Site specificity: a critical context for Tasmanian art in public buildings

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This year, 2005, marks the 25th anniversary of Tasmania’s Art for Public Buildings Scheme (APBS). Over the past few months, with the cooperation of the staff at arts@work in Hobart, I’ve had the chance to spend a little time amongst the accumulation of files and folders that is the APBS archives. My aim was to draw together an institutional history of the Scheme, for the book, Claiming Ground, a celebration of that first quarter-century. Some files bulged with drawings and artists’ statements and considerable correspondence – others held not much more than the initial advice to stakeholders, a contract and a handover certificate. Inevitably my eye for the arcane and the individual took over and I found myself fleshing out a sub-text for personalities, the gaps between official documents, and the ballpoint scrawls on the bottom of reports and the paper scraps of phone messages. To understand the real benefits of the Scheme I needed to enter that space inhabited by the administrators and facilitators, the stakeholders and, most importantly, the artists and their publics.

I had initially attempted to look at only two levels of the APBS engagement with what I could analogously call its site: the writing brief was a confine in itself. Firstly, there was the view across the closed landscape of the institutions, such as government instrumentalities that administered and facilitated the scheme; and secondly, the Scheme’s perspective on what surrounded it. There I was hoping to find the artists behind the ‘art’ and the public behind the ‘public buildings’ but, in fact, I located the stakeholders – architects, government officials, and the clients – librarians, head teachers, hospital administrators and the like. It was all rather dry. There were yawning gaps in the record: clearly the more revealing conversations had taken place in corridors and, in the case of the APBS, out on site somewhere, rather than in Ministerial and sub-Ministerial correspondence. These most important and influential
discussions and activities had usually gone unrecorded – although some, I later discovered, are alive and well in Tasmanian arts folklore.

With most of the dates in place and a pile of adminstrivia to refer to, I looked back to the works selected, commissioned, purchased and sited under the auspices of the APBS. Early guidelines for the Scheme stated that, ‘The aims of the selection procedures are to provide artwork appropriate to the building, its surrounds, the community, the building’s usage and provide the public with examples of exciting contemporary art.’ (APBS archive) Revisions of selection procedures and site management issues filled the files, and there is even an intimation of the community and the public who might access – or should that be, presented with? – the work.

**TEXT SITES**

What had informed the creation of the APBS guidelines? Interesting things happened when I moved between the files of the APBS and some of the critical texts I’d previously used when considering the placement of art in public spaces. Four pieces of writing in particular – by Miwon Kwon (2002), Paul Carter (2001/2004) and David Harding (1997) – provided some sort of resonance for me to work from. Fragments from these texts helped to identify and complexify the artist/site-specific relationship that I found was present only ephemerally, by reading through (rather than across) documentation in the APBS files.

Kwon (2002) provided me with a number of small moments of insight in a survey of site specificity in art since the 1960s. There was the community/artist/site collaboration, mapped as communities of ‘mythic unities’, ‘temporary invented communities’, ‘ongoing invented communities’, and ‘“sited” communities’: all these, as Kwon, observes ‘defines a different role for the artist’ in relation to some sort of specific site whose understanding was held or created by a community. (Kwon 2002:7) Kwon steps back to states that:

> the actuality of a location (as site) and the social conditions of the institutional frame (as site) are both subordinate to a **discursively** determined site that is delineated as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate. Furthermore this site is not defined as a **pre**condition. Rather, it is generated by the work (often as “content”), and then verified by its convergence with an existing discursive formation. (2002:26)

In this Kwon recognises that along with the spatial expansion of art – out of the gallery into hospitals, onto pavements, around schools (which has been the APBS brief) – there has
been over the past two decades, a parallel expansion of sites of knowledges on which art might draw to emphasise the site specificity of a work: for example, local histories informing artworks for community centres, natural sciences generating art works for classrooms. However, Kwon tacitly recognises how artists work, that is, from art to discourse, not the other way around; and how the public encounter with that art might be characterised. The final demonstration of an artist’s successful relationship with a site, then, would be when the artwork verifies what is already accepted in another realm of knowledge or discursive space – and that might be shared childhood experiences of fishing as well as a natural history of a nearby estuary, beach or river: each instance validates in some way the existence of the other, to its audience, though an artwork.

