

ephemeral traces

Brisbane's artist-run scene in the 1980s

The Catalogue Essay

'95% of artists leave Brisbane. Why don't you?'

Scrawled in large, rough letters on the hoarding surrounding the almost completed Cultural Centre in early 1982, this piece of graffiti captures something of the tone of Brisbane at that time. While this figure was not statistically accurate, it often seemed that way. The graffiti was a fleeting gesture, but one that left its traces in the archive. It appears in the heading of the brief artist's statement that accompanied Luke Roberts's exhibition at the Institute of Modern Art (IMA) in August 1982,¹ and in Barbara Campbell's "Brisbane Scene" column in *Art & Australia* in mid-1983.² An image of the graffiti also appears in the photocopied newsletter produced to announce the program for the artist-run space One Flat in November 1982. As one element of the cut-and-paste info-poetics of a double-sided A3 page, a photograph of the hoarding appears in a mocking collage with images of the graffiti applied over a souvenir postcard of the newly opened Queensland Art Gallery, topped by a cut-out of a squawking parrot giving voice to the text.

Back then, leaving Brisbane was part of the culture. Perhaps it is part of the culture of any small city, where life pales in the face of the imagined richness of the metropolis. In comparison, Brisbane was regarded as a cultural wasteland. As the title character in David Malouf's 1975 novel *Johnno* saw it, Brisbane was 'a place where nothing happened and nothing ever would happen ... a place where poetry could never occur'.³ Although of course it did, and so did art and music. But the image of Brisbane as nothing more than a big, uncultured country town was hard to shake.

The view of Brisbane as a cultural backwater was not simply something that was imposed from outside. It had been internalised. As Stuart Glover and Stuart Cunningham have noted, the 'vision of Queensland as a wasteland must have been a comfort to those who left for more fertile pastures, but it has been little comfort for those who stayed behind'. Moreover, they argue, 'the work of those who did not leave has been scrubbed of any meaning except within a binary of oppression and resistance'.⁴

What has dominated this story, particularly for those artists who came of age in the 1970s and '80s, is the impact of the extreme right-wing state government under Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen, in power for almost twenty years from 1968 to 1987, with a conservative government hanging on until December 1989. This is the familiar story of electoral gerrymander; social conservatism; the use of the police to suppress dissent or difference, marches and protests; the rise of 'the white-shoe brigade'; midnight building demolitions; unfettered development at any cost; police raids to remove condom vending machines, illegal brothels and gambling dens; the illicit handling of wads of cash in brown envelopes; a culture of police and political corruption; and, as a result of all this, 'the exodus of writers, artists and educated people'.⁵ The view of Brisbane as a wasteland developed its powerful narrative force against this backdrop; add the politics and the police and the desire of artists to leave is understood almost always in terms of a *push*, rather than a *pull*. The story, in its most familiar telling, is about 'leaving Brisbane', rather than moving somewhere else. And as each new wave packed their bags and headed off - be it to Sydney or Melbourne, or further afield - the sense that the city was a cultural desert, an empty wasteland, seemed to be confirmed.⁶

But it is more complicated than this. Of course, many did leave under the pressure of police harassment or a sense that the city offered them nothing, or at least a lot less than they might find elsewhere. This has become an important part of the cultural narrative of the city, but it is far from the whole story. Whatever the problems Brisbane presented for younger artists, there were those who did stay. *ephemeral traces: Brisbane's artist-run scene in the 1980s* is about those artists, and the scene that developed around the artist-run spaces and other organisational activities in which they were involved. Central to this exhibition are the five key artist-run spaces and related projects that were initiated across the years from 1982 to 1988: One Flat, A ROOM, THAT Contemporary Art Space (hereafter, THAT Space), The Observatory, and John Mills National. By coincidence, this time frame also aligns with the years between two major events that are often credited with being the prime catalysts for the transformation of Brisbane, key moments in its 'coming of age': the 1982 Commonwealth Games and World Expo 88.⁷

These big state-sponsored events had a positive impact on tourism and business, generating a general shift in the city's perception of itself, and the view from outside. Even making an unsuccessful bid for the 1992 Olympics was seen in such positive terms. But for many younger people with an interest in the arts, this kind of top-down approach just didn't ring true. The way this played out across the late 1970s and early 1980s in the Brisbane music scene has been well documented, with its focus on the edgy DIY energy associated with Punk.⁸ Brisbane's artist-run spaces also fit into this DIY tradition, and while they share some of the same transitional moments, they also function with a slightly different set of contextual reference points. In 1975, the year that saw the dismissal of the Federal Whitlam Government (itself a political and cultural watershed), the alternative political and musical voice of 4ZZZ FM was established and the IMA was opened as Brisbane's first 'alternative space'.⁹

