RICHARD FISHER

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

1989-1990

across shoulder =
across breast =
Tet to tet =
across belly button =
across hips =
Neck width =

Under chAd chin =
Tet   =
Belly button   =
crutch   =
B.B   =

412

1565
1512
0.053

226
225

1464

1395

300

1565 1490

1235
1297

278

gullet 1390

1490 ... ...

1440
1512

320
886

830 872

1071
1,020

915
960

788
750

215
814

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1071
494

1512
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1512
1071
441

1297
1071
226 + vmalla

1071
150
921

1565
788
777

1071
150
921

1565
1297
268

1297
1071
226

1071
788
283

1071
874
257

1071
872
199

1071
960
111

1565
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693

1512
1297
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1071
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179

300
105
17

3v6c = 18c

"During the decade following the First World War the idea that the artist should have the same liberty as the scientist and for the same reasons came to its maturity. And this is where Art in relation to Freedom stands today. Among the countless patterns which its practitioners make in the welter of recorded experiences, there is none which does not achieve a freedom by consummating a use in a beauty for some one. The prototype of this freedom is the experience of the maker. It is that which the American Declaration of Independence assumes when it treats of freedom as an unalienable right, a quality of our inner nature, not a gratuitous privilege permitted us by another from without. Because of that, even though there are infinite ways to make man bond, he will struggle to loose himself from all things that he feels binds him till the day he dies. He may never succeed, but he will never stop. While he lives, he cannot do otherwise than struggle; when he is dead, there is no 'he' to do otherwise."

Horace Kallen, 1942.

CONTENTS

WORK PROPOSAL: 1988

My preferred program would include an extension to my current work on deconstruction. This would involve reasonably large scale figurative modelling and use of positive and negative casts and moulds. The completed work would be presented in the form of installations and would require the use of a wide range of materials.

My work prior to and including the first three years of undergraduate studies has primarily involved three dimensional functional design. The reason for completing my final year in sculpture was the result of a growing awareness that the limiting factors of design considerations, planning and fine craftsmanship were negating the effects of immediacy and gesture which I desire in my sculptural work. My current concentration on sculpture does not mean a complete rejection of functional design. In view of this I would consider it important to allow for some renegotiation of design ideas within program considerations.
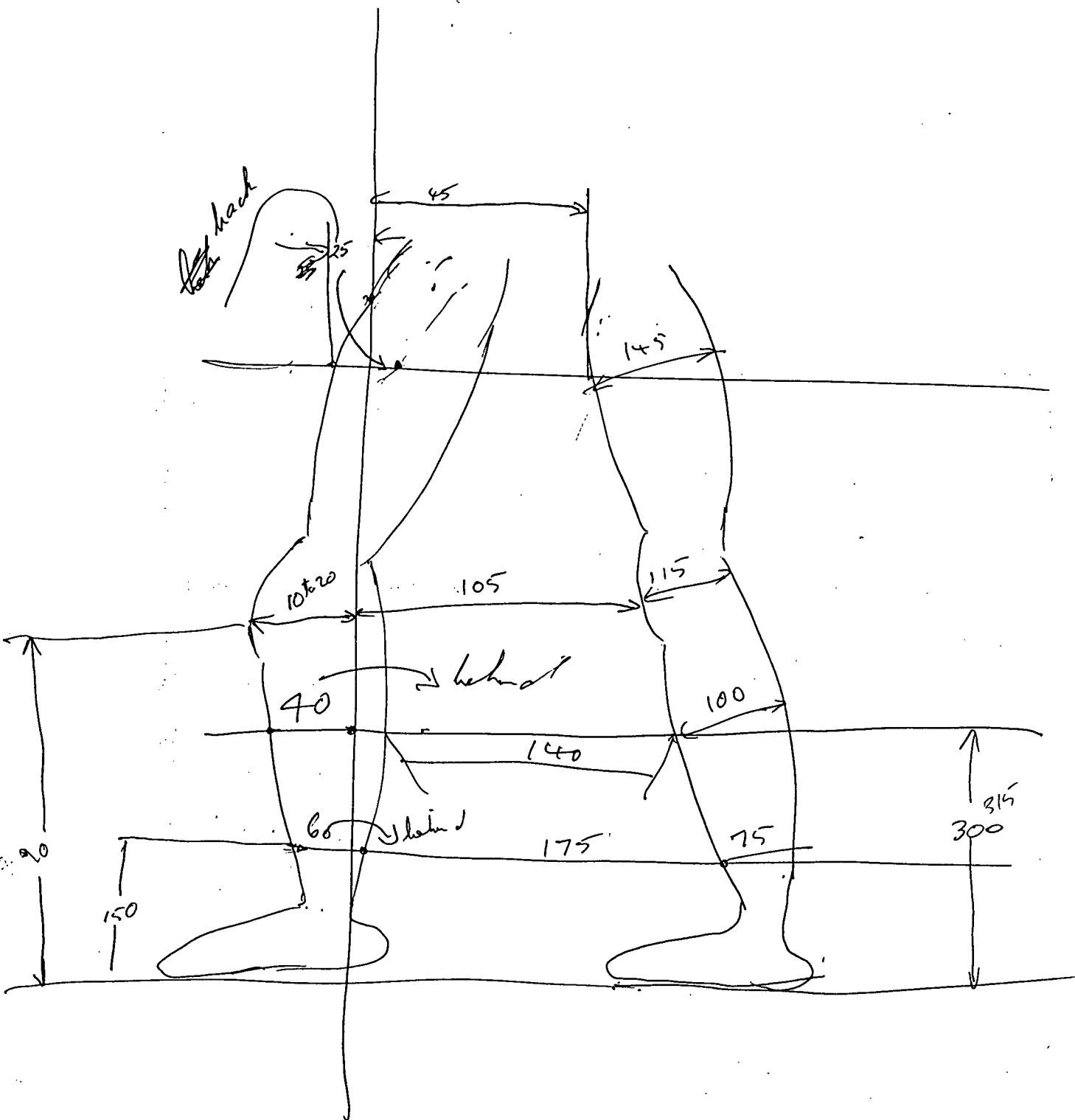
STUDIO PRACTICE

My original plan was to produce a large installation consisting of several carved wooden figures (standing and sitting), large canvases and empty picture frames. The installation was to be set up in a gallery situation with observers viewing the large canvases which hid from view figures assembling and measuring themselves against empty picture frames. The idea was based on George Dickies view of institutional theory and his notion of aesthetic measurement. There was also a more literal use of measurement in the proposed figures. For example the plaster maquette of a seated figure (plates 1 & 2) was based on my proportions. However the limbs and torso were extended in length by 5% and all widths were reduced by 25%. The chair maintained normal proportions except for the width which was reduced by 25%to suit the figure.

When I presented part of this work at a critique towards the end of 1989 the reaction was positive. However there was a protracted discussion on the scale of the project, the 'grand plan' as it became known. Following some discussions with my supervisor, I decided that the deconstruction mentioned in my program should involve a reduction in the scale and amount of process required in my work. My objective became the production of a series of individual pieces that would be presented as part of an installation of my ideas rather than the original installation of work and process based on one single notion.

