The ARX experiment, Perth, 1987-1999:
communities, controversy & regionality

Biography:
Pamela Zeplin is a writer and artist based in Adelaide. At the South Australian School of Art, University of South Australia, she holds the position of Senior Lecturer in History and Theory of Art and Design and recently completed PhD research on "The Neglected Middle Distance: Australian and New Zealand Art exchanges, 1970-1985" at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales. Pamela has been publishing criticism and essays, as well as presenting conference papers on contemporary art throughout the region since 1985, with a particular focus on Australian-New Zealand relations. Her teaching specialisations, including postgraduate supervision, include *Asia-Pacific Art, Aboriginal Art & Visual Culture*, *Arts Writing* and *Performance*. With a longstanding commitment to cross-cultural issues and multiculturalism, Pamela was appointed Portfolio Leader for Student Support & Equity and Internationalisation in 2001 and 2002 and received a University Equity Award in 2004. For a number of years she has been working with staff and industry partners to co-ordinate the *Public Forums in the Visual Art* program with Nexus Multicultural Arts Centre and the South Australian School of Art. In 2004, with Nexus, she convened the symposium: *Trompe L'Oeil: Art Education and Cultural Diversity*.

Downtown Art Space, Adelaide, October 2003. A couple of entrepreneurial students exhibit the work of their emerging peers from Perth in this artist-run space[1]. For the Adelaide visual art - as distinct from craft - community, such an initiative was rare because 'interstate' has long signified 'The Eastern States'; occasionally this denoted Melbourne but until recently, the major focus of local desire was Sydney[2]. Furthermore, the Adelaide curators' interest in their westerly cousins was sparked less by inter-regional curiosity than through their funded participation the previous year in the inaugural Perth-based PICA initiative, *Hatched*[3].

In terms of artistic exchange between South Australia and Western Australia, there is little in the way of informal discourse in Adelaide art circles and even less in terms of published information. Generally speaking, Adelaide has represented somewhere you fly over on the way to the eastern seaboard, while for Adelaide artists, Perth remains well nigh invisible as a cultural destination – in South Australian art galleries and on secondary and tertiary art curricula. The submerged assumption operating here is geographical and temporal in nature; although roughly similar in population size, Perth's time zone is one and a half hours behind Adelaide, which is 'only' half an hour behind Eastern Standard Time. Thus Perth is imagined by Adelaide artists to be even more marginalised than their own assumed situation[4]. Although such local perspectives may well occupy the zones of uncertain and largely unpublished histories, in hearsay conversation, gossip, as well as formal discussions, Adelaide's 'identity' remains a ubiquitous - and frequently obsessive – topic of debate.

In this way, at least until relatively recently, relations <u>between</u> artists from smaller Australian cities were infrequent, due to these prevailing mindsets coloured by provincialism[5]. This tendency has been further manifested, on a practical level, by vast physical distances

between metropolitan 'centres'[6]. Such inter-state forms of hierarchy find a parallel in the trans-Tasman situation, where bigger is assumed to be better and more advanced. In turn, Auckland, Christchurch and the wider Pacific become mere dots and blurs beneath the cultural flight path connecting Sydney and Los Angeles.

Hovering around these attitudes is the ghostly spectre of colonialism despite, ironically, more than two decades of postmodern and post-colonial theories suffusing our art institutions. With 'centres' refused, 'margins' (usually of 'other' countries) could be celebrated[7], but apart from regular ACUADS (previously NCHADS[8]) conferences during the 1980s and 1990s, there was little evidence of regular interest in what might be taking place beyond Sydney, Melbourne and after 1993, Brisbane[9].

The last few years of globalised electronic communication may have rendered redundant this national pecking order based on perceived physical distance from larger and more advanced 'elsewheres'. However, our inter-regional history, so apparently lacking in cultural curiosity about potentially inventive transverse liaisons, demands further examination; this is especially so in relation to the 1980s and 1990s in Perth, our 2005 ACUADS host city. Some readers might be surprised to learn that, despite the centre-margin dominance operating within and beyond Australia's perimeters between 1987 and1999, Perth, in fact, provided a national focus for inter-regional concerns. Under the aegis of five *ARX* (*Australia & Regions Exchange/Artists Regional Exchange*) events[10], this small art community also initiated broader entrepreneurial terms of regional engagement between Australian, South East Asian and, to a lesser extent, New Zealand artists. But you won't find much documentation of this extraordinary series of events since *ARX's* archive still languishes in uncatalogued boxes, in the memories of participants or at the bottom of their filing cabinets. My interest stems primarily from personal involvement.

