SITES OF ACTIVITY

# ACUADS 08/09 RESEARCH

Australian Council of University
Art and Design Schools

ON THE EDGE

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# INTRODUCTION

From the sculptural transformation of scrap metal to the use of nanotechnology in a multi-media installation that interrogates humanism; from online learning about the art of the ancient Greeks to a partnership between a big city art school and a group of indigenous printmakers living in a remote community, this report demonstrates the diversity of research being undertaken within Australian university art and design schools.

Produced under the auspices of the Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools, the first report (07/08) was published in conjunction with the 2007 ACUADS annual conference hosted in Sydney by the College of Fine Arts (CoFA), University of New South Wales.
This (08/09), the second report, is published in conjunction with the Council's 2008 conference, hosted in Adelaide by the South Australian School of Art at the University of South Australia.

The series of reports as a whole is intended to showcase the range, depth and vitality of research occurring within ACUADS member schools – as well as to indicate the kinds of imperatives driving its development, and the scope and nature of some of the changes occuring. As such it already offers some preliminary indications.

The 07/08 report focussed on a number of what might be called 'flagship' projects (for example, the iCinema collaborative project at COFA, funded with assistance from the Australian Research Council). By contrast, the current report represents, alongside such collaborative projects, a number of smaller, individual creative projects; including some that might be described as 'traditional' in being predominantly concerned with the making of sculpture, paintings or prints for exhibition. This is the kind of 'creative research' that was once taken for granted and is still seen as crucial for the effective training of emerging art and design professional practitioners. Perhaps the fact it can no longer be taken for granted is something of an indicator itself.

Be this as it may, it seems individual, creative, 'practice-led', research projects continue to flourish within the academy alongside the kinds of approaches to research that are characteristic of academic disciplines themselves. On one side, is the artist, committed to maintaining and sustaining a necessarily individualist creative enterprise ('Arrivals and Departures'; 'Steam'); on the other is the research team or 'cluster', embedded within institutions increasingly responsive to social (not to say governmental) imperatives. This shift has clearly been responsible for some interesting initiatives, such as the 'Creative Exchange in the Tropical Environment' – a series of projects aligned with a university-led mission to enhance life in a tropical environment.

But the days of simple valorisation of the techniques and traditions associated with a (largely) European canon of expressive art are long gone; though this is not to say the incorporation of hitherto independent art and design schools within academia has been seamlessly accomplished. At the very least, these first reports suggest a highly vital organism capable of finding innovative ways of adapting to its host environment. In particular, we have learned the language of and the necessity for research methodologies capable of delivering both distinctively qualitative outcomes ('art', 'design', 'culture') and a measure of evidence – for example for development of new approaches to teaching and learning.

This has been a long and sometimes arduous journey, but the very difficulty of working at the 'edge' of the academy has led to the evolution of the kinds of responsive, creative and innovative research practices and methodologies evident in this report. Seen in this light, we are heartened by the recent statement from the Australian Federal Government Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator the Honourable Kim Carr, as a most welcome vote of confidence.

According to Minister Carr, given the humanities make such a significant contribution to enriching the lives of individuals and communities, 'no further payback is needed'.

Music to the ears.

Dr John Barbour
Research Higher Degrees Coordinator
South Australian School of Art
University of South Australia

# Nanoessence
## Life and Death at a Nano Level

www.bead.curtin.edu.au/

Humanist understandings of the nature of life are now being challenged by nano-technological research. The *Nanoessence* project draws from an examination of life at a sub-cellular level to suggest ways of rethinking humanist understandings of space and scale via development of an interactive installation environment.

[1] The apparently immortal but highly differentiated HaCaT cell line was so named to indicate the origin and initial growth conditions. Boukamp, P., R. T. Petrussevska, et al. (1988). *"Normal keratinization in a spontaneously immortalized aneuploid human keratinocyte cell line,"* J. Cell Biol. 106(3): 761-771

With the assistance of the SymbioticA Lab, University of Western Australia, and the Nanochemistry Research Institute (NRI), at Curtin University of Technology, the *Nanoessence* project uses data gained from analysis by an atomic force microscope (AFM) of a single HaCaT[1] human skin cell to explore comparisons between life and death at a 'nano' level. This quantitative scientific data is being used as the basis for design of an installation designed to stimulate 'qualitative' sensorial responses on the part of visitors.

According to the Wikipedia, 'nano assembly' is the construction of a supramolecular chemistry by the assembly of nanoscopic particles, or even atoms and molecules. More generally, molecular self-assembly uses concepts of supramolecular chemistry, and molecular recognition in particular, to cause single-molecule components to automatically arrange themselves into useful conformations.

The proposal for nanotechnology to reshape nature atom by atom stimulates interesting debates as to what may be thought to constitute human life, since at an atomic level, the space of the body can be seen as having no boundaries. The *Nanoessence* project aims to construct a physical experience for visitors to the installation as a means of provoking thought about this new scientific paradigm and its implications for metaphysical understandings of our world and its life forms.

In the *Nanoessence* installation being developed, the viewer interfaces with a visual and sonic presentation by means of his or her own breath (with breath itself being strongly associated with Biblical conceptions of life). The use of 'authentic' quantitative scientific data is an important feature of the project in contrasting with the 'qualitative' aspects of the individual sensory experience sought.

According to Boukamp and Petrussevska, '[The] HaCaT is the first permanent epithelial cell line from adult human skin that exhibits normal differentiation and provides a promising tool for studying regulation of keratinization in human cells'.

In being immortal, human HaCaT skin cells demonstrate the potential for endless cloning of a single cell. For the *Nanoessence* project, HaCaT cells cultured with the assistance of SymbioticA were scanned by an atomic force microscope (in tapping and force spectroscopy mode) to determine their comparative topographies and atomic vibration.
The atomic force microscope uses a small cantilever with a pyramidal tip, measuring approximately 10nm. In tapping mode, the cantilever makes intermittent contact as it is lowered to almost touch the surface of the skin cell. The cantilever, oscillating in response to a resonance frequency, scans a miniscule area of the skin specimen. The images obtained are recorded via a laser beam deflected from the cantilever tip onto a photodiode. The AFM thus constructs a 'machinic' understanding of material nano particles using touch – in contrast to traditional microscopes, which privilege sight. Indeed, the gathering of scientific data through touch suggests a fundamental challenge to dominant ocular centric understandings of the world.

The comparative data resulting from the AFM scans can be seen as representing the 'essence of life'. This data will be used in constructing a hybrid metaphorical landscape based on an algorithm developed by Kevin Raxworthy. Within the *Nanoessence* installation environment, the algorithm generating the landscape is affected and stimulated

in response to data gained from sensors stimulated by the breath of visitors. This is presented via a central data projection screen, flanked on either by side projections of skin cells at a nano level. The left projection is of a living cell and the right a dead cell.

The auditory component of the *Nanoessence* installation results from data recorded by the AFM in 'force spectroscopy' mode. Vibrations from the HaCaT cell atoms are scanned, initially in vitro and then following injection of ether into the serum. The resulting data is then converted into sound files to create sonic vibrations occurring at a nano level and presented to audiences as a 'haptic topographic sensation'. Sound thus correlates with the changing topography of the landscape as it evolves in response to visitors' breathing.

*Nanoessence* aims to stimulate senses other than sight in creating a total sensory experience for viewers. It uses human breathing as a key mechanism and metaphor within a complex and sophisticated artistic environment aimed stimulating critical debate about the implications of nanotechnology for our understandings of life.

Dr Paul Thomas
Mr Kevin Raxworthy

# The Silk Road Project

## Dance and Embodiment in the Age of Motion Capture

www.deakin.edu.au/arts-ed/scca/index.php

Performer Carlee Mellow with live-feed motion capture to Isadora.

Performer Carlee Mellow with live 'light-string' particle system in Isadora.

Performer Carlee Mellow with live-feed motion capture to Motion Builder.

The *Silk Road Project* was a practice-based research project investigating the potential of motion capture technology to inform perceptions of embodiment in dance performance. The project created a multi-disciplinary collaborative performance event using dance performance and real-time motion capture at Deakin University's Deakin Motion Lab. Several new technological advances in producing real-time motion capture performance were produced, along with a performance event that examined the aesthetic interplay between a dancer's movement and the precise mappings of its trajectories created by motion capture and real-time motion graphic visualisations.

[1] Susan Leigh Foster, "*Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance*," (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1986); & Susan Leigh Foster, "*Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture & Power*," (London & New York: Routledge, 1996)

[2] Arthur Schopenhauer, "*The World as Will and Representation*," trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, 1966)

[3] Douglas Berger, "*The Veil of Maya: Schopenhauers' System of Early Indian Thought*," (New York: Global Academic Publishing, 2003)

[4] Judith Butler, "*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*," (New York: Routledge, 1990), Judith Butler "*Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*," (New York: Routledge 1993)

[5] Suzanne K. Langer, "*Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art*," (Scribner: New York, 1953)

[6] Irmgard Bartenieff, "*Body Movement Coping with the Environment*," (Gordon & Breach, New York & London, 1980)

The Silk Road Project was a multi-media, multi-collaborator, interactive performance project using new facilities at the Deakin Motion Lab, Deakin University's state of the art motion capture studio. Led by choreographer and interactive media designer, Kim Vincs, the project investigated the potential of motion capture to inform and enhance our perceptions of embodiment in dance performance, using a collaborative, practice-based approach, involving a team of dancers, musicians, interactive media specialists, scenographers, motion capture directors and visual artists. The project resulted in a performance event – realised in December 2007 at Deakin University – that probed the aesthetic and technological possibilities of real-time motion capture performance.

