

GAVIN MALONE
HONOURS THESIS
BACHELOR OF VISUAL ARTS, 1994
South Australian School of Art, University of South Australia

THE 1994 ADELAIDE FESTIVAL OF ARTS VISUAL ARTS PROGRAM: IS IT ECOLOGICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY SENSIBLE?

INTRODUCTION

There is a widespread belief that humanity has brought upon itself a crisis in terms of the degradation it has caused to the planet that maintains and supports its very existence. Scientific and circumstantial evidence points to the dramatic negative effect humanity has inflicted on the biosphere. Holes in the ozone layer, the threat of "greenhouse" global warming, the alarming loss of species, habitats and biodiversity and the widespread pollution of the eco system including our own habitats. It is a time where the survival of life as we know it cannot be assumed, taken for granted, and if current trends continue the results will be catastrophic, sooner rather than later. This is not an ecological crisis per se; the planet will continue no matter the fate of Homo sapiens, it is a crisis for humanity if it wishes to ensure its own wellbeing and survival. Humanity must dramatically reduce the negative impact it wreaks through its destruction and exploitation of the biophysical world and its exponential growth in per capita consumption and population in a world of finite resources.

This essentially involves an attitudinal change, a revision of the present construct or belief system where the non-human world is predominantly seen as a resource not only to maintain human life, but to be exploited and plundered to the maximum short term economic or human benefit. Within Western culture the origins of this belief can be traced to the anthropocentrism of Judaism and Christianity, the religions or belief systems that have underpinned Western attitudes to 'nature'. The medieval historian Lynn White Jr (Fry, 1994 p 63) has examined the historical Western roots of the ecological crisis and has pointed out how these religions established a belief that 'man' was 'master' under God of the natural world and thus of all other forms of life. The behaviors and attitudes generated by anthropocentrism are an essential part of our belief system and central to the conventional economic paradigm and our consumer society. As Suzi Gablik, the American author and artist (1992:49) elaborates:

We are bred from birth to be consumers. As a culture, we have failed to generate a vision of the universe that is life enhancing; and without a living cosmology enabling us to hold sacredness of life in mind, we never establish a relationship with some larger context of meaning and purpose. Instead we devastate the land in greed.

The opinion of Francis Fukuyama expressed in his book "The End of History and the Last Man" is that liberal capitalism is now the dominant paradigm or belief system in terms of economic and political systems that regulate human behavior on this planet. This system has evolved out of the Western traditions of democracy and capitalism, which again cannot be separated from the above religions. They were paramount in fostering liberal capitalism's, or the consumer society, ascendancy.

Western art (when referring to art this thesis it is specifically concerned with the visual arts and will use the word with that intent) is a major form of cultural reflection, mediation and provocation within this cultural construct. Over the last few decades some art has made comment on ecological issues and reflected the concerns of many on the non-human | human, or nature | culture, dichotomy. However, much art is heavily associated with the dominant paradigm and its ideologies. As Gablik states (1992:50) 'with its present subtext of power, profit and prestige, it (art) is heavily implicated in this ideology'.

Art itself, I contend, is popularly seen as being environmentally benign and expressive of higher human values. Culture and art are however manufactured, they are human constructions in both the physical and meta physical sense and are inextricably linked to the economic and cultural production systems. The production of art can be seen as part of an industrial process, as much as the production of motor vehicles, an industry which is popularly seen as environmentally malignant. Art involves the consumption of economic and physical resources, which as I will elaborate later are in essence the same thing. The production of materials used in art making has an environmental impact, with the manufacturing of some materials being highly eco toxic. It is appropriate to examine and question how responsive is art to pressing ecological concerns, to developing ecological sustainability both in terms of resource consumption and the content and context of art works.

A most effective way to evoke change is to accept responsibility at an individual and local level for issues which in the broad picture may seem beyond an individual or community capacity to influence. The ecological and economic sensibilities of the 1994 Adelaide Festival Visual Art Program are an appropriate subject for review. I worked as a volunteer construction assistant and was thus able to observe some of the processes required to stage the event. This review is not intended as a personal criticism of the individual artists whose work is referred to as exemplars as many other works are of the same category. Rather it is a reflection on the values of a cultural and bureaucratic system and how they are expressed in contemporary art practice.

DISCUSSION

Background to the Visual Art Program

The Adelaide Festival of Arts, founded in 1960, is held biennially and has a reputation as a premier international performance and visual art festival. More recently a significant contributor to the Festival has been the Visual Arts Program which has traditionally presented curated, gallery based exhibitions. Artists' Week, a national forum for discussion and debate of contemporary visual art issues was included in the Festival format from 1986. An Artistic Director is appointed for each Festival and in 1994 it was Christopher Hunt, a Paris / New York based art impresario. His vision was to present a Festival comprising works from Australia's time zone, that is Australia and the Asian countries to the north, supplemented by a smaller component of work from the traditional trans-Atlantic axis. Interestingly, the 1972 Festival exhibition at the Art Gallery of South Australia presented a parallel theme. Dr. Hackett, Chairman of Trustees explained in the forward of the exhibition brochure (Whitelock, 1980:130).