Kwon argues, rather persuasively in the USA context, that the notion of art being ‘site-specific’ has, since the 1980s, given way gradually to ideas of issue-specific and community-specific art. (Kwon 2002:113). Of course, if the site is simply a discursive one then that is probably a fair call – but I don’t see that ‘site’ as a ‘concrete physical location’ necessarily precludes taking up ‘site’ as a discursive space. Ideally, the APBS, as a curated collection of permanent artworks developed in close, precisely defined physical sites through consultative processes should allow a complex idea of site specificity to remain in action.

In his 2001 catalogue essay for Hossein Valamanesh at the Art Gallery of South Australia, Paul Carter makes the usual observation that the idea of public art needs redefinition, and goes on to maintain that:

    the terrain of the Australian public artwork is so often assumed to be ideologically neutral, offering a kind of museum without walls. The artist who undertakes a public artwork engages, first of all, with this prior evacuation of historical association. Sites offered for public artworks are those that architects and their clients perceive to be of minimum visual interest. They are joins in the larger site or overlooked angles. Any intervention in these areas already risks compromising the artworks. (Carter 2001:38)

Carter’s placing of public artwork seems to come inevitably after architecture, after the conceptualising – even constructing – of the physical site, and without any concession that an architect may deliberately and creatively include artwork within their design. I’m not talking about the ‘How about a water feature here?’ sort of designing, but a collaborative project with, at the very least, an artist, an aesthetic and a general theme in the architect’s
eye and mind before the project progresses too far. This is a big call, I admit, and the APBS files are full of examples of difficulties in liaising with stakeholders and their architects and contractors early in the project. A close reading of Carter’s last sentence is possibly revealing of the writer/artist/ collaborator himself – the idea that artwork is at risk of being compromised: although Carter wants art privileged in its relationship with architecture, it seems he also revels in the creative challenge of the site with ‘minimum visual interest’.

Carter’s Material thinking (2004) may seem an odd inclusion here but again, he is dealing with ways of negotiating discursive spaces, suggesting that, ‘As it moves between studio and society, the work of art proposes a social relation; it doesn’t invent a new sign for an already familiar concept.’ (2004:7) He sees the work that is art as a ‘method of materialising ideas’. The juxtaposition of social relation and materialised idea activates a similar model to that proposed by Kwon.

David Harding (1997) threw another perspective into the research by his emphasis on ‘placement’ in terms of public art. Although applicable to non-site-specific art, ‘placement’ equally does not imply so-called ‘plonk art’, rather it is about the process of siting. Harding’s very specific address to ‘public art’ also became a pertinent reminder of the core purpose of the APBS, to facilitate art FOR public buildings, that is, artworks ‘appropriate to the building, its surrounds, the community, the building’s usage’ (APBS archives) Placement, again, can be understood in terms of a destination for the work, this time an ‘appropriate’ siting: this is an important element to consider in the APBS practice given that not all work purchased by the Scheme has been designed for the site in which it is placed, and yet it must be reflective of the discursive space for which it is destined.

A number of other writers provided texts that informed this research, the processes of identifying any lack or ambiguity in the specificity of physical or discursive sites, and of actually organising information that allowed site identification. These writers included Harriet Senie’s Contemporary public sculpture: tradition, transformation, and controversy (1992) – a complex yet concise reading of the modern tradition in American ‘public sculpture’, the latter term used in the widest possible sense, from Tilted arc to bus shelter signage. Nick Kaye (2000) provided a truly exciting analysis of the themes of space, materials, sites and frames applied to the conjunction of architectural space and performance, and the antecedents of today's installation and performance art; and Mark Hutchinson (2002) presented an investigation of the denial of art’s potential by the very ideologies, economics and
technologies that drive it something of an echo of Carter (2001/2004). Hutchinson raises important issues regarding what he terms the ‘authoritarian logic’ of art put into public places, in stating the ‘idea of public art effecting change is not about art changing itself or its relationships with its publics’ and suggesting the alternative of what he terms a transformative practice, ‘public art that potentially transforms itself; transforms its publics; allows itself to be transformed by its publics and allows these relationships and definitions to be transformed’ (2002, 438)

Against these texts can be set WJT Mitchell’s 1990 collection on *Art and the public sphere* and Habermas’s muscular yet elegant investigation of the public sphere as a category or, in a more performative sense, a site of social being, which must surely also encompass Hutchinson’s radically open address to agency. (Habermas, 1989/1962)

Of course, no room here to mention Lucy Lippard and the swards of people who work with ideas of place-making (particularly in the context of CCD) mainly because I feel, in terms of the APBS brief, that particular discourse goes against their responsibility to the public and the community, in that under the conditions of place-making the work may come to stand for what Kwon terms a ‘permanent invented community’ – and there’s not the space here to pursue this concept.