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ephemeral traces is an exhibition that positions itself within a network of activities that seek to provide an account of Brisbane's artist-run scene in the 1980s, and is the culmination of an extended period of curatorial research, as well as a significant collective re-examination of art practice in Brisbane at this time.¹⁰ The particular focus of the exhibition has been shaped by a number of factors. Some of these are locally specific, involving what we might understand as the particularities of the Brisbane context - the political and cultural circumstances that have been introduced above. As such, it functions as a kind of local history. But the period that provides the focus for the exhibition (1982-1988) also coincides with some shifts within the field of visual-art policy and practice at a national level, particularly the move away from the broad concept of the 'alternative space' that had been in use over the previous decade or so. Driven by a number of changes in policy and funding instituted by the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council, the alternative-spaces field was transformed, with a small number of funded spaces (including the IMA) recast as a network of Contemporary Art Spaces, against a wide array of (mostly unfunded) artist-run spaces. Much of the debate around the politics of the artist-run field in Brisbane was informed

by these wider debates about the way this area of practice might be shaped by funding and other political and governmental forces.¹¹ That such issues were at the heart of discussion is made clear by ephemera linked to the Artworkers Union Queensland (Artworkers Union Queensland) and the Queensland Artworkers Alliance (Queensland Artworkers Alliance).

A key thread that runs through the exhibition positions it within a wider consideration of what art historian Terry Smith has termed 'infrastructural activism'; it examines 'the pivotal role that alternative spaces, artist-run cooperatives, and supportive site-specific organisations ... have played since the 1970s in the growth and diversification of infrastructure for the visual arts'.¹² In such a framework, it becomes necessary to focus not simply on the creation of artworks, but also to develop what we might think of as an expanded view of art practice, one that treats a wider range of activities as essential components of an artist's practice. Importantly, while the emergence of artist-run spaces in Brisbane may be understood as a solution to a lack of access to exhibition opportunities within either the commercial gallery system or the art museum context, it should also be viewed as a part of the development of a new form of organisation within the visual-arts infrastructure, one that is artist-led and essentially democratic or collective in nature. The establishment of the Artworkers Union Queensland, and subsequently the Queensland Artworkers Alliance, is notable in this respect, as many of the artists who took key organisational roles in Brisbane artist-run exhibition spaces were also involved in these activist organisations.

ephemeral traces draws on a range of materials to tell the story of the Brisbane 1980s' artist-run scene, including artworks, documentation, and ephemera. However, these three types of materials are not necessarily presented in a value-based hierarchy, but should be understood as all contributing equally to the account of creative practice within this field. When examining these materials as part of the process of infrastructural activism, it becomes difficult to identify where the discrete creative work might be located. Drawing on the lessons of conceptual art, this exhibition suggests that within the artist-run -field, 'the work' as an easily identified category of object is, at times, displaced by

process-based activities that involve artefact production as well as organisational, performative or managerial activities. Within this exhibition, this folding together of different aspects of an artist's practice is perhaps most clearly articulated in the installation by Brian Doherty, which reprises elements from his exhibitions at A ROOM (1984) and THAT Space (1985).¹³ The installation explicitly includes items that operate as traces of a practice that occurs outside 'the studio', some of which might usually be understood as organisational, activist or artisanal. By including such materials within the installation, Doherty suggests that within artist-run practice, the division between 'art' and 'non-art' activities is unclear. This process is mirrored within *ephemeral traces*, with a focus on 'art-work' rather than 'the art object', with the diverse materials on display demonstrating the complex web of different activities undertaken within the artist-run environment.¹⁴ That both the Artworkers Union Queensland and the Queensland Artworkers Alliance use the term 'artworker' rather than 'artist' could, in some ways, be a measure of how such a view of art practice has been understood in this context.

Although the exhibition presents material that is attributed to individual artists, it also presents a significant amount of collaboratively produced material. The threads of collaborative practice are woven - perhaps tangled - through this exhibition, not only in reference to the way that the individual spaces operated, but also more generally within the scene.¹⁵ It was collaboration that provided the focus for one of the first accounts of this area of experimental practice in Brisbane at this time: Urszula Szulakowska's important essay "Brisbane Dada: Collaborative Art in a Stagnant Culture", which was published in the first issue of *eyeline* in May 1987. To some extent, this essay was written as a riposte to a view of art practice in Brisbane that so often seemed to focus on an individualistic figurative expressionism as a dominant style.¹⁶ While the Dada label was perhaps useful in unsettling the view that expressionism dominated Queensland art practice, the assertion that there should be something particular that reflected the Queensland context in which works were produced was also contested by many artists. In a more postmodern view, Brisbane could be anywhere.

Sketching out the contours of One Flat, A ROOM, THAT Space, The Observatory, and John Mills National has involved a substantial reviewing of much archival material, an activity made more challenging by the fact that none of the spaces had previously attempted to organise their archives or make them publicly available. In the process of curating this exhibition, the tasks of reviewing and reorganising ephemera and photographic documentation have been undertaken for the first time, and have often drawn together fragmentary materials from diverse personal collections. While some of this material is presented in its original form - as posters or newsletters or exhibition invitations - ephemera and documentation are presented as screen-based 'slide shows'. In the case of THAT Space, the slide show is drawn almost exclusively from images taken using the collective's 'shared camera'. These photographs provide a compelling record of the people and social activity around openings and shared studios. Together, they form an anonymous collective work, while also documenting an essential social aspect of artist-run spaces.