Australia is where it is - and where it will always be - in South East Asia and Oceania ... Perhaps with some feeling of locality, the exhibitors selected for this year's Festival ... have been chosen from Australia and the regions adjacent to it - South East Asia and the lands and islands of the Pacific Ocean.

Since 1990, as an adjunct to the Festival, the Art Gallery of South Australia has staged the Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art, a survey of aspects of contemporary Australian art for the 1994 Visual Art Program the Festival and the Gallery, traditionally distinct entities, combined for the purpose of staging Adelaide Installations, a major installations program proposed by Hunt that would be predominantly non gallery based. Apart from Artists' Week this event was to comprise the whole of the official Visual Art Program.

Adelaide Installations comprised three distinct segments:

"Beyond the Material World" - The Asian component curated by Alison Carroll, presenting the work of eight artists from North and South East Asia and examining the meta physical, the mystical, beyond the physical and material in Asian culture and beliefs.

"Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art" - The Australian component curated by John Barrett Lennard presenting the work of eleven artists or collaborations (in total 18 artists). This component addressed questions of identity both collective and individual.

"Moving Sands: Forward Momentum" - The Aboriginal component curated by Doreen Mellor, presenting the work of four artists or collaborations, was concerned with the relationship of Aboriginal people to the ground and the powerful spiritual forces which constructed the landscape.

Artists' Week was founded in 1982 by the South Australian Visual Arts Committee (SAVAC) to coincide with the Festival and since 1986 has been incorporated into the Festival program. It continued to be organised under the auspices of SAVAC as an art community initiated and managed event. In 1994 Hunt proposed instead that a curator be appointed and more dynamic and diverse ways of discussion and debate be developed. SAVAC supported this initiative and agreed to step aside from the organising role and act in an advisory capacity. The format and content of Artists' Week was to be programmed by the curator under the thematic direction of Hunt This initial concept did not fully eventuate, instead four curators (or collaboratives) were appointed, each to develop segments of the program and a Coordinator, Julianne Pierce, appointed to facilitate and manage the logistics of the event.

Thus for 1994 the Visual Art Program had a revised format and outlook, but ecological concerns were not expressly on the agenda of the curatorial and management objectives of the Program, except perhaps for the intrinsic attachment to the land expressed in the Aboriginal component.

Ecological Overview of Adelaide Installations

Hunt's intent was to present a major international installations program in a variety of venues. Five indoor spaces / galleries were used, the focus being the Gerard and Goodman building, a disused warehouse in the city, ironically destined to be demolished to allow the construction of a multi-story car park for the University of Adelaide. A variety of outdoor sites were also used from the facade of St Peter's Anglican Cathedral to the Adelaide Botanic Garden. An extensive curatorial, logistical and administrative program was required to support this endeavor.

An intrinsic aspect of installations is that they are usually site specific and temporary in nature. Some of the objects and materials are readily re-utilised in later reconstructions of the particular work or as components for other works. However, much of the material used is also site specific and scrapped at the end of the exhibition. The construction of installations can be demanding in terms of labour and a team of workers, both paid and volunteer, was required to construct and install the Adelaide works. Labour is a physical resource and must be included in an assessment of resource consumption.

The Gerard and Goodman building housed 10 of the total of 23 works. One intent of the use of the building was to take advantage of the material and space opportunities presented in the disused building and the artists had relatively free choice in the spaces selected. However, a significant amount of physical intervention, an intensive cleanup and re-commissioning of services was required. Approximately 400 sq. metres of plaster board walling on timber stud frames was installed to partition space or as part of works. Plaster board cannot readily be salvaged and this was then scrapped at the end of the exhibition. Several ten tonne rubbish skips, destined for landfill, were filled at the Gerard and Goodman site with waste generated during the construction and dismantling process. As Fry (1994:181) states:

The volume of waste that can be nothing other than waste is one key measure of the entropic slide. Over consumption, unrealised consumption and mis consumption destroys bio mass, it wastes it by turning it to waste.

Whilst intrinsic use of on site features and materials was a component of some works, importation of construction materials was extensive. An 8 square metre brick wall was constructed to house a small video monitor, liquid foam sprayed on walls to create a textured surface that could be coloured and carved into, a 48 square metre elevated steel and chipboard platform erected on which to site a small galvanised iron shed and coloured glass sheeting installed to divide space. Extensive painting of newly constructed or existing surfaces was also required.

Installations at other sites had similar patterns of material consumption. The installation at the Contemporary Art Centre necessitated the construction of a 42 square metre false wall of plaster board on a timber stud frame. This was not the intent of the artists (F. Hall, pers. comm. 1994) but was decided upon by the project management as the most "efficient" means to achieve a particular objective. Again the walling was scrapped after use. A 100 square metre outdoor enclosure was constructed adjacent the Art Gallery of steel tube framing and chipboard cladding to form a space to house a gas flame, a whirlpool and raked soil. 200 square metres of 20 mm thick chipboard was required, and as chipboard deteriorates when exposed to the weather, the material was likely to be rendered useless.

