

Postscript

From the time of the second Sydney Biennale in 1976, meetings began to be held within the art community to discuss the aims and structure of the Next Biennale.

A great number of people participated in these, some for only a few meetings, while others committed themselves to most or all the meetings. The fact that meetings continued intermittently over three years is a measure of the serious concern within the art community about the Biennale and related issues. Out of these meetings, a number of recommendations were made to the Biennale Committee and Director, and attempts were made to negotiate these.

We felt it necessary to publish a historical account of this process. There were three important reasons for doing this:

- (i) to reinforce what was achieved, by making public a record of the precedents established,
- (ii) to document what wasn't achieved, in order that we all may learn from mistakes, and
- (iii) to use the record of this history as a basis on which to build.

The idea of a publication was first raised at meetings during November, 1978. A decision to proceed with it was made in late January, 1979. In early February, some three hundred copies of a broadsheet were mailed out inviting contributions to the publication. A deadline was set: March 9th, a mere two or three weeks for most people receiving the broadsheet. Given this very short notice, the extent of the response is both significant and gratifying. This is especially so, given that a number of people who were sympathetic were already preoccupied in other ways with the Biennale. Moreover, the request for contributions came at a time when there existed a level of bad feeling which was a direct consequence of the organization of the Biennale itself. Specifically, it was extremely demeaning to women to find that they still had to demand equal representation from a male-dominated committee which debated whether or not to grant it.

From the start of the project, we were gambling on funding. On the belief that an important role of the Visual Arts Board should be to fund projects which set out to document activities of the art community and provide a forum for feelings and ideas about events like the Biennale, we applied for a grant for the printing costs of this publication. Our belief was clearly mistaken; the application was denied. The present Chairman and a majority (not all) of the members of the Board appear more concerned to try to muffle any critical discussion of art and cultural events. We are both angry and appalled that such a decision could be made.

With few options left open, the Students Representative Council of the Alexander Mackie College Student Union was approached and they offered to support the publication. They felt the event and critical discussion of it were of direct relevance to the student community as well as the art community. Once this commitment was made, students began actively working on its production.

On behalf of the many people in the art community who feel this publication is significant and valuable, we express our extreme gratitude to the Student Union for the important step they took to provide funding. In its next issue, the Alexander Mackie College Student Union newspaper 'Chimera' hopes to further address some of the issues raised here, and would like to receive any comments or reactions to this publication.

Those who have worked on the preparation of this publication are: Vivienne Binns, Ian Burn, Tirn Burns, Nigel Lendon, Ian Milliss, Richard Maude, Mark Kuludrovich, Kerryn Stanton, Peter Thorn and Terry Reid

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