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During the period under scrutiny, the IMA provided a key point of engagement for artist-run activity; however, this exhibition does not attempt to provide a full account of activities undertaken there, nor does it seek to provide an account of activities within the commercial gallery or art museum sector. The exhibition's 'timeline', which provides a backdrop to the activity of the artist-run spaces, concludes with a listing of 70 Brisbane-based artist-run projects that have occurred since 1975, which demonstrates the richness of this field of activity. Included in this list - which is almost certainly not comprehensive - are two early artist-run activities that precede the focus period of the exhibition, Q Space and EMU. While Q Space is now quite well known,¹⁷ accounts of EMU have been mostly anecdotal, with only fragmentary ephemera and few other documentary traces available.¹⁸

Of the five artist-run spaces that provide the focus for this exhibition, **One Flat** is the most difficult to define. The activities that fall broadly under this banner were diverse and not linked to a single physical space,

or even a single name. Although there are common threads, 'One Flat' is a short-hand way of describing an evolving mix of collective activities that took a variety of forms, from studio and gallery spaces to publications, events and ephemeral and performative modes of collective art production. From 1982 to 1988, many artists were involved in these activities, although, for the bulk of this time, the core collective comprised the trio of Adam Boyd, Jeanelle Hurst and Russell Lake.¹⁹ The group functioned in diverse ways, producing 'works', exhibitions and performances in various gallery spaces, as well as initiating gallery, studio and publication projects that provided space for their own art work and the work of others. However, as the nature of the collective's practice is considered as a whole, such a distinction between the creative production of 'artworks' and 'art infrastructure' is one that is difficult to sustain.

The story of One Flat begins with the setting up of the Red Comb House Studios in a former office and warehouse complex at 190 Roma Street in February 1982.²⁰ The first events were organised almost immediately as a lease was signed: at first, film and music events and then a large group exhibition, *Produce Art*, in March 1982.²¹ However, the focus of activity at Red Comb House was primarily studio-based, with the building occupied by artists for well over a year.²²

In mid-1982, the collective, with the additional involvement of Gary Warner, opened One Flat Exhibit in Hurst's small flat at 19 Edmondstone Street, South Brisbane. While Warner moved to Sydney shortly after the gallery opened, he continued to contribute to the project, exhibiting in the space and facilitating exchanges from interstate. The first One Flat newsletter for 1983 provides a list of the 1982 activities, which included around 20 exhibitions, installations, performances and talks.²³ In around May 1983, the One Flat collective moved the centre of its operations to 355/353 George Street in the CBD and established One Flat Exhibit George Street Branch. Here the mix of activities seemed to become more fluid, and while formal exhibitions were staged, to the casual visitor, the site seemed in a constant state of flux. Significantly, it was here that the Midnight Cabaret series took place in mid-1983, with these somewhat anarchic events lending weight to Szulakowska's identification of a strong

Dadaist strain within art practice in Brisbane at this time.²⁴ In addition to regular One Flat newsletters, two more general publications with some links to this group were initiated during this time: *Art Walk* and *Art Wonder Stories*.²⁵

One Flat's core collective of Boyd, Hurst and Lake, with the addition of Zeliko Maric, Adam Wolter and various 'guest artists', also presented work at other sites, such as the One Flat collective exhibition at the IMA in March 1984. By late that year, the One Flat collective had rebranded as O'Flate. In this new guise, they occupied a studio space at 242 Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley (in the building now occupied by the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Art). Working as O'Flate, activities were mainly focused on collective art production and exchanges, with work exhibited in exhibitions such as *Brisbane Hot* (IMA, 1985), *Queensland Works* (University Art Museum, The University of Queensland, 1985) and *Know Your Product* (IMA, 1986). The collective project culminated in an experimental *National Art Safari* (1986) that toured across Australia, after which members of the group began to develop individual projects. The collective work of O'Flate and new media experimentation using Telecom's Viatel 'on-line' system (a pre-Internet online network) during the *National Art Safari* fed into Hurst's work on new media and artists' networks under the title of *Future Stock Compatibles*, including the curatorial projects *Outdoor Art Drive-in* (1986), and subsequently the major city-wide art project *InterFace: City as a Work of Art* in March 1988.²⁶ *ephemeral traces* includes a number of works that were presented within the *InterFace* project, including Jane Richen's large billboard, and Jay Younger's *Blue Kingdom*.

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In contrast to the complex network of activities linked to One Flat, the **A ROOM** project was a tightly circumscribed activity. A ROOM was set up in mid-1984 as 'a seven-member exhibiting artel'.²⁷ Over a predetermined six-month period (July-December 1984), it occupied two rooms in an office space above shops at 446 George Street. One room was used as a studio, the other as a gallery. As one of the exhibition flyers for the project noted, a key

objective of the A ROOM project was to provide a model that presented 'few encumbrances for its members', with the space operating without any formal 'committee structure, constitution, [or] responsibility to membership or government grant'. As the name suggests, a functioning gallery simply required a room. The project began with a group exhibition of the collective, followed by a solo exhibition by each artist: Ted Riggs, Barbara Campbell, Bronwyn Clark-Coolee, Hollie, Brian Doherty, Christine Henderson and Dianne Heenan. While there was no necessary stylistic or conceptual links between the artists within the collective, the project as a whole was in some ways a response to the changing circumstances within the alternative-spaces context; in particular, the division between a set of 'flagship' Contemporary Art Spaces and a wider group of (mainly unfunded) artist-run spaces.²⁸

A ROOM was set up just a month or two after the appointment of a full-time director at the IMA in mid-1984,²⁹ and, in many ways, it emerged from debates concerning how the alternative-spaces field might be organised, and how the different institutional structures might play a role in legitimising art practices. This was of particular significance for two of the collective members, Campbell and Riggs, who had been central to the IMA's operation over the previous two years under the 'guest curatorial program'.³⁰ As already noted, Doherty's installation in *ephemeral traces* reprises elements from his A ROOM exhibition, and works by Clark-Coolee and Heenan are also directly linked to their exhibitions in this space.