Dance theory has traditionally been concerned with emphasising, articulating, and valorising the materiality of the dancing body. This has been a critically important aspect of a much broader strategic aim – to free dance from its historically subservient status as a mere subject for investigation and description by text-based disciplines, and to imbue the dancing body with the status of a discourse in and of itself.[1]

Now dance is established as a discrete area of theoretical and practical artistic discourse, it is, perhaps, safe to go back into the water and ask whether, in the age of new technologies such as motion capture, the materiality of the dancer's body is not necessarily or self-evidently the central element of a dance practice.

Arthur Schopenhauer's 'falsification theory' [2] provides a starting place for this discussion. Schopenhauer suggested that a veil of magical illusion and trickery is present in all forms of art as soon as viewed from outside of, or beyond, the gaze of the artist. According to Douglas Berger,[3] Schopenhauer's 'veil' appropriates the Indian idea of mâyâ (a term we might translate as "illusion", "trick" or "deceit") and applies this to the Hindu idea of the Veils of Maya, which allow us to believe we are seeing the 'truth'.

Like Schopenhauer's 'veil', 3D animation software creates illusory characters. As if demonstrating Judith Butler's[4] notion of the 'performative self' that has no real inner core of interiority, only the illusion created by the surface inscriptions of the body, the 3D animated character has no interior. Imbued with colours and having the appearance of opacity and mass – in reality it is but an illusion created by image files (textures) pasted onto the surface.

Can the materiality of a dancing body be understood in a similar way? Susan Langer[5] has suggested that a dancer's body communicates symbolically through the creation of 'virtual forces' – apparent, but illusory, appearing both to emanate from the dancer, yet acting upon her from outside. In this scenario, the body is also a veil, an artefact that can only indicate the effects of unseen, illusory forces.

The process of making and performing a real-time motion capture event- in which a dancer controlled motion graphics that formed traces of her captured movement – has provided a means of investigating whether motion capture, by virtue of its ability to plot the pure line, speed, trajectory and acceleration of a dancer's movement, can provide a glimpse through the 'veil' of the material body – to perceive 'movement-as-interiority' as being ephemeral but not 'virtual'. In dance terms, our collaboration team wanted to make Laban's 'inner intention'[6] visible through the abstraction of motion capture, to expose the material body of the performer as a 'veil' that obscures the forces that drive it- the dual (and interconnected) loci of biomechanics and spirit.

To do this, the project team for *The Silk Road Project* developed a number of 'pipelines' through which we could map the trajectories of performer Carlee Mellow's movement onto finely and precisely drawn visual 'trails'. We designed a range of mapped environments that allowed us to play aesthetically across distance and scale. Some environments mapped fine, intricate, short-lived pathways made of computer-generated particle systems that captured the essence of subtle, nuanced movements, especially breathing and liminal, pre-movement impulses. Other environments mapped Carlee's movement onto broad, sweeping and ricocheting 'strings' of light, or carved almost tangible, rotating seaweed-like masses through the space, or produced a dispersed, abstracted 'particle-body' that seemed to shimmer across projected landscapes.

These strategies enabled us to create a movement trajectory across imaginary landscapes that played between the 'real' movement of the performer in her motion capture suit and the 'hyper-real'

environment in which her most subtle and minute movement impulses were mapped, amplified and displayed – roaming across richly coloured, intricate and projected environments that suggested a journey through a 'silk road' of discovery and movement.

This unique projection environment placed the performer between four screens of varying colour and transparency, through which the audience viewed the performance. The screens functioned as 'veils', simultaneously obscuring elements of the 'real' performance and enhancing and amplifying the 'hyper-real' mapping of the motion capture data.

To realise this artistic and investigative vision, the project team developed a number of new technological advances in real-time motion capture performance. A custom software package to was developed by industry collaborators Pete Brundle (Nice Device) and Ross Bencina (Audiomulch) to convert Motion Analysis motion capture data to OSC protocol and stream it in real time to visualization and motion graphics softwares such as Cycling '74's Max/MSP/Jitter and Autodesk's Motion Builder. A new interface between 'Evart-2-OSC' and the Isadora platform was developed by resident guest artist, Mark Coniglio, of Troika Ranch, New York, while industry collaborators Act3animation developed a 'particle character' for real-time visualization of data.

A key aspect of the project, integral to its aesthetic and technological success, was the large collaborative team that, by necessity, typifies artistic research in interactive media. This team, in addition to the above-named industry collaborators, included dramaturge, scenographer and technical director, Matthew Delbridge; dancer Carlee Mellow, musicians Robert Vincs, Scott Dunbabin and Eugene Ughetti; graphic artists Ed Culling, She Bee Thao and Cassie Williams, and motion capture assistant Daniel Skovli. The project was led by Deakin staff members Kim Vincs and Matthew Delbridge, and also involved three Deakin students undertaking internships in the motion capture studio, as well as two recent Deakin graduates, four industry collaborators and four guest artists.

Dr Kim Vincs
Mr Matthew Delbridge

## Envisaging Globalism

Globalisation and Chinese Traditional Art and Art Education

www.sca.ecu.edu.au/

An account of the inter-institutional organisation of an international conference on the effects of globalisation on traditional art practices in China, and the role of art education in interpreting those effects.

A decade ago, knowing over half of Perth's population was born overseas, and that it was (then) cheaper to fly to Singapore and Kuala Lumpur than to Melbourne and Sydney, the School of Communication and Arts at Edith Cowan University introduced Asian art history and intercultural and multicultural theory units into the curriculum. From this tentative beginning, seeking to address the needs of the school's student demography by looking toward Asian, African and indigenous Aboriginal culture – the school has developed links with staff and students at other schools in our geographical region who are focussed on issues of cultural exchange. This has formed the collaborative ground from which a set of shared research objectives has been slowly developed – to finally gain focus at an international conference in China. Our story demonstrates the way in which research that struggles by on inadequate funding, often 'flying under the institutional radar', can result in significant outcomes.

In 1999, academics from the School of Communication and Arts, in partnership with colleagues from Vaal University, South Africa, hosted a symposium on intercultural practices. Following this, in 2001, the school convened a conference on art and cultural difference in Qingdao, China (Earth and Sunshine) – in association with Beijing National University, the Chinese Artists' Association and the Qingdao Art Gallery. This second conference marked the formation of the Network for Research into Intercultural Practices in the Visual Arts, an informal grouping of academics from Australia, the United Kingdom, South Africa and China – all sharing an interest in the tension between modern universalist theories of art making and traditional cultural practices.

Until 2007, the School of Communication and Arts at Edith Cowan University was hub for the network, and despite being a 'virtual' rather than 'real' hub, a number of 'measurable outcomes' were achieved. Several research projects were initiated with network partners including one undertaken in collaboration with Beihua University's Australian-Chinese Art Education Research Centre. This resulted in two publications: 'a comparative study of theory teaching in Chinese and Australian art schools,' – the only foreign scholarly contribution to the fourteen volume National Encyclopaedia of Traditional Chinese Culture (Crouch, C. 'A Western Perspective on Traditional Chinese Painting') – and The History of Modern Design, by Longlong Books in Beijing (for which three network members acted as editors: Crouch, C, Wang, X, and Liu, S).

The network became a useful site for the exchange of ideas – but whilst some members occasionally met together internationally (for example at a series of seminars in Johannesburg in 2004 and as panel members at the Conference on Visual Literacy, Cork, 2005), there was a growing feeling we were an underground 'gang' (acknowledged by secret handshakes invisible to the outside world) rather than a group of internationally-acknowledged scholars. Indeed, it had become clear that a founding aim of the network – the generation of significant funding – had not been realised. But it was equally clear we had become highly successful in generating projects through personal contacts (sustained through individual commitment).

By 2007, most active network members were based in China, largely as a result of funding support from their respective universities. The network finally dissolved in 2007 after becoming the Chinese Australian Studies Research Centre, based in the School of Communications and Design at Sun Yat Sen University, Guangzhou. Co-directed by academics from Edith Cowan University and Sun Yat Sen, the first task of the centre was to convene a conference to debate an issue long discussed by network members: the role of the national art education system in China under the new economic conditions.

Centralised cultures have edges, even if these are not visible from the centre. Two issues of particular concern noted by network members were: increasing regional dissatisfaction with Beijing's imprimatur on art education, and the inflexibility of the national education system.

Indeed, many members believed the effects of globalised culture on traditional art practices were so powerful as to warrant institutional debate. This proposal was problematic, firstly in running counter to the consensus that the adoption of 'Western' avant garde practices was a measure of aesthetic freedom – and secondly, in that promotion of traditional art practices was perceived to carry an unwholesome taint of nationalism.

The conference that eventuated was convened using frames of reference proposed by Ulrich Beck and Zygmunt Bauman (defining a reflexive, cosmopolitan late modernity) – both as a means of freeing debates from accusations of national chauvinism, and of moving the emphasis in discussions from aesthetics to sociology. As a result the conference focussed on the question of how creative individuals may successfully negotiate between and within tradition and modernity. Issues debated included the importance of the subjective realm as a space for creativity, and the relevance of education for creative growth. Three related issues emerged as being of importance: tradition as text; the aesthetics of the mass media, and contemporary educational practices. Papers were encouraged from practitioners and scholars. Eminent Chinese art specialist, Michael Sullivan, offered strong support for the conference and delivered the keynote address. The conference was accompanied by an exhibition of artworks by conference delegates and postgraduate students from the School of Communications and Design at Sun Yat Sen and the School of Communications and Arts at Edith Cowan University.

