

From: omegadecarts

Sent: Thursday, 8 December 2011 12:13 PM

To: Committees

Subject: Inquiry into the future use of the Fitters' Workshop in the Kingston Arts Precinct

**ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry
into the future use of the Fitters' Workshop in the Kingston Arts Precinct**

SUBMISSION FROM MICHAEL COGHLAN

My reasons for making a submission to the Committee are that I have been a collector of decorative arts and works on paper for over 30 years and my daughter is a printmaker and was an artist in residence at Megalo several years ago. I am a Canberra citizen and rate payer of 40 years standing and I am interested in all developments to do with the arts and crafts. I have no formal qualifications in art whatever.

I have always marvelled at how Megalo has survived over more than 30 years to provide facilities in an area where for the most part artists cannot create without access to expensive and cumbersome print facilities of one kind or another. My own daughter has a fine arts degree and her only way of continuing her art has been access to Megalo. It has been a life saver for her and many young artists like her. It has residencies, exhibitions and gives great encouragement to young artists in every way possible. It is an institution that has survived when many others have failed and it has had a major role in Canberra in promoting printmaking and ensuring excellence in the culture.

Printmaking is I think as an incredibly important adjunct to the visual arts. It is also a medium of art in its own right. My daughter is a print maker simply because she prefers to express herself through her art by using the print medium. She often does one off prints that are unique without multiple copies. Practically all famous artists of the twentieth and twenty first centuries whether Australian or not have completed a body of work using the print medium. This has meant their art is available to a very wide section of the world community. It has increased the dissemination of art and made it possible for people with modest incomes to own works of art. I make this general point as it is important to realise that Megalo provides an important role not only as a precinct for artists but as an important adjunct to the visual arts.

Megalo Print Studio has been a great survivor and had fought hard for a central prestige locality where the work of its artists can be observed and where the commercial opportunities are significantly better. Watson is not an ideal location and Megalo will be soon required to pay commercial rent which will seriously erode their activities. The decision of the Government to allocate the Fitters Workshop was logical and an absolute god send to Megalo.

According to Vicki Dunn (Canberra Times 7 Dec) because the Fitters workshop has unique acoustic qualities that requires the complete re- consideration of what was a great decision for Canberra in the first place. My understanding is that Peter Sculthorpe has since clarified his comment on the acoustics and is saying it has great "resonant" acoustic qualities and adding "not all people like resonant". This probably means the acoustics are ideal for choral and chamber music. Whatever the acoustics are like I doubt seriously if they could be better than say St Christopher's Manuka and the many purpose built auditoriums and public buildings available for Choral and Chamber music in Canberra. Do these musicians have to have the Fitters workshop as well, thus denying Megalo, a great surviving institution, a permanent home after more than 30 years of struggling survival?

It was an exciting prospect having an integrated art centre at Kingston where people can both make and look at art not only glass art but the art of printmaking. The techniques of printmaking are fascinating and include woodcut, lithography, silk screen printing mezzotint and aquatint. The Fitters Workshop is a wonderful structure to facilitate printmaking by professional artists and for teaching and inspiring the wonder of the print as a medium of art. As in the Glassworks, visitors could watch the drama of the printmaking techniques as demonstrated by some of Australia's top printmakers. It would provide a gallery for the sale of works on paper in a central locality where art glass is produced and sold and at weekend's the crafts and collectables market is in full flight. The Bus Depot, Glass House and Fitters Workshop would be a unique centre of arts and crafts with an ambience matched nowhere else in Australia and make a big contribution to attracting visitors to the national capital.

I do not understand how the musician's submission could hijack such a great initiative. Even if the acoustic qualities of the Workshop are exceptional I do not believe that is a good reason to jettison a wonderful concept which would help to put Canberra on the map of must destinations not only for art lovers but tourists of all persuasions. The use of the Fitters Workshop as an auditorium for music would dilute the concept of a visual arts and craft centre which has been an aim of the Government since 2003.

I strongly support the original decision of the Government to allocate the Fitters Workshop to Megalo and maintain the integrity of a visual arts complex on the Kingston foreshore.

MICHAEL COGHLAN