

CI 879 Centre for Contemporary Photography



**ALRC NATIONAL CLASSIFICATION REVIEW**

**SUBMISSION**

**CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY**

Prepared by

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7 July 2011

## **Centre for Contemporary Photography (CCP)**

### **1. Background**

Dedicated to the exhibition of contemporary photo-based arts, CCP was established by the photographic community in 1986 as a not-for-profit gallery, resource and education centre. A small organisation with 5. EFT staff, CCP exhibits a large quantity of images on an annual basis. In 2010 CCP exhibited 371 artists, across 29 discrete exhibitions both onsite and touring; CCP received 611 paid members; CCP website received 103,163 visits and 3,487 Facebook fans.

CCP receives funding from the Federal Government through the Australia Council and from Victorian Government through Arts Victoria. As a Key Organisation of the Australia Council, CCP is also a member of Contemporary Arts Organisations or CAOS. Entry to the CCP galleries is always free, encouraging visits from broad

sections of the community.

As one of Australia's longstanding and key organisations focussed on the exhibition, teaching and development of photo-based arts, we welcome this opportunity to contribute to the Australian Law Reform Commission's Review of the National Classification Scheme. In this submission we speak purely from experience.

## **2. Current practice: exhibiting still and moving photo-media**

CCP exhibits still and moving images, primarily in the gallery and to a lesser extent on our website [www.ccp.org.au](http://www.ccp.org.au) and in small-run published exhibition catalogues. In this context moving images are 'art videos' and tend to be of short duration and designed to be viewed standing in a gallery space. CCP has between 4 and 5 discrete galleries and our Night Projection Window which exhibits either a) silent, still images in a slideshow format or b) silent moving image, on the exterior of the building, visible from the street and adjacent buildings after sunset 365 days per year.

Exhibitions arise through two modes: proposals submitted to CCP and exhibitions we generate as curators. Since the Australia Council's requirement concerning *Protocols for working with children in art* CCP curators view all moving image work before being exhibited and if either still or moving images depicts naked children the artist is asked to sign a statement as required by the Protocol.

To the best of our knowledge and research, CCP has never been the subject of legal or informal complaint about the classification or appropriateness of content.

To the best of our knowledge and research CCP has not only never exhibited explicit images of naked children, but such images have not been proposed to CCP for exhibition. This is perhaps surprising given that on an annual basis CCP holds the largest open entry annual photography competition and exhibition in Australia, now in its 19th year.

CCP is a controlled or curated environment and a destination where people choose to visit, with the intention of viewing contemporary photo-media. CCP is well respected as provider of schools education, programs for youth at risk and adult workshops. We do not seek offensive work and nor is this what our audiences expect. We are responsible and responsive to the needs of this 'meeting place' between contemporary art and audiences. All work exhibited is done so in a

particular context with an artist statement and often with extended information in the form of printed and on line catalogues, artist floor talks, seminars and lectures.

### **3. Self-regulation: working well**

Contemporary art spaces understand that we exist within a complex web of social mores and legal responsibilities. Currently this is not a burden for contemporary artists or art spaces. We abide by the Protocols determined by the Australia Council.

In September this year we will be exhibiting work containing full frontal adult nudity as part of a major exhibition on surveillance. The following warning: *Full-frontal nudity, adult concepts; Under 16s must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian* will be positioned at the following points:

- In advanced publicity (Melbourne International Arts Festival booklet);
- At CCP front desk;
- CCP website;
- At the entrance to galleries where such material will be exhibited,

thus enabling visitors to make an informed choice and easily avoided the material if they wish to do so.

### **4. Significance of artist generated images in contemporary art spaces**

Given the ubiquity of still and moving images in public and private domains—where images are largely in the service of the marketplace, such as news media or advertising—it is extremely important that contemporary art spaces exhibit images that are independent from such constraints and demands.

It is vital within a democratic society that individuals can make informed decisions to view images exhibited in a contemporary art space, images that freely expand, challenge or critique current ideas and practice.

It is important that image makers are able to exhibit their work in curated, supportive environments; where work can be engaged with by broad audiences and conversely that the public are free to encounter such images in a specialised context, at no cost and supported by text panels, catalogues, education programs and on line resources.

### **5. Improving the current self-regulatory framework**

We would welcome some form of guidelines within a self-regulatory framework, to guide our very occasional warnings. This would bring some uniformity across the sector benefitting all stakeholders: artists, contemporary art spaces and visitors.

#### **6. Problems associated with external classification**

Apart from the inherent threat to freedom of expression resulting from subjecting contemporary art spaces to a formal classification scheme and external classifiers, we believe that the administrative and financial burden that imposing such a scheme would place an enormous strain on the sector, one that already struggles with limited financial and personnel resources. Further, submission of images in advance to a classifying body would be very difficult given our limited resources, those of artists and the tight timeframes under which we both work.