Another work proposed the digging of a 30 m long earth mother figure in the banks of the River Torrens, connected to the river by an umbilical cord. The river would flow in and out of the figure through the umbilical, a symbolic gesture of our connection to other life forces. However, the intent was compromised by a bureaucratic decision not to allow excavation so an attempt was made to construct the work above ground. Several truckloads of high quality Onkaparinga River loam was brought to the site to form the figure complete with bright blue plastic pool liner to retain water. A Bobcat loader was required to move the soil on site, with hand labour to shape the embankments into which several hundred flowering plants, delivered in disposable plastic hanging baskets, were planted. Because of illness the artist had been unable to travel to the Festival and the work was constructed to his plans. However, it did not have the intended strength and was deemed unsuccessful by the curator / manager and was abandoned and removed several days later.

While the works mentioned are easily recognised examples of materials usage and wastage they should not be considered to be the only form of consumption. Other consumption is often less obvious. Energy to freeze ice sculptures, cranes to install banners, high technology materials, machines and equipment

and a myriad of infrastructure support services. The pattern of resource utilisation reflects that of our capitalist paradigm and its economic system. This pattern is critiqued by Fry (1994:162):

More specifically, the current direction and anthropocentrism of the restrictive economy, in its multiple delivery of finite materiality (all it can produce) of the non re-newable consumed (resource depletion), the consumable (absorbable but wasted waste) and unconsumable (intractable waste) leads to termination before an entropically delivered end.

The nature and intent of the four installations at Tandanya were separate from the balance of the program physically, curatorially and materially. The relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the non-human world is vastly different to the Eurocentric attitudes. The land is part of their being, integral to the Dreamtime, the spiritual forces and the stories, myths and legends of creation it explains. Both the nature of people and the land is explained in the intertwined Dreamtime stories. In the works displayed the earth, the actual soil and sands, assisted by ritual and symbolic objects and ceremonial dance, were fundamental material and grounding for meaning. Doreen Mellor, the curator, introduces her catalogue essay as follows (Adelaide Installations, Vol 1:98):

"Waly a nnga ga liba nyina: We Walpiri live on the ground". So with pride, and economy of phrase - were two lifestyles juxtaposed and at the same time, according to Nancy Munn, sympathy was expressed for white people, who were in the unhappy position of having a multiplicity of devices and layers interspersed between them and the earth itself.

While the works reflected a spiritual attachment to the land they too require resource consumption and the Western infrastructure - transport systems, photography, communications, bureaucracies etc. The Aboriginal peoples do not live separate from contemporary industrialised society; they are part of contemporary culture.

Ecological Overview of Artists' Week

Artists' Week was held from Tuesday 22nd to Saturday 26th February, leading into the balance of the Festival program which commenced on Friday 25th February. It was, with Adelaide Installations, the lead in or "opening event" of the Festival. Despite earlier intentions of Hunt to change the format of Artists' Week from a "talkfest" to an event with a vibrant dynamic and the encouragement for curators to consider alternative methods of presentation, the venue was a staid 19th century Adelaide University hall and the programming no different from previously, that is individual or panel presentations followed by question time from the floor. The program involved 68 speakers and panelists (Adelaide Festival 1994:6). To publicise Artists' Week 20000 three colour double sided, double A4 size brochures were produced and distributed widely throughout South Australia and interstate (Pierce, 1994). Artists' Week did not require a large and direct material consumption but its content, cultural effectiveness and outcomes are still relevant to the resources required to present the event and are discussed later.

Resource Consumption - The Cost

Most public activity is measured in an economic or monetary value sense. The 1994 Festival cost \$8.87m to stage (Adelaide Festival 1994:7) and the cost of staging Adelaide Installations was approximately \$600,000 or an average of \$26,000 per work (N. Williams, per. comm. 1994). It is difficult to give a precise figure as funding was drawn from several sources and involved several institutions. Many overhead, management, curatorial and support costs were also met by the institutions as part of their ongoing operations (D Mellor and N Williams, pers. comm. 1994). In addition, sponsorship was obtained for numerous goods and services, there being forty four sponsors other than Government organisations (Adelaide Installations Catalogue, Vol 2). Extensive volunteer labour was also provided. According to Williams, a million dollar project was achieved. The cost of Artists' Week, additional to the above, was approximately \$50,000 (Adelaide Festival 1994:8).

Money is not an abstract quality; it is an exchange mechanism, or valuing system, for the trading of goods and services, for the exchange of wealth. Wealth is again not an abstract construction, it is created by three fundamental processes; the harvesting, extraction or cultivation of the bio physical resources of the planet. Therefore any wealth generated or dollar currency value expended is in effect a consumption (or exchange) of either the finite resource capital, or renewable resources, available within the biosphere. Renewable resources are dependent on energy created by the sun and expressed through the various thermo dynamic processes. Thus no matter the direct materials usage, the

expenditure of a currency value on a project still has an equivalent consumption of the bio physical resource or processes and cannot evade direct linkage to ecological concerns, particularly mass consumption.

Our species, like all others, must consume resources to maintain and reproduce itself. The level and distribution of consumption and the societal and ecological outcomes is the issue.

