

Best Practice for Artists and Publicly Funded Galleries

SECTION A.2 TYPES OF PUBLICLY FUNDED GALLERIES

Publicly funded galleries have proliferated in Australia since the 1980's and now include four major sectors:

- National and State Galleries including Modern and Contemporary Art Museums
- Regional Galleries throughout Australia
- Contemporary Art Organisations (CAOs)
- Australian Craft and Design Centres (ACDCs)

The defining characteristic of all of the above is that they are not for profit entities and they receive the majority of their funding for administrative and operational purposes from one or more levels of government: federal, state and local.

They are an extremely diverse range of organisations with different histories and roles in relation to the collection, conservation, presentation, critical analysis, promotion and marketing of contemporary visual art and craft.

The following briefly describes each of the sectors, noting at the end other galleries operating in the public sphere.

It should be noted that most publicly funded galleries also have a retail function, either through a museum or gallery shop or through selling works of art and craft from exhibitions. Issues around selling are discussed in Best Practice for Selling Art and Craft in Publicly Funded Galleries.

If you can assist in developing these descriptions, please do so. Your input is welcome.

A.2.1 National Galleries

The National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, founded in 1975, holds a national and international collection of visual art and craft. As well as developing and displaying its permanent collection, it initiates and tours exhibitions to all parts of Australia. Its stated aim is to be the pre-eminent gallery in Australia through the quality of its collection and the service it provides to the Australian people. The gallery may exhibit the work of senior or significant living Australian artists and craft practitioners, either as a focus exhibition or in the context of a larger curated thematic presentation.

The National Portrait Gallery at Old Parliament House and Commonwealth Place was founded in 1998. It is creating a collection of portraits across diverse media. It exhibits both temporary exhibitions of contemporary material and a permanent collection of portraits of nationally significant Australian individuals. It also commissions artists to paint portraits.

Several other national institutions display the work of living Australian artists and craft practitioners from time to time in relation to other items in their permanent collections. These include the National Library, the Australian National Museum, the National Botanical Garden, the National Film and Sound Archive, and the Australian War Memorial.

The federal government funds all of these national institutions with additional assistance from private sponsors and benefactors. The collections they have built are intended to be a national archive and to provide an overview of the Australian experience.

A.2.2 State Galleries, and Galleries/Museums of Modern or Contemporary Art

Each State and Territory has a major visual arts institution. All receive substantial administrative and

operational funding from state government with additional project based funding from federal government sources. The average staffing level of a state gallery is 126.5 full time staff. Benefactors and sponsors provide the majority of funds and/or items for collection development. Most of the institutions in the southern states were created during the 19th century as each separate colony of Britain strove to acquaint Australians with European artistic traditions as well as to collect material reflecting their own unique achievements. These galleries house and exhibit large permanent collections to which contemporary material is added as deemed appropriate.

The state galleries began showing temporary exhibitions of loaned work by living Australian visual artists and/or craft practitioners only in the 1980's. Their interest in contemporary material has increased steadily since then and, within the last 5 years, has resulted in Victoria and Queensland establishing a separate museum/gallery of contemporary or modern art as a branch of the state gallery. New South Wales has a major museum of contemporary art established with funds from a benefactor of the University of Sydney and sited in a major public building. All of the state gallery institutions are developing permanent collections of the work of contemporary Australian visual artists, and a few of the work of Australian craft practitioners.

Today, these institutions play a leading role in the exhibition of contemporary work at a national, state and regional level. All of these galleries host, and some initiate, major exhibitions of international visual art or craft that include an Australian component. Many tour exhibitions to other states and/or regional centres. The state gallery institutions also provide substantial related services to the public including lecture series, forums, seminars, education programs, performances, libraries, gallery shops and cafes, and membership/friends activities.

The State and the Northern Territory libraries and museums may from time to time hold exhibitions of the work of living artists and/or craft practitioners, or include their work in exhibitions to support a broader theme.

A.2.3 Regional Galleries and Art Centres

There is a network of more than one hundred regional art galleries or art centres in Australia, varying considerably in size and scope. Reflecting the spread of the national population, in New South Wales there are 33 regional galleries, in Victoria 24, in Queensland 31, in South Australia 9, in Western Australia 5, in Tasmania 4, in the ACT 2, and in the Northern Territory 1.

The average staffing level of a regional gallery is just 2.1 full time staff, and in some regional galleries, the staff are volunteers. When compared to the state and national institutions, many in this sector prefer to be referred to as 'small public galleries' given that the scope of their services to artists and the community is limited by their smaller size and funding base.

All receive the majority of their funding from local government. Some receive additional funding for projects from federal and/or state government sources, and from sponsors or benefactors. A few were established in the late 19th century and have valuable permanent collections. However the majority were established in the mid to late 20th century as local government accepted a greater degree of responsibility for the provision of cultural services, and have small collections.

All play a role in the support of regional practice and in introducing the public to, and engaging them with, contemporary visual art and craft. Exhibitions range from the work of established and mid-career artists and craft practitioners to the work of emerging practitioners and students still in training. Many regional galleries also host unselected community access exhibitions; competitions, prizes and awards; and fundraising exhibitions.