At this point, as part of Perth's second-generation diaspora, I should declare a particular interest in Western Australian history; my parents departed Perth in 1942 for Melbourne and I only met most of my extended family at a reunion here last year. My visits to Perth in 1987, 1992 and 1995, however, were less motivated by family connections than to specifically attend *ARX* events. These were a direct outcome of *ANZART* in Auckland in 1985, participation in which had left me amazed and confounded, and to my astonishment, an artist.

From its beginnings, *ARX* was predicated upon the participation of artists from South East Asia, and decreasingly, from New Zealand[11]. This represented a new direction in terms of artist exchange within Australia and the Asia-Pacific, with the Western Australian initiative up and running at least four years before the advent of Asialink in 1991[12] and Queensland Art Gallery's first *Asia-Pacific Triennial of Australian Ar*t in 1993. Moreover, *ARX* established a vital intelligence network and considerable cultural expertise, which benefited many later and larger Asia-focused institutions, even though the latter are commonly believed to have 'discovered' contemporary Asia-Pacific art[13]. This art historical myth has not yet been subject to scrutiny, especially by the *APT* 'machine' itself. One rarely, for example, finds reference to *ARX* in histories of Australia-Asia-Pacific visual arts relations, unless as a footnote or fleeting reference[14].

Wild and woolly though *ARX* may have been in some or all of its five incarnations, it also represented a wonderful, if highly contested, experiment in community involvement/alienation and a number of people attending ACUADS will have been involved in or attended *ARX* at some point. It could not have existed without support from its local art and high school constituencies and the community of interstate art colleges. According to Marco Marcon, various local collaborations instigated through *ARX* events:

> contributed to the professional and cultural development of the local art scene. In this sense, the cooperation between ARX and many Western Australian educational institutions has proven to be a [sic] effective, and very welcomed, supplement to their educational programs.[15]

ARX features on the *curriculum vitae* of many artists and writers across Australia, South East Asia and New Zealand. A sample of names would include: the late and loved Neil Roberts, David Watt, Allan Vizents and Pam Harris. Then there is Lisa Reihana, Merylyn Tweedie and Peter Robinson (New Zealand), Matthew Ngui (Australia-Singapore), Suzann Victor and Kanaga Sapabathy (Singapore), Rene Boutin (New Caledonia), Harsono, Jim Supungkat and Aramaiani (Indonesia), Apinan Poshyananda, Kamol Phaosavaesd and Pinaree Sanpitak (Thailand), Sid Hildawa and Marian Pastor Roces (The Phillippines), Ruth Watson (Australia-New Zealand), Ismail Zain and Wong Hoy Cheong (Malaysia). Then there are Vivienne Binns, H. J. Wedge, Julie Ewington, Destiny Deacon, Hossein Valamanesh, John Barrett-Lennard, Paul Hay, Aadje Bruce, David Jones, Pat Hoffie, Simryn Gill, Rea, Geoff Parr and Pat Brassington, Ian Howard, Nola Farman, Joan Grounds – and hundreds more.

For myself and many other participants, these bi and triennial events were apprehended as amazingly complex organisms, swarming with opportunity, controversy and conflicts. Often too large and unwieldy, *ARX* activities regularly frustrated funding bodies, irritated participants and divided communities, causing as much friction locally as creative *frisson* nationally and internationally. Finally, the off-shore component of the final 1998-99 event in Singapore was swamped by censorship scandals[16] and *ARX* henceforth was laid to rest. Not early enough for some[17].

It wasn't just the size and spread of *ARX* that marked it as distinctive in the (as yet unwritten) annals of Australian art; the spirit of dialogue, collaboration, heterogeneity and its downright daggy DIY ethos set it apart from mainstream art concerns. By 1987 these ideals had become *passé* within a newly professionalised Australian art world that was increasingly influenced by Francophile theorisation and industrial rights for cultural workers. With the global resuscitation of two-dimensional art - notably painting - as the dominant art form of the early 1980s, a booming art market was constructed by Euramerican Trans-avant-garde and postmodern tastemakers[18]. Consequently, as averred by at least one paper at the groundbreaking 1984 *Futur*Fall* conference on postmodernism, '[t]he book of the seventies [was] closed'[19] in this country at least.

Certainly, many of the precepts undergirding *ARX's* artist-run nature were derived from 1970s *avant-gardist* concepts; these included the privileging of (white male) Euro-American and

'experimental' art forms and the primacy of artists' agency, which was positioned in binary relation to the perceived 'menace' of art institutions. Given the dated-ness of these concepts by 1987, the question arises: what attracted so many emerging and mid-career artists, as well as art students, writers, critics and bureaucrats to Australia's South Western corner on a regular basis over 12 years? And given its shortcomings and apparent redundancy, how did *ARX* maintain its momentum? After all, Perth hardly constituted a Mecca for aspiring artists across the country[20]. To address this, we need to 'drill down', as current bureaucratese would have it, to the archaeology of *ARX* in the 1970s and 1980s.