I adapted some unfinished work for use in several new pieces that were in simplest terms canononical representations of power and influence. The plaster maquette figure was produced along with the Five Pi's (plate 3) and the Balance (plate 4). This piece originated from a number of ideas I had developed around various forms of measurement used in engineering. Initially I was interested in the play of words between technical jargon and everyday conversation. For

example, power, torque, friction, feet and balance. This resulted in several pieces, one is documented (plate 5). At mid-course review I presented these unfinished pieces along with the chair from the first critique and an abstracted form of a figure and chair (plates 8 & 9). I indicated that a further extension to my work would involve a concentrated effort on abstraction.

The notion of balance developed further, particularly in the relationship of praxis and a representative national identity in my second paper. The Bookmatch (technical woodworking term), and the Slab, (plates 10 & 11), are the studio resolutions to my investigation. The Bookmatch shows the notion of praxis: two balanced slabs, each the mirror image of the other, separated by a negative space. The Slab is praxis: a package that represents individual resolution of the division between practice and theory, known as art practice. These pieces were a positive move away from figurative and process orientated installation work to single pieces based on the use of line, form and volume.
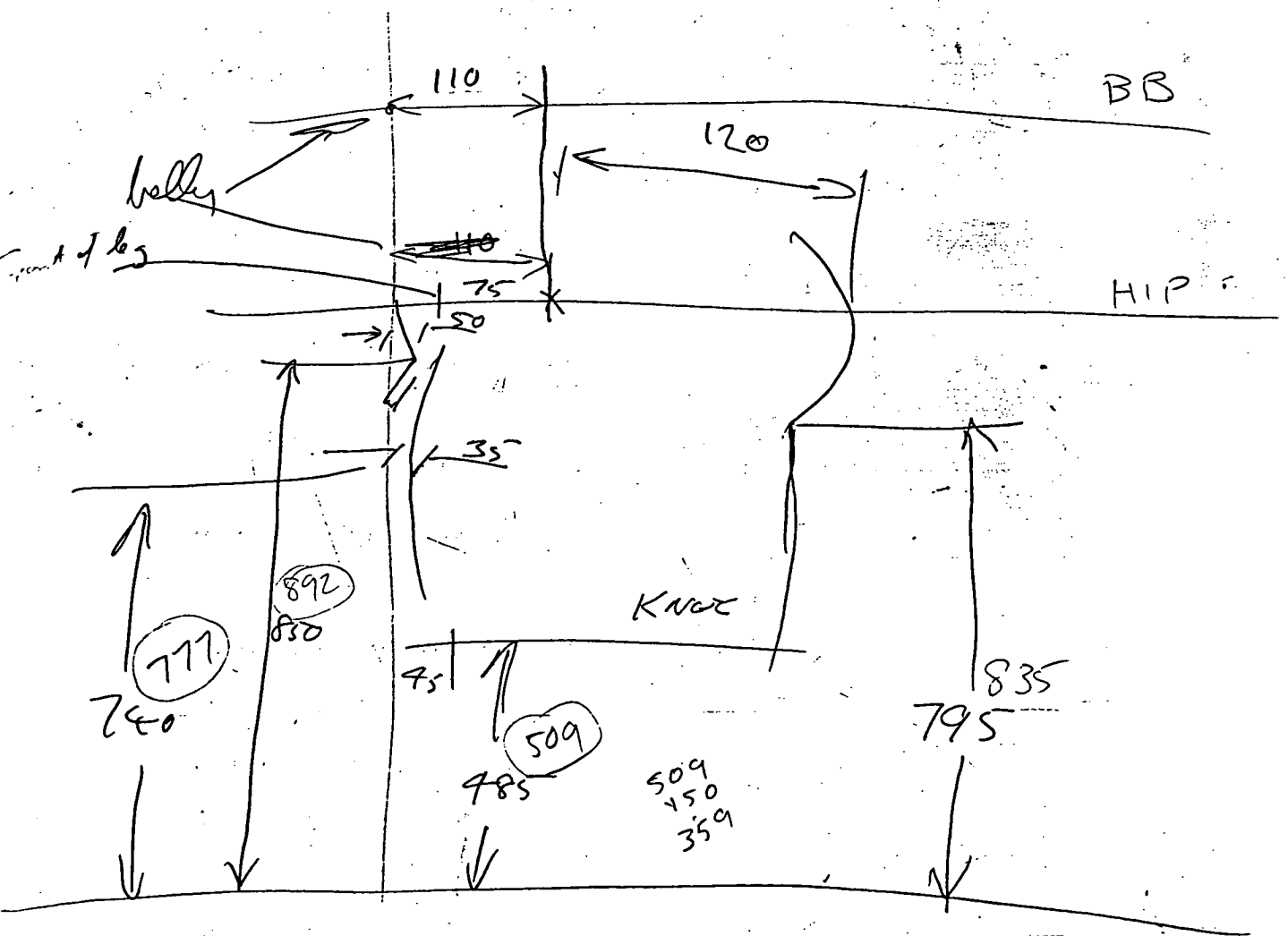
To further reduce my work process and to use a less valuable material I purchased a number of freshly sawn slabs of timber from a local saw miller and restricted the process to dressing the slabs, cutting to length and cutting forms with a bandsaw. Initially I painted the beams white and started building structures similar to my previous work (plates 12 & 13) and then further reduced the work process, primarily to the use of the beam and fulcrum (plates 14 to 19).

Upon completion of these individual pieces I commenced work on the installation. The major design objective was to present the bulk of my two years work in a confined space, while allowing for an open display with ready viewing from any position. The result is a large closed box which can be opened by the viewer. The box is five metres long, three metres high and one metre wide and contains completed and unfinished works, casts, moulds and

other objects made from a wide variety of materials including wood, plaster, wax, metal, canvas and clay. To open the box four doors on each side are lowered to the floor. This creates a boundary seven metres by five metres around which the viewer can walk to observe the exposed works.

My major interest in art practice is process: the methods of making art and the way it is presented to the community. The reference to measurement and geometry reflects a general interest in the way our society feels the need to measure itself against the past and to alter previous laws and canons to suit present needs. As my papers indicate I am concerned about the agenda of modernism. My view of the compartmentalisation of human activity is evidenced in both the contents and the structure and packaging of the box.

Although the work program has been primarily directed towards an installation my studio activity has proved to be an unexpected and refreshing aspect of this course. The move away from figurative modelling to the minimalist aspect of my latter work reflects a recognition that the concerns outlined in the second paragraph of my work proposal were misplaced. I had previously failed to recognise that although design, planning and fine craftsmanship are assets in all forms of art/craft activity, sculpture does not require these skills to be immediately evident to the viewer. The development of the box and its internal structure reflects a growing interest in the work of Walter Pichler an Austrian sculptor. A catalogue of his work at the 1982 Venice Biennale will be in my studio.