Emerging from the conference, a collection of essays, entitled Globalisation and Contemporary Chinese Visual Culture (with contributions on graphic design and fashion) is due for publication in the United States in 2009; while an illustrated exhibition catalogue will be published in 2008. A conference on Subjectivity, Creativity and the Institution is also planned (subjectivitycreativityandtheinstitution.com).

The success of the Globalisation conference demonstrates the potential of projects 'on the edge' to produce significant impact upon the centre; yet there is no doubt it takes time to build the institutional structures needed to support research into topics apparently at the margins of dominant discourses. Meaningful personal relationships capable of bringing institutions together in mutually fruitful ways are hard to build and sustain but well worthwhile – and may prove to be longer lasting than 'top down' projects. But the disadvantage of such 'loose' research networks is their lack of apparent status within institutions – something that particularly affects prospects for funding. Thus marginality may be both a 'blessing' (particularly in permitting a degree of freedom from institutional oversight) and a 'curse'.

It is not always possible to know when an open-ended dialogue has begun, let alone where it will lead, but reviewing the history of the 'network' one may trace a series of events that has led over time to close institutional collaboration. This success has been underpinned by the fact that for a decade previously the school's main research interest was in finding ways to give its migrant students a voice outside the discourse of mainstream of Australian art school aesthetics. This perhaps reflects an 'ethico-philosophical' commitment of considerable symbolic value, but how does one evaluate the worth of this? Certainly 'measurable' research outcomes have been produced by members of the network (on behalf of their respective universities) through publication and exhibition - but there is no key performance measure that can adequately measure the value of an astonished Chinese student meeting Michael Sullivan in Guangzhou, or the pleasure of working with academics who offer views that help us read 'against the grain'.

Dr Christopher Crouch
Professor Deng Qiyao

# Steam
## Transforming the Mundane

www.gu.edu.au/faculty/qca/

*Fall 2*, 2002, aluminium

*Oscilloscope (Trace)*, 2007

*Steam, public artwork*, Brisbane Square, 2006, aluminuim

Dr Donna Marcus teaches at the Gold Coast Campus of the Queensland College of Art. She constructs astonishing sculptures from distinctly mundane, everyday domestic objects, namely discarded aluminium kitchenware sourced from second-hand and thrift shops. A ubiquitous material with both democratic and elitist aspirations and applications, aluminium has been used since its discovery to manufacture everything from soft drink cans to space ships, saucepans and aeroplanes. Marcus's unique use of the material is an homage bordering on obsession. To realise her sculptural installations she relies on vast numbers of objects, a kind of critical mass of domesticity that elevates the homely items at the heart of her work (saucepans, steamers and poachers) to the realm of high art, via pop and post-minimalism; imposing order upon chaos. Refashioned, but never reconditioned (Marcus leaves surface scratches, burn marks and warps), these simple vessels – imbued with personal and collective histories – are accorded a second life.

As Marcus states:
*'My work starts in the wastelands of the scrap yard or the well-named opportunity shop, garage sale or church fête. Discarded aluminium objects form the building modules of my sculpture installations. In place of the singular ready-made, I use multiples – large numbers of the same type of object – an excess created through processes of industrial 'efficiency'. In the past decade, I have collected several tonnes of discarded aluminium kitchenware – teapots, colanders, steamers, cake tins, pudding bowls, anodized coloured saucepan lids, beakers, trays, sink sieves.*

The objects I collect come scarred with an inescapable past, gained through everyday use that begins with the mining of the ore and its refinement into aluminium, followed by the making, use, discarding and retrieval of these manufactured objects. Their suggestive possibilities are explored through the processes of collection and through their reinsertion into the domain of the everyday and the contemporary through my installation/sculpture practice. In this process the undeniable links between objects, memory and modernism in both the practices of the everyday and contemporary art are hopefully unearthed.'

*Steam* was based on an earlier work, *Fall,* made of vegetable steamers. These works referred to the geodesic domes of 1940s architect and inventor, Buckminster Fuller, who advocated resourceful use of existing industrial forms with his famous slogan 'Doing the Most with the Least'.

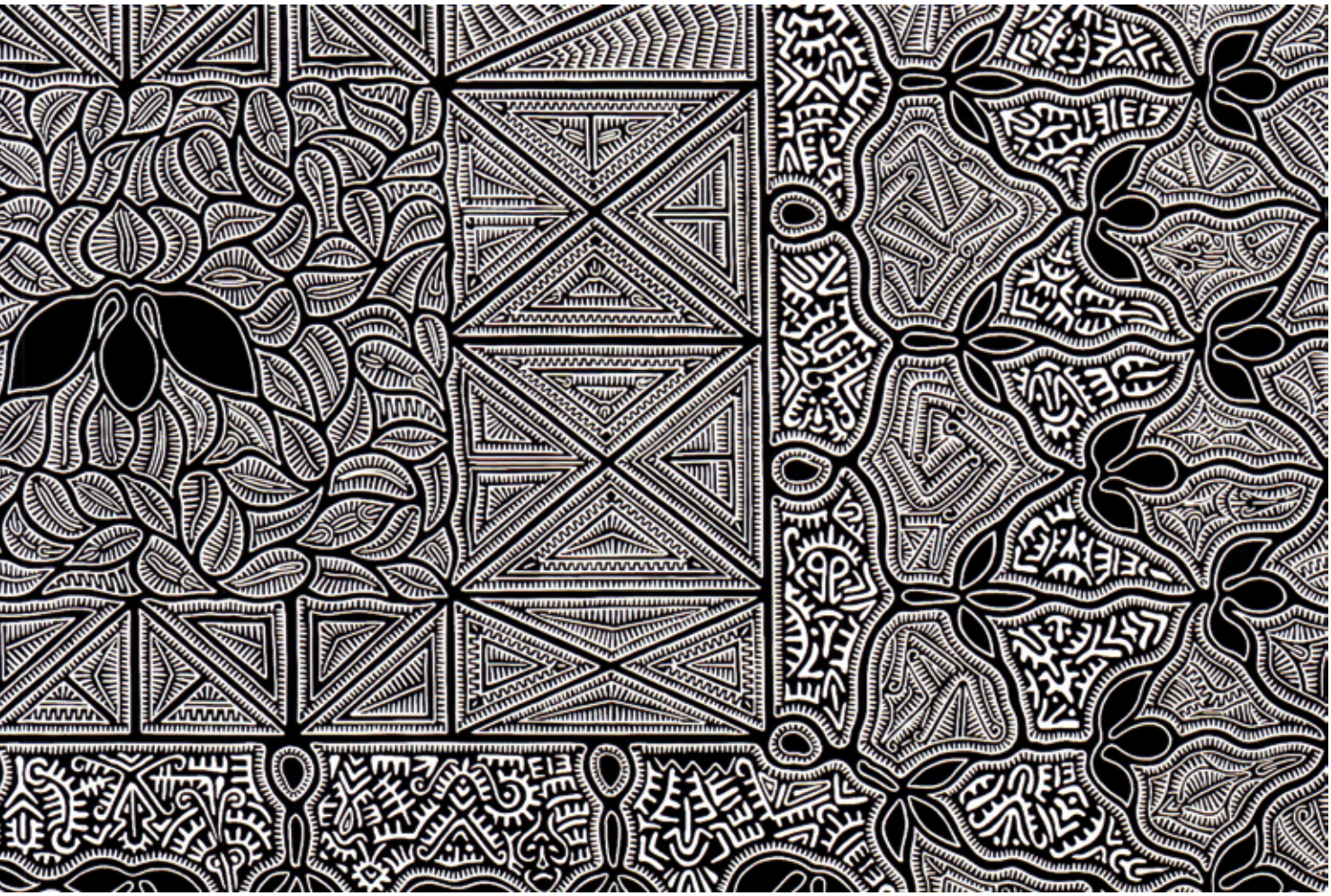
The spheres for *Steam* were created from 7000 welded steamer pieces and 780 plates bolted together. Inspired by the concept of random disbursement, Marcus has placed the works in a variety of locations throughout the space in an almost haphazard manner.

*Oscilloscope (Trace*) is based on the electrocardiogram or ECG, a device that measures the electrical activity of the human heart. This activity is displayed on the screen of the oscilloscope and mapped in exquisite detail by a line known as the 'the trace'. The trace moves and fades across the screen as it tracks the changing rhythm of life.

Discarded domestic aluminium objects bear the traces of modern life, its changing daily practices and the persistence of materials and things. A tonne of saucepan lids, pudding bowls and other redundant objects reordered as an oscilloscope becomes a symbol of the changing movement of people and things – the objects or 'heartbeat' of everyday life – recording life and waste as they are constructed and constrained by each other.

# Creative Exchange in the Tropical Environment

www.jcu.edu.au/soca/



The *"Billy Missi Urapan Kai Buai Project."* (detail) curated and researched by Russell Milledge

Campbell (front) using the PLaY+SPaCE System in performance with David Salisbury

This report relates key agenda items and research themes associated with a new research grouping within the recently formed School of Creative Arts at James Cook University. Associated with the University's research focus on enhancement of life in the tropics, four research projects are reported that illustrate a diversity of research activities occurring within the group and which reflect its key research focus and themes.