It should be noted that *ARX* did not suddenly materialise in Perth in response to community vision, although local groups in their various manifestations shaped the trajectory of each successive event, including its demise. *ARX* was the inheritor of a regular, seventeen-year tradition of large 'travelling' shows operating since 1970 at the informal and experimentally based *Mildura Sculpture Triennials* and later, trans-Tasman *ANZART* exchanges. Under Tom McCullough from 1970 until 1981, the early Mildura 'encyclopaedias of confusion' (as described by Charles Green[21]) re-defined the boundaries of regionality to include regular Australia-New Zealand connection. Located in country Victoria (the home of irrigation and the sun-dried grape), the Triennials became the hottest events on Australia's art calendar by 1973 and were characterised by their open-ness to the propositional and provisional in art, while accommodating more conventional forms. Most significantly, they were committed to the principle of artists working and talking, if not always 'walking' together.

1970s New Zealand work was considered particularly 'advanced' by Australian peers[22] and by 1981 this artistic 'lifeline' for the smaller arts community developed into a specifically trans-Tasman exchange. Learning from Mildura's problems, New Zealander, Ian Hunter radically reduced participation to forty at the first *ANZART-in-Christchurch*, providing a particularly successful model of bilateral exchange between the two countries. This structure was, however, ignored by subsequent Australian organisers, intent on scaling up *ANZART* and later, *ARX*, thereby diminishing the New Zealand component. As a result, *ANZART-in-Hobart* (1983) and *ANZART/AUCKLAND '85* once again recalled Mildura's gargantuan 1970s 'messiness', which also became the preferred model for *ARX*.

By 1985 the VAB (Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council) was pursuing a forceful course of intervention through vigorous policies of internationalisation, bureaucratisation of contemporary art spaces and professionalisation of the arts 'industry'[23]. Moreover, the Board's new geographical preference became directly aligned with the Hawke Labor Government's prevailing foreign policy. Here, close Pacific alliances were abandoned for more robust alignment with western powers and newly booming East Asian economies, even though the visual arts sphere was much slower to develop interest in the latter region. Within these changing terms of reference New Zealand's smaller art community became irrelevant to official Australian cultural aspirations. Until the 1990s, understandings of the regional, therefore, shrunk from Australia's wider Tasman-Pacific neighbourhood to firstly, what was happening intra-state, beyond capital cities or secondly, as a descriptor of relative capital city size[24]. Perth and Adelaide were regional; Sydney and Melbourne were not.

Given this context, it is not surprising that *ANZART's* final 1985 gathering in Auckland was doomed to failure, occurring only weeks after the legendary ANZUS *débâcle*[25]. I have written elsewhere on how official Australian *ANZART* reports offer only partial accounts of what was generally an unfortunate exchange; i.e., that Kiwi ineptitude was overwhelmingly to blame[26]. These accounts ignore, however, the increasingly powerful role of the VAB in its direct control and deliberate funding delay, the unwieldy and disproportionate size of Australia's contingent[27] and the inadequate conditions under which New Zealand organisers were operating. Worst of all, Julie Ewington perceptively noted the colonialist swagger of a number of newly professionalised Australian art officials, whose notion of community was expressed throughout Auckland as crude nationalism[28]. What had been essentially an informal, collaborative and artist-run event, a loose community where artists responded spontaneously to the vicissitudes of site and circumstance, was hi-jacked by career administrators, toting excess designer 'baggage' in the form of unrealistic bureaucratic expectations and last minute demands. State of the art video facilities? Sophisticated technical and personnel requirements? Slick PR? Pristine spaces with white walls? I don't think so.

ANZART's 1987 manifestation in Perth had been mooted since 1983 and despite subsequent bureaucratic wrangling in Auckland, the bilateral event still held much appeal for Australian artists, if not for funding organisations[29]. Perth participants at *ANZART/AUCKLAND '85* enthusiastically took up the challenge of continuing the trans-Tasman forum but extended the notion of region to include art proximate to their own neighbourhood[30]; initially, this was intended to be the Indian Ocean region; in actuality, artists from the 'ASEAN' region were selected[31]. During *ARX'87s* gestation, further changes indicated little, if any, knowledge of New Zealanders' reports on *ANZART*. While candidly shouldering responsibility for the 1985 *débâcle*, these accounts strongly critiqued the efficacy of large committees and urged a smaller, more manageable and bi-laterally balanced event, with indigenous issues at its core. Had these perspectives been consulted, *ARX*'s history might have been less fraught and fractured.