BB

110

120

belly

front of leg

110

75

HIP

50

35

777
740

892
850

KNEE

45

509
485

509
450
359

835
795

ADDITIONAL WORK

Centenary Sculpture

Towards the end of 1988 the University of Tasmania called for proposals for a sculpture to celebrate its centenary. My submission was one of five selected to be presented in maquette form for a final selection process. I did not receive the full commission. However, the selection committee were most encouraging in their general support. The maquette, proposal and supporting documentation will be displayed in my studio.

Environmental Sculpture

This piece originated from a request for sculpture students of the school to participate in an open day at a large bush reserve. Unfortunately the event was cancelled and this piece has not (yet) been used. However, it is presented as work documentation.

Two sets of 256 numbered pieces were produced by press moulding clay. One set of unfired teracotta was to be distributed in a known pattern throughout the reserve. The second set, made of bisque fired white clay, was to be set up on a table in a 16x16 square, at the central meeting area. The process involved group participation. Any person who located one of the distributed objects would replace the identically numbered object on the table with the found object. The replaced object would then be packaged and given to the finder as a memento of the day. There are two objectives: to involve the visitors in an informal group activity and to produce a form of map that would indicate the degree of exploration of the reserve. The documentation will be displayed in my studio.

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

Both papers are directed towards the relationship between art and society and reflect the general concerns regarding the fragility of our social structure outlined in my application for admission to this course. As I stated in the application: 'Essays on Australian art history, the involvement of women in that history and in a broader sense the relationship of the feminist movement and postmodernism has interested me in the way men and women have been manipulated to suit the concerns of our society. Research into the Institutional Theory of Art has helped me develop a closer interest in the machinery of operation, manufacture and presentation of art in within our society.'

Two writers have directly influenced the formation of my submission. Since I entered art school Arthur Danto has challenged every preconception I had of art. Whilst I do not fully agree with his thesis (particularly in the <u>Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art</u>) he has helped me understand the extreme importance and interdependence of practice and theory. His cognitive model of art history forced me to think about the relationship between modernism and Australian art history and was the impetus of my second paper. Horace Kallen's two volumes, <u>Art and Freedom</u>, published in 1942, (approximately the same time as Bernard Smith's <u>Place, Taste and Tradition</u>) has reinforced my application to art practice.

The Victorian Ministry of Education publication, <u>Praxis</u>, provided a wealth of information. In particular the explanation of curriculum development gave me some insight to the structure and perceived role of art education: something that had not been apparent to me before and suggests that this is one of the old traditions that could be re-negotiated by institutions.

c.50

30

775
814.

750
780

795
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870
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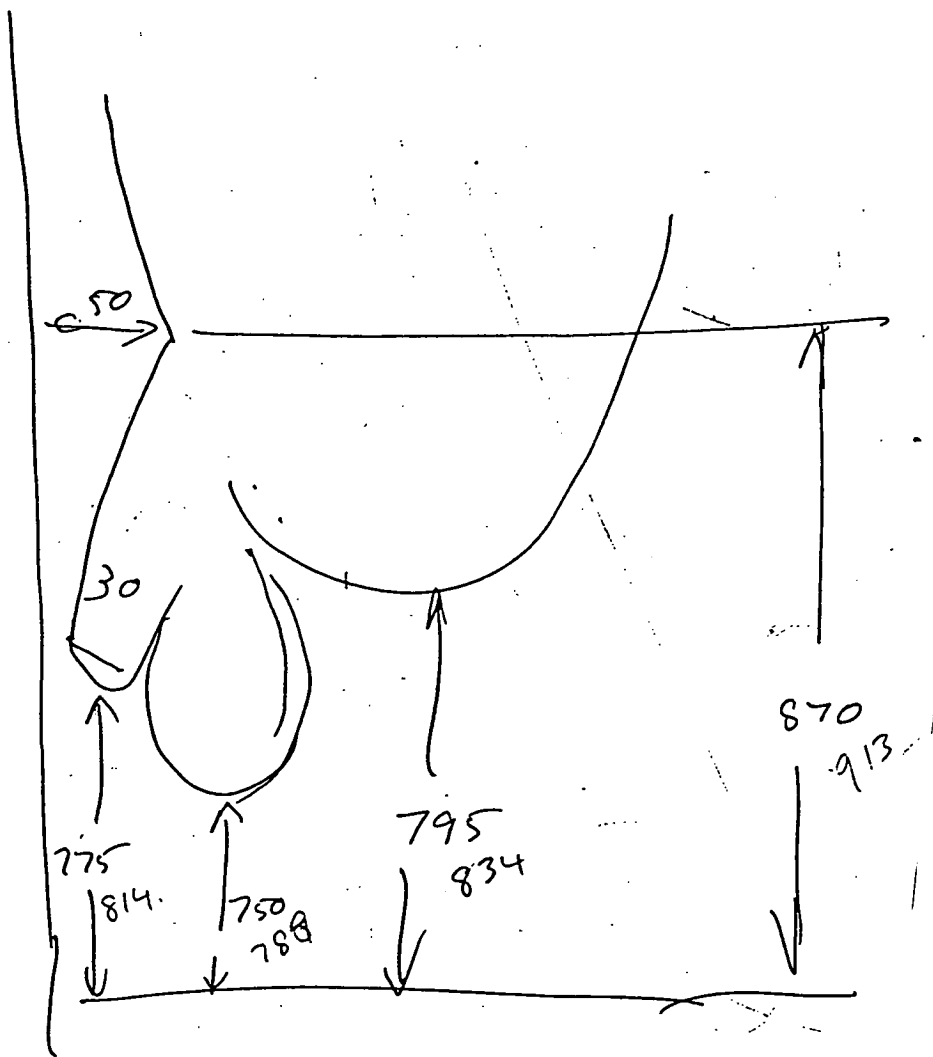
PAPER ONE

A QUESTION OF HISTORICAL ACCURACY

In an essay titled "A Science of Seeing",[1] Terry Smith outlines a variety of the problems involved in the production of an Australian art history. The problems include the lack of an overall institutional research program, absence of historical investigation into the "minor" arts and support structures, and particularly the failure of newspapers, magazines and book publishers to provide a suitable platform for independent criticism.

