

## SALA Keynote Address 2009

While South Australia faces some very serious challenges involving

- The environment - climate change, the River Murray, water, etc
- The economy – and problems of attracting industry, dealing with business, employment and finance, etc
- Health issues - both mental and physical
- Community issues - from seniors to citizen's rights, emergency and safety, to justice and law
- As well as issues around education and transport

It is important to remember that ***the image of your state is the thing others see first and remember longest - it impacts on those that might invest, decide to come to the state, visit or tell others about us.***

***A cultured society enriches those of us that live here, gives evidence of our education system, our spiritual wellbeing, and our commitment to future generations and can directly help the serious issues I have just listed.***

We often hear from within our state how great the state is, and yes there is much to be proud of. However recently I was in Berlin and a friend there pointed out a PR company office - their slogan is

***It is not a matter of whom you know***

***But who knows you***

I believe we might be better known if the scene was like as follows

***Imagine***

You have just taken the tram along North Terrace and stopped off at the JamFactory, Experimental Art Foundation, Nexus Gallery, SASA Gallery, and the Anne and Gordon Samstag Museum of Art; now take the tram further west to the corner just before the Coca Cola factory - a giant **Louise Bourgeois** sculpture of a spider recently bought by the Adelaide City Council sits on the corner, purchased from holding back two years budget from public arts money, with plans for a major work on another Adelaide corner by **Ugo Rondinone** to follow in two years time, then **Kiki Smith, Jake and Dinos Chapman**, etc.

The old SA Water site nearby, with its great barn like structures, now houses the Contemporary Art Centre of SA and the AIS – Adelaide International Studios - the centre where the British Council, Canadian Council, and governments of France, Argentina, Japan, Germany and China, etc, have paid to provide artists from their respective countries a space to spend 6 months or a year living and working, giving the odd lecture at the 3 local art schools and mentoring the odd final year student.

Your visit is just before Tourism SA's invitation to each of the overseas visitors to experience the outback on a trip to the Pitjantjatjara Lands, arranged in association with Tandanya.

Back on the tram and it is time to go off to a major SA company boardroom for its monthly meeting, where as a matter of policy you have been invited and paid as an artist to offer opinions on not only their business at hand but also more creative ways to do business, from the physical space to corporate image and product placement.

Walking back through the city you can glimpse some of the video walls, paintings and installations in foyers and new public buildings that have resulted from enforcing the 1.5% rule, where any new building over \$2million must spend 1.5 % of their budget on commissioning artworks – not some garden bench or gate that just doubles as art – but whatever is proposed should be approved by panel of advisors; opportunities not limited to local but open to all artists.

Time to visit the new artist co-op housing project in the south-west corner of the city to see how this eco village with homes and studios has progressed, and talk about exchanges with similar projects in Manchester or Copenhagen - swapping house and studio for 6 months and developing further connections. While there I see in the paper that a Memorandum Of Understanding between The Department of Transport and the Department of Education and Children's Services has been signed so that in off-peak periods buses can be called on by schools to take students to galleries and exhibitions, and instead of there being 'art smart' schools across the state, all schools will be art smart and our children will become art literate at an early age.

The city now has a choice of three daily newspapers, each with a full-page weekly of intelligent writing and critiquing of exhibitions, with healthy debates between universities and institutions, feeding information/opinion and reviews to national newspapers and magazines.

With your Adelaide mobility card you can now take one of the city bikes found on many street corners, activated or unlocked through your mobile phone with credit units paid previously at any deli, and then ride along the world's largest outdoor museum, The River Torrens Linear Park Sculpture Trail. The 7 or 8 Councils that front the river have already agreed that a River Torrens Authority should look after the whole environmental control using the monies they would normally each spend on their part of the river, and now each Council has agreed to contribute \$200,000 per year towards commissioning major Australian and overseas artists to site a work somewhere along the 27km route over the next 27 years.

Home just in time to see the SA arts program on the ABC - a round-up of all art forms presented once a week in prime-time. This week there is a focus on the international curators exchange program between staff from the Art Gallery of SA and the New Museum in New York, as well as a new classical music composition project run in conjunction with Arts SA, where local composers write pieces in response to artist's works, or for the opening of major events like this one.

A utopian dream, or an achievable goal for 2012?

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