

Two Percent Collective

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A FRESHBREEZBS ZIPPINGits way around Adelaide's West End laneways and abandoned buildings, breathing a new wave of art and creativity into this strip with its manifold contradictions of nocturnal bawdiness and apparent passivity under the cloak of daylight – heritage funk with a seedy underbelly. The same spirit of dynamism which gripped the then staid Adelaide art world in the late thirties with the rise of Ivor Hele, Ruth Tuck, Jacqueline Hick, John Dowie and Dorritt Black, is alive and well again. South Australian Living Artists (SALA)-inspired or in spite of SALA, dynamic new artists are emerging.

Firmly anchored by the nearby Roma Mitchell Arts Centre, TAFESA, UNISA design faculty, the nationally renowned Jam Factory, Samstag Museum, Higher Ground Arts Café and a host of other art-related production and exhibition spaces at the former Lion Flour Factory site, the whole precinct is jumping with the raw energy of various collectives of young and 'mentally young' emerging artists.

One such group is the Two Percent Collective. Indeed, the term 'group' is itself a case in point. Over numerous coffee sessions ZLWK ¿YH FRUH PHPEHUV 3 DW U laments suspended from its own construct of reality. Peter Drew, Riley O'Keeffe, Chloe Langford and Harry Freeman, we toss around what 'group' actually represents in this case.

Is it a 'movement' with a 'generational statement' – a loose federation of like minds? Are

the associates necessarily even of like minds? It was consensually agreed that 'the collective LV D ÀXLG ³SK\VLFD O VWUXFWXU range of artists bound in commonality only in the sense that a range of genre is accepted and celebrated'. A similar kind of mission statement appears on their website: 'We believe there is a wealth of enthusiasm and talent within the visual arts sector in Adelaide and we hope to create more emerging artists to exhibit in an environment where they feel free to experiment.'

The idea of the collective not being anchored ¿UPO\ WR D VSHFL¿F μSHUPDQH O also seen as one of its identifying strengths. Riley O'Keeffe suggests that 'the concept is midway between a bar and gallery – not just a place to view art but a place to have active dialogue about it and for artists to be able to produce work on site'. 'We can do exactly what we want and remain dynamic by not having a permanent space. The ephemeral quality is the drawcard', adds Peter Drew.

The collective has approximately twelve core members and a number of associates, who through their shared artistic, intellectual and ¿DQQLDO FDSLWDO KDYH VW D J TWO ROOMS and HALVES, in recent months. Katie Barber, Connor Tomas O'Brien, Louise Vodice, Sean Ruiz and Claire Nielson were also involved considerably in these exhibitions.

The concept of an ever evolving 'space' is obviously somewhat at variance with the White Cube Gallery concept of art being 'distilled', almost suspended from its own construct of reality. The 'White Cube concept', generally attributed to Charles Saatchi and his instrumentation in giving prominence to the YBA (Young British Artist) movement of the eighties, of which Damien Hirst and Tracy Emin were founding



members, was in itself a reaction to art's cooption by the cultural elite in the settings of grand galleries, bank board rooms and such like.

In turn, the Stuckists, led by Billy Childish and Charles Thomson, reacted against this movement, and attempted to refocus interest LQ ¿JXUDWLYH SDLQWLQJ 7KH\ SDUW Emin for her tent installation of Everyone I Have Ever Slept With (1963-1995), and introduced 7KH 5HDO 7XUQHU 3ULJH LQ GH¿DQFH saw as a new form of art world nepotism and the dominance of media savvy, entrepreneurial YBAs.

Two Percent, in tandem with other art collectives such as FELT, Paper Horse studios and Eye to Eye Gallery in Adelaide, appears to be embracing all ends of the spectrum, with all the in-built contradictions of the art world, and genuine dialogue and impressive art work inspired both collectively and individually is emerging. Indeed, the rigid ideas of 'conceptual SXULVWV¶ ZKR DWWHPSWHG WR LQ¿O dominate the group were not encouraged.

One of Two Percent's associate artists producing a range of art in social justice and anti-rampant consumerism/pro-'green' genre is Peter Drew. In the tradition of Banksy and Blek Le Rat, the 'Godfather of stencil art' before him, Drew employs stencil art as a medium, with the cycle being a symbol he uses frequently in conjunction with functional images.