Australian art history is the focus of a recent publication - The Necessity of Australian Art subtitled An Essay about Interpretation.[2] In a review of this book, Ted Colless complains - "No longer does the experience of the objects of art comprise art's history and value but instead art history and criticism are institutional constructions from either the innocent or conspiratorial reading of 'privileged texts'"[3]. The text of The Necessity of Australian Art provides some insight as to how and why this situation has developed. The publication consists of a series of essays written between 1979 and 1983 and published in 1988. It deals with the general development of the Australian art industry following the first World War, it's subsequent re-structuring following the second World War, and the role art market booms had in that development.[4] The authors are concerned that existing interpretations are unable to account for recent developments in Australian Art and propose that the reclaiming of a regional tradition would "re-establish a more complex and richer sense of cultural

[1] Terry Smith, "A Science of Seeing", The Age Monthly Review, March 1982.
[2] Burn, Lendon, Merewether and Stephen, The Necessity of Australian Art, Power Publications, Sydney 1988.
[3] Edward Colless, Review: The Necessity of Australian Art, 1989.
[4] "The depoliticalised tone of Australian Painting has to be heard through the tooting of a Holden, the squeak of a Hills Hoist and the spluttering drone of a Victa mower, that is, through the changes brought to the working classes through a mass market fed by hire purchase and stimulated by television. This mass market state provided one of the bases for the art market that came to life after 1960. I am persuaded neither by Moore nor by The Necessity of Australian Art that there was an art 'boom' in the 1920s. As Marx said of Mill : on the level plain even a tiny mound can look like a mighty peak.", Humphrey McQueen, Art Monthly Australia, No 20, May 1989, Page 7.

specificity" and hence "provide a basis for a re-assessment of Australian art within the broader terms of development of twentieth century art".[5]

To prove "an underlying unity in the development of art in Australia"[6] the authors reclaim the values of William Moore and argue that his understanding of modernism was formed through contributions by artists in an institutional setting and were purely Australian manifestations of modernism and therefore "constricted by the values implicit in the formation and integration of the prevailing tradition into society"[7]. They further argue that modernism became a tradition when it "participated in the transformation, and thus the continuation, of the regional tradition through the outback modernist imagery of Drysdale, Nolan and subsequently others"[8]. Regionalism of the 1920s, when national identity on a political level was "secured" and subsequently provided a new climate in which "the standards for cultural and artistic achievement were advanced and affirmed"[9], is selected as a beginning of this tradition. Integral to this was the development of an art industry which saw the "structural integration of art into society"[10]. It is on this basis that regionalism is used as a foundation on which to build a picture of an Australian art industry, based around a new theoretical structure that incorporates political economy and cultural criticism. What this industrial picture of Australian art describes is an art history determined by the life and development of Institutions; a notion that fits Raymond Williams analysis that since 1945 "industry has (again) been generalised, along the line from effort, to organised effort, to an institution"[11].

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[5] Burn, Lendon, Merewether and Stephen, Page 145.
[6] Burn, Lendon, Merewether and Stephen, Page 37.
[7] Burn, Lendon, Merewether and Stephen, Page 34.
[8] Burn, Lendon, Merewether and Stephen, Page 36.
[9] Burn, Lendon, Merewether and Stephen, Page 14.
[10] Burn, Lendon, Merewether and Stephen, Page 15.
[11] Raymond Williams, Keywords, Williams Collins, Glasgow 1987, Page 167.

Organisation and effort are critical elements in Howard Becker's book <u>Art Worlds</u>. This book addresses the "sociology of occupations applied to artistic work"[12] and provides an insight into the social productivity of art and an understanding of the machinery of art production. The concept of an "Artworld" has in turn become a key element in the development of Institutional Theory.

The Institutional Theory of Art is one method of explaining works of art that have not fulfilled the requirements of other theories. Works that do not display the qualities of skill, emotion, gesture and beauty required by theories based on the aesthetic, can gain acceptance through the concept of Institutional Theory, which does not judge works on special gifts or talents. George Dickie treats the institutional nature of art through the idea of convention. His Artworld consists of a number of systems such as music, painting and sculpture, all or some of which may contain subsystems, which in time may attain an individual identity. Each system has an institutional background for conferring status within its domain.[13] Arthur Danto approached the institutional nature of art from the idea of theory and knowledge and explored the multiplicity of styles in art through a style matrix.[14] The rows of this matrix determine available styles and are articulated by an active critical vocabulary. As the vocabulary expands so does the matrix.

Danto's use of the matrix raises some important issues. Particularly when he introduces the idea of fashion and points to the influence of "museums, connoisseurs and other makeweights in the Artworld"[15]. He indicates that influence by these people may cut the available style matrix in half, but dismisses

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[12] Howard Becker, <u>Art Worlds</u>, Berkeley, USA 1982, Preface Page xi.
[13] George Dickie, "What is Art?", <u>Culture and Art: An Anthology</u>, L Aagaard-Morgenson (Ed), USA 1976.
[14] Arthur Danto, "The Artworld", <u>Culture and Art: An Anthology</u>, L Aagaard-Morgenson (Ed), USA 1976.
[15] Danto, Page 20.

such vulnerability as being "a matter of almost purely sociological interest"[16]. What would happen if this vulnerability was exploited and for a short period of history the "sociological interest" became a dominant concern of the Artworld? What would be the implications and long term cost to the institution of art?

The following summary of The Necessity of Australian Art provides one possible scenario. The authors believe that there is a precedent on which to base a new perspective of Australian art. This precedent is Moore's history which identified a relationship between art and society (and the subsequent development of an art industry). The development of a regional tradition, mainly manifested in landscape representation, which identified the cohesion and harmony of a class structured society, is traced to contemporary times through outback modernist imagery and provides a unifying element in Australian art. Bernard Smith is placed in conflict with this view in terms of his defence of stylistic assumptions which needed constant affirmation from European sources[17] and necessitated a devaluation of the regional tradition. This dependency became the dominant aspect of Australian art and has not been properly considered in the context of its role in production.

The issue of dependency brings to the surface a search for Australia's national identity and resulting debates on provincialism and relations between centre and periphery. The authors present the view that for the last hundred years, artists and writers have been preoccupied with the location of Australian art within an international framework. They chart the progress of this location from dependency on the British Empire through the assertions of an independent national identity in the 1920s to a position where location was required within

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[16] Danto, Page 20.
[17] Bernard Smith's Place, Taste and Tradition was a construct at a political and cultural moment and expresses the derivative nature of the country's development and its position as part of western culture and democracy.

the wider concept of internationalism. Hindered by a "cultural cringe"[18], the only way forward was to emulate international art without negotiating the terms of participation and without investigation by writers and critics.

The authors contend that an interpretation within an international perspective but not based on a dependent or devalued role would make a different story of Australian art. This different interpretation would require a re-examination of art based on the notion of interdependent relations between centre and periphery. "This would require scrutiny of the relation between national forms or traditions and the 'international' form of the art market."[19] They claim that the need for "a structural dependency model as a basis of art historical explanation"[20] has passed, and if a new interpretation is possible it will be necessary to evolve a new coherent theoretical framework which has greater explanatory powers. This new theoretical structure should have the capacity to "explain culturally specific expressions, while comprehending them within relationships between cultures on an international scale"[21].

The authors maintain that regional factors are still active in the development of the character of art in this country and "the need for a new understanding of regional values today and of their historical basis in Australian culture is not merely a question of historical accuracy or of the central role enacted by regionalist attitudes in artistic development. It is rather a necessary condition of contemporary understanding and practice"[22]. They state that "the importance of

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[18] "The cultural cringe is usually seen as relation between Australia and other countries, an aspect I don't want to deny though it's a phrase I try to avoid using since its re-iteration reinforces the very attitude it is supposedly attacking.", Humphrey McQueen, Art Monthly Australia, No 20, May 1989, Page 7.
[19] Burn, Lendon, Merewether and Stephen, Page 132.
[20] Burn, Lendon, Merewether and Stephen, Page 139.
[21] Burn, Lendon, Merewether and Stephen, Page 141.
[22] Burn, Lendon, Merewether and Stephen, Page 144.

this essay - at least to us - lies in the ideas and arguments which became a foundation on which we could build"[23].

