

I am a working visual artist and a postgraduate Masters' Research candidate.

My profession is an expression of an outlook that has not been crimped by societal persuasions to accept the dominant narratives about identity, politics, market forces, history, place and futures.

I have escaped many of the crimpings created by societal narratives through the windows opened by the arts. Art Nation continues to introduce me to art expressions that are beyond what is casually encountered within the geographic and cultural limits of my corner of Australia.

I protest about the ABC's choice to axe Art Nation. This is not because it is the best arts program, but because it serves a particular function for the arts on Australian television. For many people the program will be counted as the best, but, for me, it is good because the program is broader than the breadth that already exists within my professional arts interests. The program, by its length and formatting, is an effective bridging device between broad communities and the arts. It can be high or low brow but is never patronizing causing viewers to feel alienated. The pacey "magazine" format develops a concept that anyone can access and enjoy the arts.

If anything should be axed, it should be the current system to promote this program and the decision to place the repeat of each week's program in a less accessible time slot at around 10pm on Sundays. The biggest failure is with the ABC's capacity to properly evaluate the product they have and in how they present the program to the audiences the program deserves.

My protest has operated on another level. I created a group on Facebook, "Saving ABC Art Nation" (<http://www.facebook.com/groups/114507155313667/>). I initially presented the group to some of Facebook friends with art interests and it now has a membership of nearly 300. About 90% of these members do not know me – the membership has developed through people reading that one of their friends has joined the group. It has not been a high tech campaign to enlist members due to my current busy-ness but people have joined because they have a strong interest to "save Art Nation".

There has been some discussion by members of the group about how ratings surveys do not properly capture audience numbers and there is strong feeling that there is not an accurate means for calculating ABC audiences for Art Nation. On a personal level, my wife has started watching Art Nation with me since the beginning of the year – what mechanism does the ABC possess to record this household increase in viewing?

I suggest that the ABC does not really know its Art Nation audience and that the ABC should not be driven by audience numbers in determining the future of the program. The ABC should take a more cutting look at how the program is promoted and when it is screened before axing this program.

Alan Tulloch