Economic Systems and Cost Benefit Analysis

The Concise Oxford Dictionary describes economics as the "practical and theoretical science of production and distribution of wealth". Economic systems are cultural constructs, methods of valuing and regulating the exchange of goods and services within and between communities. As constructs they are subject to questioning, interpretation and revision. They are also part of, not the whole of, any cultural value system. The emphasis given to the economy in a rationalist or conventional economic sense however often suggests that all other aspects of human endeavor are subservient to the needs or logic of the economy, to the terms of an ethic in which negative ecological and social impacts are of minimal consideration in the mania for the generation of wealth, or economic growth.

Conventional economic policy has an emphasis on economic growth as measured through the Gross National Product (G.N.P.). Growth is seen as being a positive indicator of wellbeing. However, as Ekins points out (1986:9) a 3% growth rate implies a doubling of production and consumption every twenty-five years, a tenet that has serious ecological and thus human consequences. According to Ekins conventional economic thinking does not have the conceptual or political tools to distinguish between economic activity or growth that may be benign and life enhancing compared to others that are wasteful, polluting or inequitable.

The G.N.P. also does not take into account the informal sector of the economy, that is activity that does not exist within the confines of monetary exchange, for example domestic activity, care giving etc. With conventional economics the informal sector is excluded from economic conventions and discussion of living standards, therefore giving a distorted and inadequate image of the human condition or "image of reality". Max-Neef (Ekins, 1986:48) points out that in Sweden working time in the formal economy is 6 billion hours per annum and informal 7 billion. He states that economic analysis is therefore based on pure fiction as conventional economists have not been able to agree on how to assign economic value to the work carried out outside of the formal market system. A significant proportion of art production exists in the informal sector of the economy, with many artists transgressing between formal / informal continuously.

As posited earlier (Fukuyama), the greater portion of the planet's wealth is managed within the variations of the liberal capitalist system, with varying degrees of popular participation under the guise of democracy. This system allows and encourages the maximum possible financial return on any investment made and for the generation of surplus wealth. The ecological effects of these processes have been of subservient or minor interest. In an attempt to deal with this, one flawed theory within conventional economics is that cost of repairing, minimising or even continuing ecological degradation be built into the product unit cost, the user or polluter pays. This does not encourage the abandonment of polluting industries or give recognition to other values. Money cannot repair much of the damage that is being done or replace the species and amenity that have been and continue to be lost.

Only in the last two decades or so has an acute awareness developed of the finite nature of many resources, ecological toxicity and the irreversible negative human impact being inflicted on aspects of the bio-physical world. Luke (1992:72) elaborates:

The concept of "ecology" should imply concern for the total pattern of all relations between natural organisms and their environment. However, complex modern economies, with their super exploitation of eons - old stocks of nature's resources in the lifetimes of only two or three human generations, operate at levels beyond and above the natural balance of the biosphere.

Economic systems and theories are now being revised or developed to take into consideration the ecological costs. Ekins (1986:1) states that:

The very assumptions which form the basis of conventional economics are now unsound. Having ceased to describe the real world in its theories, economics has become incapable of acting coherently on the

real world in practice. A new start is needed, an economic approach that is consistent with the science, technology, values and attitudes of the late twentieth century.

The new theories are popularly known as New Economics, which according to Ekins (1986:9) in contrast to conventional economics are:

... rooted in the recognition that human life and economic activity are an interdependent part of the wider ecological processes that sustain life on earth and will either operate sustainably within those processes or bring about their own demise.

New Economics theories are a reevaluation of economic systems, the values given to various resources and human welfare. The production and distribution of wealth is governed by political decisions, economics is not an apolitical science and is used extensively as a political tool to justify certain actions which maximise production and consumption but that are adverse to overall ecological and human welfare. New Economics is about human welfare, a complex condition. Ekins (1986:7) states that:

Welfare has to do with health and human needs, with mental, emotional and spiritual matters, as well as with physical wellbeing, and with social and environmental issues. Thus economics needs to be informed by psychology, sociology and ecology, if it is to avoid a narrow, materialistic reductionism that may be counterproductive of welfare as a whole.

In this sense a greater emphasis is given to qualitative rather than just quantitative aspects of existence and the economy. New Economics theories are more inclusive and multi-dimensional with a broader and richer conceptual base giving greater regard to the human condition in a holistic approach.

The theory developed by the Chilean economist, Manfred Max-Neef, is an example of such systems which have the same broad objectives, to satisfy human needs on a human scale within sound ecological parameters. It opens new awareness and understanding of wealth creation, welfare, social and ecological costs and benefits. Max-Neef (Ekins, 1986:49) proposes two hypotheses regarding human needs:

Firstly, fundamental human needs are finite, few and classifiable. Secondly, fundamental human needs are the same in all cultures and all historical periods. What changes over time and through cultures, is the form or the means by which these needs are satisfied.