This is evidently the case : there are plenty of ideas, reams of instructions, a starting point and a vehicle on which to reassess Australian art. The book contains all the criteria for social investigation. The assertions are there: we must do this, we must do that; and we must rationalise another approach in order to explain the previously unexplained.[24]

The issue in The Necessity of Australian Art is not the reclamation of Australian art from the clutches of dependency, but an outline of another self-sufficient project for social historians in a pursuit of a definitive sociological history based on an Australian art industry. The cost of such an investigation is the exclusion of the author/artist, the dismissal of aesthetic value and perhaps eventually the replacement of works of art by text.

Jerrold Levinson, in an essay titled "Defining Art Historically", says "I do not mean to deny that there is a common practice of art, and a group of people bound together under that umbrella, nor do I deny that art works need to be understood in relation to their cultural situation. What I do deny is that the institutions of art in a society are essential to art, and that an analysis of arthood must therefore involve them. The making of art is primary; the social frameworks and conventions that grow up around it are not".[25] The Necessity of Australian Art does not deny that the making of art is primary - it just excludes the process of

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[23] Burn, Lendon, Merewether and Stephen, Preface, Page 3.
[24] In a review of The Necessity of Australian Art, Robin Wallace-Crabbe comments that "no matter what I write here this work's authors will stand it on its head and reinterpret it in their occasionally convoluted prose.", Robin Wallace-Crabbe, Art Monthly Australia, No 20, May 1989, Page 9.
[25] Jerrold Levinson, "Defining Art Historically", British Journal of Aesthetics, UK, Vol 19 Pt 3, Summer 1979, Page 247.

art. A strategy more in line with Becker's sociology of occupations than a theoretical approach in determining the construct of Australian Art History.

By taking such a position the authors should recognise that as members of one compartment within an Artworld they represent only one voice amongst many and that attacks on the methodology of others leaves them open to criticism. In this case their assertion that dependency has dominated Australian art seems to ignore the strength of their own position since the radical days of the early seventies. To rationalise and organise such a history to suit their own view of contemporary understanding and practice may only prove to be the articulation of a blank canvas dubbed "Postmodern".[26]

In a recent Art Monthly, Bernard Smith says "Those who talk in their airy-fairy way about re-writing Australian art history do not, I have noticed, take on the task themselves. They keep telling others how it should be written. When they do, if ever, undertake the task, they will find that there is a publication industry in this country and that sometimes it publishes some kinds of books, sometimes others."[27] The ambiguous title and constant parade of book covers as imagery[28] throughout The Necessity of Australian Art combined with a fixed authoritarian text highlights this problem in art historical production. It also underlines the difficulty of providing a balanced view of Australian art history when certain

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[26] "To the postmodernist mind, everything is empty at the centre. Our vision is not integrated - it lacks form and definition. Is it any wonder, then, that art has fallen prey to difficulties of legitimacy - or that, like a dark body which absorbs everything and gives out nothing, it should be undergoing what seems, by now, like a permanent crisis of credibility?", Suzi Gablik, Has Modernism Failed?, Thames & Hudson, London 1985, Page 17. "All that postmodernism has proven so far is that something can be more than one thing at the same time, and can even be its own opposite.", Gablik, Page 123.

[27] Bernard Smith, Art Monthly Australia, No 21, June 1989, Page 3.

[28]The Necessity of Australian Art contains sixteen images - 1 print, 1 Streeton, 2 important people looking at art and 12 book covers.
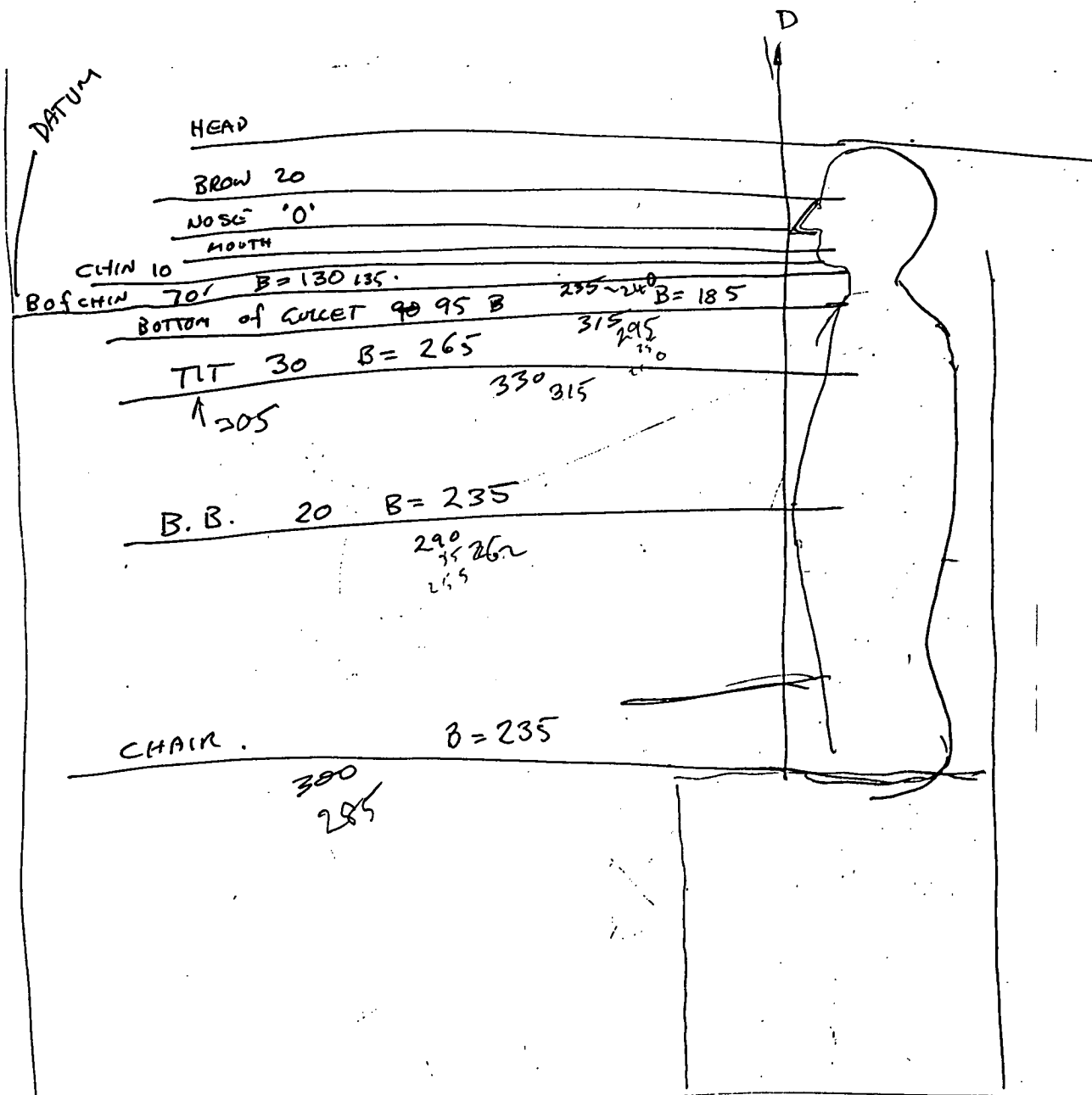
orthodoxies prevail.[29] In a recent radio discussion[30], Bernard Smith accepted that there is a need for an alternative mode of looking at art history. Perhaps in a search for this new mode, or structure, art historians should re-introduce the products of the "art industry", and the views of artists and various discourses that underline and articulate the usefulness of art to our society.