Perth committee changes, then, centred primarily around Australian concerns. Nomenclature of the event changed from *ANZART* to *ARX*, which situated Australian art at the centre of a multi-lateral rather than bi-lateral region[32]. Until 1991 the acronym stood for *Australia and Regions Exchange* but following criticism by South East Asian artists that Australia was positioned at the 'centre', the name was altered to *Artists' Regional Exchange*. As recommended by a 1986 feasibility report[33] commissioned by the Perth committee, *ARX* would henceforth remain based in that city as a strategy for creating a regular local, national and regional focus, thus alleviating a deeply felt sense of geographical isolation[34].

Steered by Praxis contemporary art space, a complex committee structure was nonetheless set up in 1986, ironically similar to the kind that failed the New Zealand organisation. Broadly representative of the *avant-garde* Perth community, the committees included a range of art school and secondary school staff and students[35] and came under strong criticism for excluding more conventional sections of the local community. Despite attempts to include Aboriginal representation, this was not forthcoming and such a lack would haunt subsequent *ARX* endeavours. Even at *ARX4* in 1995, where indigenous artists were included, cross-cultural relations were decidedly uneasy.

As with *ANZART-in-Hobart*, local representation amongst forty-two on-site artists at the first *ARX* in 1987 was high (29%) compared to Australia-wide representation (78%). New Zealand participation was not actively pursued, dropping to four (less than 10%)[36]. There would be no Indian Ocean regional participation because of available DFA funding, which determined the inclusion of five 'ASEAN' artists (12%) and one writer[37]. Apart from the 1983 and 1985 *Continuum* exchange exhibitions between Japan and Australia[38], this South East Asian sector represented the first of a number of exchanges between groups of visual artists from Australasia and Asia. Through ongoing *ARX* events, these exchanges spawned many further collaborations and set down an important base for other later organisations pursuing a conscious program of 'Asianisation'; these included Asialink and the *Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*[39]. Disappointingly, the latter organisation has actively re-written its own genealogy with a 'spin' that dismisses its debt
to, or potential collaboration with, the Perth-based project. *ARX* co-ordinator from 1987-1993, Adrian Jones suggests *APT's* omission represented a 'need to deal with history by being the "first", "the best funded/supported", the most "intellectual"[40]. Once again in Australian art institutional history, size mattered.

While *ARX's* South East Asian inclusion increased between 1987 and 1998/1999 from 12% to 67%, New Zealand participation remained minimal at future encounters and ceased after 1995[41]. With a strong Pacific identity, the Kiwis considered *ARX* too far removed from indigenous concerns, local and regional[42]. It was not until 1998/1999 that more equitable ratios between Australian and non-Australian participants were achieved, when *ARX 5* was sited in three venues; Perth, Singapore and Hong Kong[43].

In 1993 a Western Australian Government-commissioned report by Marco Marcon outlined a host of difficulties faced by various *ARX* committees, participants and audiences, the event's failures - and its successes. Interestingly, this report, written 'half-way' through the five encounters, closely echoed various co-ordinator's reports[44], published critiques and personal observations by attendees. It does not, however, align with the kind of judgements reiterated year after year by funding bodies. While demanding an increasing range of activities such as: professional organisational and publicity expertise, exhibitions, catalogues, residencies, forums, film and video programs, mail art projects, complex collaborative projects, government agencies continually critiqued *ARX's* curatorial standards and slow responses to regular information requests. This was notwithstanding the fact that the artist-run endeavour was largely run on voluntary lines with intensive, wide ranging and time-consuming community/regional consultation. Western Australia's Department for the Arts, in particular, begrudged adequate funding after 1992, refusing to support ongoing infrastructure for ARX, even after three events that were widely recognised as successful and which the Department itself acknowledged as highly beneficial for the State's culture and economy. Similarly, DFAT officers such as Neil Manton would become increasingly exasperated that funding could not be obtained from South East Asian countries – as if that could ever be the case!

Inevitably, what resulted throughout *ARX's* history was a diverse group of people doing too much with too little and, without an ongoing secretariat, forced to re-invent each event. On one hand this situation allowed *ARX* to retain a 'romantic' 1970s sense of non-institutionalised

autonomy; on the other, it created an enormously inefficient waste of resources, not to mention bad feeling and downright exhaustion. Why, we must ask, have such Australian-based artists' organisations, from Mildura Triennials onwards, been unable to say no or at least scale down such enterprises to a manageable size?

In an interesting budgetary comparison, Marcon notes that *Documenta IX*, which was a

> grand international exhibition ... [of] work in situ, had a budget of $(AUS)15,000,000 to cater for the needs of 200 artists. ARX3 had approximately $200,000 to put together an event with 50 participants.... the two events are comparable in their objectives, format and organizational requirements.

