

From the basic to the bountiful...

This was read out at the first opening night of exhibitions at Watt Space at it's new site in University House on the evening of Thursday 23 August, 1996.

It seems like a lifetime ago that a group of dissident students led by a man dubbed 'The Terrorist' forced the Student Union to reassess its stand regarding the Visual and Performing Arts Faculty. If you could look at that man now, you probably would fail to see him as we did, bursting into a general meeting to protest at last year's folly of spending the student's money on what we saw as junket trips to God only knows where to play, cricket, skiing or football.

The President of the Union came from the Education /PE area as indeed many of them were if my memory serves me correctly. That soon came to an abrupt halt. Watt Space was born from a political move to rectify the imbalance that had Arts students paying fees to supplement everything and everyone except them. Though we gained support for a student's Art Gallery it was a very humble beginning and nothing of the gallery that you now have. However, never for one moment did we think it wouldn't be a success. Looking back it amazes me that within two weeks we had found a suitable building at 11 Watt Street, had put up the lighting ourselves and organised the first Watt Space showing.

There are many who must be acknowledged for their contribution to the Art Gallery in those infancy days. Graham Gilchrist for his unflagging support who was always available for advice and made up for our

inexperience and I'm sure pulled strings and influence without letting on.

Stan Barwick who, once he saw how determined we were and more particularly how political we could be, became our champion, not always without argument as we can both attest - how I enjoyed those battles Stan. Anna Manzoney from NBN, Jill Stowell from the Newcastle Herald for her reviews with such postivism, Ross Woodrow for his wonderful machinations should we have forgotten our political leanings, Peter Singleton, Glenn Henderson and Vlase Nikoleski for their quiet behind-the-scenes support.

The greatest changes however have been undertaken by Pippa Robinson who took over the reins and has overseen this gallery's metamorphosis from the basic to the bountiful. It has not been an easy task and full credit should go to her.

However as I sit here silently offering up my glass in a celebratory gesture it is to you, the students, whose unflagging support, enthusiasm and talent will ensure the gallery's future. I'm so sorry I am unable to be with you in person however I most certainly am in spirit.

from a faxed speech by Jacquie Henderson
founding student of Watt Space