[29] "The great value of art is that it can permit artists to shape personal and social experience to a depth that most communication cannot systematically reach. Through critical engagement, others can rework this and other material into further understandings. Both can be grasped by theorists and historians in ways which will carry them still further.", Terry Smith, Age Monthly Review.

[30] Richard Acland, Bernard Smith, Ian Burn, Ann Stephen - Late Night Live, Radio National, 7th June 1989.

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DATUM

D

HEAD

BROW 20

NOSE '0'

MOUTH

CHIN 10

BOf CHIN 70' B = 130 135.

BOTTOM of CRICKET 90 95 B 235~240 B = 185

315 295 270

TILT 30 B = 265

330 315

↑ 305

B.B. 20 B = 235

290 75 262
265

CHAIR. B = 235

380
285

Distance less 35 less dim. 'B'

PAPER TWO

THE ART OF CONSENSUS

My primary role as an artist is the making of art: talking about art is secondary. However, this paper recognises the vital role of this secondary process in the development of a national identity and its impact on individual art practice.

Australian art and cultural history is dogged by centre/periphery issues. The recent agenda has been an effort to deny the derivative nature of Australia's origins. That is: the development of a history free of the shackles of "British Imperialism" and the construction of an art history promoting a strong regional identity. In 1983 Terry Smith adopted a broader perspective when he nominated six phases in Australian art historical construction and added that external factors of art historical practice in Europe, England and the United States have had influence in that construction. He continued, "The variety of possible approaches has, accordingly increased in the past thirty years to such an extent that an account of present practice could only be a listing." However, he considers that "Modernity seems to have eclipsed all of the other concerns we have been tracing. It seems to be the key to the puzzle of the overall structure of the history of Australian Art."[1] In this sense it seems premature to search for a history and a national identity outside of modernism for this universal term embraces all Australian art, cultural, social, institutional and political documentary history since Federation.

As a western capitalist democracy Australia has pursued progress through the development and expansion of mining, agriculture and primary and secondary industries. The scope of such institutions are immense. In some cases, such as mining, they provide their own townships and in secondary industry the factories often take the form of small populations within cities working towards a single cause: production.

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[1] Terry Smith, "Writing the History of Australian Art: Its Past, Present and Possible Future", Australian Journal of Art, Vol 3, 1983.

Despite popular myth related to the misery and despair of factory work, many of the employees are extremely dedicated and loyal to the cause, whether it be the company, the production, the department, the department boss or the product. Within these institutions there are no grey areas. People are employed for specific reasons and in many cases to be creative and skilled day in day out for years on end. Contrary to its elevated position in art where people pursue the idea of creativity, in industry creativity and skill factor are assumed - the results are the products of modernism. (In many cases these products are the materials and technology used by contemporary artists in their everyday lives and in pursuit of their own creative activity.) The skills and knowledge of workers are enhanced to suit the systems and methods of production, new employees are trained and graduates are re-educated to fit into the real world. The employees gain the rewards of consistent income, holidays, bonus incentives, overtime, superannuation and credit union benefits, pursue career paths or shop floor promotion and become consumers of their own creations. Within the institutions of art and education it is my observation that individual choice of profession and career path is primarily directed towards personal achievement and security: no different to any other form of institution or organisation. The fundamental difference is that the machinery of society relies on production and profit, and the artworld on government patronage and funding : an extremely variable situation that depends largely on the way governments perceive that it is of benefit to the promotion of cultural democracy.

In 1986 there was an inquiry into Commonwealth assistance to the arts by The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Expenditure. A publication titled Patronage, Power and the Muse was released which detailed the inquiry

and the conclusions of the committee.[2] In the introduction to Chapter one the committee underlines a fundamental problem in the understanding of the arts. It reports : "There is little agreement on what work is art, whether and why governments should assist any art, and if so, what they should support and how best to do so."[3]

The notion of pluralism in the arts is severely tested in the rationalisation of funding and public benefit which they say "is hampered by treating the arts as homogeneous" when "the benefits they provide are different, they speak to different publics, they are distributed in different ways and their material circumstances differ".[4] In view of this the arts were divided into three units : heritage art, new art and innovatory art.[5] The committee found itself in a situation of investigating the best method for allocating funding to an activity which is perceived as being important to the notion of national pride and prestige, but cannot be defined beyond a broad base of cultural activity operating under the umbrella of the government funded Australia Council.[6]

In actual distribution of funds the greatest difficulty lay in the proportioning of funding between the "flagships" (the major performing arts companies) and other art activity. The committee concluded that the "flagships" despite being

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[2] The following quotation outlines this committee's view of cultural democracy : "The committee sees the broad objective of government arts assistance as increasing cultural democracy. We define this not as wider access to the so-called high arts, but rather as access by the community to a diversity of cultural experiences from which individuals may choose for themselves the cultural activities of most benefit to themselves at any time." Patronage Power and the Muse, House of Representatives, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1986, Page 5.

[3] Patronage Power and the Muse, Page 16.

[4] Patronage Power and the Muse, Page 39.

[5] Heritage art is what has survived of previous artistic activity, high and low, elite and folk. New art is the mass of contemporary art-work that falls into the mainstream of cultural activity. Innovatory art provides new, often shocking methods of expression or interpretations of culture. See Patronage Power and the Muse, Page 39.

[6] "The Committee accepted however that it is at least possible to establish broad agreement on the range of activities that are potentially art in any particular society at a particular time. Such an agreement for Australia at present is embodied in the art-form board structure of the Australia Council......". Patronage Power and the Muse, Page 25.

"among the world leaders in the art of ear-stroking and arm twisting"[7] should continue to have assistance although there is evidence "that much of the public support resulted from an honorific or deferential approach to the subject by respondents who were reluctant to appear uncultured".[8] Absence of any widespread opposition to the activities of the "flagships" meant that "the committee could not find other than that there is a community support for funding of the major companies. Whatever the roots of this support may be, there is little doubt that it exists."[9]

These observations, amongst many others in the publication, illustrate the extreme complexity in the operation of the artworld and underline the problems of internal definition and an apparent inability of the institutions to articulate a position outside their own domain.