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THAT Space was established in June 1985 in a small two-storey warehouse at 20 Charlotte Street in the CBD, with access to the building via a laneway (the building was demolished in early 1988). The organisation operated as a collective that included artists such as Paul Andrew, Dale Chapman, Jane Richens, John Waller, and Jay Younger (and many others - up to 250 artists exhibited here). It included an exhibition space, a half-dozen studio spaces and, from about April 1986, the offices of Queensland Artworkers Alliance. While Paul Andrew occupied the unpaid position of 'coordinator', the decision-making processes within THAT Space were collaborative.

Because it was a self-funded organisation, the viability of the space depended on the active support, and financial contributions, of a fairly large group that included studio artists, exhibiting artists and others. The underlying philosophy was inclusive, operating on the basis that the space 'should be open to as many interested people as possible, simply because that invariably gives a place a more positive feel and tends to reach out and be more inviting'.³¹

As Michele Helmrich noted in her retrospective account of THAT Space published in *eyeline* in mid-1988, such an open approach sometimes led to the criticism that the space exhibited too much 'bad' art. But in taking a risk with emerging artists, THAT Space's 'open space' approach sought to build an environment for emerging artists to present their work, where previously 'there had been a lack of accessible infrastructures, little local art history, and, until *eyeline*, no substantial venue for local art criticism'.³² The collective at THAT Space produced a monthly newsletter and was known for its social events, parties, performances, talks and other activities. A set of the newsletters is included within *ephemeral traces*, and features many of the additional flyers and notices that were often added as inserts. The inclusive approach of THAT Space, coupled with the fact that the office of the Queensland Artworkers Alliance was located within the same building, made it an important networking site, as it provided opportunities for wider collaborations.

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The Observatory was established in October 1985 by three artists, Robyn Gray, Lehan Ramsay and Anna Zsoldos, whose primary interest was contemporary photographic practice. Located in a small warehouse at 92-102 Little Roma Street, The Observatory included a gallery space and a darkroom. The space was sublet from Anna Burke, whose fashion studio Atomic Workshop was also in the building, as was the rehearsal studio of the ZIP performing group. Artists exhibiting at The Observatory included collective members and Ivan Nunn, Vincent Long, Marian Drew, Jay Younger, David Gofton, Joanna Greenwood and Margaret Rol. In February 1986, The Observatory presented *Suspending belief*, a group exhibition of Sydney

photographers (Geoff Kleem, Jacky Redgate, Robyn Stacey and Anne Zahalka), and developed an exhibition of Brisbane photographers, *Occlusion*, that toured to the Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, and then to THAT Space in December 1986. The Observatory was the focus of *The Demolition Show* (curated by John Stafford), which marked the demolition of the large city block bounded by George, Turbot, and Roma Streets in April 1986. The exhibited works were left in situ to be destroyed with the building. Of all the spaces, the short-lived Observatory has left the least archival trace, with few records or documentation available. In the end, it is the materials produced around the demise of the space in the context of *The Demolition Show* that offer the most tangible record of this space.

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John Mills National (JMN), which was established in November 1986 by Virginia Barratt and Adam Boyd, had a primary focus on performance art, though exhibitions of work in other media were also held. Located in the John Mills Himself building at 40 Charlotte Street, the space was previously used for artists' studios and was originally a printery. Artists who exhibited or performed at JMN included the two directors, plus Kate White, Brian Doherty, Russell Lake, Lehan Ramsay, Dale Chapman, Hiram To, Tim Gruchy, Sheridan Kennedy, Malcolm Enright, Eugene Carchesio, Jose Macalino, Steven Grainger, Hollie, Cernak and many others, with activities often spilling onto the street outside. Artworks were also presented adjacent to the gallery entrance using a small light-box, which was named 'John Mills Annex'; this micro gallery has recently been restored, and is included within this exhibition.

JMN presented two focused performance seasons and, in October 1987, a weekend forum on performance. Given Boyd's link to the ephemeral and performative activities of One Flat/O'Flate, and Barratt's primary work in performance, the space is unsurprisingly most well-known for this aspect of its program. However, after almost 30 years, a significant amount of the documentation of the performance activity that took place there has either been lost or remains to be located, collected and documented. While many performances were documented, many were not, or at least

not with an eye to anything other than a general record, and little (if any) of the performance documentation from this space has entered public collections. Moreover, JMN artists often resisted treating this material as a commodity, with their focus placed firmly on the activity itself. In comparison, a substantial body of ephemera remains and clearly demonstrates that performance was a central aspect of artist-run spaces across this period in Brisbane; relocating and preserving the photographic and video trace of this activity remains a work in progress.

