

**2 June, 2018**

Extract, with permission, from a weekly newsletter by John McDonald, art critic for *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

To subscribe to his (free) newsletter, see <http://johnmcdonald.net.au/>

From  
John  
McDonald ☉

After discussions about the Blake Prize and the Sydney Film Festival, McDonald continues...

'Late last week I attended a National Art School Dinner where Michael Johnson and Wendy Sharpe were made "fellows". This was an amiable affair, but NSW Arts Minister, Don Harwin, stole the show with a strident defence of the NAS and its embattled independence. Here at last was the political saviour the School has been looking for, or so it seemed.

If only the Minister would find the same energy and good will for the Powerhouse Museum one could almost overlook the terrible mess that passes for the streets of Sydney nowadays, or the towering apartment blocks growing like mushrooms. A little TLC towards the arts goes a long way.

There was nothing like that from the former Premier, Mike 'the banker' Baird, who brazened it out in front of an Upper House committee that accused him of being intent on flogging off the Powerhouse site to his developer mates. Not at all, said Magic Mike, he was "100 percent" concerned with providing a superior cultural experience for the people of Parramatta.

I wonder if anyone asked him how this is to be achieved by carving up the existing Powerhouse and sending Parramatta citizens an unwanted science museum, when they might have expected something vaguely artistic. They may at least enjoy an absorbing spectacle when the building starts to fill with water during a big downpour.

John

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