The promotion of a multi-cultural society and the embracing of postmodernity by art has increased the complex relationship between art and society. The following quotation from Arthur Danto provides a concise summary of his view of art's position. He says :

> The age of pluralism is upon us. It does not matter any longer what you do, which is what pluralism means. When one direction is as good as another direction, there is no concept of direction any longer to apply. Decoration, self expression, entertainment are, of course, alluding human needs. There will always be a service for art to perform, if artists are content with that. Freedom ends in its own fulfilment. A subservient art has always been with us. The institutions of the artworld - galleries, collectors, exhibitions, journalism - which are predicated upon history and hence marking what is new, will bit by bit wither away.[10]

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[7] Patronage Power and the Muse, Page 130
[8] Patronage Power and the Muse, Page 137
[9] Patronage Power and the Muse, Page 137
[10] Arthur Danto, The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art, Columbia University Press, New York 1986, Page 115.

It is not difficult to reinforce the views of Danto. The artworld is surrounded by negatives. When talking to students and practicing artists the negative prevails. It's only a matter of beating the other bastards to it .... if you manage to make it, it doesn't matter what you do .... its only a game etc etc. Suzi Gablik underlines a more potent negative :

> One of the unsettling characteristics of modernism, as a tradition, is that it has failed to develop the means for training artists. Nowadays, the artist has no function to transmit traditionalist skills, or even to impart a knowledge of art - nor is there any consensus as to what should be learned.[11]

Many of the major art movements of the 20th century which were primarily based on the debunking of traditional institutions and methods of representation have now become the institutional determinants of art education. Barbara Creed says;

> Any attempt to speak from a "place" is immediately rendered problematical by the fact that one of the positions central to postmodernism is that there are no places left from which to speak - there are no "Truths", "Beliefs", or "Positions". Yet, this is in itself a position and one now in danger of becoming a new orthodoxy.[12]

Considering the statements of Gablik and Creed recurring undergraduate questions such as; What is sculpture, how do I make it and how much do I have to make to pass?, have become increasingly difficult to answer. An approach to these questions requires a knowledge of three different areas of debate in art. The first is what is art and what constitutes a work of art. The second questions the processes involved in the making of art and the third addresses the institutional notion of education in art.

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[11] Suzi Gablik, Has Modernism Failed?, Thames & Hudson, London 1985, Page 117.
[12] Barbara Creed, "From Here to Modernity: Feminism and Postmodernism", Screen 1987, Section v, Page 67.

The first two questions form the basis of an artist's work ethic which has become known as praxis: the relationship between theory and practice. Raymond Williams draws a distinction between praxis and theoretical practice.[13] It is the complex relationship between the two practices that provides the cutting edge of tertiary education - the negotiation by students between the two discourses that marks the development of an individual and self motivated work practice.

Danto argues that modern art refers to a stylistic period, a new kind of period, a crisis. A stage of history when art realised that it had an identity to enquire into and became an object for itself. The results of this investigation characterise art and our systems of cultural morality. He points to postmodernism as erasing the boundaries between art and criticism, the artist / dealer / critic / gallery etc, and argues that we have entered a period where art is absolute in its freedom and in that sense "Artmaking is its own end in both senses of the term : the end of art is the end of art. There is no further place to go." He goes on to say that by reaching this point "art has exhausted its conceptual mission"[14] and brought us to a stage of thought outside history where it is now possible to contemplate a universal definition of art, a closed theory which in itself is an explanation of postmodernism - an openness in all classes of cases. He argues that from this point on art will be post-historical and, having transformed culture to the extent of making a final philosophy possible, the only role for artists is "the keen sense of play that survival in the artworld now demands".[15]

The generalised views of artists and students mentioned earlier tend to confirm this view. But if it is a game, what are the groundrules, what is the position of

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[13] Praxis is an activity uniting theory and practice, while theoretical practice is predominantly theoretical. See Raymond Williams, Keywords, William Collins, Glasgow 1987. Page 318.
[14] Danto, Page 209.
[15] Danto, Page 210.

postmodernism, is it actually post-modernism or another modernist movement? A general Australian view of postmodernism may be found in a series of essays that were presented at a conference in Sydney in 1984. In an introduction to a book that includes many of these essays, Elizabeth Grosz provides a personal summation of the views presented.[16] She refers to a difficulty in defining the general term "modernism" and points out that there are subsystems, such as art, within the general structure of modernism. These subsystems feel that it is their right to define and know what is modern. Grosz believes that it is possible that a view on modernism will determine a view, but not necessarily the position, of postmodernism. Such a postmodernism is not yet clearly defined and although it serves the ideals of plurality and multiplicity it does not help to provide a position. She continues that postmodernism is concerned with the present and is a style of the eighties "living out reversals of values and norms presently operating". In all, postmodernism "covers a broad diversity of approaches, methods, objects and attitudes".[17]

If, as Gablik suggests, modernism is a tradition, her complaints are not a short-list of failings, but an explanation of modernism (and the postmodern its political rational?). However her complaints/explanation highlights a dilemma faced by students and staff of educational institutions. The students wish to be told of the future and the teachers can only talk of the past. One approach is documented in Praxis, a publication by the Curriculum Branch of the Victorian Ministry of Education: "Teaching art is a complex activity, for the art world encompasses many opinions, attitudes and values. As an organising strategy, canons and doctrines are often imposed on its teaching. Learning about art should have no orthodoxy. There is no right way of doing it. There are many possibilities".

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[16] Grosz, Threadgold, Kelly, Cholodenko, Colless (Eds), Futur*Fall : Excursions into Postmodernity, Power Institute of Fine Arts, University of Sydney, 1986.
[17] Futur*Fall, Page 11.

Earlier it says, "For students to 'know' they must organise or give structure to their experience, it is the source of new experience".[18]

To give structure to an artist's experience it is necessary to place art in terms of modern art and modernism. In this respect Australian artists are placed in an advantageous position where the development of Australian art is a regionalised product of modernism without prior history or tradition. The compartmentalising of human activity has not altered the productive activity of an artist. To "make art" it is still possible, and quite normal procedure, to use materials and technologies that have been used for many centuries. The making of art, in most cases, remains a singular and self motivated activity. What modernism has changed is the relationship between the artist and society and the role of the artist in that society.

The current call for Australia to become a clever society which, translated from political rhetoric, means a shift in emphasis from the humanities to the sciences and suggests a resurgence of the modernist ideals of the 50 & 60s. It indicates an effort by government to redress the dominance of social and cultural nationalism of the 70 & 80s. This promotion of cultural and social harmony, which was touted to be an expression of a true national identity, has led to a devaluation of many of the professional and skill related activities that are essential to the continued productivity of an industrialised country.