Thus needs are defined as being cross cultural and are found irrespective of gender, race, creed, colour, sex and age. They are not culturally programmed as wants or desires may be, and failure to satisfy human needs leads to a progressive and sometimes irreversible human malfunction. This contrasts to the fulfilment of wants and desires, a major impetus for consumption within our existing system. Unsatisfied wants and desires may lead to little worse than frustration, they differ from society to society and from individual to individual; they change as technologies and products change and vary at different stages of one's existence. Whether a person belongs to a consumerist or ascetic society, fundamental human needs are the same but the satisfiers vary enormously.

Max-Neef has defined nine categories of needs that require satisfaction to allow for a full and rich human existence. They are Subsistence, Protection, Affection, Understanding, Participation, Leisure, Creation, Identity and Freedom (Ekins, 1992:206). These needs are met by satisfiers, that is action or things that satisfy or fulfil a particular need, for instance food, shelter and work are satisfiers for the need of subsistence. Satisfiers that can then meet needs across several categories, that is multiple satisfiers, are thus more effective and reduce demand for resources. To explain, I heard Max-Neef speak at a workshop titled "Human Scale Development" in Adelaide in January, 1994. He gave the example of satisfying the hunger of a baby. The need of Subsistence would be met by giving the baby a bottle to feed itself, whilst breastfeeding would also satisfy the needs of Protection, Affection and Identity. He proposes that poverty should not only be defined as a lack of money (or subsistence) but a poverty within any of the categories contributes to a lack of wellbeing within an individual or community. An individual who may be rich in material wealth but who has a poverty of affection, identity and protection does not have an optimal existence.

Thus discussion and analysis of economic sensibilities of the Visual Art Program would vary quite considerably and would have different outcomes dependent on the economic system or rationale used. As Seabrook (Ekins, 1989:62) states:

Conventional economics takes an extraordinary limited and simplified view of human motivation, as reflected in its concept of Financial Man, a quintessentially competitive human archetype, who orders his entire world to conform to the conditions of maximum monetary gain.

In conventional economics the Visual Art Program is not meant to be economically viable, it is subsidised by community (tax payer) funds. A financial return is not the only criteria for assessment although a working conceptual base to measure the societal return does not appear to exist. However, arts expenditure is still firmly posited within conventional economic thinking. As such, it still offends a section of the community as it is seen as a non-essential, non-productive and "soft" area of expenditure. It is increasingly having to be justified by the domino effect it may have in the tourism and leisure industries but this does not evaluate other contributions to the human experience. As Max-Neef (Ekins, 1986:48) elaborates:

We have become conditioned to accept economic theories, which instead of being capable of evaluating what is truly important and significant grant only importance and significance that which can be measured according to the existing rules of value.

I suggest that in the face of ecological catastrophe the conventional economic system, based on maximum financial return, most economically efficient use of resources and continued growth, is an inappropriate system by which to measure production systems and human endeavor as humanity determines its destiny into the next century. As a community we continue to make decisions which are ecologically destructive and fail to take necessary remedial action because of the conventional economic rationale. I therefore believe it inappropriate and counterproductive to undertake a cost benefit analysis, or an evaluation of sensibilities, in the context of conventional economics, it is a conceptual system that is too limited in its application and underpins a paradigm which is ecologically doomed. Critical thinking and debate must discredit this system and expose its falsehoods rather than reinforce its credibility.

To consider the Visual Art Program in the context of Max-Neef's need system, presents a Program which is a multiple satisfier, contributing to a variety of needs. Understanding, Participation, Leisure, Creation, Identity and Freedom can be all met to varying degrees by the activities of the Program. The development of necessary indicators to allow detailed evaluation of the Program remains elusive to me. Critical thought and debate of these issues is in process to develop a system that allows indicators of human satisfaction and human needs. There are no doubt conceptual problems of quantifying well-being but large scale studies are being undertaken. At the workshop Max-Neef spoke of work being undertaken in comparing economic growth, the quantitative aspects, with the qualitative aspects of existence and how relevant professions are developing indicators within communities and societies. Max-Neef proposes (Ekins, 1986:54) that:

In addition, the required indicators must serve to evaluate and assign value even to those human activities where no marker transactions and monetary fluxes are involved. In short we require indicators that tell us what happens in those sectors that are 'invisible' because they are excluded by orthodox indicators.

Cultural Outcomes

Whilst I give support to the principal by which art contributes to the human condition and the definition / shaping of culture, that is not to absolve it from any responsibility to critically examine the way it does consume resources and for what purpose and outcomes it achieves. As indicated the actual impact, outcomes and effectiveness can be problematic and difficult to assess given the present material emphasis within our economic and political systems. There is no doubt that the Visual Arts Program had an impact on the cultural milieu in South Australia and elsewhere and makes a contribution to our cultural coding. South Australia calls itself the "Festival State", part of our collective identity, although this may be for State marketing and promotional purposes as much as anything else. In discussing the Adelaide Grand Prix, The Advertiser alludes to the difficulties (Editorial Opinion, 15/11/94):

The various attempts to quantify it (the Grand Prix) in strict accounting terms have produced mixed results since it can easily be shown that the race absorbs millions of public dollars ... What is beyond dispute is the Grand Prix put Adelaide on the map in a way no other event, save the Biennial Arts Festival, has ever done.