### Creative exchange in the tropics

At the forefront of moves by James Cook University to prioritise research into the enhancement of life in the tropics, the School of Creative Arts has developed a research group focussed on five main themes: new media arts practice, pedagogy and theory; Indigenous arts research; and community engagement in the tropical environment.

The school has also recently introduced undergraduate programs focussed on collaboration within and across contemporary arts practices, and has relocated to new purpose-built facilities suited to the support of both teaching and research in new media.

The group consists of thirteen teaching and research staff, with members undertaking projects typically concerned with two or more of the broad research themes above. The group's main aim is to pursue initiatives through which research conducted within the tropical environment will have positive impact on the region (as well as nationally and internationally).

The following projects illustrate some of the group's current and recent research activities.

### Sweet Crush audio visual project

Sweet Crush is the result of collaboration between photographer Clive Hutchison and composer Dr David Salisbury. This work spans areas of new media arts practice and community engagement in the tropical environment through development of an audio-visual work based on images and sound recorded within a North Queensland sugar cane mill. The project, conducted over the period of a cane season, explores a range of agricultural and industrial features of the growing and processing of sugar cane. Extensive fieldwork, including interviews with management and mill staff, together with on-location sound sampling, resulted in a body of works subsequently edited into a 12 minute DVD. This foci integrates digital imagery and a full audio composition. It explores and records the physical environment of the cane fields, the mill environs and machinery, and the freighting of the crop on small cane trains (all evocatively lit in a manner reminiscent of Fritz Laing's Metropolis), and the mill workers and community. Exhibited at Umbrella Studios and on location at the South Johnston Mill, this work has received significant acknowledgement for its contribution to the building of local community identity.

### PLaY+SPaCE music technology system

Research in the area of new media arts practice has resulted in Dr Steven Campbell's development of the PLaY+SPaCE proprietary music technology system, in collaboration with the University's Electrical Engineering Department. Using ultrasonic sensing, the system transforms an empty room or space into a musical instrument that can be played simply by moving within the space. As a non-tactile system, PLaY+SPaCE has resulted in varied application of the system within a number of creative works, including music performance, dance, and installations – as well as for disability access workshops.

Collaborative works developed for live music performances using the system include *Gabriella Takes a Bath* (2005), with Dr David Salisbury on live/processed flute (pictured) and *Sensience* (2006), with German saxophonist Ulrich Krieger. Others include a work for North Queensland's professional dance company Dance North, *Opposites Attract* (2004) – for seven dancers; and a piece for Cairns-based group Bone Map, titled 'Body Blow' (2008), for a solo dancer.

Works undertaken using the PLaY+SPaCE system also focus on the theme of community engagement in the tropical environment. Examples include a *H20*, a collaborative installation featuring Brisbane poet Jayne Fenton-Keane (2005) and exploring marine themes; *Flow*, an installation developed for Townsville's annual River Festival (2002); and *Come Home*, an exhibition of artworks arising from a workshop conducted by artists with children from three local primary schools (2007).

### The Pool is a model for the learning and teaching of digital design

In the area of new media arts pedagogy, doctoral candidate Ms Katja Fleischmann is developing and implementing a new cross-disciplinary learning and teaching model in collaboration with the University's School of Information Technology. The model aims to manage the increasing complexities of digital design technology through the 'pooling' of expertise from industry figures and from academics within the university's design and IT departments. In response, students are formed into 'learning pools' to utilise this teaching expertise and to draw on each other's skills and knowledge to solve problems and realise projects in ways consistent with team-based industry practice.

### Advancing opportunities for Torres Strait Islander Artists

Understanding the position of Indigenous art practice within an Australian context is the focus of Dr Stephen Naylor's research. His doctoral work on mapping Australian contemporary art presence in the Venice Biennale has established a strong correlation with the rise of Indigenous art in Australia. Since moving to James Cook University in 2005 Dr Naylor has focussed on researching the significant practices of Indigenous artists from the northern region of Australia, particularly the Torres Strait Islands. Together with colleague Dr Julie Gough, Dr Naylor recently presented a collaborative paper entitled, 'Circuit breaking? Indigenous Australian art and critical discourse', at the 32nd International conference in the History of Art. In this paper, the authors argued that: '…despite the obvious acclaim and renown for Indigenous works there is an increasingly marked absence of critical engagement with Indigenous Australian art; the gap intensifying with the acceleration of art being produced nationally, from remote and urban locales'.

Professor Ryan Daniel
Dr Steven Campbell
Dr Stephen Naylor
Dr David Salisbury
Mr Clive Hutchison
Ms Katja Fleischmann
Mr Russell Milledge

# ARTEMIS
## (Art Educational Multiplayer Interactive Space)

www.artdes.monash.edu.au/


Art & Design history is taught mainly by lectures and tutorials throughout the world. At Monash, we decided to supplement this time-honoured convention, offering history and critical theory by means of a game in first year, a multi-user virtual environment in which players face challenges and complete a quest. The game developed has been very satisfying for students and tutors and has found international acclaim.

Robert Nelson and I decided to try a radical idea: a virtual game to help teach history and theory of art and design. Together with a small start-up company called Millipede (my former students), in 2006 we built a small proof-of-concept named ARTEMIS (Art Educational Multiplayer Interactive Space). The following year we tested the game on willing students, and, on the strength of results we bid for research funding.

Modest success in this allowed us to create a functional prototype for helping students engage with what may arguably be the least approachable level in learning about art history, namely, ancient Greece. The prototype, further tested on students in 2008, is a multidimensional, virtual architectural template, created as an experiential space that embraces and promotes contemporary learning. As a result of our efforts and faith, we can now prove that ARTEMIS has breathed new life into the teaching and learning of the history and theory of art and design. We have been particularly rewarded in ARTEMIS winning the international honour in 2008 of Interactive Media Award (IMA) 'Best in Class' – with a score of 498 out of 500. From the outset, the project was conceived as being both a research investigation and an educational strategy. Thus far, the investigation has yielded two scholarly papers (with more to follow) outlining the educational theory and design underpinning the game.

### What we came up with

To support current teaching and learning approaches to the subject, we created an online application: a navigable virtual world and game imbued with personalities, text information windows, objects, artefacts and structures – related to different epochs in the history of art and design. Students, represented by avatars, explore and progress within this environment by completing quizzes and quests. Game play is challenging, fun, adventurous, and quest oriented. A particular feature is live-chat, which promotes player-to-player collaboration.

The game is for first year students whose knowledge of art and design history is assumed to be relatively limited. Stemming from our recognition of the way undergraduate history of art and design students embrace and regularly use online technology, we thought an online game might be an excellent way to help learning. We consulted other teaching staff, who responded that they thought our project was innovative, with strong potential to enliven and refresh the subject.

### Methodology and educational philosophy

The guiding principle for ARTEMIS was to divide the learning experience into three tiers: facts, concepts and skills. Facts: this tier includes historical, archaeological, chronological and cultural content to shape the virtual architectural space and provide students with a milieu within a particular epoch (ancient Greece for this particular prototype). This level is the mise en scène by means of which students are immersed and transported in space and time into a fantastical world that is alive. This environment becomes an engaging encyclopaedia and terrain for exploration. Though this engagement does not by itself achieve the main learning objectives recognised by higher education, it does promote recognition by students of key historical works of art and design and the way they fit within the appropriate cultural climate.

**Concepts:** the raison d'être for studying the creations and artistic pursuits of the epoch also needed to be fused with the game-play. To achieve this, a series of quizzes, supported by pop-up dialogue boxes with graphics, text and external web links were attached to game progression. Mostly styled as 'mix and match' quizzes, two columns of jumbled statements (sometimes with visuals) need to be sorted to correspond correctly. This enables students to read, reflect, analyse and make connections between technical, aesthetic, spiritual and ideological aspects of the era studied. Correctly completing a quiz will facilitate game progression and reward a student with bonus information in the form of further text excerpts, interactive slide shows or valuable conversations with in-game characters. The cumulative effect of engaging in these activities is that students forge a worldview of the specific epoch and how it relates to the appreciation of historical and contemporary art and design spheres.

**Skills:** an important innovation within the interface design is the inclusion of a pop-up journal or visual diary to monitor game progression, house solved quizzes, and note and archive visual information from key areas visited. It is common (often mandatory) for art and design students in higher education to maintain visual diaries. The pop up journal enables them to take notes both visually and in writing for later development within studio-based subjects. As a familiar resource, the ARTEMIS diary becomes a simulation of real world activity students can refer to and even print from. The online diary thus also promotes students' development of good note taking habits and a strong work ethic, both central to successful creative endeavour.