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In the "Brisbane Scene" column that appeared in *Art & Australia* in 1983, Barbara Campbell began by reflecting on the previous year's major activities: the opening of the new Queensland Art Gallery at South Bank in June, and the arts festival that was organised to coincide with the Commonwealth Games a few months later. However, these events were not her primary focus, nor were they presented as the most significant. Instead, her attention was concentrated on smaller organisational changes, such as the IMA's shift to a 'continuous program of guest curators' and the moves by younger artists to 'establish sole-supporting frameworks for continued work': the Red Comb House studios, One Flat Exhibit gallery in West End, and the publication of the first issue of *Art Walk* magazine at the end of that year. These activities, she noted, 'were a direct result of an enthusiastic leap from complacency taken by individuals who, traditionally, would have joined the queues moving to the cultural South'.³³

By mid-1988, much had changed: key policy shifts meant that the artist-run spaces and the IMA were no longer part of a common field of 'alternative spaces', but instead organisations that were parts of two distinct but related systems. The slew of demolitions and the closure of THAT Space and JMN meant that a break in the artist-run scene suddenly appeared. At South Bank, World Expo 88 was in full swing, with nightly fireworks displays and coordinated high-tech light shows. Writing in the newsletter of the Queensland Artworkers Alliance, Virginia Barratt described the scene as

being 'in the doldrums'.³⁴ The Australia Council had finally released a new policy on artist-run spaces, but for this brief moment, there were none in Brisbane.

The pause was not long, and new artist-run spaces soon emerged. At the very end of 1988, the short-term project Bureau was opened in a vacant shop site in City Plaza, and Arch Lane Public Art was established. These spaces were followed in 1989 by AGLASSOFWATER/Site and Brutal, with the focus of these artist-run activities beginning a shift towards Fortitude Valley. In mid-1988, the Queensland Artworkers Alliance set up its new office in Woolloongabba and appointed a part-time coordinator. This heralded its transition from being a primarily grass-roots activist organisation to a government-funded body that provided services, information and advocacy for artists within what was soon being described as 'the arts industry'. The commercial gallery sector had expanded during the 1980s, with the Milburn and Bellas galleries being of particular importance, as they represented a number of artists who had initially exhibited mostly within the artist-run context. Nevertheless, there were still many more emerging artists than the local commercial sector could accommodate.

Following the election of the Goss Labor Government in December 1989, serious cultural policy reform was undertaken, with the development of a much more coherent arts policy and funding structure at the state level. The Brisbane City Council also developed a clearly articulated cultural policy at this time. Significantly, the need to consider artist-run activities as a part of the visual arts infrastructure was recognised, and while direct support was still limited, the artist-run space, or artist-run initiative (ARI) as it was now being called, began to figure as an accepted part of the visual arts ecology. Although the number of ARIs operating in Brisbane at any moment has fluctuated, the raw numbers are impressive for a city of this size. This exhibition focuses on just five artist-run spaces, but any attempt to provide a comprehensive account of the activity within this field in Brisbane would need to deal with more than ten times that number.

Many of the artists who played key roles within the artist-run scene during the 1980s are not well represented in the holdings of our public art collections (in some cases, they are not represented at all), but the rich record of their activity in the ephemera, documentation, and few artworks we have assembled for this exhibition clearly demonstrates that Brisbane was anything but a cultural wasteland at this time. Government and big business may have looked to major events to 'put Brisbane on the map', but it is the more modest efforts of the artists who decided to stay and work within whatever temporary spaces they could find that have provided the foundation for an ongoing artist-run scene within this city. The 'leap from complacency' and the decision not only to stay and make art in Brisbane but also to work creatively to build a context for art sit at the very heart of this exhibition. And this sense of energy and activism, a willingness to just get on and do it, continues to provide the foundation for artist-run spaces in Brisbane.

Peter Anderson - exhibition curator

1. '95% of artists leave Brisbane. Why don't you?' or alternatively 'Would the last person out of Brisbane please turn off Luke Roberts', Luke Roberts, Institute of Modern Art, 3-28 August 1982.
2. Barbara Campbell, "Brisbane Scene," *Art & Australia* 20 no. 4 (1983): 464. Campbell concludes: "perhaps when the graffiti on the side of the Cultural Centre reading '95% of artists leave Brisbane. Why don't you?' was finally removed, the significance of the action was greater than anyone realised."
3. David Malouf, *Johnno* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1998), 118.
4. Stuart Glover and Stuart Cunningham, "The New Brisbane" *Artlink* 23 no. 2 (2002): 17.
5. Ibid.
6. The exodus of artists from Brisbane was the focus of The University of Queensland Art Museum's 2012 exhibition *Return to Sender*, curated by Michele Helmrich; in some ways, *ephemeral traces* offers a response to this earlier project.
7. Glover and Cunningham, "The New Brisbane," 16.
8. For example, see Clinton Walker, *Stranded: The Secret History of Australian Independent Music 1977-1991* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1996); David Nichols, *The Go-Betweens* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1997); and Andrew Stafford *Pig City: From The Saints to Savage Garden* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 2004).
9. Sue Cramer and Bob Lindgard, eds., *Institute of Modern Art 1975-1989* (Brisbane: IMA, 1989).
10. Initial support for the development of this project was provided by a Siganto Foundation Fellowship, which allowed the curator to undertake focused research in State Library of Queensland's Australian Library of Art in 2013. One outcome of this work was the essay "Marginal Notes: Towards a History of an Artist-Run Scene, Brisbane the 1980s," *eyeline* no. 82 (Summer 2014/15): 59. To facilitate reflective dialogue and networking, a Facebook group - 'Queensland ARI Heritage' - was established by artists