Adelaide Installations

Visitation at the four principal indoor venues was 72,256 comprising 50,000 visitors at the Gerard and Goodman building, 10,000 at the Experimental Art Foundation, 6524 at the Contemporary Art Centre and 5732 at Tandanya (Art Gallery, pers. comm. 1994).

Media coverage at Festival time was extensive there being at least 30 articles in the popular press ranging from the *Financial Review* to the *Sunday Mail* and 10 articles in art and related journals (Art Gallery press clippings file). For much of the population most art is now experienced once or more times removed from its empirical state (original being), mediated through the popular media or journals. It exists in its reproduced or electronic state for much of its audience. For installations and performance art, being ephemeral, this is particularly so, works to be recorded and built into the construction of the cultural dialectic, exemplars of the activity of its day and part of the process of continual revision, renewal, adaptation and reflection. Although many of the works were for me esoteric and insular, others were reaching out and mediating on issues such as race (artists Bennett and HOFFIE), gender (Lyndal Jones) and inhumanity (Scenario Urbano) as part of the revision and reflection of our humanity. The works continue to resonate. I have seen several more recent references to the works in television programs and art journals. Deborah Jones writing about the Festival of Perth in the Australian Weekend Review (19 November 1994) states:

The only exception is in the area of visual arts and here the program is weak ... This year's Melbourne Festival wasn't overburdened with exciting visual arts events either and it seems that only Adelaide, thus far, has been able to come to grips with festival art.

Unmeasured but significant contact also took place in the public space, the outdoor sites. Art also became part of daily existence for a few weeks rather than something contained in a dedicated place, a gallery. What cognition there was of the works by this audience is difficult to assess but it presents the interesting and for me, the more relevant juxtaposition of cultural and everyday urban organisation and activity. To what extent the works influenced the questioning or understanding in the community of the issues addressed is unknown. It is impossible to say when and how the effects of art will manifest themselves in individual persons or communities. Is it enough for us, a community, to know that issues are being researched and presented through the visual language, by the minds of artists seeing and presenting the world from other perspectives than that which may be engaged in the popular media or other areas of discourse and critical thinking? As Kuhn - White (1993:11) outlines:

Our art has an important role here, in fostering meditative knowing. For works of art do not have meaning in themselves, but are understood as acquiring meaning within the context they are seen, heard or used. This development of meaning involves multi channeled communication between ourselves as creators of the life worlds we live within and the work of art and our perceptions of it, and its context. The work of art may foster ambiguity and disorientation of known life world by rearranging, re-ordering and re-fragmenting the elements of perception.

The visual and meta physical explanations presented by Adelaide Installations are part of the dialectical process. However, an all pervasive issue overriding this myriad of concerns about the human condition is the actual survival of the species. Whilst it cannot be expected, nor is it suggested, that the majority content of art making be concerned with developing ecological sustainability, art making needs to develop and awareness as to whether it is exacerbating existing ecological problems or contributing to solutions. Gablik (1992:50) states:

It is clear that this kind of ecological subtext for art is not (yet) in the official picture of mainstream aesthetics. It is also equally clear that many artists are beginning to realise the need for radical reevaluation of the institutions and ideologies associated with the dominator model of culture, whose "business as usual" ideology of affluence relentlessly puts personal profit ahead of the interests of the planet.

A fundamental reassessment of the way we consume materials and value the non-human world is evolving in sectors of the world community. Gablik presents a strong and comprehensive outline of this re thinking as it affects contemporary art practice in her book "The Re enchantment of Art". She outlines and calls for artmaking that contributes to ecological and spiritual harmony, art that is integral to life and that can have a stronger utilitarian and humanitarian contribution. Gablik (1992:51) proposes:

Faced as we are now with the diminishing richness and vitality of life on Earth, the historical mission of our times, as Berry claims, is to achieve a new cultural coding for the ecological age - a new, more integral language of being and values that can overcome the devastating consequences of the existing mode of cultural coding. Creating an art that is integral with this new coding may well be the next phase of our aesthetic tradition.

Many works in Adelaide Installations do not give recognition to this concern but continue with a post modern "coolness" which is often obtuse and accessible only to the few. Can we justify continually making such works which add to the excess of objects and consumption that exists?

The Aboriginal works present another way of seeing and interacting with the non-human world, a world which is not just resource capital, but a fundamental pre-requisite to human existence. One must be careful though not to romanticise this theology which since 1788 in its basic form can never be returned to, but there the challenge is to adapt the ethos expressed into the broader community for a 21st century existence.

Artists' Week

Attendance at Artists' Week was reported by Pierce (1994) at 7500 which was calculated on an average attendance of 300 at each of the 25 sessions. My own observation was that the attendance was far less and the method of calculation flawed. Although numbers attending is not necessarily the best guide as to the educational or cultural effectiveness, it was clear to me that there was a lack of popular support not only from the general community but also from the arts community. The sessions were very unevenly attended, less than 100 at some. There was very little cross cultural, cross practice support and debate, with support being given by groups for their cliques rather than a forum for learning, dialogue and discourse. Much of the activity and opinion was insular and exclusive. Mary Eagle reviewing Artists' Week in Art Monthly Australia stated:

But the talk - fest was wearying and incoherent. One after another the speakers dodged theory, evaded naming and wriggled away from points of view. Ostensibly they were escaping from the network of academic assumptions, however belied by an amazing conformity of attitude.