For all its failings, what *ARX* did achieve on seventy-five times less budget than *Documenta* transcended the mythic Aussie status of heroic 'underdog'[45] or marginalised 'feel good' event. Internationally, its reputation was evident by 1988 when a Visual Arts/Crafts Survey Team was commissioned by DFAT's (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) Cultural Relations Section and the VACB to 'initiate' cultural contact with the Asian region. To their surprise the team, which included DFAT officer, Neil Manton, discovered that 'the little that was known of [contemporary] Australian art' was through *ARX*. Moreover, the 'impact of the first Asian involvement at ARX 87 was substantial and 'interest generated by the contacts made in Perth was extraordinary'[46].

Such impact extends beyond *ARX's* historical contribution as 'first past the post' to regularly engage with Asian art. The networks mentioned by the Survey Team, and the further collaborations these contacts engendered, constitute the longer-term value of the *ARX* project[47]. Despite *ARX's* sometimes threadbare and exasperating nature, as well as its frequent lack of sustainable cross-cultural theoretical frameworks, positive responses were regularly elicited by an overwhelming number of participants, as acknowledged in Marcon's report and many other sources. However, such connections are extraordinarily difficult to quantify as outcomes for grant applications and acquittals, a scenario that is, of course, not unfamiliar today in art schools across Australian Universities

From Australia 'having no region to call its own'[48] in 1986, *ARX* developments during the 1980s sought to situate Australian art within a larger and more detailed chart that included Asia, regional Australia, Perth, and for a time, New Zealand. In navigating the 'layers and labyrinths that underpin cultural negotiation'[49], this largely vanished project now demands some micro mapping of those specific journeys, pathways and collaborations – tortuous and otherwise - that were spawned from the South Western corner of Western Australia but went on to develop their own independent and abounding trajectories. Hopefully, my re-visiting of Perth, this time to attend ACUADS, will encourage some re-thinking of these lateral 'family connections' across Australia and the immediate geographical region. Beyond their art historical value, the kinds of relationships and linkages made possible through *ARX* may yet prove significant, perhaps even relevant, in manoeuvring around and between our current institutionally determined - and often constricted – courses of action.

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[1] *Wild Frontiers: Breadbox Gallery at Downtown*, Downtown Art Space, Adelaide, October 2003. Curated by Andrew Best and Bridget Currie. The artists were: Bec Dean, Cheather Webb, Tony Nathan, Alin Huma, Felena Alach, Mark McPherson, Simon Pericich, Kate McMillan, Christian De Viem, Thea Costantino and Marcus Canning. This was followed by an exchange exhibition, *Downtown* of Adelaide artists, showing at Breadbox Gallery in Perth, February 5-21, 2004. The artists were: Akira Akira,

Jim Strickland, Yoko Kajio, Sarah Crowest, Chris Flanagan, Bridget Currie, Louise Flaherty, Bianca Barling, Viv Miller, and Andrew Best.

[2] During World War II the capitals of Melbourne and Sydney were officially referred to as 'The Vital Areas'. Stanley, P, 'All points north', *Life Matters*, ABC Radio National, August 12 2005. Although not often available in published form, discussions centring around the status of provincial centres like Adelaide and their 'neglect' by the larger Australian centres have been obsessively regular over at least the past twenty four years of my residence in this city. In recent years, the 'Mecca' for aspiring artists has shifted from Sydney to Melbourne, with increasing numbers of emerging South Australian artists re-locating to the Victorian capital.

[3] Zeplin, P, Discussions with Andrew Best, Adelaide, July 5 and August 12, 2005. PICA stands for Perth Institute of Contemporary Art. Since 1992 *Hatched* has represented an important national exhibition, showcase and benchmarking event of tertiary art student work from around Australia. The concept for *Hatched* (originally titled *The National Graduate Show*) was 'incubated' by former Director of PICA, Noel Sheridan.

[4] This is also felt in Perth. Convenor of *Hatched*, Sarah Miller, noted in 2001: 'There is a certain pleasant irony in the fact that this unique, national initiative should take place in Western Australia, renowned more for its isolation than for its artistic and intellectual vibrancy'. Miller, S, 'Introduction', *Hatched: Healthway National Graduate Show, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, May 12 - June 24 2001,* 2001. Online. URL: http://members.iinet.net.au/%7Epica2/hatch01/intro.html

[5] For a general discussion of provincialism in Australian art, see Smith, T, 'The Provincialism Problem', reprinted in Taylor, P (ed), *Anything goes: art in Australia 1970 - 1980*, Art & Text, Melbourne, 1984, pp.46-53. For a more recent distinction between 'regionalism' and regionality', see Smith, T, 'Between Regionality and Regionalism: Middle ground Or Limboland (sic)?', *Periphery*, Nos 40-41, Spring 1999 - Summer 2000, pp. 3-8.