Drew, who has travelled widely (belying his twenty-four years), also uses acrylic on canvas to produce stunningly colourful representational images of issues related to the environment, and the abuse of human rights in countries such as China. The Preservation of Damien Hirst (2008) is an interesting take on the artist who has so successfully challenged the boundaries between art, science, media and popular culture. Drew re-examines this, suggesting that art is only looked at in terms of 'how much it is worth', perhaps with some irony noting that artists with great commercial success sometimes become preserved in their own formula, remaining static, as opposed to meaningful art which should be ever evolving.

In Bio-Carbon Vacuum D ¿QDOLVW LQ WKH 2008 Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize), a VFLHQWL¿F GLDJUDP RI D WUHH LQ YD



of transpiration, photosynthesis and 'carbon neutralising' is presented, conjuring up images of so called 'environmental impact studies' where environmental degradation is explained away. Similarly, various events, with rampant consumption of food, alcohol and packaging along with glossy publicity in all its forms, are badged as 'carbon-neutral' by planting invisible hectares of millions of trees, presumably quite distant from sanitised urban spaces of paved courtyards and water features. Drew playfully inverts digits and symbols, making JREEOHGHJRRN RI WKH VFLHQWL¿F UHSUHVHQQWDWLRQ RI D tree. 'Science and to some extent various religions ± ³*RG JLYLQJ ODQ GRPLQLRQ RYHU WKH HDUWK' ± KDYH led us to visualise a tree or the domesticated bovine in the diagram only in terms of usefulness to human life as opposed to being an integral part of nature in their own right', he suggests.



Patrick Rees teases out the degeneration imminent in our unbridled quest for mass consumerism. In his painting *The Nuclear Power Plant Worker* (2008) he offers how it 'represents the banality of the apocalypse; the kindly face of SRWHQWLDQ DQQLKLODWLRQ for the state of the environment globally, as it has been our desire for comfort, an increasingly high standard of living and a thirst for growth in the true spirit of industrialisation, that has brought us to the current environmental precipice.'

Drew's environmental underpinning to much of his work and his use of recycled materials have parallels with exhibitions in 2007 of works by Adelaide artists – James Dodd, Bridget Currie, Louise Hasselton and Laura Wills. In her composite review of these shows, Stephanie Radok writes:

In three recent exhibitions in Adelaide local artists engaged in what I like to think of as a new kind of arte povera. Such work responds to the environmental crisis in which new materials but by recycling old stuff, sometimes garbage, and doing ingenious things with it. It is a form of art that makes poverty a virtue or at least a principled stand. It is also about resisting consumerism, taking a stand, activism and culture jamming.¹

Artists involved in this circle have also organised gatherings in abandoned buildings by SMS where visual and performing artists collaborate. Bridget Currie, who swore a 'vow of poverty', has at times used discarded garments from such gatherings in creating new art.

With so many art collectives of real dynamism and talent abounding, and cafes

VXFK DV 127 &RIIHH 'UDJRQÀ\ DQG 7L actively displaying and encouraging 'live' art interactive events, the direction of Adelaide art seems positive, and positively aware, against the backdrop of world recession. W VHHPV D ¿WWLQJ PHWDSKRU Notes:

1. Stephanie Radok, *Artlink*, 'screen deep' issue, Vol. 27, No.3, *Artlink Australia*, Adelaide, 2007, p. 95; in a composite review of exhibitions by Laura Wills, parkside nomadic group moves inland 4 winter; Louise Hasselton and Bridget Currie, *Years without Magic*; and James Dodd, *Speakeasy*.

The next exhibition by Two Percent Collective is *BIG*, a one-night only visual arts and performance exhibition in collaboration with Forum, 3 June, Queens Theatre, Adelaide, 6pm to 12am: www.twopercentcollective.com

Dennis Coleman is an Adelaide-based lecturer and freelance performing/visual arts writer for a number of local and international publications.

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: *The Preservation of Damien Hirst*, 2008, acrylic on canvas; BELOW: *Bio-Carbon Vacuum*, 2008, acrylic on canvas; THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: *The Monkey On Our Back*, 2008, acrylic on canvas; *Jerry Can Series*, 2008, oil on jerry cans; untitled street art, Grenfell St, Adelaide; *The Yuan Shall Inherit the Earth*, 2008, acrylic on canvas. All images are of work by Peter Drew. All images courtesy the artist.