However, individual sessions were of merit. The Aboriginality in Art sessions, curated by Aboriginal people with predominantly Aboriginal speakers redressed the historical exclusion of this voice and had quite a different dynamic to other sessions. It was I believe, a day of empowerment for the presenters and audience alike and recognition of sensibilities other than the dominant. The critic Kevin Murray (1994:24) undertook a comprehensive reporting of Artists' Week. In concluding he wrote:

The dominant theoretical culture at this post-colonial moment has found itself in the situation of giving audience to the sufferings imposed in the name of Empire. Those who are direct products of that empire (i.e. of European descent) thus hold their tongue while its victims recover their voice. The forums reflected this: statements by those of the dominant culture were limited to complex forms of silence (disavowal of artistic intention and deferral to the audience) while those with non-European cultures were expected to have messages that would overturn preconceptions ... The critical art scene at the moment seems to be frozen in this bureaucratic arrangement.

The nature of Artists' Week makes ecological sensibilities more difficult to adjudicate in terms of direct materials usage. However, it appears to me that the application of resources did not have an overly effective outcome. The potential for introducing debate on art and ecological issues into the agenda was overlooked.

CONCLUSION

There are divergent views as to the function of art in society and what its role and responsibility should be in regards to ecological sustainability. Art can be seen as a vehicle to challenge, mirror, mediate and present other ways of seeing and understanding. Because its function is not tightly proscribed it has broad opportunity to engage and challenge across boundaries. Kuhn-White (1993:11) expresses optimism for art in terms of ecological understanding:

Ecology is an integrating, transforming science, in that ecology stresses the way in which life exists through multitudinous interacting processes. Lift as process is emphasised, rather than the existence of

separate entities. It is fitting for the arts to be recognised as playing a role in shaping ecological understandings, as they also serve an integrating function, at very subtle, often subconscious levels.

Indeed that can be, but the extent to which contemporary art practice is challenging the dominant paradigm and contributing to ecological understandings is limited. The Visual Art Program reflects this. In some ways it is neutered, unable to forcefully attack or subvert the dominant paradigm as it is so much part of it, part of the cultural and economic mainstream. Gablik (1991b:30) points out that there are a number of individuals who understand the need for an ethical stance in relation to an ecological paradigm, but they are at the margins of social change. In referring to Murray Bookchin (*The Modern Crisis*), Gablik states it is at "the margins we must look, if we are to find the cores that will be central to society in the future, for it is here that they will be emerging".

As I have outlined the Program made and continues to make a contribution to the ongoing process of definition of culture, of exploring, mediating and adding richness to our existence. It was not primarily concerned with promoting ecological issues. For many the ecological crisis exists in another dimension. It does not to them present an immediate threat. We live well. Adelaide seems so remote from it, does it really exist, is it a hoax? As Fry (1994:180) points out "To proclaim crisis is still to open oneself to being dismissed as an extremist". Developing ecological sustainability is not of the highest priority in Government, economic or social activity. The content and management of the Program largely reflected the concerns of the dominator model of ecological relationships. There was not an active culture of conservation, an awareness of developing ecological sustainability through the choices we make and actions we take in our individual and communal activities.

I have argued that conventional economics is not an appropriate system by which to measure human endeavor. Therefore, in dollar expenditure terms I offer no judgment. However, in equating the dollar value to an overall resource consumption equivalent the program is problematic. A large resource was required to present the Program and it was, I believe, undertaken in a way that was not ecologically sustainable. It did not to any significant extent, except for the Aboriginal component, contribute to ecological understanding or to revising the way we consume materials (or art).

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines sensible as having or showing good sense, reasonable, judicious, moderate, practical. These are subjective qualities. Opinions and judgments can be expressed, influenced by the position one holds in a belief system. I believe the dominant paradigm is not ecologically sensible or sustainable and the Program in reflecting that paradigm was not ecologically sensible either.