Paul Andrew and Virginia Barratt as an artist-run response to the UQ Art Museum's commitment to the exhibition, and this group has provided an important contribution to the development of the project. Further to this, Paul Andrew initiated a separate artist-run online public archive, e-resource and interactive artwork project (www.remix.com.au), which is focused on artist-run spaces in Queensland from 1980 to 1990. As such, this exhibition needs to be understood as one part of a wider collective project, presenting an occasion to broaden discussion and reflection on the history of this area.

11. See Peter Anderson, "The Politics of Space: From Alternative Spaces to Artist Run Initiatives," *Art Monthly (Australia)* no. 19 (April 1989): 25.
12. Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2012), 99.
13. Some of the phrases I have used to describe the work here are taken from my own unpublished review of Doherty's October 1985 THAT Space exhibition, "THIS WORK WAS an exhibition by brian doherty, john waller and others at THAT", which was written in late 1985.
14. Artists included within this exhibition not only made their own art, but also curated exhibitions, designed and produced posters, flyers and other ephemera, and organised events. In some cases, the work of an artist appears in a number of locations within the exhibition, with work in variety of media; among these artists are Paul Andrew, Adam Boyd, Brian Doherty, Malcolm Enright, Sally Hart, Hollie, Jeanelle Hurst, Jane Richens, and Jay Younger.
15. Most of the artists included within *ephemeral traces* were engaged in collaborative practices. For example, the body of work linked to Tim Gruchy is run through with a collaborative ethos; he was a member of the ZIP group (Gruchy, Irena Luckus, Matt Mawson, Terry Murphy and John Willsted), the ZIP Performing Group (Gruchy, David Clark, Anthony Patterson and Mark Ross), CLOUT (Gruchy, Virginia Barratt, Eugene Carchesio, Mark Louttit), and was often involved in the performance projects of others, such as works by Michelle Andringa and Sheridan Kennedy.
16. The discussion of this issue was particularly focused around the exhibition *Brisbane Hot* staged at the IMA in March 1985, with the exhibition accompanied by a forum on 'Expressionism' and the publication *Brisbane Writings* (issue 1, March 1985), which included two essays - "The Dominance of Figurative Expressionism in Queensland Painting: Towards a Sociological Account" by Robert Lindgard and "Brisbane's Perfect Match" by Ross Harley. This latter essay provided the foundation for Harley's curatorial research for the IMA exhibition *Know Your Product* (1986), which examined the music scene in Brisbane.
17. Q Space and Q Space Annex were described by John Nixon as 'a non-permanent private venue for the exhibition of "new" or avant-garde art' ... 'a provisional strategy for an alternative space'. Exhibitions were primarily focused on the work of Nixon and Robert MacPherson. The activities of Q Space were retrospectively examined in the mid-1980s in an exhibition at the IMA curated by Peter Cripps, *Q Space + Q Space Annex 1980 + 1981*, 7-25 October 1986. Also important were Nixon's 'Anti-Music' activities, which provided a link back to the music scene. The significant crossover between the art and music scenes at this time has been examined in two exhibitions curated by David Pestorius, *The Brisbane Sound* (IMA, 2008) and *Melbourne<>Brisbane: punk, art and after* (Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, 2010).
18. During the period of developmental research at the State Library of Queensland, I could not locate any ephemera or other documentation concerning EMU. Urszula Szulakowska describes EMU - established by Georgina Pope, Luke Roberts and Ross Wallace at 1 Logan Road Woolloongabba (1979-1980) - as 'the first artist-run space in Brisbane', although she provides little detail concerning exhibitions or other activities and does not take into consideration the variety of earlier collective studio and organisational ventures, from Miya Studio in the 1940s to activities linked to the Contemporary Art Society, such as the long-running St Mary's Studio in Kangaroo Point. Szulakowska, *Experimental Art in Queensland* (Brisbane: Queensland Studies Centre, 1998), 15. The activities of the Miya Studio were documented in *Young Turks and Battle Lines: Barjai and Miya Studio*, curated by Michele Helmrich, at the University Art Museum, The University of Queensland, 21 September-4 November 1988, and are revisited in the exhibition, also curated by Helmrich, *Barjai and Miya Studio*, UQ Art Museum, 21 April-24 July 2016. On the activities of the Contemporary Art Society, see Helen Fridemanis, *Artists and Aspects of the Contemporary Art Society, Queensland Branch* (Brisbane: Boolarong Publications, 1991).