[6] For a discussion of hierarchies of Australian centres and regions such as Western Australia, see Bromfield, D, 'Distance and dystopia or how to differ gracefully', *Praxis M.* No 25, December 1989, pp. 17-20.

[7] Apart from research on Australian indigenous art, most published Australian literature on post-colonialism during the late 1980s and 1990s regularly referenced the northern hemisphere, including the Middle East, Africa, the UK and the US. Discussions of Pacific, Asia, or indeed, the non-Indigenous Australian/New Zealand situations were rare. See, for example, Taylor, P, in Davidson, C, 'Interview: Paul Taylor', *Art Network*, No 10, Winter, 1983, p. 47. Cited in McLean, I, 'Racism and postmodernism: Australian art and its institutions', *Art Monthly Australia,* September 1997, p. 17. '(O)ne looks at how other countries are using their local histories and I refute the stupid notion that Australians are going to 'naturally' use Aboriginal motifs and are going to draw on the cultures of South East Asia and this kind of rubbish.'

[8] ACUADS (Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools) superseded NCHADS (National Council of Heads of Australian Art and Design Schools) in 1994.

[9] Since 1993 the Queensland Art Gallery has presented the *Asia-Pacific Triennials of Contemporary Art* (1993, 1996, 1999, 2002). A further Triennial is planned for 2006. These have become major fixtures in the Australian art calendar, attracting unprecedented numbers of visitors.

[10] Until 1991 *ARX* was the acronym for *Australia and Regions Exchange*.

[11] New Zealand artists did not participate in *ARX* after 1995.

[12] Alison Carroll established the Asialink Arts Program in 1991 under the auspices of The University of Melbourne's Asialink educational organisation.

[13] See *Artlink* ('Contemporary arts of the region: South East Asia and Australia'), Vol 13, Nos 3 & 4, November - March, 1993/1994. Many of the writers for this issue were directly connected to *APT1*.

[14] See, for example, Hall, D, 'Cultural coexistence in Australia: art and the institutions that support it', in Turner, C (ed), *Tradition and change: contemporary art of Asia and the Pacific*, Queensland Art Gallery, South Brisbane, 1993, p. 188. Hall's brief reference to ARX notes: 'The establishment of ARX was an important catalyst in generating a

broader interest in Asia from the visual arts community'. See also 'The 1980s', *Tension*, No. 19, 1989, pp. 12 ff. As an indicator of Australian postmodern trends, the Melbourne-based journal, *Tension* tended towards the 'cooler' end of the visual art spectrum. In 1989 it devoted twenty pages to listing significant visual arts events during the 1980s but *ARX*, *Continuum* and *ANZART* were not directly mentioned.

[15] Marcon, M, 'Artists' Regional Exchange research report,' Department for the Arts, Government of Western Australia, Perth, 1993

[16] For detailed analysis of a major censorship incident involving ARX artist, Zunzi Wong at the Singapore Art Museum, see Donald, S, 'Exchange and display: republics of taste and the vision of elder statesmen', *Communal/Plural*, Vol 9, No 2, 2001, pp. 183-202.

[17] Carrier, A, 'ARX 5 (Artists Regional Exchange)', http://www.artseeninwa.com/arx5.html , n.d. (1999?), p. 2. Antoinette Carrier notes: ' It is perhaps time to lay ARX to rest and allow artist-driven initiatives to develop through other programmes. Although the artists of ARX5 have attempted to reclaim their voice in the structure of the project, the voice of the management, which redefined itself during the forum on 10th July was still too dominant to make this an equitable event.'

[18] See Van den Bosch, A, *The Australian art world: aesthetics in a global market*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2005, pp. 74 ff.

[19] Martin, A and Hayes, G, 'The Eighties (If we took a holiday)' (conference abstract, Sunday July 29, Bondi Pavillion Theatre ('Repeat of Saturday Night Program')), *Futur*Fall: Excursions into Post-Modernity, Sydney, 26-29 July 1984*, Sydney, 1984, p. 23. Conference Programme.

[20] There is a certain pleasant irony in the fact that this unique, national initiative should take place in Western Australia, renowned more for its isolation than for its artistic and intellectual vibrancy.

[21] Green, C, *Peripheral vision: contemporary Australian Art 1970-1994,* Craftsman House, Roseville East (NSW), 1995, p. 34.

[22] At the 1975 *Mildura Sculpture Triennial*, Daniel Thomas pronounced the New Zealand work 'the most professional avant-garde pieces'. Thomas, D, Cited in Gardiner, P., 'Godzone in Ozone', *New Zealand Listener*, June 21, 1975. See also Lynn, E, who stated that New Zealand art works were in general 'more creative and intellectual … than their Australian counterparts'. Lynn, E, cited in Gardiner (above).