**STRUCTURED SITES**

In the APBS archives, the documentation of individual projects carried some indication of both the locative and discursive sites of art for public buildings, providing you could read between the lines, however what was most consistently evident was the structure that defined and enabled the collaborations that developed the APBS collection.

The Tasmanian Art for Public Buildings Scheme was launched in June 1979, when Ministerial approval was given for the establishment of the Tasmanian Art for Public Buildings Scheme under the umbrella of the Tasmania Arts Advisory Board. In the early years, between 1979 and the first review in 1983, the Scheme operated on percent-for-art allocation of 1% per project with a ceiling cost of $10,000. In the period to the second review in 1993, the Scheme continued to operate at 1% with the per cent project ceiling was raised to $20,000 in 1988. In 1994 private consultants were introduced to administer the Scheme, which was reviewed in 1995 and again in 2000, in light of an increase in the percent-for-art
allocation to 2% per project with a ceiling cost of $40,000. In September 2001 the APBS was transferred to arts@work through Arts Tasmania. It has just been announced (August 2005) that the ceiling cost per project will be doubled for the following two years.

The Scheme has moved from its earliest, somewhat hagiographic, commissionings through a series of shifts that reflected changing social and political conditions in rural and urban Tasmania, in the State generally, and in the broader national and international scenes. These shifts impacted on both the conditions of production and commissioning of works. As the demographic of selected artists changed over the twenty-five years of the Scheme, so did the range of materials and sites accepted as art for public buildings, with a clear rejection of the split between ‘art’ and ‘craft’ that was evident in the early documentation of the Scheme.

As a percent for art scheme the notion that art in sites accessed by members of the public or by specific communities or community groups was, as Hutchinson puts it, ‘an article of faith that art should be, and is, more democratic and accessible when placed in the public sphere.’ (2002, 430)

DISCOURSE SITES

Four projects have been selected to reveal something of the discursive ground ‘claimed’ by the APBS artists in collaboration with communities, publics, stakeholders and project facilitators: David Hamilton’s Rack (1988); Penny Mason’s and David Marsden’s Light of our time (1991); Wayne Hudson’s Snake seats, 1993 Taroona High School; and Christl Berg’s Finds #30-51 (2002).

These projects represent many aspects of the APBS collection, not just through the range of media but also through the commissioning and project management processes. Against these historical moments can be placed the individual ways of working of the artists, and the professional responsibilities these artists must take to be part of a successful APBS project. I am dealing with them chronologically here – not because I am a supporter of a linear model of a critical art history (far from it) but because this most closely mirrors the institutional structure, set out above, that inevitably governs the writing of a history of an organization such as the APBS. Knowing and working with all the artists involved also became very useful when it came to reading the available documentation of the projects.
David Hamilton’s *Rack* (1988) is a copper plated steel and wood sculpture installed at the Tasman Region Community Library for the project client, the State Library of Tasmania. This project was undertaken when the APBS had really reached its first threshold of organisation maturity, with most facilitating structures in place. The project was delayed by at least two years by a review of the client department but eventually got underway on a green field site.

The architect described the project as:

> a new building in a large landscaped area. It will be the Civic Centre for the area, housing the Library and in close proximity to the Council Chambers and the Police Station. The walls will be of cream and buff blockwork with cream cement sheet and a fair amount of glass. The external area will have grey-toned paths.

![Fig. 1 Plan for the Rosny Park Integrated Development, with arrow indicating location of the proposed artwork for the Tasman Region Community Library. (APBS archives)](image)

His preference was for ‘an artwork location as being in the landscaped area in front of the main entrance to the building which would provide an external focal point, to be seen from some distance, leading people to the building.’ (Fig. 1)
The site lacked public seating, colour and water, which it was hoped the artwork would provide. The artists were advised to attempt to make the work vandal-proof – regardless of the proximity to the Police Station. A Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board letter from Lynne Uptin to David Hamilton states the site was ‘to start with native trees at the extremes with a gradual cultivation of planting as the building is approached. A row of Japanese flowering cherries will adorn the pathway to the sculpture and the building.’ (APBS archives)