One legacy of the industrial revolution is a requirement for specialisation. However the exponential growth of information and technology has altered the role of specialisation from a method of efficient and cost effective production to a necessary method of human activity and understanding. This

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[18] Barbara Dover, Art works, Ministry of Education, Victoria. 1986, Page 3.

compartmentalisation of human activity through the streamlining of education and the promotion of provincial cultural identities has in effect produced a situation which is contrary to social and cultural unity. That is: the notion of many voices, of freedom in all cases, has produced a divided society dominated by single issue demands which are articulated by people with specific and tunnel visioned views of social and cultural activity.[19]

In a broad sense it marks a fundamental division between those who produce the products for use in society and those who say how they should be used and the reason why. This is a situation similar to that outlined earlier in the discussion on the development of praxis in art. Two determinants that provide the boundary in which to form a tangible notion of a national identity. The primary concern of this paper has been the illustration of division between the activities of production/profit and cultural institutions/public accountability whilst at the same time noting that the general activities, hopes and ambitions of individuals in both activities are broadly directed towards individual progress and reward in a selected occupation. Similarly, as the formation of praxis in art is individual resolution of the dichotomy between studio practice and theory, the development of a national identity is in a broad sense a form of national praxis. In that context it is essential that a renewed emphasis on the sciences does not become a totalising doctrine and provide a reversal of the lopsided thinking of the last twenty years.

The conclusions drawn by Danto and the complaints of Gablik do not influence the potential capabilities of artists. What they do indicate is that modernism did not require traditional skills or structured forms of education to fulfil its agenda. This does not mean that these notions are lost ; the revival of the arts and crafts

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[19] "The old commitments to egalitarianism have disappeared; pluralism has produced not a more tolerant society, but a more unequal one." Richard White, Inventing Australia, George Allan & Unwin, Sydney, Fourth Impression 1985. Page 171.

industry indicates that it is not only possible to reclaim traditional skills, but to improve them by the use of modern technology . For art, society provides tools and structure in terms of museums, galleries and art schools. It is up to the artists, craftpersons, administrators and educators who utilise these institutions, to renegotiate some of the neglected traditions and to recognise that there is a difference between individual professionalism and art as a profession.

David Throsby notes that "The idea of being an artist as a professional occupation is a strange one to many people in the community. Many artists have had the experience of being asked: 'Yes but when are you going to get a *real* job?'" [20] The question of a "real job" or career path has become increasingly insistent from my friends and acquaintances, many of whom fit the professional criteria noted by Throsby.[21] Several observations can be made from these encounters. The first is that it is rare to find any person who does not have an opinion about art and what they consider to be "real" art and have some consideration of its importance. Secondly, as I have increased my understanding of art and the process of art education, it has become increasingly difficult to defend the position of art against the arguments of others. There are two perceptible reasons for this; one is my expanding use of the vernacular of art which unfortunately eliminates the uninformed, and the other is that beyond personal belief of what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, people are not interested.[22] In this respect the third observation is

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[20] David Throsby, "Art, Work and the Economic Realities of Staying Alive", Art Monthly Australia, May 1989, Number 20, Page 24.

[21] "Yet in fact of course the vast majority of art of any substance is created by skilled professionals who, like doctors, lawyers, or any other professional worker, produce their best work only after long years of training and on-the-job experience.", Throsby, Page 24.

[22] The committee agreed with Peter Robinson, who said: " The problem is, of course, that most Australians are like Herman Goering who said that, 'whenever I hear the word 'culture' I reach for my gun.' I am not implying that Australians are determined to resist the arts or are positively opposed to them (although a substantial number are, despite what some rather unbelievable polls taken by the Australia Council say) but rather that the very word 'culture' is like the red rag and the bull. It is ill-defined, frightening and formidable to many people." Patronage Power and the Muse, Page 137.

articulated by Christopher Allen in a paper titled "Kitsch and the Weight of the Real". He says;

> High culture (therefore) finds itself at something of a loss in dealing with kitsch, since it cannot compete with it on its own ground without being absorbed by it, and the standard modern response of retreating into its own domain, and making that domain more impregnable, effectively leaves the field in enemy hands. Moreover the introversion of modernism, and even more of postmodernism, mean that high culture may actually be growing incapable of dealing with human experience. And this is not just an aesthetic question; apart from its intrinsic aesthetic and ethical ugliness, cultural kitsch softens up the population for political kitsch, on which, as the recent election showed, parties ultimately rely to get themselves elected. [23]

Kylie Winkworth notes that "Professionalism is not value-free. It holds connotations of power, authority and control over other people". Winkworth is concerned with potential conflict between public accountability and peer group pressure. Later she notes that, "the work program of museums and galleries is rarely decreed by political interests. Rather it is internalised and formulated by a professional elite that has real power and choice in the way it constructs the institutions relationship with Australian society."[24]

In pursuit of a professional career an individual will at times be assessed by an established body. These collectives, the institutions of teaching, collection and preservation, must, by the nature of their position in society, lay claim to knowledge and objective standards. A belief that standards of excellence do exist or can be established is defended by institutions who argue that through discussion, a panel which has "a combination of native ability, education, training and experience"[25], is likely to move beyond subjective evaluation to an objective collective judgement. This may be a valid defensive posture from

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[23] Christopher Allen, "Kitsch and the Weight of the Real", Art Monthly Australia, June 1990, Number 31, Page 19.

[24] Kylie Winkworth, "Some Common Ground for Museums and Galleries in the 90s", Art Monthly Australia, Dec-Jan 1989-90, Number 27, Page 14.

[25] Janet Wolff, Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art, Page 50.

those within the institution but by their use of traditional socio-political values based on education, experience and self proclaimed ability they can only accept art relevant to their standards, produced by those within their own ranks.

The making of art is an artist's major form of communication and individual reward is the satisfaction of being a good artist. However, in society the value of art is not the recognition of individual reward but an acceptance of individual pursuit in the field of art. The presumed role of institutional education is to enlighten, impart knowledge, to encourage and to judge the merits of an individual's application to art practice. A work of art produced within an institution is both a celebration of individual freedom and a submission for collective judgement. A form of praxis, a consensus between individual achievement and the concerns of various discourses that form the structure of institutions. In this desire to present a balanced view of art to society the institutions of art (galleries, museums and art schools) are fulfilling their function as the protectors of the relativity of cultural democracy. But it should be recognised that they do not hold all the cards to the notion of art. Without a clearly stated position and formal structures of presentation and education there is a danger that individuals will adapt this compromise to their own external art practice and produce a homogeneous form of work devoid of the idiosyncratic attraction that is the hallmark of art.

Words such as postmodernism and pluralism, combined with notions of national identity, cultural democracy and praxis used so freely in the early section of this paper constitute part of the developed language of institutional art. This language is also the tool used by competing ideologies to peddle their wares under the banner of art. This use of rhetoric has removed the institutions from the field of everyday activity. Other visual activities, with different criteria for group judgement, have annexed words such as creativity and artistic

expression, added notions of power and prestige, and now present them to the community in the form of popular culture. This generalising imperative of mass communication has become dominant, subverting expressive enterprise of individual artists and undervaluing the ability of art to present an individual experience of life beyond an often limited, parochial field.

As the compartmentalising activity of modernity erodes the notion of individual freedom the activity of art becomes more important. It is vital that artists examine, question and, at times, upset the balance of institutional and national consensus.

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