REFERENCES

- Adelaide Festival (1994) Report on the Eighteenth Adelaide Festival, Biennial Report of the Adelaide Festival of Arts Inc. Sept.
- Adelaide Festival of Arts Inc. (1994) Adelaide Installations Catalogue, Vol. 1 and 2, Adelaide.
- The Advertiser (1994) Editorial Opinion, 15th Nov, 1994, p 14.
- Adelaide Festival (1994) Adelaide Festival, Biennial Report of the Adelaide Festival of Arts Inc. Sept.
- Baudrillard, J. (1993) The Aesthetic Illusion *Parkett*, No 37, 1993, p 13-15.
- Eagle, M. (1994) Shadows Cast by Others *Art Monthly Australia*, No 68, April, 1994 p 15.
- Ekins, P. (editor) (1986) *The Living Economy - A New Economics in the Making* London, Routledge.
- Ekins, P. and Max-Neef, M. (editors) (1992) *Real Life Economics: Understanding Wealth Creation* London, Routledge.
- Fry, Tony (A. H.) (1994) *Remakings: Ecology, Design, Philosophy* Sydney, Envirobooks.
- Fukayama, F. (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man* London, H. Hamilton.
- Gablik, S. (1991a) *The Re enchantment of Art* New York, Thames and Hudson.
- Gablik, S. (1991b) *Towards an Ecological Self* New Art Examiner, Jan., p 26-30.
- Gablik, S. (1992) The Ecological Imperative *Art Journal*, Summer.
- Hall, F. (1994) Participating Artist, Adelaide Installations.
- Jones, D. (1994) *Festival Upstaged* The Weekend Review, The Australian, 19th Nov. p.9.
- Kuhn-White, L. (1993) *Ecology Extended. The Arts and Ecological Education* Paper presented at Eco Politics V11, Griffiths University, 2-4 July.
- Luke, T. (1992) Art and the Environmental Crisis. From Commodity Aesthetics to Ecology Aesthetics *Art Journal*, Summer 1992, p 72-76.
- Mellor, D. (1994) Visual Arts Coordinator, Tandanya, National Aboriginal Cultural Institute.
- Murray, K. (1994) Out of the Bunker *Broadsheet*, Vol. 23, No 2. April.
- Pierce, J. (1994) *Artistic Report 1994 Adelaide Festival, Artists' Week* Adelaide, Adelaide Festival of Arts Inc.
- The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1976) 6th Edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Whitelock, D. (1980) *Festival! The Story of the Adelaide Festival of Arts* Adelaide, published by the author.
- Williams, N. (1994) Project Manager, Adelaide Installations, Art Gallery of South Australia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adelaide Festival (1994) Report on the Eighteenth Adelaide Festival, Biennial Report of the Adelaide Festival of Arts Inc. Sept.
- Adelaide Festival of Arts Inc. (1994) Adelaide Installations Catalogue, Vol. 1 and 2, Adelaide.
- The Advertiser (1994) Editorial Opinion, 15th Nov, 1994, p 14.

- Adelaide Festival (1994) Adelaide Festival, Biennial Report of the Adelaide Festival of Arts Inc. Sept.
- Australia Council (1989) *The Arts - Some Australian Data*. (3rd Edition) North Sydney.
- Baudrillard, J. (1981) For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign. St. Loins, Telos Press Ltd.
- Baudrillard, J. (1993) The Aesthetic Illusion *Parkett*, No 37, 1993, p 13-15.
- Blowers, A. (1992) Pollution and Waste - A Sustainable Burden? *Town and Country Planning*, Oct, 1992 pp 265-268.
- Eagle, M. (1994) Shadows Cast by Others *Art Monthly Australia*, No 68, April, 1994 p 15.
- Ekins, P. (editor) (1986) *The Living Economy - A New Economics in the Making* London, Routledge.
- Ekins, P. and Max-Neef, M. (editors) (1992) *Real Life Economics: Understanding Wealth Creation* London, Routledge.
- Fry, Tony (A. H). (1994) *Remakings: Ecology, Design, Philosophy* Sydney, Envirobooks.
- Fukayama, F. (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man* London, H. Hamilton.
- Gablik, S. (1984) *Has Modernism Failed* New York, Thames and Hudson.
- Gablik, S. (1991a) *The Re enchantment of Art* New York, Thames and Hudson.
- Gablik, S. (1991b) *Towards an Ecological Self* *New Art Examiner*, Jan., p 26-30.
- Gablik, S. (1992) The Ecological Imperative *Art Journal*, Summer.
- Gablik, S. (1992) Doin' Dirt Time. *New Art Examiner*, Nov. 1992, pp 18-22.
- Hall, F. (1994) Participating Artist, Adelaide Installations.
- Jones, D. (1994) *Festival Upstaged* *The Weekend Review*, *The Australian*, 19th Nov. p. 9.
- Kuhn-White, L. (1993) *Ecology Extended. The Arts and Ecological Education* Paper presented at Eco Politics V11, Griffiths University, 2-4 July.
- Luke, T. (1992) Art and the Environmental Crisis. From Commodity Aesthetics to Ecology Aesthetics *Art Journal*, Summer 1992, p 72-76.
- Mellor, D. (1994) Visual Arts Coordinator, Tandanya, National Aboriginal Cultural Institute.
- Murray, K. (1994) Out of the Bunker *Broadsheet*, Vol. 23, No 2. April.
- Pierce, J. (1994) *Artistic Report 1994 Adelaide Festival, Artists' Week* Adelaide, Adelaide Festival of Arts Inc.
- Sanders, P. B. (1992) Eco Art, Strength in Diversity. *Art Journal*, Summer, pp 77-81.
- The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1976) 6th Edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Whitelock, D. (1980) *Festival! The Story of the Adelaide Festival of Arts* Adelaide, published by the author.
- Williams, N. (1994) Project Manager, Adelaide Installations, Art Gallery of South Australia.
- Wines, J. (1992) The Ghosts of Modernism haunt Eco-Politics and the New Spirit *Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 82, Jan 1992, p 120.