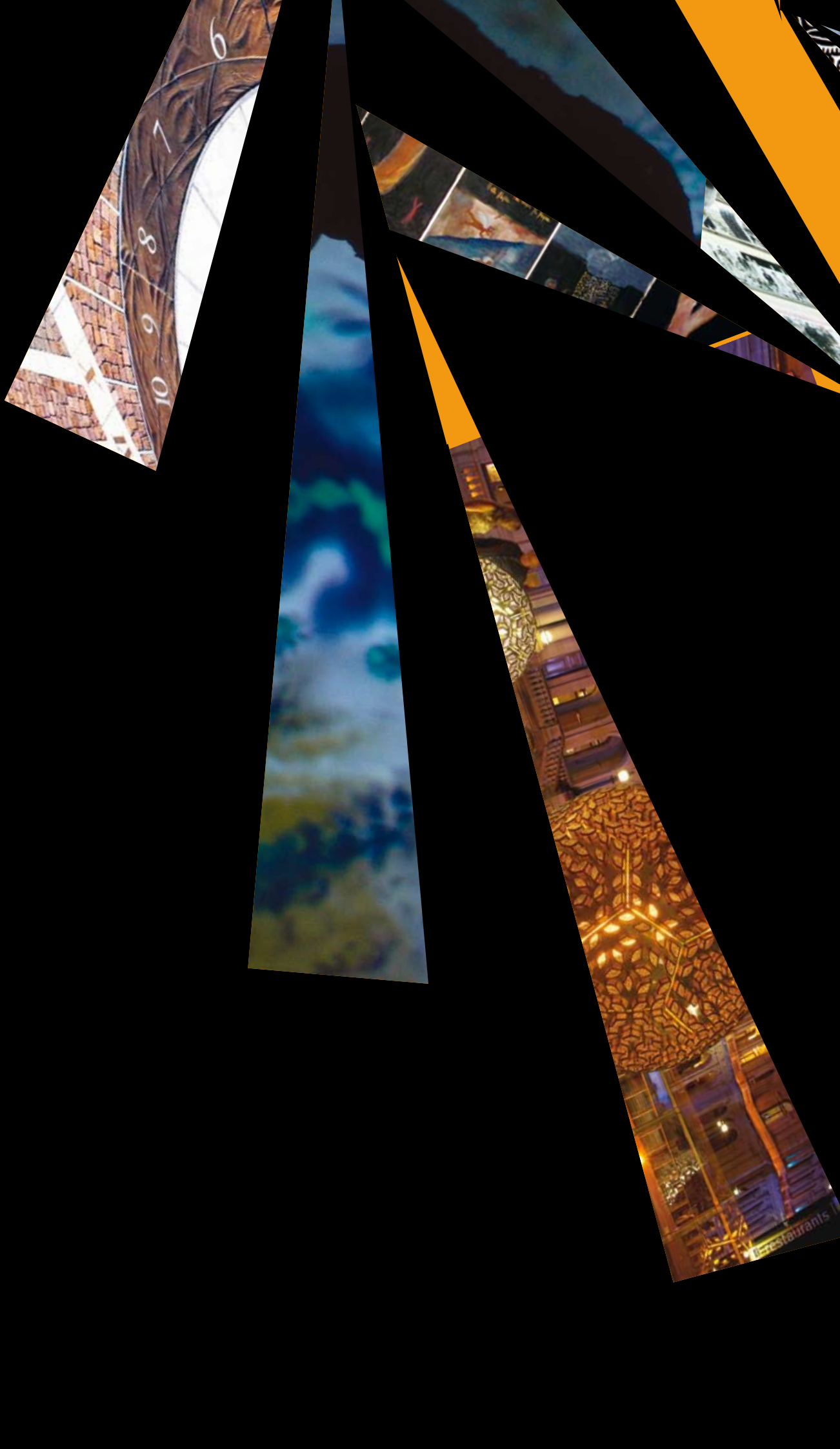
The ability for students to write acceptable and assessable visual critique is another core skill promoted through engagement with ARTEMIS. Development of this ability is supported in level one through completion of a 'virtual essay'. This involves students engaging with a 'model' essay presented in quiz form, and provides the ultimate challenge enabling progression to level two. The essay structure and content are predetermined, with the objective being for the student to distinguish correct from incorrect content. Self-generating paragraphs of text require users to choose a phrase from two options. Once a selection has been made, new sentences appear presenting further choices. Users are not informed (at this stage) as to whether they have made the correct choice. Effectively this strategy functions as a disguised multiple-choice test to promote understanding by students of the need for logical structure and methodology in the documentation of visual analysis.

## Outcomes

The second iteration of ARTEMIS has produced a robust and pedagogically enhanced prototype using the 'proof of concept' phase as a scaffold. In developing the game, we have noticed the iterative nature of the design process - and our experience highlights the value of testing and feedback from student users, educational content experts, lecturers and tutors. Survey results show ARTEMIS is viewed by students and academic staff as potentially adding value to learning. ARTEMIS is an accessible online e-learning asset easily incorporated into lectures and tutorials.

Responses were recorded as part of a formal survey after ARTEMIS was tested on a cohort of over 200 students in March 2008. Eighty percent of students surveyed believed ARTEMIS to be of educational value, while 76% found it challenged and stimulated interest in the art and design of ancient Greece. Expressed negatively, 92% said ARTEMIS did not 'put them off' learning about the art and design of ancient Greece. Ninety-six percent thought ARTEMIS could be a useful learning tool and 82% responded positively to the suggestion that an online game like ARTEMIS could be appropriate for tertiary level education.

Mr Jeff Janet
Associate Professor Robert Nelson
Dr Melissa Miles



## An Audience with Myself
Mapping – Unmapping Memory

www.nas.edu.au/

Jumaadi's project is an interdiscplinary exploration in mixed-media of cross-cultural experience. Informed by Indonesian oral and visual folkloric traditions and modernist avante-garde aesthetics, the project engages with contemporary identity politics in which the individual, the family, the village, communal memory and the environment are interwoven with larger issues of national identity, post-colonialism and globalisation. Jumaadi's 'audience with himself' is an autobiographical expression of longing and belonging that documents his memory of his Javanese village in order to offer evidence of what has changed, and what has not, within himself and the world. Combining Indonesian and Australian iconography, Jumaadi has developed a highly idiosyncratic visual language of symbols, myths and metaphors, familiar and yet foreign, the apparent simplicity of which discloses a complex narrative rich in suggestion that communicates with layered meanings the ecological, political, social and aesthetic changes he has experienced.

Jumaadi is a 38 year old painter, poet and performance artist from the Javanese village of Pecantingan. In the years before his emigration to Australia he had been a very active participant in the cultural life of the area. He wrote complex poetic narratives for theatre and performance groups and developed skills as a grass puppet-maker in order to enrich the telling of these narratives. Painting, in the western sense of a contained representation, was not, at that time, a major factor in his creative output.

Jumaadi settled in Sydney in 1998 and began studying Fine Art. He is currently completing his Master of Fine Arts (in painting) at the National Art School. He maintains close links with Indonesia and makes frequent visits to his family and village. Pecantingan is only 10km from the edge of the mud spill that in May 2006 swallowed about twelve villages after a mining incident that left 12,000 people homeless. This disaster, and the 2004 tsunami, prompted many questions for Jumaadi, leading him to wonder about the nature of creation and destruction, death, love and hope, in relation to his homeland. To document his feelings and express his emotions he produced a series of small drawings and watercolours of the bodies of pregnant women floating on water. Impromptu and automatist in character, Jumaadi's working method is fast and informal, a spontaneous creative energy from the subconscious that manifests in imagery imbued with such powerful symbolism and semiotic complexity that it is able to operate on a variety of metaphorical levels. The resultant layers of meaning within the work render his particular vision, although personal and idiosyncratic, with a universal significance.

A desire to embrace and preserve his memories of his village and its folkloric traditions thus motivates Jumaadi's project, and his efforts to articulate his personal experience from the point of view of an artist working between cultures endows his project with a freshness and originality that reinvigorates the notion of research within an academic visual arts context. Indeed, it is a project that resists easy classification.

On the one hand, his project deals with the particular minutiae of local Javanese creative activity, of stories, poems and social interaction, and on the other with wider issues of globalisation and the dominance of western cultural practice and discourse. His project is thus located within a local Indonesian artistic tradition as well as within the contemporary context of displacement, dislocation and cultural identity that is the preocupation of much recent visual arts practice. At the same time, Jumaadi identifies with Australian Indigenous painters, such as Ian Abdullah, whose preoccupation with country evokes a sense of place that is at once personal, communal, spiritual and ecological in its concern with the past and the social and environmental threats of the future. Jumaadi addresses and elaborates upon these issues in his exegesis, which establishes a context for the project that brings together such Indonesian artists as Sujoyono Kerton, Hendra Gunawan and Dadang Christianto with a diversity of Western influences that range from Chagall to Frida Kahlo; Utrillo to William Robinson; and from Clemente to McCahon.

The recent death of his father has moved Jumaadi to record and preserve the stories of his village as told by his mother and friends. These stories provide the subject-matter of his drawings and paintings and have inspired his collaboration with poets and performace artists in Indonesia and Australia. Jumaadi's work embodies the notion of discovery rather than conventional ideas of research. But although it is not merely an illustration of a concept, the work is grounded in an informed awareness of the issues that, in terms of research, are aligned with conventional notions of knowledge acquisition. Jumaadi's methodology spans anthropological and ethnographic approaches to data collecting, such as interviews and conversations with the people of his village; the identification of particular symbols; and the performative interaction with his audience that draws on a variety of traditional oral, visual, and theatrical artforms and social practices.

Jumaadi's desire to not only preserve the traditional practices of his region but enlist them in order to communicate with a wider audience is underpinned by his awareness of the social role of the artist. In these terms, his work is a kind of visual poetry in which each image cannot be separated from its context in relation to the whole, a pictorial strategy by which meaning is generated as a cumulative process of reading the images as a form of text. In its execution and apparent simplicity, the work almost contradicts the sophistication of its agenda. In this project the work truly is the embodiment of the research; the result of a consistent engagement with and a sustained investigation of a cluster of deeply resonant issues – an approach that negotiates that fine line between conscious research and intuitive ceativity that is the hallmark of all creative practices. It is a true example of reflective practice.

