



## Art industry comes together in Tamworth

Art industry representatives from across the New England North West came together in Tamworth on Friday to participate in the Art as an Industry Symposium and explore new ways to foster the development of the region's art industry.

According to Jack Ritchie, Regional Arts Development Officer at Arts North West, participants embraced the opportunity to share strategies to successfully build the region's art industry and their role in it. Participants included emerging and established artists, art teachers and students, galleries and businesses.

"There was a great mix of people there, lots of discussion of art as an industry and some really good feedback. Many of the people I spoke with were moved and inspired to continue in their efforts to create art and to foster the region's art industry," he said.

"The strength of the art industry in this region has been steadily growing for some time. More and more it is contributing to the region's broader cultural and economic strength."

According to Gunnedah artist, Sabine Altmann the Symposium was very worthwhile.

"The program was really diverse and I was absolutely thrilled, as a beginning artist, to hear from others who have made their name already. I especially enjoyed Ross Laurie's presentation," she said.

Altmann believes that it is particularly important for rural communities to bring art into the public domain. She enjoys the way that public art not only adds to a community's streetscape but engages the community with art. For this reason Altmann appreciated the presentation by internationally renowned Public Art Consultant, Pamille Berg.

"Pamille Berg impressed me with her knowledge about international public art," said Ms Altmann.

"Public art is a brilliant opportunity to consider children's needs. I love the way children can touch it and climb on it. "

Like many others in Tamworth for the Symposium, Altmann enjoyed the opportunity to network with others. The Symposium provided a great opportunity for artists and art industry representatives to meet and for artists to create new linkages regionally, state-wide and nationally.

"It was great to spend a whole day with artists, researchers, galleries with an interest in marketing artists' work and with both emerging and established artists – I really enjoyed it," she said.

Participants had a rare opportunity to hear from art industry leaders including David Throsby from Macquarie University, who not only chairs the NSW Arts Advisory Committee but is recognised as Australia's leading cultural economist.

"Public Art Consultant, Pamille Berg was very inspiring about the possibilities for the development of public art in the region," said Mr Ritchie.

"The good news is that she will be back in June-July to run forums in public art policy development."

Regionally based artists, Terrence Allen, Michelle Hungerford and Ross Laurie had their audience laughing as they recounted experiences as emerging, and now internationally recognised, artists from this region while Sydney Commercial Gallery Director, Damien Minton provided valuable insights into how regionally based artists are connecting with Sydney galleries.

Emerging Tamworth artist, Libby Kellar, described the day as constructive.

"It was a great day - a lot of interesting people," she said.

"I enjoyed each of the presentations and the opportunity to see the work of other artists. Damien Minton's talk about how to approach galleries was very helpful."

Ms Kellar hopes to be involved in further Symposiums and has suggested that they provide a forum from which working groups could be set up to address specific areas.

The organisers have confirmed that this will happen in each community.

The Tamworth Symposium follows the success of the first, held in Armidale in 2005. Regionally based artist, Angus Nivison had proposed the original idea based on feedback he had received from visual artists in the region.

The next Symposium will be held later this year in Moree, followed by one in Inverell and then Quirindi early in 2008.

Partners in the project are Arts North West, Tamworth Regional Gallery, Gamilarart, the Northern Inland Regional Development Board, the New England Institute of TAFE, the Department of State and Regional Development and Tamworth Regional Council.

"For those who missed out on attending the Symposium in Tamworth, the event was filmed by students and staff of the New England Institute of TAFE Film School," said Mr Ritchie.

An edited version of their work will be available in late June.

For more information, contact Arts North West on 02 6732 4988.

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