

Platform Papers

Currency House's quarterly essay series

Katharine Brisbane, Currency House

A viable argument for government support', is how David Uren, economics writer for the Australian newspaper (20 July 2006), described the July issue of 'Platform Papers', Currency House's quarterly essay series on politics and the performing arts. He was writing about Stuart Cunningham's *What Price a Creative Economy?*, the publication of which celebrated the beginning of the series' third year.

'Most artists think of themselves as providing a public good that brings benefits to society above and beyond the dollars that people may pay to enjoy it. This sets up a cycle of disappointment with artists constantly let down by inadequate government support while governments seek more tangible justifications for dispensing taxpayers' money,' writes Uren, and points to Cunningham's claim that if the arts were folded into a larger sector which he terms the creative industries, then the arts could become leaders in a new creative economy.

This kind of search for renewal lies behind the work of Currency House Inc. that is

a non-profit association of concerned practitioners and researchers, whose aim is to assert the value of the performing arts by research, debate and publication. Currency House is a philanthropic associate of the arts publisher Currency Press Pty Ltd. Platform Papers has the brief to define an issue, examine its causes, to think laterally and seek a way forward. Publication is usually accompanied by discussion events and speaking engagements at which the issues may be debated.

The series was launched in July 2004 with radio producer and writer Martin Harrison's *Our ABC a Dying Culture?* a discussion paper raising concern at the political pressure increasingly placed on the ABC and its declining capacity to fulfil its charter. It was followed by *Survival of the Fittest, The artist versus the corporate world*, by violinist Chris Latham, an account of the way independent musicians and performers are employing the new digital technology. Then came *Trapped by the Past: why our theatre is facing paralysis*, by Julian Meyrick, Associate Director of the Melbourne Theatre Company. He

traces the rise of the subsidised theatre and shows how a movement that began in revolution has built itself into a conservative hierarchy.

Celebrated Singer and Festival Director Robyn Archer, in *The Myth of the Mainstream, politics and the performing arts in Australia*, identifies the way intellectual challenge has given way to entertainment in public life and calls for a return to public curiosity and debate. Veteran filmmaker Storry Walton in *Shooting Through: Australian film and the brain drain*, proposes a way to rebuild a viable industry by providing incentives for filmmakers working abroad to return as mentors.

Realtime Editor and Critic Keith Gallasch in *Art in a Cold Climate: Rethinking the Australia Council*, inveighs against the devolution of the new media and community development boards. And in the most wide-ranging of the essays, the eminent cultural economist David Throsby, in *Does Australia Need a Cultural Policy*, draws attention to the rapid changes in our ethnic mix, our social and religious allegiances and our mobility and shows how documenting our shared values could benefit our social, economic and foreign policy.

April saw the publication of Dr Amanda Card's *Body for Hire? The state of dance in Australia*, which argues that changing work methods now require a more democratic, collaborative consortium than the structure in which the ballet and dance companies are now confined. And Stuart Cunningham in July questioned the whole culture of the arts by showing the way to a new, more sustainable future as part of the new creative industries that are changing the economies of the UK, China, Korea and Singapore.

'Platform Papers' is a radical series but not an iconoclastic one, written for the general reader and aimed at revealing ways to renew systems and open debate on outdated policy. Most attention-getting so far has been David Throsby's paper, which was launched in Sydney by Cate Blanchett, concerned by the erosion she saw of Australian culture by global forces.

Being designed to encourage debate, 'Platform Papers' invites considered responses to the essays, which are published in the following issue. The essays also offer practical guidance to students embarking on a career. They outline the changes taking place in employment opportunities - in contemporary music, theatre and dance, and suggest ways into an increasingly restricted market. The Editors are pleased that the essays are growing in influence among the decision-makers in cultural and communication policy. State and federal ministries are now subscribers, as are the Australia Council and professional associations.

The series is distributed by UniReps, along with those of Currency Press. 'Platform Papers' is also available by subscription. Details of their publications and other activities are available on their website, www.currencyhouse.org.au.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS
BUSINESS RELOCATIONS

Making all the right moves

**Specialists in
Library/Archive Relocations**

Movers and Shakers are an independently owned national relocation company with a professional advisory planning strategy service for library relocations.

Using state-of-the-art extruded plastic relocation trolleys which are:

- fully enclosed
- weather-proof for external relocations
- fitted with adjustable shelves to suit all size materials.

1300 136 681

• Adelaide • Brisbane • Canberra • Melbourne •
• Newcastle • Perth • Sydney •

MOVERS SHAKERS
BUSINESS RELOCATIONS

www.moversandshakers.com.au