Mr Michael Downs
Dr Ian Greig
Mr Bernard Ollis

# Activating Studio Art
## Collaborative Practice in the Public Domain

www.rmit.edu.au/art

Karen Forbes, *Rotating City* (2008)

Dianne Beevers & Andrea Tomaselli, *Piazza Italia* (2007)
Photo: Christopher Alexander Photography

RMIT School of Art values the studio experience and positions material practices as the core pedagogical model for learning in and through art. For all students art history and theory inform studio practice – which becomes more than mere skills and technologies – and studio practice is informed by its historical, contemporary and critical contexts in which the technologies of 'making' are located. The challenge for arts educators is to facilitate through studio art practice the changing paradigm from individual production to include the more collaborative and trans-disciplinary approaches emerging in creative industries.

[1] Green, C., *"The Third Hand: Collaboration in Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism,"* (Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 2001)

[2] Creek, G. & Perry, S., *"When Seeing Matters,"* (Paper: Second International Conference on the Arts, Kassel, Germany, 21-24 August 2007)

[3] Barberis, I., *"interview by author,* Melbourne, Australia, 8 July 2008

[4] Hogg, G., *"interview by author,"* Melbourne, Australia, 2 July 2008

Charles Green's (2001) study of collaborative practice in contemporary art posits the generation of a 'third persona' through collaboration. The 'third hand', as he suggests, alters the status of artistic identity – to the point of effacing the individual 'signature' of the artist entirely. He also suggests that collaboration manifests identity through production rather than through this signature.[1] The following three RMIT School of Art projects demonstrate differing pedogical models emphasising generative collaborations integrated into the conceptual framework of institutional studio practice.

*International Virtual Studio Project* (IVSP), 2005 - 2007, is a collaboration between sculpture students from RMIT School of Art and Chelsea School of Art, in London. Simon Perry, RMIT, and Gerard Wilson, from Chelsea, instigated the IVSP project using the Chelsea virtual-studio website, an online site presenting examples of virtual projects, exhibitions, reviews and image banks (www.chelseasculptureprojects.net). The *International Virtual Studio Project* involved an installation of student sculptural work and events at sites in Melbourne and London. These activities could be viewed both in real space and on the internet, broadcast via real-time webcam.

Each of the 2005 and 2006 projects spanned ten to twelve days. The beginning and end were relatively orchestrated, and included approximately 20 students at each campus. Intervening student-initiated actions, usually one-off activities by small groups or individuals, were improvisational and provisional. All outcomes were webcast in real-time. Some were short, others extended over 24 hours. For example, for the event 'Saucepan/Teabags/Eggs' (2006), web cameras framed the London and Melbourne studios as contiguous. A blackened saucepan was closely framed; with one half left of screen in Melbourne, the other right of screen in London. Using word-play, a montage of scenes played out with students and staff arranging themselves in perspective as a 'mixed stew' in a common pot. A third iteration of this project in 2007 involved an exchange of 43 short video works posted on a weblog (with links to Youtube) within a loose dialectical structure. In essence, a work from one group arose in response to a video produced by the other, with the resultant montage viewable on the web.

Web-based practices enable students to draw on their individual skills to collaborate in producing networks and new ways of learning – in the process, involving audiences in ways that alter notions of both collaboration and spectatorship. Greg Creek and Simon Perry suggest that developing creative partnerships between well-matched student peers operating in different contexts – using technology as a means of bringing real time audiences into the pedagogical domain – may enhance relations between the academy and the broader community.[2]

*Activating Dormant Spaces*, 2008, is a *Metasenta* Project within the RMIT University Design Research Institute. Dr Irene Barberis, director of Metasenta, initiated The Drawing Space, Melbourne, as a response to her perception of the need for establishment of a 'mobile gallery' capable of exploring the potential and parameters of drawing in a global context – particularly through 'activating dormant spaces'. One example involved a staircase converted into a three-storey site for the investigation of international drawing. Aligned with the philosophy of London's 'Drawing Room', this project resulted in works being exhibited by international and Australian artists working with a variety of disciplines. For example Tony Trehy, a conceptual poet and director of the Bury Museum, Manchester, exhibited *Mirror Canon Snips*, a minimal, text-based work resulting from 'virtual' instructions sent by Trehy and interpreted and transcribed by Honours drawing students.

Also as part of this exhibition project, Karen Forbes, an artist from Edinburgh College of Art, visited Melbourne (with funding from *Activating Dormant Spaces* and the *Metasenta*) to work with students. The resulting work, *Rotating City* (2008), was transformed from AutoCAD format to hand drawn line - exploring tensions between different modes of visual representation. Forbes initiated the work in response to discussions with five drawing major students from the Bachelor of Arts program. The studio provided an environment in which students researched, transcribed and generally engaged with the artist's ideas – whilst collaborating with each other to realise the final work.[3]

*Piazza Italia,* 2007, is an urban public precinct commissioned by the City of Melbourne to recognise Italian migration to Australia. In activating this complex public art project, a multi-faceted collaborative approach was key. Artists Dianne Beever and Andrea Tomaselli commenced their collaboration through undertaking the Masters of Arts: Art in Public Space program. Working within a studio environment enabled the artists to become familiar with each other's methods and to develop synergies between their differing approaches and skills. Andrea contributed architectural, craft and building skills derived from training he received in Italy, whilst Dianne drew on a solid knowledge of the local urban context. Together they created a practical and theoretical framework for building a complex exchange between the cities of Melbourne and Trentino, Italy, which eventually even included Italian and Australian stonemasons working with the artists on the final piece in situ. The underlying principles and design philosophy for the project were supported by a program of master classes in porphyry cobblestone paving, hosted by the RMIT Art in Public Space program. Learning was developed through reflection on artistic practice, specifically through working at a high level with a leading industry partner, the City of Melbourne.

*Piazza Italia* demonstrates the value of collaborative studio-based art practice for developing effective approaches to urban planning and the commissioning of public art. *Piazza Italia* received the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (Vic) Presidents Award in 2007.[4]

The projects above demonstrate how studio-based collaboration between individuals and groups may open a 'transitional space' in which participants can both contribute their individual skills and experiences and share in the ideas of others. This shared space of experience and creativity promotes students' understanding of how good workshop skills, productive networks and collaborative relationships with peers (including shared studios), and sound research translate into effective professional practice in the public sphere.

Mr Mark Edgoose
Dr Irene Barberis
Mr Greg Creek
Mr Geoff Hogg
Mr Simon Perry
Ms Clare Leporati

# Victoria Harbour Young Artists Initiative
## VCA Sculpture & Spatial Practice in Contempora2

www.vca.unimelb.edu.au/

Aerin Langworthy and Rachel Bauman, *AS4602*, Existing pylons safety vests

Marcin Wojcik, *Flicker*, steel, polycarbonate sheet, ball bearing for rotation

The Victoria Harbour Young Artists Initiative involved seven undergraduate students from the Victorian College of Art's Sculpture & Spatial Practice course participating in *Contempora2* a major annual outdoor sculpture exhibition in Melbourne's Docklands precinct. The main part of the exhibition is competitive entry, and in 2008, 34 artists took part. Selection of students for entry in the Initiative component of the *Contempora2* exhibition was run as a parallel process within the Sculpture & Spatial Practice course. This way students could gain first hand experience of what is involved in working within the public domain: making artwork to full professional, technical and safety standards; working within budget; and placing the work in situ. The project operated as a real world exercise in applied research, involving development of a proposal to be presented to a panel as a feasible and desirable component of a major public exhibition, then to be constructed and completed. Students were responsible for all aspects of the project, including raising in – kind support for their projects and for the catalogue publication.

For two weeks in April 2008, students from Sculpture & Spatial Practice, VCA, exhibited their works as part of *Contempora2*, an outdoor public sculpture exhibition at Docklands. The main exhibition featured 34 artists, while the student component had seven, drawn from the second and third year undergraduate groups. The exhibition was sponsored by Lend Lease, Victoria Harbour, the City of Melbourne, VicUrban, and Melbourne Docklands.

The aims of the project were: to help undergraduate students develop an understanding of an artwork as representing a form of knowledge held in the public domain; to teach research methods, presentation skills and delivery techniques by means of real-world experience as a form of applied research; and to infuse teaching with the values of art research by acquainting students with kinds of research typically employed by artists (including propositional response, design development, fabrication, installation, documentation and publicity).

Within the discipline of Sculpture & Spatial Practice, Dr Marie Sierra (head of discipline) and Mark Stoner (lecturer), decided to align the project as closely as possible with the realities experienced by artists participating in professional competitive exhibitions. They called for entries, provided a brief and hosted site visits to the Victoria Harbour area on the south side of Docklands. In response to a deadline, students developed and submitted proposals that were assessed by a panel of academic staff. Proposals by seven students were commissioned, following which negotiations commenced with Lend Lease, developer of the Victoria Harbour site, as to where and how the final works would be installed.

Although the call for entries occurred before the academic year began, students were only able to work on the project after classes began in February, leaving them six weeks to take the work from concept to delivery. Placing sculptural works in the public domain raises many issues, and in the case of the Docklands site these included 24-hour public access, public safety, opportunities for vandalism, transport of works to and from the site, insurance, engineering certifications for the building of works and their siting, and risk assessment. Students worked closely with Sculpture & Spatial Practice academic and technical staff to address each issue. They also met regularly with the Lend Lease project manager and safety officer, and many also developed private and in-kind sponsorship. It was a steep, fast learning curve about the 'real world' aspects of making and placing sculpture in the public domain.

