

**Submission
No 165**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Organisation: Asheville Art Museum

Date received: 30 August 2016

The Hon Robert Borsak MLC
Committee Chair
General Purpose Standing Committee no 4
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Upper House Inquiry into museums and galleries No 4

Terms of reference: 1e) and 1f)

Submission from Pamela L. Myers, August 2016 to gpscno4@parliament.nsw.gov.au via email.

I am willing to have this submission published with my name.

Pamela L. Myers, Executive Director
Asheville Art Museum
2 South Pack Square
Asheville, NC 28801
United States of America
828 253 3227 phone
828 257 4503 fax
www.ashevilleart.org

Brief Biography: **Pamela L. Myers, Executive Director, Asheville Art Museum** (1995 – present) is responsible for all aspects of Museum operations and has led its extraordinary development and growth. Her more than 37 years of experience includes Administrator, Exhibitions and Programs, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; Head of Exhibitions and Facility Planning, Museum of the City of New York; Director of Exhibits, The Strong Museum, NY; Head of Exhibition Design, Production and Installation, North Carolina Museum of Art. BS, Design and Environmental Analysis, Cornell University; graduate study at North Carolina State University; Tyler School of Art, Rome, Italy and Syracuse University. Kellogg Foundation Fellow; Museum Management Institute Fellow; J. Paul Getty Trust Advisory Committee Member Fund for Arts and Culture in Eastern and Central Europe Consultant and Institute of Museum and Library Services reviewer. Asheville Downtown Commission member, Downtown Master Plan Advisory member, Asheville 5x5 Arts and Culture Committee and GroWNC Cultural Resources Workgroup.

Summary: This short submission addresses the discussion of moving the Powerhouse Museum from its current location which includes historic structures in Ultimo to Parramatta in Western Sydney.

As a professional with more than 37 years of experience working internationally with museums and colleagues around the globe, and as a professional committed to the importance of the work of museums for the good of the publics they serve I am concerned that the consideration of moving the Powerhouse Museum would do a great disservice to the people of New South Wales and to the collections that the museum holds in the public trust.

Since 1988 I have been to the Powerhouse Museum on many occasions. Likewise I have visited and worked with other Sydney and broader Australian museums and their professional staff. The incredible public/private partnership project that created this institution, adaptively reusing, rebuilding and adding contemporary structure to the historic properties, and the ensuing work of the Powerhouse Museum in revitalizing its community and interpreting the history, material culture and people of its place has been groundbreaking and a model to the international museum world.

As an international visitor to Sydney and to the Powerhouse Museum I found its location ideal. It was easy to get to and to navigate and my visits there presented me with a better understanding of the city's history, growth and dynamism.

Each time I visited the Powerhouse it was teeming with visitors of all ages. School children were everywhere and actively engaged in excited study of their history and culture and pursuing curriculum objectives in experiential ways leading toward better understanding of the world around them and the development of life long critical thinking skills. Older students and scholars from around the world were engaged in real world, important research with the outstanding collections of the Museum, truly pursuits that could not happen anywhere else in the world. Clusters of friends and family moved excitedly from gallery to gallery where outstanding interpretation of the collections opened new avenues for dialogue and discourse.

The Powerhouse Museum has unbelievable and totally unique collections (including its buildings and the site specific installations they contain). For years the Museum has aggressively pursued the acquisition of these collections through important scholarship, research and the development of important relationships with donors and collectors. Not many institutions with such vast and diverse holdings have done so much to make them physically and intellectually accessible in Sydney and elsewhere. The Powerhouse Museum has been a leader in the care, management and interpretation of these works for decades. Special exhibitions and publications have likewise garnered international attention and acclaim.

In today's world vibrant museums that are connected to their physical locations and to their communities are vitally important in providing a real sense of place, of history and of the potential of the future. I am not familiar with Parramatta, nor with its place based needs but can only imagine that for a museum to be successful and important there it should be rooted in that community. Museums around the world have established outposts and partnerships to share their collections and their expertise. It would seem to me that such a model- leaving the Powerhouse in Ultimo where it has been and will continue to be a critical anchor- and assisting the Museum in using its expertise to work closely with those in Parramatta to craft an outpost there would be a far better, more financially feasible and more sustainable approach. This approach would safeguard the work and dedication of so many who have made the Powerhouse great while using the collective expertise of the Powerhouse to help determine what future facility and programs might best serve Parramatta.

Pamela L. Myers, Executive Director
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2 South Pack Square
Asheville, NC 28801

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Engaging, enlightening and inspiring individuals and enriching community through dynamic
experiences in American Art of the 20th and 21st centuries since 1948.*
