

Thank you all for coming tonight...it can get lonely in the studio, it's nice to be reminded that there's so many of us.

In speaking to you tonight, my thoughts are celebratory; this is a festival after all, and celebration is in order. For one thing, there's this many people here, not only making work, but writing about it, showing it, buying it and creating the infrastructure that allows it to happen.

During the SALA Festival we celebrate this thriving network of art schools, galleries, artist-run spaces, funding bodies, studios and all the other entities and individuals in the visual art community. As artists we re-examine and re-imagine our practices and the culture of visual art in this state, rediscovering gems that we may sometimes take for granted.

As an emerging artist, the things that are freshest in my mind are the little moments we experience somewhere between being infant scribblers, going to art school and making a life out of it. There are many pebbles along the road, on the way to being an artist, and I'd like to hold up a few to examine and to celebrate.

Many changes occur when you seriously devote yourself to looking, thinking and making. Things move around in your head and lock into place. New structures are built up and others are collapsed. The web of associations and meanings that exists between things in the world gradually becomes denser and richer and more complex. You gradually acquire a language and learn how to think with it, and then to your great relief and joy, you realize it makes sense to more people than just you. You hit moments where you wrestle furiously with a work or an idea and struggle through and find that suddenly your work begins to respect you, keep you up at night and get you up in the morning. You find that you're constantly surprised.

There is something that grows in you when you give yourself over to your visual world...you get hungry. And all of us here tonight are hungry; visually hungry. Everything we see, every idea we have, everything we make whets our appetite, sharpens it; we want more and we wouldn't have it any other way. As artists we're excited about looking all the time, and events like the SALA Festival, the Adelaide Festival and Fringe create an immersive environment when everyone else gets excited as well. It would be unrealistic to expect society to be constantly immersed this way in visual art...in fact, it would be downright exhausting. However, what we can have all the time is a culture of visual sensitivity, a culture of seeing more and thinking deeper. The joy of looking is infectious and we can instill our visual hunger into the world at large. We're doing it right now: every time an artist goes out on a limb, every time we're rigorous, cynical, daring, clever, witty; every time we look a bit harder and invite someone else to do the same; every time we re-imagine the world, dance around the edges of it and ask what if?, we are making a gesture towards a stronger culture of looking, thinking and creating. So let's stay hungry, excited about making stuff, and claim the subtle and unpredictable territories of images and ideas as our own.

I think there are some good things we could make.

Roy Ananda