

The ARI Experience

artist-run initiatives in Australia and Denmark

BLINDSIDE | 10th Anniversary

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BLINDSIDE is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Founded in 2004 by four artists originally from Brisbane – Renai Grace, Pip Haydon, Simon Koger and Christine Morrow – the final exhibition for 2014, [Curtain Call: the Rough End of the Pineapple](#), celebrates this primal and it seems ongoing connection with the Sunshine State. Celebrating and exploring these many connections between north and south, the exhibition includes the work of six former Queenslanders – now living in Melbourne – **Xanthe Dobbie, Troy Emery, Simone Hine, Ted McKinlay, Melanie Upton and Tim Woodward.**



— Ted McKinlay, Curtain Call 2014.

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The curators, Robert Heather and V acknowledge that the original BLIND “parochial”. Perhaps this says some considered a cultural desert, “a city quipped), or simply ‘the ‘deep north’ done with no wincing or dodging. Or sense of pride, humour and straightf explore their own journeys south and

“...it is apparent that from the outset north of the Tweed River to showcase exhibition and projects. This special It asks the question whether their upbringing and experience of Queensland has had any effect upon their identity and artistic practice.”

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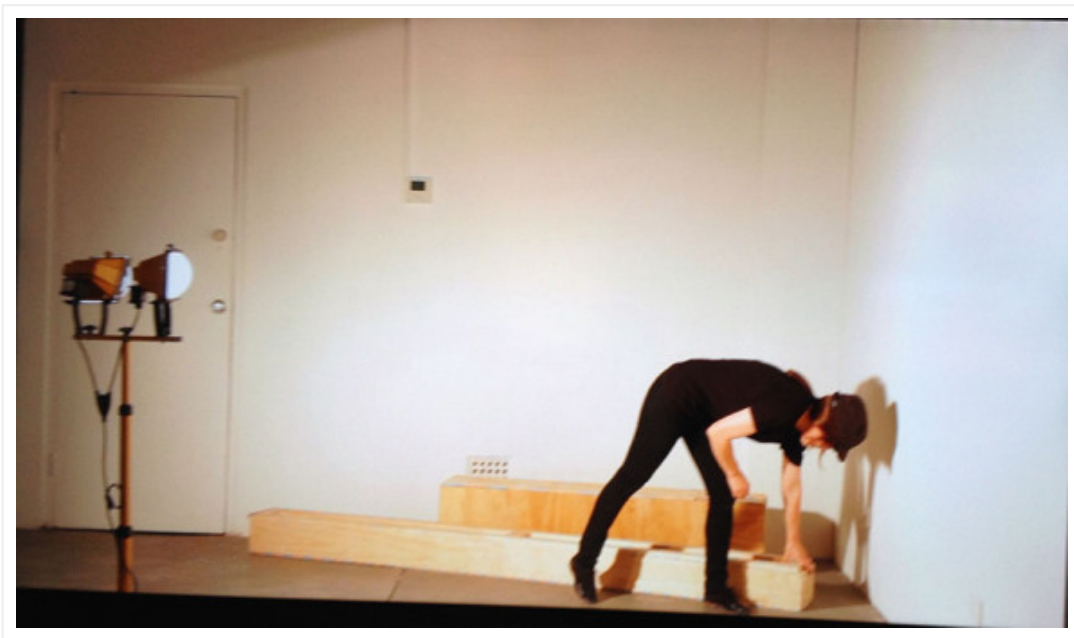
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— Melanie Upton, Vague Terrain: Things Calling (detail from installation), 2014, timber, plaster

In conjunction with the exhibition, BLINDSIDE held a public forum last Saturday afternoon. The discussion focussed on the relations and cultural connections between Brisbane and Melbourne, with participants exchanging lots of stories about former ARIs and artists, both in Brisbane and Melbourne, as well as a general discussion about the role of ARIs over the last few decades. The main participants on the panel included Andrew Tetzlaff (Moderator), although not from Queensland, Robert Heather (Co-Curator), Peter Anderson (Independent Arts writer and curator) and Ted McKinlay, a participating artist.

Leaving your home, whether it's exile from your country or simply moving to another State seeking opportunities, or to change your circumstances, always involves adjustment, excitement and anxiety. And feeling unfamiliar or outside of things, people gravitate to who they may know or recognise, perhaps through word of mouth, friends or family. Foreign migrants and refugees are well-known for gathering together in one suburb or area, creating coffee shops or other places to meet and exchange information. It's rarely that we see so clearly an art space as a place where interstate 'foreigners' find each other and support each other. Yet this of course makes sense, as ARIs have the potential to be more than simply places of professional development. They can also be places where 'communities' of artists gather, and as Dan Rule puts it so succinctly in his contributing essay, *Making Talking Doing: A Possible Archaeology of the Australian ARI*, "the artist led organisation's real potency and value comes down to something far less immediately tangible or quantifiable. Community may be something of a hackneyed term, but it's also a notion that has been central to the history of art making...that being the simple act of artists hanging out and seeing one another's shows."



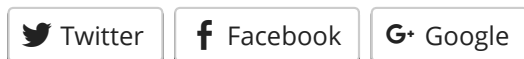
— Simone Hine, *Curtain Call* 2014

Accompanying the exhibition and public forum BLINDSIDE has produced a very smart and well-designed publication, *To the Left and Back Some*, with short essays from a number of current and former BLINDSIDE participants. It contains a wealth of information on BLINDSIDE's history and many achievements, with lots of fascinating photos documenting the many art projects and events over the last decade. There's also a sizeable part of the publication devoted to essays describing BLINDSIDE Projects. The Projects are an important and innovative part of BLINDSIDE's programming, creating a unique approach which ensures experimental and marginal practices space and time within the overall programming. The Projects act as platforms for artists and curators to focus, and give BLINDSIDE its unique identity and place in Melbourne's complex arts ecology. In broad strokes, the Projects include: *Debut*, which is intended to "provide a link for young artists between university and the 'art world'; *Curtain Call* which is an encore

performance by previously exhibited artists; *Showstoppers* is devoted to performance, in all its forms; *Sound Series* acts as a “creative lab” focused on sound, in all its permutations; *Screen Series*, is focused on film and video art; and *SummerStudio* transforms the gallery space into a studio residency; *Play* is the online website featuring single channel video, and lastly *BLINDSIDE Festival*, a biennial multi platform event.

Near the end of the catalogue, Jane O’Neill reminds us that the term ‘blind side’ “refers to a hit or attack on someone without their realising – this is their ‘blind side’. On my own visits to Blindsight over the last couple of years, it has often delivered just such a ‘hit’ – with art projects that surprise, delight and engage the senses with provocative ideas and sometimes even attacking my blindside.

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