 31-5469 (home)
23-8911 (office)

Mr. Clifton Pugh,
"Dunmoochin",
Cottlesbridge, Vic., 3099.
PH. 714-8230 (home)

Mr. Tim Johnson,
54 Albermarle St.,
Newtown, N.S.W. 2042

PH. 519-4672 (home)

John Baily is chairman of the Visual and Plastic Arts Board, which is made up of:

Mr. John Baily (Chairman), - 23.8481
Art Gallery of South Australia,
North Terrace, Adelaide. S.A. 5000.

Mr. Ron Robertson-Swann, - 31.7436, 31.0266
58 Thompson Street
Darlinghurst. 2010.

Mr. Nigel Lendon - 22.1455
Gilberts Road, 051-691534
Yinnar. Vic. 3869.

Mr. James Mollison, - 70.7367 (0)
Director,
Australian National Gallery,
P. O. Box 5,
Canberra, A.C.T. 2600.

Mr. David Thomas - 049-23263
Newcastle City Art Gallery,
Laman Street,
Newcastle. 2300.

Mr. Patrick McCaughey, - 34.0484
School of Fine Arts,
Melbourne University,
Parkville. Vic. 3052.

Mr. Lenton Parr, - 62.7411
The Art School of the National Gallery,
180 St. Kilda Rd.,
Melbourne, Vic. 3004.

Mrs. Anne Lewis, - 31.9720
Gallery A Exhibitions Pty. Ltd.,
21 Gipps Street,
Paddington, 2021.

Mr. Fred Williams - 20.2261
379 Tooronga Road,
East Hawthorn. Vic. 3123.

Mr. Len French, - 23.2069
22 Alfred Street,
Beaumaris. Vic. 3193.

Mr. James Gleeson, - 95.4994
10 Tarakan Ave.,
Northbridge. 2063

Mr. Udo Sellbach - 23.6758
Art School,
Hobart. Tas. 7000.

The Visual and Plastic Arts Board will be taking over the financial responsibilities of the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board, which in this financial year administered funds of \$1,158,000. All but \$214,000 of this had been committed by the C.A.A.B. at the time the new Board was formed.

Some of the criticisms at the time the Council was announced were rather bizarre. The Age (Melbourne), for instance, published a confused article by Patrick McCaughey in which his main theme seemed to be that several members faced a "conflict of interest". He considered that Kym Bonython (whose interests conflict with McCaughey's) would be better replaced by the "more spirited", and even more conservative Rudy Komon (whose interests don't conflict with McCaughey's). The great majority of the articles on the Council had this same "me and me mates first, everyone else second" attitude about them. When the members of the Visual and Plastic Arts Board were announced two weeks later, McCaughey was on it.

It was only after the first meeting of the Council, on the 16th of February, that the first real criticism could be levelled at the Council, or rather, at its Chairman. It was on this day that the composition of the seven boards was announced in such a way as to imply that the Council had selected the members at the meeting. They had in fact been selected by Coombs and Whitlam from lists prepared by the Chairmen of the various Boards. In spite of strong opposition by Council members, these lists were forced through the meeting by Coombs and the other public servants who are ex-officio members of the Council.

The Visual and Plastics Arts Board, in spite of this arbitrary selection method, could have been worse. Most of the other boards are. It could also have been much better. To be effective, it is obvious that the terms of appointment to the Board should be strictly limited, in order to keep in touch with what is really going on. It is also obvious that unless Council Members are allowed a true voice in the running of the Council it will be moribund within a year.

Source: CAS Broadsheet, March 1973