All students drew on the experience and skills they gained in undertaking Sculpture & Spatial Practice to approach the site with sensitivity and conceptual rigour. Ren Gregoric and Natalie Holloway realised *No Artificial Colours*, a slice of stadium seating facing the scene of the waterfront. Marcin Wojcik made a large zoetrope titled *Flicker*, which, when spun, altered viewers' perceptions of the surrounding environment. Both works took the larger context of the Docklands site as their subject, examining ways in which it could be constructed – or deconstructed – through the gaze.

Aerin Langworthy and Rachael Bauman collaborated on two works. In one, *Faux Sprawl*, they used artificial plants to mimic the site's drought-resistant plantings. The work was a clever, liminal statement on the relation between the real and the artificial, and the role of both

within new urban developments such as Docklands. Their second work, *AS4602*, involved the dressing of some existing wooden piles in the water (the relic of a previous pier) in bright orange safety vests, commemorating the men who had worked at the site over the years. As the exhibition occurred during the ten-year anniversary of the Waterside Workers dispute, this was a timely tribute. Similarly, Klara Kelvy's *Ship to Shore* used a shipping container to house a small museum, comprised of personal memorabilia contributed by waterside workers she had befriended in the course of her research.

Benjamin Woods' work, *Stromatolites*, re-imagined the earliest known formations of biological life. His lumpy, organic sculptures were perched on a knee-high ledge not far from the water, from which they appeared to have impossibly crawled. Made of polyurethane, they commented on the ubiquity of such plastics in our contemporary lives, and on the role these 'new molecules' play, both positively and negatively, within our ecological well-being.

The exhibition, which ran for two weeks, played an important role in showcasing the work of emerging artists undertaking critically-engaged art in the public realm. This has traditionally been the domain of established artists able to produce a constant stream of works, some of which find their way into the public realm. By contrast, the students from Sculpture and Spatial Practice developed their works through applying a research-based, propositional, relational and quick-response approach. This allowed them to respond in an agile, innovative and perceptive way to the challenges of working in public space. Taking planned and well-researched risks, the rewards for students were significant.

Dr Marie Sierra

# The Papunya Partnership

## A New Paradigm for the Researching and Teaching of Indigenous Art

www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/

The teaching of Indigenous art has long presented difficulties for colleges of art and design. The massive infusion of Indigenous art over the past few decades has revolutionised contemporary Australian art, yet the problem of how to engage a predominantly non-Indigenous student and teaching body with Indigenous art has remained largely intractable. Our students, like Indigenous art audiences, hunger for an 'Aboriginal experience' unmediated by non-Indigenous 'experts', but the conventional strategy of engaging an Indigenous academic with a specialisation in Indigenous art to fill the curriculum gap has rarely proven successful. Indigenous artists are many, but Indigenous art academics are all too few. At the College of Fine Arts, a new researcher-led strategy for engaging Indigenous artists and communities in the life of a leading institution for the teaching of art and design is yielding promising results.

COFA's evolving partnership with the remote Northern Territory Aboriginal community of Papunya has a unique point of reference in COFA's history. In 1963-6, COFA's site was home to Alexander Mackie Teachers' College, where a thoughtful young man was training as an art teacher. Geoffrey Bardon, whose name, like Papunya's, is synonymous with one of the most remarkable artistic developments of the late 20th century, received his Teacher's Certificate from the NSW Department of Education on January 1st 1969, and a Diploma of Art (Education) signed by John Coburn as Head of the National Art School and W.E. Hart as Principal of the Teachers' College on 31st December 1971.

'During 1971, Mr Bardon satisfactorily completed a prescribed project to satisfy the requirements for the award of Diploma.' Over that same period the Papunya Tula painting movement was being born in the back of Bardon's Papunya classroom. His encouragement of the 'painting men' grew out of a fascination with Aboriginal graphic design nurtured in the classrooms of Alexander Mackie. Unusually in the 1960s, his Teaching Methods for Art History lecturer Ellen Waugh always began her account of Australian art history with Aboriginal art – and also told her students to take whatever their students were interested in as a starting point, a method Bardon followed in his encounter with Aboriginal visual culture in Papunya.

Michael Jagamara Nelson was a young married man working in the Papunya Council office when Bardon came to teach at Papunya school in 1971, and though he observed the painters from a distance, it was more than a decade before Papunya Tula Artists had resources to take on new artists, Nelson among them, to carry on the tradition established by the company's founding fathers. Soon, he was the rising star of Western Desert art, designer of the Parliament House mosaic and an exhibitor in his own right in the 1986 *'origins, originality + beyond'* Biennale of Sydney (curated by Ivan Dougherty director Nick Waterlow). Papunya Tula's success spawned a network of community art centres across remote Aboriginal Australia and by the end of the '90s the founding Western Desert art company was the flagship of a multi-million dollar Indigenous art industry.

By the early 1990's, Papunya Tula was still providing support for the remaining Papunya-based shareholders, but had moved base to the Pintupi strongholds of Kintore and Kiwirrkura. Warumpi Arts, established by the Papunya Council in 1994 as a retail outlet in Alice Springs for Papunya artists' work, was abruptly terminated in 2004, leaving Papunya artists to fend for themselves. In desperation, Michael Nelson approached long time Papunya Tula researcher Vivien Johnson in late 2005 to ask her help in establishing an art centre for Papunya, independent of both Papunya Tula and the Council, for the sake of the community's young people. Johnson had been a regular visitor since 1980, and her longstanding friendship with artists and their families inspired the community's trust that she would respect their aspirations for their own art centre.

Johnson had recently started work at the College of Fine Arts as a New South Global Professor with a brief to help to lift COFA's profile in Indigenous art. Pondering the Papunya artists' impasse, Johnson had the idea of facilitating a partnership that might fulfil the agendas of both the Papunya artists and the College. 'Building partnerships with art colleges' to improve professional standards in the Indigenous art industry had for some time been a goal of Federal funding policy for Indigenous art centres, but to that point nothing had been put into practice. Michael Kempson of COFA's Cicada Press saw a way to involve his Custom Printing master class in working with Papunya artists in a series of print-making workshops held initially on campus and subsequently in Papunya. Several exhibitions of works produced in these sessions followed, culminating in *Papunya Tjupi: A New Beginning* at Ivan Dougherty Gallery in 2007. The Australia Council had provided funding for artists' materials and travel to the exhibition opening, enabling still more Paddington based workshops. Over $100,000 in sales was clocked up during the exhibition, from which the artists contributed $40,000 to top up a small grant from DCITA for the fledgling art centre.

In October 2007, the Papunya Tjupi Art Centre commenced operations in Papunya from a small house leased by COFA. Though the building may have been unprepossessing, more than sixty artists soon signed as members and by May 2008 a new Toyota Landcruiser purchased from a $70,000 'Indigenous Visual Arts Special Initiative' grant stood in the driveway. The start-up coordinator left, and in her place, the Papunya Tjupi management committee appointed COFA graduates Kasumi Ejiri and Simon Taylor as managers. In June 2008, a team of COFA staff and students stayed for a fortnight, taking delivery of a flat bed printing press donated by COFA. Local art centre trainees learned to operate the press as Ejiri, Kempson and his team of honours students conducted a week long workshop in relief printing and etching. An Art Education student also completed an internship at Papunya School which helped bring staff and senior students to the centre to observe their linocuts being printed, forging valuable links with Papunya's next generation of artists. During this visit, the art centre heard that Papunya Tjupi had received $130,000 from DEWHA, securing its future for another year.

In Sydney meanwhile, Michael Jagamara Nelson, who as Papunya Tjupi's inaugural chairman had been a driving force behind the establishment of the art centre and the building of the relationship with COFA, accepted an Honorary Doctorate from the University of NSW for his services to Aboriginal art and the Papunya community. Within the School of Art History and Art Education a new course is underway that will provide a professional framework to enable art, design and media educators to better understand the teaching of Indigenous culture and art. The approach involves fostering engagement between students and communities in ethical, consultative and collaborative ways. Based on the professional experiences of COFA students in the Papunya School and community, the course will provide practical preparation for a range of student cohorts (art administration, graduate researchers and art/design/media educators) to work in remote Aboriginal communities. This initiative dovetails with the objectives of the Federal Government's 'Closing the Gap' scheme to put more quality teachers into Aboriginal schools.

Back at the Art Centre, Ejiri and Taylor share the lessons of their art school training and assist Papunya artists to re-invent themselves for the new millennium. It is early days, but this marriage of art school resources and expertise with the aspirations of a group of artists whose lineage goes back to the founders of Australia's Indigenous art revolution seems set to bear prodigious offspring.

Professor Vivien Johnson

# The Creative Application of Knowledge

www.unisa.edu.au/art/

The Creative Application of Knowledge is a research project undertaken in 2007 by Ron Corso and Stuart Gluth, lecturers in Visual Communication at the South Australian School of Art, University of South Australia. It is an investigation of the potential for application within other disciplines of creative thinking methodologies employed in visual communication design programs.

The aims of the project, funded through a grant from the Division of Education, Arts & Social Sciences, were to: a) establish a definition of creativity that could facilitate its application within a variety of university disciplines and programs; b) counter common misconceptions about creativity (for example, that it is the domain of the individual and cannot be taught); c) trial and measure the effectiveness of methods for enabling creative knowledge and its application; and, d) identify exemplars for its promotion across and beyond disciplines (including within business and government).