19. In a brief summary of One Flat and its various permutations, Virginia Barratt suggests that this core group 'regarded themselves as a board of directors', although the group never operated as a legally constituted entity. Virginia Barratt, "The Politics of Space," *Queensland Artworkers Alliance Newsletter* (June/July 1988).
20. Artists involved in taking out the lease on the building were Chris Anderson, Adam Boyd, Jeanelle Hurst and Harley West; artists who subsequently took up studio space within the building included Brian Doherty and Hollie among others.
21. *Produce Art* 10-24 March 1982. The poster produced for this exhibition lists the following participants: Wendy Moss, Lyndall Milani, Hollie, Marit Hegge, Sharon O'Phee, Irena Lucas, Barbara Campbell, Linda Wallace, Christine Chance, Ted Riggs, Harley West, Adam Boyd, Adam Wolter, Gary Warner and Chris Anderson, with the project curated by Jeanelle Hurst.
22. Red Comb House and the associated grain silos were spectacularly demolished in September and October of 1984. The site is now occupied by Police Headquarters.
23. Some of artists included in One Flat's program were Hollie, Gary Warner, Jeanelle Hurst, Adam Boyd, Barbara Campbell, Ted Riggs, Kevin Boyce, Craig Patterson, the ZIP collective and Ellen Zweig. A talk was also presented by Lucy Lippard, who was in Brisbane as Visiting Scholar in Art History at The University of Queensland.
24. Urszula Szulakowska, "Brisbane Dada: Collaborative Art in a Stagnant Culture," *eyeline* no. 1 (May 1987): 14.
25. These were not strictly 'One Flat' publications, although Jeanelle Hurst was involved in both. Three issues of *Art Walk* (December 1981-January 1982, February-March 1983, and April-May 1983) were produced by an editorial collective of Hurst, Brian Doherty, and Russell Lake, while one issue of *Art Wonder Stories* was published in mid-1983 by Hurst and Bronwyn Clark-Coolee.
26. The project *InterFace: City as a Work of Art or City under Redevelopment* was the Queensland contribution to national Contemporary Art Spaces project funded as part of the Bicentennial. The artists included Murray Bent, Eugene Carchesio, Peter Callas, Lucinda Elliott, Allen Furlong, Diena Georgettti, Tim Gruchy, Zeliko Maric, Anne Pieriotti, Jane Richens, Pat Ridgewell, Peter Rohen, Jay Younger, Adam Wolter and Gary Warner.
27. This term is partly derived from the word 'cartel', but was also used in Russia from the late nineteenth century to describe an artists' collective workshop.
28. See Anderson, "The Politics of Space," 25.
29. Peter Cripps was IMA director from 1984 to 1986.
30. Riggs had served on the IMA Board and exhibitions sub-committee, and had been the architect of the 'guest curatorial program' and the important group exhibition *No Names* in May 1983, while Campbell had worked part-time as the IMA's Gallery Co-ordinator. On the appointment of a new Director, both shifted their attention to the activities of A ROOM, before moving to Sydney at the conclusion of the year.
31. Paul Andrew, from an unpublished interview by Peter Anderson (March 1987).
32. Michele Helmrich, "That's THAT, But Is That All?: THAT Contemporary Art Space 1985-1988," *eyeline* no. 5 (June 1988): 18.
33. Campbell, "Brisbane Scene," 464.
34. Barratt, "The Politics of Space."

Peter Anderson has been an independent practitioner in the fields of writing and the visual arts since the late 1970s. He has published poetry, short fiction, essays and reviews, as well as curating and producing exhibitions and performance projects. Over the past three decades, his writing and curatorial research has focused on issues in cultural policy, copyright law, artists' books, and craft and design practice, as well as alternative spaces and artist-run initiatives. During the 1980s, he was an active participant in Brisbane's artist-run scene, a board member of the Institute of Modern Art, and a founding member of the Queensland Artworkers Alliance. From 1987 to 1991, he worked as a Teaching Fellow in the School of Humanities at Griffith University, and has also taught at Queensland College of Art and Queensland University of Technology. He currently lives and works in Melbourne.

Key curatorial projects include the touring exhibition *The Artist's Books of Robert Jacks* (Bendigo Art Gallery, 2009) and *Repeat Business: Tasmanian Craft & Design* (CAST, Hobart, 2008). His catalogue essays have been published to accompany exhibitions at the National Gallery of Victoria, Craft Victoria, State Library of Victoria, Bendigo Art Gallery, Institute of Modern Art, The University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane City Gallery, Queensland College of Art Gallery, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, and various commercial and artist-run galleries.

Curator's acknowledgements

Curating *ephemeral traces* has been a long process involving both archival research and personal recollection, with many face-to-face conversations, as well as online discussion through the Facebook group 'Qld ARI Heritage 1980-2000', which now has over 450 members. The exhibition is part of a wider collective project to document and reflect on artist-run spaces and projects, and I thank all those who have been involved in this continuing activity for their contributions, comments and insights.

I am particularly indebted to the ongoing work of Paul Andrew, whose online collaborative memory archive focused on Queensland artist-run culture, www.remix.org.au has been under development alongside *ephemeral traces*. It was in conversations with Paul that I first resolved to embark on this exhibition, and I thank him for his unwavering support, friendship and collaborative spirit as our related projects have developed.

