

"WHAT POLITICS DESTROYS, IT FIRST SUBSIDISES"

GOLDEN MILE ART EXHIBITION GROUP

OFFICIAL OPENING OF EXHIBITION NOVEMBER 18, 1994

BY RON MANNERS, PATRON

For over 20 years I have been involved in a very small way with a University based in Hillsdale, Michigan USA.

Hillsdale is only one quarter the size of Kalgoorlie, but Hillsdale College has become famous throughout the USA and in other parts of the world for two main reasons :

- Their high standards
- The fact that they refuse to accept any government funding.

Hillsdale College recognised years ago that what politics destroys, it first subsidises.

By refusing to take taxpayers' money from the government, Hillsdale has been able to set their standards higher than the minimum standards set by government regulations. This shows in the quality of their teaching staff and their students and the fact that employers are prepared to pay a salary premium for Hillsdale Graduates.

I only tell that story as a way of buying into the vigorous debate raging in Australia over Government funding for "the arts". On one side we have a clamoring mass of so-called artists who have no confidence in their own ability to produce something that the public wants. These people use pressure group tactics to feed at the public trough.

On the other side, is a growing group who feel uneasy at the similarities between our politicians buying votes with other people's money, and the brainwashing antics of history's many other pompous rulers who thought they could control the people by controlling the arts.

Adolph Hitler was "big" on opening art exhibitions and one of his henchmen, Joseph Goebbels explained why, in these words, when addressing the 1937 Joint Congress of the Reich Chamber of Culture and Strength Through Joy, just a few years before starting World War II.

"The German artist has his feet on a solid, vital ground. Art, taken out of its narrow and isolated circle, again stands in the midst of the people and from there exerts its strong influences on the whole nation.. To be sure, the political leadership has interfered in this, and today it still interferes daily and directly. But this occurs in a way that can only work to the benefit of the German artist: through subsidy, the commission of works, and a patronage of the Arts, whose generosity is unique in the whole world.

... Germany marches ahead of all other countries not only in art but also in the care which it showers upon artists.... The German artist of today feels himself freer and more untrammelled than ever before. With joy he serves the people

and the state, who have accepted him and his cause in such a warmhearted and understanding way. National socialism has wholly won over German creative artists. They belong to us and we to them".

The term "Government Grant" itself, is a misnomer as the government has no money of its own, they only have money that has been taken, by force, from the taxpayers, so we should more accurately use the term "Taxpayer Grant".

Such government funding, by throwing taxpayers' money at the Arts, will destroy our real art in much the same way as it is destroying our educational standards,

As John Lennon said;

"Everything the Government touches, turns brown"

So where are these comments leading us? They lead me to suggest two things:

- The Australia Council for the Arts describes one of its functions as "shaping Australia's cultural identity".

Ladies & gentlemen, what is "our cultural identity"? Who has the right to "shape" it?

What I suggest is that the Golden Mile Art Exhibition Group doesn't need to have its "cultural identity" reshaped. The works that you see on these walls illustrate your high level of self-esteem. It's high enough to project a "cultural identity" of its own.

- I also suggest that the Golden Mile Art Exhibition Group could become famous throughout Australia (in a similar fashion to Hillsdale College), by simply "sending back" the next Taxpayer Grant it receives, with a note, saying "Please give this money back to the long-suffering taxpayers".

Question the morality of the politicians and the bureaucrats giving you the taxpayers' money, remind them that it is simply *not theirs to give*.

Point out to the bureaucracy that the tax-dollars they took from our neighbors' pocket was to the detriment of our neighbors' standard of living. Remind them that, these dollars, left in the hands of our neighbors could have helped to provide employment opportunities and even explain to them that unemployment is a greater problem for Australia than funding unpopular Art.

Our art, produced by the Golden Mile Art exhibition Group is not unpopular so it does not need a taxpayer subsidy.

You receive support from voluntary contributions and voluntary purchases and you have enough confidence in your own ability to maintain this support and in so doing, retain your own pride and dignity.

Can you imagine the Australia wide publicity you would receive by sending the taxpayers' money back unspent?

You can't buy that sort of publicity, but if you could, I suggest that it would be worth several times the value of the taxpayer's grant itself.

Australia still loves an independent battler and a bold move from your group would bring tremendous support for your activities.

Such a bold move would take courage but the rewards would be worthwhile.

You should be ready with a colored catalog for sale to all those who respond to that publicity.

What sort of support would be forthcoming? There are many admirers of the work of your group and this week I was speaking to the Goldfields Mining Expo Executive and they are delighted that you are planning an exhibition to coincide with the 1995 Expo. For a start they have guaranteed the purchase of between \$2,000 and \$3,000 value in paintings, but more importantly they would like to publicise your exhibit in their publicity material, being distributed world-wide.

This is good for them too as it helps to overcome the image of our Goldfields being "one dimensional". (i.e. business without a soul).

This is also an appropriate moment to congratulate the group and the individual members whose works were recently acquired by the Holmes a Court Collection.

Ladies & gentlemen, as with all investments, the time to buy is just before the price goes up and the rate at which this Group's fame is spreading, the time to buy is now, so get hold of those red stickers and quickly put them on the paintings of your choice.