David’s design for the initial selection round had been seen as successful in its use of materials but had been considered ‘formal’ and ‘a barrier’ and even ‘aggressive’ and he received considerable feedback from the selection panel, which included representatives of the building users and the client department as well as the architect and construction coordinators. He responded with six further options for the site, stating his preference for Number 1 and supplying detail of finishes (Fig, 2)

The space around the work needed to be worked into the amenity of the site, in the sense of it being both utilitarian and yet inclusive of art that somehow also looks useful, or at least embodies a human-ness. The finished work nonetheless appeared monumental when
viewed from the west. (Fig. 3) The base of the dark timber and steel work was strongly
defined against the white stones and surrounding mulch and this further stresses the
verticality of the piece – a point admired by the selection panel. The tactility and the
contrasting warm and cold of the materials maintained the dialogue with the buildings and
hard landscaping that had attracted the panel to David’s work in the first round of selections.

![Fig. 3 (left) David Hamilton, Rack, 1988, at time of installation. (Photograph: David Hamilton)](image1)
![Fig. 4 (right) The site in 2005. (Photograph: Peter Robinson)](image2)

Today, although the work is not seen as the artist intended, with its verticality stressed
against the horizontal lines of the building behind, it has ‘aged gracefully’. (Fig. 4) The site
has been ‘bedded’ with block walling and dense ground cover threatening the scale of the
work, and the linear quality of the building behind is broken up by additional plantings of
now-mature trees and shrubs. In a way, this is now another work, but one that remains
specific to its site and is, reportedly, a recognised marker for the local community. This
engagement with the site by David Hamilton over-rode a number of other requirements the
client set in the initial brief. In fact, if you had to fit the brief to the work, instead of the other
way around, you would not have selected it: the ability to work across discourses and to
accommodate a different perspective is vital to this form of site-specificity.

By comparison with Hamilton’s work, a collaboration between Penny Mason and David
Marsden created a site-specific work in an existing interior circulation space. A mixed media,
suspended sculpture, *Light of our time* (1991) produced for the client Department of
Education.
The Centre for Precision Technology was a new technical facility situated on Innovation Drive at the Tasmanian Techno Park in Glenorchy, Hobart: just the address gave more than a hint that the Centre placed itself ‘at the forefront of technology in Tasmania’, emphasising ‘a highly innovative, flexible and entrepreneurial approach’ to developing ‘skilled technologists and contribut[ing] toward the continual upgrade of industry infrastructure and performance.’ (APBS file A/107/91)

The artwork was to be commissioned for the central circulation area, or atrium, of the building, a space filled with light through a barrel vault of steel and aluminium ribs with tinted polycarbonate infill. (Fig. 5)

![Fig. 5 The vaulted corridor leading to the atrium space, Centre for Precision Technology (now Printing Authority of Tasmania), Hobart. (APBS archives)](image)

The brief for the commission stated that,

the theme of the artwork should reflect the purpose of the building and focus on innovative, technical and precision elements. It may corporate a “timeless” quality and respond to the open ended and flexible approach of the Centre in its aim to be at the forefront of modern technological advancements. (APBS archives)
An on-site meeting between representatives of the architect, building user, state development bodes, the Construction Department and the TAAB took place in February 1992. As usual, the possible location of the artwork and the identification of specific spaces was at the top of the agenda, along with discussion as to the type of artwork appropriate to the locality, the building and the designated spaces.

Penny Mason’s notes and sketches for one proposed design (Fig. 6) show the atrium with its high tech allusions transformed into a ‘hothouse/ greenhouse’:

![Sketch of atrium transformation](image)

Fig. 6 Penny Mason and David Marsden, one of three proposals for the Centre of Precision Technology, Hobart, (APBS archives)

A dynamic spiral form rises out of the centre of the atrium: the budget listed beside the sketch reveals that the proposal is for a 1-metre-high ceramic planter supporting a Lysart steel espalier, on which are trained a pair of deciduous Chinese gooseberries, which were intended to grow up and across the atrium providing summer shade and winter light. Just to make sure APBS and the stakeholders understood the ramifications, a short summary of the gooseberry’s growing habits was also provided by the artists.

