

Extract from Legislative Council Hansard

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SPECIAL INTEREST MATTER

THE SALAMANCA COLLECTION GALLERY

Mr PARKINSON (Wellington - Deputy Leader of the Government in the Council) - Mr President, in response to a matter raised by the honourable member for Nelson last time, I read from a letter published in the *Mercury* dated Friday, 23 November 2001, signed by Annette Downs on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Salamanca Arts Centre. It reads in part:

'... the Salamanca Arts Centre has not evicted Jeff Thomas and The Salamanca Collection.

The Salamanca Collection, a commercial gallery, is a principal commercial tenant of the arts centre. The commercial tenancies provide the income stream that enable SAC Inc to provide discounted rents to artists-in-studios and not-for-profit arts organisations.

There are 72 tenancies in the arts centre, 69 per cent of which receive subsidised rent, the bulk of which is directed to visual artists ...

In the past 12 months alone the arts centre has proudly provided exhibition opportunities for more than 100 Tasmanian artists in the Long Gallery, the Sidespace Gallery and The Loft on the first and second floors of the arts centre.

Response to the Island, the arts centre's major visual arts contribution to the inaugural 10 Days on the Island international arts festival and seen by more than 9 000 people, presented the work of 26 outstanding contemporary Tasmanian artists and was covered by national and international media.

To place The Salamanca Collection in context, Mr Jeffrey Thomas is an art dealer who several times a year exhibits work by selected Tasmanian artists.

The petition circulated to SAC artists mentioned in The Mercury article of November 14 infers that the arts centre has given notice to The Salamanca Collection. This is not the case.

The situation is actually completely the reverse. As landlords we are unable to assume that a tenant means to exercise his option. Mr Thomas did not exercise the option on his lease by the due date. This means that the existing lease is not extended beyond its due expiry date. This is a standard process in accordance with Retail Tenancies Code practice.

At a special meeting of the executive committee it was unanimously agreed that the dispute be referred to an arbitrator and that Mr Thomas was welcome to stay on a month by month basis while the matter was in arbitration.

In following due process, it is important that the best possible options for the arts-related use of this space are canvassed. Therefore, the executive committee intends to seek expressions of interest for the site.

Mr Thomas has been invited to submit his proposal. Contrary to the misinformation that has been circulated, the arts centre has an absolute policy of no further restaurants in our buildings but does intend to identify the best possible arts use for what is one of the best sites on the whole of the Salamanca Place strip ...

If The Salamanca Collection presents the best option for this site then nothing precludes the arts centre and The Salamanca Collection from possibly negotiating a new lease.'