Central to the success of this exhibition has been the willingness of artists to share their memories and to review, reorganise and re-present both art works and elements from their archives: from One Flat, Jeanelle Hurst, Russell Lake and Adam Boyd; from A ROOM, Barbara Campbell, Brian Doherty and Di Heenan; from THAT Space, Paul Andrew, Dale Chapman, Jane Richens, John Waller and Jay Younger; from The Observatory, Anna Zsoldos; and from John Mills National, Virginia Barratt and Adam Boyd. Contributions from other artists involved in activities across the various spaces have also been essential, and I thank Malcolm Enright, Tim Gruchy, Barbara Heath, Ivan Nunn, and John Stafford.

The collection held by Brian Doherty and Jane Richens was the source of a number of key works as well as documentary and archival materials from several of the artist-run spaces, and I thank them for their long custodianship of this material, for their willingness to share it, and for their direct personal support for the project.

I thank Griffith University for the loan of works from their collection, particularly Michael Barnett at Griffith Artworks for his early support for the project and facilitation of these loans.

This exhibition would not have been possible without the period of developmental research I undertook in 2013 as the Siganto Foundation Research Fellow in the Australian Library of Art at the State Library of Queensland. I thank Marie Siganto of the Siganto Foundation for support provided by the Fellowship, and Helen Cole and other staff at the Library for their support of my work there. In this context, I also thank Sarah Follent, editor of *Eyeline*, for publishing an essay prepared as part of this developmental element of the project.

Further support for research and writing associated with this project was provided by a New Work grant from the Australia Council, and this support is duly acknowledged and appreciated.

As an independent writer and curator, the institutional support of The University of Queensland Art Museum has been essential to the success of this exhibition project, and I thank Campbell Gray, Director, and Michele Helmrich, Associate Director (Curatorial), and all the Museum staff for their unwavering support for the project right from the beginning. I would also like to thank Sarah Bradley, recipient of the 2015 UQ Art Museum Industry Placement Bursary, who made a substantial contribution to the development of the timeline in the exhibition. Given the mix of materials presented in this exhibition and the complexity of the hang, I would particularly like to thank the exhibition production and installation team working with Gordon Craig (Project Manager) and Brent Wilson (Production Manager): Ian Berry, Yannick Blattner, Michael Littler, Kate O'Connor and Caro Toledo. Thanks also to Evie Franzidis for editing the catalogue essay so efficiently.

The foundation of this project is the work of the artists who made Brisbane's artist-run scene during the 1980s such a vibrant and innovative one, and while it has not been possible to include work or other references to all the artists involved - at least 300 artists exhibited in artist-run spaces during this period - I hope that this exhibition provides an indicative account of artist-run activities at this time. I acknowledge the importance of all the artists who contributed to the artist-run scene then, as well as those who continue to work in this field now: thank you, this exhibition is for you.

My final note of gratitude is to my wife Jennifer Bartholomew and son Ben, who have all-too-frequently had to accompany me as I sought to untangle a past with which they have no direct connection. If the past is another country - Queensland in the 1980s appeared to be just that - I have almost certainly been away too often. Thank you for being here now, I couldn't have done this without you.

UQ Art Museum's acknowledgements

ephemeral traces: Brisbane's artist-run scene in the 1980s forms the concluding part of a suite of three exhibitions, including *Return to Sender* curated by Michele Helmrich in 2012 and *Remembering Brian and Marjorie Johnstone's Galleries* curated by Dr Nancy Underhill in 2014. Each has analysed particular conditions that existed in contemporary art practice in Queensland in the second half of the twentieth century.

The *ephemeral traces* exhibition was programmed as a counterpoint to the earlier exhibition *Return to Sender*, which featured a number of artists who left Queensland in the late 1970s and early 1980s, largely in reaction to the political and cultural milieu of the Joh Bjelke-Petersen era. *ephemeral traces* brings an important and timely focus to the Brisbane-based artists who stayed and were active in the artist-run scene between 1982 and 1988.

The UQ Art Museum sincerely thanks Peter Anderson for curating *ephemeral traces*, a process that involved both plotting the history and context of these artist-run endeavours and locating the 'ephemeral traces' that comprise this exhibition. In undertaking this project, Peter perhaps did not anticipate the scale of complexities that would unfold as his research developed. Many artists who were active in Brisbane in the 1980s have assisted both the curator in his research and the Art Museum in presenting the exhibition, and we thank them sincerely too. They have also worked collaboratively to tell their own history through Paul Andrew's online archive (www.remix.org.au) and the Facebook group 'Qld ARI Heritage 1980-2000'.

UQ Art Museum acknowledges those institutions and individuals who have assisted with loans and copyright, with special thanks to private lenders and copyright holders who have generously assisted the exhibition. We particularly thank Griffith University for loaning a number of artworks to the exhibition. We thank all members of the UQ Art Museum team who have worked towards bringing this project to fruition. We also thank Evie Franzidis for her editing, and student Sarah Bradley, the recipient of the 2015 UQ Art Museum Industry Placement Bursary, for her research that contributed to the timeline that appears in the first gallery.

Earlier in the exhibition's development, Peter Anderson was supported by a Siganto Foundation Fellowship granted by State Library of Queensland, which enabled him to conduct research in the Australian Library of Art (ALA); in particular, its important ephemera collection. ALA Librarian Helen Cole is gratefully acknowledged for her generous assistance.

The Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, awarded Peter Anderson a New Work grant, which also provided valuable support for his research and writing.

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