As in the case of many APBS projects, the artists’ engagement with the discursive and physical site, rather than the initial designs, guided the selection panel. In this case, the majority of the panel found the spiral and espalier the most interesting proposal however the
architect and the building user wanted the artists to pursue a second, more prosaic, suggestion of angled vanes which also provided potential for solar control. (Fig. 7)

After selection and further consultations a more complex design evolved, based on a modern Chinese verandah-style fish trap (Fig. 8)

This is possibly the first use of CAD to draw up a site-specific artwork in Tasmanian, in this case by Michael van Tiernen at the University of Tasmania. The design was accompanied
by a note stating that ‘These options are tentative sounding because our work processes are flexible and open ended’, and documented with notes as to the artists’ ways of working and with installation details. Negotiations with the client took place over lunch – very Penny and David – and sounded tense: the clients were reported to be ‘very nervous about taking on a sight-unseen concept’, and were ‘very definite about what they want’. The final point of resolution is not documented however the fish trap proposal went ahead. The piece slotted seamlessly into the space, an outcome of good planning, the use of CAD and the excellent metal skills of another artist, John Parrish,

Figs. 9 & 10 Penny Mason and David Marsden, ‘Chinese fish-trap’ design for Light of our time, 1991, Centre for Precision Technology, Hobart, installation showing painted ‘race’ (left) and ‘net’ (right)
(Photographs: Peter Robinson)

Penny Mason painted the blue interior of the trap’s ‘race’. (Fig 9) The exterior black patterning is by David Marsden. Detail of the fish trap shows the use of wire bread ties in the construction (Fig. 10): a low-tech yet elegant solution stressing a consistency of material but creatively sourced, and a fluid development of design through process. The multi-layered understanding and materialising of the idea of technology was what had worked very well for the initial client, who were after a light, abstract and sophisticated approach – even if this design was not what they had initially envisaged. This is certainly a case where Kwon’s reflexive dialogue reveals a site’s specificity.

At Taroona High School, Wayne Z Hudson designed Snake seats for the Humanities Building foyer. The project was completed in 1993 for the Department of Education, with the work being undertaken during the period when the APBS was facilitated through consultants drawn from the local arts community working on specific projects, rather than being managed ‘on the ground’ by APBS staff.
This project provides a good example of the integration of designed furniture and hard landscaping into the APBS brief, recalling Harriet Senie’s comment that,

> Public sculpture with a use places pragmatic public needs, available to all, alongside spiritual and intellectual ones those projects that create their own hospitable space, combining art with use, appear to be the most appropriate [and] one way to make public art accessible and acceptable. (Senie 1992, 16)

Wayne Hudson reported that he commenced work by viewing the site and closely watching how students used the area. He observed,

> that the students tend to hang around in clusters, being quite tactile with one another, sometimes sitting with legs or arms across their friends. These body movements reminded me of snakes curled up on a hot day. The concept of the SNAKE SEATS began. (APBS archives)

Hudson’s observation-as-research provides a good example of artist /site/ community interaction that leads to the development of an artwork or design that can be judged as successful precisely because these interactions are understood and are then taken back up by the community with investment in the site.

Figs 11 & 12 On the left, the preferred model of the galvanised steel and plywood Snake seats (APBS archives); right, during the making process, a seat with feet in air, in Wayne Hudson’s studio (Photograph: Wayne Hudson)

Wayne chose the circular forms ‘to allow the students to continue sitting in clusters’ and to avoid injury from sharp corners. The forms also had ‘a playful image’ with the twisted metal
legs and the ‘wriggled grooves on the wood surface’ which also referred to the ‘basking snakes’ theme. (Figs 11 & 12)

The interior site of the wriggly seating (Fig. 13) also illuminates visual plays of the most basic forms – circles and squares, cylinders and cubes, in the lighting, window frames and the arc of the window, the jutting edges of the lift well and corridor wall, and the seats themselves.

Beyond the formal qualities of the site is an appreciation by students of the more functional aspects of the work – good height and shape, for example – as well as the ‘fun’ quality Wayne was seeking to convey: although, as one student commented, ‘it’s a pity they’re outside a staff room!’ (APBS files)

The design of a facade sign on the building was offered to the School by Hudson as part of the commission. (Fig. 14) The school community were so enthused after the artist’s presentation of his design concepts that it funded the fabrication and installation of the sign. Conceptually quite simple yet strong, it carries the visual form of the wriggly legs of the Snake seats into a central binding or twist.

