

TO RESPECT IS TO ADEQUATELY FUND



GLENDA FELL JONES, SOLITARY CLOUD, ARALUEN 2019 OIL ON BOARD 30X35 CM

Valuing the Arts

Cecile Galiazzo on the need for better funding

I have worked across the arts and health sectors for over 35 years. As well as being an arts practitioner, I am a small business owner of the Altenburg, an institution which has served the arts in Braidwood for well over 40 years.

It is well documented the value and proven benefits of art, in all its forms on whole health and wellbeing, mental, emotional and physical.

The arts are deeply embedded in the cultural sector, and cultural activity makes a substantial contribution to the Australian economy. Arts and Cultural activity contributes over an estimated \$112 billion dollars annually to Australia's GDP.

The arts reflect who we are individually and as a community, and how we engage with our environment. It includes literature, theatre, music, dance, performing arts, festivals, visual arts and crafts, arts education and training, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts, community arts and cultural development, emerging and experimental art, film, the print media, multimedia, cultural institutions such as libraries, environmental heritage, fashion and design. Indeed we could say, art is the creative connection between everything.

Interestingly, the arts sector employs an equivalent number of people through creative industries and more, as the

mining sector. Yet often, it is undervalued, particularly when it comes to Government support.

However, recently the COVID-19 Audience Outlook Monitor Australia Snapshot Report of May 2020 states that since the pandemic, 46% of people are doing creative hobbies more frequently, three people in four are engaging with culture online and 28% have discovered a new artist, performance or art work online. It is during this truly very challenging time, that we see the value of art in sustaining us.

The Australia Council's vision, is for a culturally ambitious nation in which every Australian feels enriched and connected by arts experiences infused throughout their daily lives. Its report shows how crucial the arts are at this pivotal moment in time — for understanding our differences, reflecting our cultural diversity and connecting with each other through our common humanity. It shows that digital technology and multichannel content dissemination have transformed the nature of arts engagement, enabling more Australians to experience the arts in increasingly interconnected ways — growing rather than diminishing arts audiences.

At a local level

In our community, well over 130 people identify as arts practitioners — vi-

sual artists, poets, writers, musicians, makers, designers and more!

This puts us at over 10% of the local population.

The Braidwood Regional Arts Group (BRAG), established over 20 years ago, exists to support artistic endeavour, for established and emerging practitioners through the provision of a low cost venue for holding classes, exhibitions and other arts-related activities.

Braidwood is recognised as a hub of arts activity in the QPRC region. It is a drawcard for visitors and a generator of income for local businesses and individuals.

Despite this, for more than a decade, no funds have been available from any level of government to employ staff. BRAG operates entirely on the work of volunteers.

Without their input, BRAG would fold and the Arts Centre would cease to operate. Income is generated entirely through hire fees and funds raised during exhibitions and via grants for specific, one-off purposes.

From BRAG's perspective, the main issues of concerns are:

- The failure of Government to recognise the importance of the arts to the economy and the well being of the community, especially in times of crisis.
- Lack of federal support for regional and small scale arts organisations in favour of larger prestigious entities — BRAG is not opposed to the provision of funding for such organisations but feels the funding pool should be enlarged and extended to regional arts practitioners and organisations.

During the Covid19 crisis, a very tardy and inadequate support package has been provided for the arts but again, directed to the larger entities rather than to regional and small operations.

We trust that the next Member of Parliament for Eden Monaro, Kristy McBain is an effective, enthusiastic and strong supporter of the arts in Braidwood and our electorate.

I'd like to leave you with a positive quote from Rick Rubin:

"The power of nature is such that it's what all art strives to be. The more we can get in tune with the harmony of the planet, the more our art and culture can benefit from that relationship."



Catherine Vandermark pulls up the covers

It was Maurice who started it. Or at least I think it was Maurice. It certainly sounded like him. But I could be wrong — I mean, it was nearly 3:00 in the morning, the time when all over Australia, people of a certain age lie awake in their beds, hoping that the familiar voices on ABC overnight radio will help them ward off the existential questions that lurk at the foot of the bed, in the winter loneliness.

'It's just the same as the rest of us', he said. 'The virus. It's just struggling to stay alive, the best way it can...'

I imagine him sitting up on the front porch in Clyde Street, legs crossed, concave from a lifetime of too many cigarettes, angling his head so the smoke drifts away from the door, empathy monitor on alert (amplifier turned up to 11) and unconventional brain cells firing. Last time I saw Maurice he was on his way to a meeting with fellow travellers, out the back of St Bede's, talking social justice. I hadn't realised his concern extended to microbes.

It's the winter solstice in Braidwood, the time of the shortest day and the longest night. The time when Les and I had planned to hit the road on the long drive diagonally across the continent—across the Hay Plains, up the Stuart Highway, over the Tanami Track and

all the way to Broome. But State borders are closed now and, like the rest of us, we are staying home. Containing the virus. Sheltering in place.

My son rings. 'You can't complain. I mean what really changes for you?' Its true, I think. Cocooned in a well-stocked country town, health services on standby, no cases yet.

But we haven't weathered a winter here before. 'Well', says George the builder, 'if being cold is the worst thing you can say about a place, it can't be that bad.'

Matt, our Broome-based son in law, comes to visit us. He stands at the back door, holding a splintering disc of ice up to the light. 'This is wild!' he says, and I'm reminded that he was born and raised up North, where you only find frozen water indoors — in children's picture books, or the service station freezer. He'd like to go home now. 2020 has been a disappointment so far. He arranged a work placement at Head Of-

lice, only to find himself locked up at his parent's house on endless Zoom meetings, instead of living the Sydney night life, watching the opportunity to get a Green Card for the United States slip out of his grasp. But it's complicated. Who knows what will happen next? How long will this thing last? If he goes back North, will he ever return?

And it's not only Matt suffering pandemic fatigue. Cecile at Altenburg is fretting for the Northern Territory borders to open, so she can be grandmother in Alice Springs while her daughter campaigns in the local elections.

Jane and Gary find new meaning in the word Gravititas, soberly planning a trip to see family in western New South Wales, while posting photographs of sunflowers and reliving last year's Stringalong tour of the Occitanie region of Southern France.

Wendy had planned to be sailing the Greek Islands at this time, in the steps of her ancestors. Instead, she drops a blue-tooth speaker inside the Walter Burley Griffin-designed church pulpit she salvaged from demolition and it vibrates with warm sound, just like an old-fashioned valve amplifier, soothing the room. She pulls her chair closer to the slow combustion stove and threads tiny coloured glass beads together with