[23] For ongoing critique of VAB policies at this time, see a series of articles by Terry Smith in Smith, T, 'The Visual Art Board: from a "ministry of mediocrity" to "rational reform?" - Part one', *Art Network*, No. 14, Summer 1985, pp. 22-27; 'The Visual Arts Board: from a 'ministry of mediocrity' to 'rational reform'? - Part II (sic.)', *Art Network*, No. 16, Winter 1985, pp. 38-40, 45; 'The Visual Arts Board: from a "ministry of mediocrity' to 'rational reform"? - Part III (sic.)', *Art Network*, No. 17, Spring, 1985, pp. 40-42.

[24] Perth, Darwin, Adelaide, Hobart, Canberra and Brisbane were regional; Sydney and Melbourne were not. By the late1980s this perceived imbalance was viewed by many artists outside larger capitals as a major equity issue, requiring the Australia Council to subsequently create more culturally, gender and geographical diverse policies

[25] This incident in March 1985 saw New Zealand Prime Minister, Lange pronouncing New Zealand ports as nuclear free zones, thus refusing access to (possibly) nuclear powered US ships. This decision considerably weakened the forty-four year old ANZUS alliance between Australia, New Zealand and the US.

[26] See Zeplin, P, 'Lost white tribes of the Tasman-Pacific: an archaeology of Australia-New Zealand art exchanges in the 1970s and 1980s', *Image and text, Conceptual art online*, pp. 1-8. http://www.imageandtext.org.nz/zeplin.html. Viewed 24 November 2004.

[27] Over sixty Australians were represented through their work and a further forty artists and artworkers participated in person.

[28] Ewington, J, '"All the Australians are walking around behaving like Texans": Anzart-in-Auckland 1985'', *Art Network*, No 18, Summer-Autumn 1986, pp. 30-32.

[29] Porter, A, 'The 1987 Perth Artist's Exchange: feasibility report'', unpublished report, 1986, p. 11.
 'Opinion, among those canvassed, is, of course, divided. However, feeling is strong, particularly among practising artists that the Anzart ideal is a sound one, seemingly based on the notion that dialogue between the only two accessible European communities in this part of the world is beneficial.'

[30] John Barrett-Lennard, Director of Praxis in Perth, claims to be the instigator of this idea. Barrett-Lennard, J, Interview with author, University of Western Australia, April 4, 2004.

[31] ASEAN refers specifically to the regional economic trading bloc, the Association of South East Asian Nations. Marcon explains that the 'subsequent shift into SE Asia was determined by very pragmatic consideration (sic), namely by the availability of Foreign Affairs funds to support initiatives in that region'. Marcon, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

[32] The event's change of name represented a significant development. It had not been bilaterally agreed at *ANZART/AUCKLAND '85,* where the New Zealand contingent anticipated something akin to *ANZART IV* or *ANZART/Perth '87.*

[33] Porter, *op. cit..* pp.12 ff.

[34] *ibid.*p.13. 'The isolation of the visual arts community is obvious, and whilst this gives a particular flavour to arts practice in WA, it can also have a stultifying effect '.

[35] The 1986 Interim Organising Committee was chaired by John Barrett-Lennard, with the other five members being staff from the University of WA and art schools. Subsequent committees continued with strong input from staff and students at local art colleges and high schools and other art institutions, as well as artists. See Watt, D, 'Chairperson's introduction', *ARX87: Australia and Regions Artists' Exchange Catalogue*, Australia and Regions Artists' Exchange Committee, Fremantle, 1987, p. 4.

[36] For details of participation breakdown, see Table 1: participating artists, 'Appendix 2: Participation statistics','*ARX'87* Report, Perth, 1987, n.p.

[37] Selected ASEAN artists were:Ponirim Amin (Malaysia), Chumpon Apisuk (Thailand), Genara Banzon (Philippines), Goh Ee Choo (Singapore) and Tonny Haryanto (Indonesia) Writer, Kanaga Sabapathy (Singapore) gave a keynote address.

[38] *Continuum: aspects of Japanese art today, September 10-27, 1985*, Continuum Australia Committee, Victoria (Australia), 1985. Exhibition catalogue.