Figs 13 The three Wayne Hudson Shake seats in position in the Humanities foyer; Fig 14 The exterior of Humanities Building, Taroona High School with signage mounted between windows above the main entrance. (Photographs: Peter Robinson)

Unlike the three previous commissions Christl Berg’s works for the Anne O’Byrne Centre, Launceston General Hospital, were purchased during a building refurbishment program, selected specifically for the building but not specifically created for the site.
The commission was for a variety of works for meeting areas, entry and corridors in the refurbished Launceston General Hospital teaching and research facility. Given the space limitations, two-dimensional works were preferred and the decision was made to purchase existing works that could all be viewed by the stakeholders before decisions were made. The arts@work Public Art Officer approached local artists working in appropriate media and with good exhibition records to put work forward for consideration. Project stakeholders visited a current exhibition of Christl Berg’s work at Poimena Gallery where they saw the many-faceted images mounted individually on the gallery walls in groups, rather than framed. One of these groups was selected as a major purchase for the Anne O’Byrne project.

Figs 15 & 16 Christl Berg, *Finds #30-51* 2002, complete mounted work (left) and detail (right)  
(Photographs: Peter Robinson)

The images are printed on matte archival paper in a limited range of subtle tones. The work as exhibited at Poimena was not, of course, in a state suitable for long-term display in a busy public area so a way of encasing the works had to be devised. For the project they were arranged in a perspex box measuring 2 x 2 metres and 4 cm deep. (Figs 15 & 16) The provision of the work ready to install was the responsibility of the artist who had the box made to fit with the required heavy backing panel, and arranged the transporting of the – by then – extremely weighty piece of work.
Before the work was installed the artist had not seen the actual site, although she had seen floor plans and viewed the building from the outside. Decisions about the siting of the work, the relationship of the work to the entry corridor and traffic flow, and also the focus on the work through the strong use of colour in other related areas of the site were those of arts@work and the project panel, including the architect and client representatives, although there were discussions between artist and architect to ensure the perspex case would be in keeping with the intended aesthetic. (Fig. 17)

In this instance, the physical site is made even more rigid by the pre-existence of the artwork. Yet two publics encounter it – the regular workers in the building and their clients. To one group it becomes a work to grow with, to the other the work is a marker, each a discursive space inseparable from its site.
FUTURE SITES

In researching the archives of the APBS, I had initially found that art appears as secondary to the documentation and dockets, Ministerial memoranda and municipal meanderings, and yet art is what permanently enables and affirms the APBS. What emerges from the archives of the APBS is a sense of responsibility felt by those administrators involved towards the stakeholders in a project, the community that is attached to art, to site or to their discursive space. The APBS facilitators became mediators between artist and community only as required – otherwise the artists’ contact with stakeholders, as community, is largely unrecorded. It is off-site in one sense, but intensely site-specific in others.

The voices from the files both confirm and contest the accepted development of the discourse of ‘public art’ locally and internationally from the late 1960s, and particularly over the past two decades. Miwon Kwon (2002, 109) cites art critic Jeff Kelley registering:

the extent to which site-specificity has experienced a radical reversal in recent years:
where it was once a means to better integrate art into the spaces of the everyday, to
better engage and accommodate the public, it has become a means to overrun the
public and the meaningfulness of local places and culture.

We have all seen this occur, of course – the obliteration of the local by something ‘better’ – and it is not a new phenomenon: just think of those ballast loads of Venuses, boxers and shepherdesses that were littered around parks and domains for the edification of the 19th century public. There are inevitably many out there who still appreciate a bit of potboiler art ‘plonked’ into the public domain and might even have a negative image of the APBS as an aesthetic or bureaucratic watchdog. Yet the sites from which the APBS best speaks are those specific to the Tasmanian context, and it is in the development of the Scheme that is recognised the importance of that context – the social, ethical and economic grounds for the reception and production of art in Tasmania.

My intention was to write a paper on the experience of writing about the APBS for the just-released book, Claiming Ground: Twenty-five years of Tasmania’s Art for Public Buildings Scheme. This has not happened: instead, I have started to consider where more extensive research into the critical context for so-called public art and the Art for Public Buildings Scheme in particular, should go. Being guided by arts practice and management from elsewhere only works if those processes are appropriate to the Tasmanian context. Rather
than throwing out the idea of site-specificity as some sort of authoritarian regime, as it is fashionable to suggest elsewhere, I would prefer to investigate what promise it may hold as a critical tool to provide an equitable and multi-layered understanding of the discursive and locational possibilities of art outside the gallery.

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