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To Whom it May Concern

Regarding: Terms of Reference

From: Foot Young

Dear Madams / Sirs,

Please allow me to provide some feedback, as it seems the appropriate point to voice an opinion. It is hoped that you can see from my letterhead that Art is my field of expertise. I am an artist (a sculptor), as well as the person in charge of all marketing efforts, here and abroad.

This may place me in the category of a 'commercial' artist, however I would like to emphasize a point, and it is simply that I have learned to appreciate, and provide for, the tastes of the general public. This is, I believe, something which should be the prime directive when terms of reference are drawn up which will later guide the exhibition and acquisition of art by public bodies. After all, the final recipients are exactly the same as are my clients, none only than the general public. Commercial galleries, and in fact all artists, could not exist if someone did not like what they are making enough to pay for it. Public galleries, because their funding does not come from the public directly, can get away with putting in what ever in the directors please.

This is not intended to be derogatory in any way to previous choices, but my research has indicated an immense amount of evidence clearly indicating that most of what has been offered up to the public, by way of public bodies or funding, is simply not in sync with what the public would like to see. This phenomenon is not unique to Australia. Aside from countless hundreds of conversations with persons concerned enough to voice their opinions, I have also made a point of collecting data from my website, for several years
<http://www.foot.com.au/>

Recently I had the opportunity to ask a senior member of the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, why so many times, these things were being served up to the public, at the publics expense, when it was clear that most of the public did not like what was presented, at best, and at worst, was simply shocking. Her answer, and I quote, "It really doesn't matter if they like it or not, we don't even care if it shocks them, as long as they notice it".

From my perspective, this is morally wrong. Politically, perhaps, this may be effective, and if Art is again being subtly drawn into service as a political tool by the persons controlling our tax dollars (as it was for example during Hitlers reign, and many times before), then it is a waste of time for me to say any more. But if there is still any interest in maintaining Art as a form of cultural enhancement, where development of awareness and sensitivity is given more priority than social conditioning, then kindly take this statement as a collective voice of those who not only pay for the art (if it is art), but also your salaries.

Again, I apologize if this is too direct a statement, but heh, shock creates countershock. The public, I am certain, would prefer to see things that are beautiful, things that make them feel good, things that cause them to

think or become more interested in Art, and not recoil from it. Meaning, sure, but a string of words painted onto a boardwalk, as was recently a prize winner in Noosa (not the popular choice award), is not something we should call Art. It must be remembered that our language only functions, as does mathematics, and intelligence in general, because we assign a particular meaning to this particular symbol, A or B, 1 vs 2, etc. If anything can mean everything, then pretty soon nothing will mean anything. It appears that this is the virus that has gotten into the meaning of Art, and I'm sure that unless something is done to address it, there won't be much concern for it in the future.

In a nutshell, as was my answer to the lady mentioned above, "Don't you think that if you keep shocking people, that they will eventually become desensitized" Personally, I've seen so many things in national and regional galleries, I think the most memorable of which was an exhibition in the US where all the canvases were just blank (one had a yellow dot in the middle), that I no longer bother to enter public art arenas.

It is hoped that the above may be of some value to you in your future policy making.

Regards,

Foot Young

PS. Of course, *if* the underlying principle in play here is a political tool to alter the public's ability to discriminate between what is good and what is not, then it needs to be suggested that more effort be made to camouflage the modus operandi.