[39] For a list of major later initiatives concerning Australian and Asian art, see Marcon, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

[40] See Turner, C, 'Internationalism and regionalism: paradoxes of identity', in Turner, C, (ed), *Tradition and change: contemporary art of Asia and the Pacific*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1993, p xiii. Turner claims: '... There have been exchanges between the countries of East Asia and South-East Asia, and between the Asian nations and Australia, but there has been no previous attempt to focus on the Asia-Pacific region as a whole.' See also Kerr, R, Conversation with the author, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, September 27 1996. Co-ordinator of *ARX 4,* Rosie Kerr, expressed her dismay that the *APT* had never appropriately acknowledged *ARX's* achievements in building relations with South East Asian artists nor its assistance in providing valuable information for the larger *APT* organisation. See, as well, Jones, A, Interview with author, Perth, April 11 2004. See also unpublished essay by Adrian Jones, Co-ordinator of *ARX '87, ARX '89: Metromania* and *ARX 3.* Jones, A, 'The First Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art – Brisbane: a new state of relations: Australia and its near neighbours', Perth, n.d. (1993?) n.p.. As a 'paying customer' of the *APT1* conference, Jones 'returned from the APT with deep anxieties', which included 'a sense of discomfort in acknowledging ARX, in the conference and exhibition (in both their planning and presentation) by the Queensland Art Gallery; and that (his) access to vital knowledge was not through the centrality of the conference, but from around its edges. The discomfort of acknowledgement can certainly be accounted for by interpreting the Queensland Art Gallery's role in establishing this regional Triennial as being a pre-eminent one ... ARX's historical and ongoing role in Australian/South East Asian contact has provided an opening and point of reference for many projects. Though it is not the exclusive source, it does, however, have credability (sic) from the Asian side'. Similar responses were made by

a number of participating artists in conversation at *ARX 4* in Perth in 1995. These responses concerned the danger of *ARX's* informality and focus on interpersonal exchange being 'supplanted' by a large and prestigious *APT* 'machine'.

[41] See *Metro Mania: catalogue of the 1989 Australia & Regions Artists' Exchange*, Australia & Regions Artists' Exchange, Perth 1989, n.p. ('Contents'). Exhibition catalogue, 1 – 14 October 1989. Of a total of forty-four individual artists in thirty-one projects, there were three New Zealand artists, or seven and nine percent, respectively. There were twenty-two Australian artists in seventeen projects and nineteen artists from South East Asia in eleven projects. At *ARX 3* in 1992 there were thirty-two artists from Australia, thirteen from South East Asia and one from New Caledonia. Of a total of fifty-three participants, New Zealanders comprised less than eight percent. At *ARX 4 (torque)* in 1995 there were six artists from Indonesia; six from the Philippines, and seven from Australia. There were no artists from New Zealand.

[42] New Zealand curator, Priscilla Pitts 'dramatically reinforced' this point when speaking at the *ARX 3* forum in 1992. "(She) handed over the remainder of her allotted time to Maureen Lander (Kai Tahu, New Zealand) and Pamela Croft Murri, Australia) who presented their own "stories".' Garrett, R, 'Theses arising', 'Report on attendance at *ARX-3* in Perth: The Third Regional Exchange for Visual Arts Professionals from Australia, New Zealand and South east Asia April 1992', School of Art, Otago Polytechnic, Dunedin, n.p., 5.7.

[43] Of the fifteen artists involved in *ARX* from October 1998 to October 1999, in Singapore (October/November 1998; Perth, June/July 1999 and Hong Kong, October 1999), five were selected from each of the following countries: Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong (PRC).

[44] See also Jones, A, 'ARX Consultative Report: South-East Asia and New Zealand September – December 1990', Perth, 1991.

[45] Marcon, *op. cit.* p. 13.

[46] Sections 1.12, 2.5.4, 1.16, *Report of the Visual Arts/Crafts Survey team's visit to South East Asia June 5-20 1988*, Cultural Relations Section Occasional Papers, AACR Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 1988, n.p.

[47] In addition to many residencies at various ARX events, many later collaborative projects resulted from this project. See, for example, McNamara, P, 'Never solely a matter of "art": the New School for Collaborative Development', unpublished paper presented at the Art Association of Australia Conference, Victoria University, Wellington, 1999. See also catalogues from other exchange projects: *Cocoons, kerosene, culture: Darwin-Southeast Asia art exchange,* 24 Hr Art, Darwin, n.d. (1994?) and the Philippines-Australia exchange, *Tugmaan: ties that bind*, (Northbridge and Metro Manila), 1994.

[48] The notion that Australia was 'a country in search of a region' was expounded by foreign policy analyst, Hugh Collins in an Australian Institute of International Affairs publication in 1986. See Edwards, P & Goldsworthy, D (eds), *Facing north: a century of Australian engagement with Asia*, Vol 2: 1970s to 2000. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade & Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2003, p. 17.

[49] Moore, M, 'ARX5: introduction', *ARX5 Processes: a residency and exhibition project Singapore 13 Sept – 1 Nov 1998*, Singapore, n.d. (1998?), n.p.