Local government supported libraries and other exhibition spaces may also provide display space to visual artists and craft practitioners. See below.

A.2.4 Contemporary Art Organisations (CAOs)

These organisations arose in the 1970's and 80's as artist run initiatives in response to an unmet need for exhibition space for experimental, ephemeral, new media and cross art form practices. At the time of their establishment this type of work was not being exhibited within the state institutions and the

regional gallery network, and had limited exposure via the commercial gallery sector. Now the CAOs are relatively well established and well funded from a mix of state and federal government sources, sponsors and benefactors.

There is currently a network of twelve contemporary art organisations with representation in each state and territory. All except the Australian Network for Art and Technology provide an exhibition venue for a diverse range of contemporary visual arts practices by both established and emerging Australian and international artists; the Australian Network for Art and Technology supports virtual exhibitions via the internet. The Australian Centre for Photography and the Centre for Contemporary Photography focus specifically on photographic media. Several of the CAOs have associated residency studios, some include performance space and screenings, and some publish media based journals. All aim to provide a critical context for contemporary visual art practice through activities such as forums, seminars and publication.

Some CAOs include exhibition space for hire. The CAOs are not collecting institutions.

A.2.5 Australian Craft and Design Centres

There are currently ten contemporary craft and design organisations in Australia, with one or more centre in each state. Objectspace in New Zealand is an eleventh member. Craft Australia is a national body that plays a strategic direction and advocacy role and assists with international projects, whilst the other organisations are generally state focused.

These centres developed out of the state and territory craft councils founded in the mid 20th century, and have embraced design as it relates to the construction, conception and production of contemporary craft objects. The organisations are funded from a mix of state and federal government sources, sponsors and benefactors. All centres advocate for the interests of their state's craft practitioners.

Most of the state based centres provide an exhibition and selling platform for craft practitioners and designers. As some 75% of craft practitioners are not represented by a commercial gallery, the ACDC network has, to some extent, stepped into the breach to represent and market their work.

Some of the centres offer residency opportunities, advanced training, a commissioning service, and one publishes a journal. The ACDCs are not collecting institutions with the exception of the Design Centre - Tasmania that houses the Tasmanian Wood Design Collection.

OTHER EXHIBITING VENUES THAT MAY RECEIVE PUBLIC FUNDING

A.2.6 Artist Run Initiatives (ARIs)

In all States and Territories, in capital cities and regional areas, artists and craft practitioners have cooperatively set up spaces to exhibit and sell their work. There are approximately 85 of these nationally. Most are operated by groups of volunteer artists and craft practitioners, although there are some cases of paid part-time staff. Most ARIs are self funding. Some ARI's have attracted limited state or federal funding for specific projects or aspects of their operation.

Some of these spaces have associated studios and other facilities for the production and presentation of work. Their exhibitions programs may be determined through a peer review process or through an open access policy. Artists and craft practitioners generally pay a fee to rent the exhibition space, with variable fees charged dependent on the level of services provided by the venue. Exhibitors meet the majority of presentation costs.

A.2.7 University Galleries

Many universities in Australia have one or more art galleries on campus, funded by the University or with assistance from a benefactor. The scope of their operation depends on their level of funding and staffing. Most are closely associated with teaching departments in fine arts or visual art/craft and others have been established

to complement a broader cultural and educational agenda. They exhibit a wide spectrum of work from the historical to the contemporary, from overseas and from Australia. Where the curriculum of the university includes visual art and craft, these galleries also display the work of graduating students, and of past and current staff.

A small number of the university galleries have been extremely well endowed through benefactors and some have substantial permanent collections. Many of these galleries are collecting institutions.

A.2.8 Local Government Gallery Spaces not in the Regional Gallery Network

A number of gallery spaces supported by local government offer exhibition opportunities for artists and craft practitioners. These tend to be associated with libraries or community leisure centres/workshops. Generally these spaces are available for hire or offered with minimal or no support to the exhibitor.

A.2.9 Art and Craft Centres

There is a network of 106 art and craft centres in Australia that exhibit the work of Indigenous artists. These are spread throughout the six states and the Northern Territory. They are community owned enterprises; many receive federal funding via the communities in which they operate. They perform a variety of roles including some or all of the following: promotion, marketing and sale of visual art and craft; education and training of artists and craft practitioners; provision of art materials, accommodation and studio space; and documentation of work. More than 5,000 Indigenous artists are represented by art and craft centres.

A.2.10 Artist and Craft Practitioner Associations, Organisations, Unions

There are many membership organisations throughout Australia that represent the interests of artists and/or craft practitioners and assist in establishing standards of professional practice. These include local and state based groups as well as national bodies with a significant advocacy role. Some receive a mix of state and federal funding and/or sponsorship for specific activities. Many publish newsletters, and a few broker employment opportunities for artists. A small number of these organisations also have exhibition venues available for hire.