Within this project we considered creativity to be a hierarchy of skills that are transferable and can be taught, all involving a restructuring of existing ideas, knowledge, technology and systems into new models and applications, leading to 'perception shifts'[1] recognisable as being innovative.

Pink,[2] Czikszentmihlyi,[3] Robinson,[4] and Sperry,[5] as well as various state and federal government bodies,[6] acknowledge that a new and more creative way of applying knowledge is required for a world in which education, business, politics, technology and society itself are rapidly changing. In our trials, we aimed to have students understand that creativity consists of such 'perception shifts', and to promote different ways for them to learn and consider creative knowledge, as well as to become aware of impediments to creative thinking.

[1] Jerome Bruner, *"The Process of Education,"* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960)

[2] Daniel Pink, *"A Whole New Mind"* (New York: Riverhead, 2005)

[3] Mihály Csikszentmihalyi, *"Implications of a Systems Perspective for the Study of Creativity,"* in Handbook of Creativity, ed. Sternberg, R. (Cambridge University Press, 1999)

[4] Ken Robinson, 1998, "*All our futures: Creativity, Culture and Education"* (The Robinson Report), (London: National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999)

[5] Roger Sperry, *"Consciousness, Neuropsychology and the Divided Brain,"* Neuropsychologia 22(6) (1984): 661 - 673

[6] Department of Education, "*Science and Training, Terms of Reference of the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council,"* (Canberra, Commonwealth Government of Australia, 1997); Department of Premier and Cabinet, South Australian Strategic Plan (Government of South Australia, 2007)

[7] Brandon Schauer, *"Interview with James Hacket,"* (Chicago: Institute of Design Strategy Conference, 2005) http://www.id.itt.edu/events/strategyconference/2005/perspectives_hackett.html

[8] Douglas Look, *"Interview with Roger Martin,"* Strategy 06 Conference (Chicago: IIT Institute of Design, 2006) http://www.1d.iit.edu/events/strategyconference/2006/perspectives_martin.php

[9] Clive Dilnot, *"The Science of Uncertainty: The Potential Contribution of Design to Knowledge,"* Doctoral Education in Design, Proceedings of the Ohio Conference, October 9 -11, 1998 (Pittsburgh: School of Design, Carnegie Mellon University, 1998)

James Hackett,[7] chief executive officer of Steelchase, and Roger Martin,[8] Dean of Management at the University of Toronto, have both argued that people in 'knowledge jobs' need the kinds of skills commonly used in design practice. They believe design skills offer a disciplined and focused process for generating creative ideas and solutions. Teaching such skills using studio-based projects involves students experiencing a number of processes, methodologies and attitudes – all leading to development of disciplinary 'knowledge'. Development of these skills, including problem analysis and idea generation (as well as the application and verification of ideas), starts with tackling less complex problems in order to give students confidence in taking on more complex ones.

In the academic programs in which we conducted trials, we used a group approach to explore curricula to determine aspects where problem solving or creative thinking were expected and desired but perhaps not fully realised. We then explored ideas, both collaboratively and with individuals, in order to encourage students to re-analyse problems – employing different approaches to produce positive (often unexpected) outcomes.

'Fluency', for example, involves generating different solutions, but without judging their correctness or worth, leading to ideas other than those that may be obvious. Indeed, there is no right or true answer in design, only a potentially infinite variety of imaginative possibilities.[9] 'Flexibility', on the other hand, involves restructuring given information to create new configurations, again leading to unexpected possibilities. 'Challenging assumptions' means exactly that – and involves analysis of patterns and habits, and the development of strategies to break them. 'Deconstruction' involves separating problems into parts, finding possibilities for solutions to these, then combining those solutions. This overcomes one of the biggest difficulties in creative problem solving – the idea that there must be a single, correct solution. Indeed, the expectation students will present a 'right' answer is pervasive within education, but by not being penalised for mistakes, students can find unexpected outcomes by building on different and partial insights.

An understanding of the need for creative collaboration is also crucial as we shift from a perspective that values the 'gifted' individual to one that values cooperative, 'conversational' models enabling a progression of ideas and encouraging development and application of 'intuitive' approaches. Indeed, intuition itself is not well understood – despite being highly overused as a term. The modelling of 'conscious' thought processes can certainly affect those that are 'unconscious' – the point is that we need to build students' confidence and trust by removing the pressures that often inhibit conscious creative thinking (right answers, time limits, judgements, fear of failure). Our project was tested in a variety of university learning and teaching programs, including entrepreneurial enterprises, event management, education, social work and creative writing. Our 'model' approach was to identify existing opportunities for the creative application of knowledge within a given course or program – in response to which we developed a specific intervention. For example, we often change the order or structure of lesson presentations in order to avoid 'inhibitors'. We also introduce active collaboration as a means of encouraging students to question and evaluate different ways of working.

In the Entrepreneurship course, for instance, we identified a 'lack of ideas' as a problem relating to the question of how to develop a successful business enterprise. Creativity was certainly expected in this course but there was little idea as to how this could be fostered or evaluated. We reordered lessons so legal and financial aspects that might be 'inhibitors' could be presented later, when they could be creatively considered in the light of what had been learned. Initially we had students examine motives for starting a business (surprisingly, money was not a common motive), analyse unmet consumer needs, and critique traditional understandings of what business is and does. All this meant students had to creatively consider many possibilities and approaches in order to develop ideas for a new business.

As a result of this intervention, survey responses received from students showed they had developed a new appreciation for the importance of creative idea generation, as well as an appreciation of the value of collaboration. Responses reflected that students also understood the importance of thinking of different possibilities; of accepting, even using, mistakes; of deconstructing problems; and of withholding judgement. Students also saw a need for this approach to learning to be embedded within the entire program.

Other trials have reflected similar results, however to better establish the effectiveness of the project, we developed a model to evaluate how student engagement with learning could be enhanced through approaches aimed at strengthening creativity. This model is based on formal feedback, but also uses informal data gained from students about their perceptions of their experiences – particularly as compared to their perceptions of previous educational experiences. It also draws on lecturers' perceptions of their students' level of engagement – again as compared to previous courses. We recognise however that there are differences between these groups' perceptions of the short term positive impacts following our interventions, and suggest that a model needs to be developed to measure effects as they unfold over the longer term, particularly following students' progress after graduation – whether they engage in further education or in the professional industry.

This project is a beginning, and our evaluative model is therefore to be seen as indicative rather than definitive of further potential. As an indicator however it has helped us understand more about the 'nature' of creativity and its implications for approaches to learning and practice. We have found students are more engaged in learning if offered the opportunity to exercise creative knowledge, working both individually and collaboratively across disciplines. We have achieved significant changes in students' perceptions of the qualities expected by industry of graduates – particularly in being able to apply knowledge effectively. All participating programs indicated they wished to make this a permanent part of their core curricula. Indeed, this was perhaps the most significant outcome.

This project suggests the need to include 'creativity' as an important qualitative element within a wide range of institutional policies, including graduate quality objectives. While the outcomes described above are promising, a lasting change to approaches to learning and teaching reflecting a commitment to truly creative knowledge and its application will require a strong and sustained commitment on the part of business, government and the academe.

Mr Stuart Gluth
Mr Ron Corso

# Second Skins

www.unisa.edu.au/art/

*Net 1*, pencil and graphite on Arches watercolour

*Lovelocked*, oil on linen

An exploration through painting and drawing of the symbolism of skins, surfaces and folds, using object relations theory. The exploration resulted in a body of works exhibited in Melbourne, accompanied by a catalogue with an essay by the author. The results of this research project also included a conference paper and an exhibition of art works – both presented in Oxford, UK, as part of a symposium on Sylvia Plath.

[1] Esther Bick (1968), *"The Experience of the Skin in Early Object-Relations,"* International Journal of Psycho-analysis 49:484 - 486

[2] Naomi Segal (2006) *"The other French Freud: Didier Anzieu – the story of a skin,"* A presentation given at the University of Sussex http://hdl.handle.net/10065/62, p. 4

[3] Amanda Robins, unpublished thesis *"Slow art: Painting and Drawing as a Meditative Process,"* 2006, p. 27, c.

[4] Esther Bick, *"The Experience of the Skin in Early Object Relations,"* International Journal of Psycho-analysis

[5] Didier Anzieu, *"The Skin Ego"* Tr. Chris Turner, New Haven 1989, summarized in Sylvie Conzoli, *"The Moi-Peau,"* Medicine Sciences, 2006 Feb. 22(2): 197 - 200

[6] Gilles Deleuze, *"The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque,"* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1994, p.121

[7] Didier Anzieu ibid

*'…her clothes should be firmly fastened, her shoes tightly laced…*
*Toys are not like me, they break to pieces and don't get well.*
*They don't have a skin. We have a skin!'* [1]

*'In the late 20th Century with a world running out of control, there is a need 'to set limits'; the typical patient [in psychoanalysis] is no longer a neurotic suffering from hysteria or obsessions, but a borderline case (that is, on the border between neurosis and psychosis) whose problem is a lack of limits. Maths, biology, and neuro-physiology have all become sciences of interfaces, membranes and borders, and embryology has shown that the ectoderm forms both the brain and the skin; thus the centre is situated at the periphery.'* [2]

When *Second Skins* opened in 2007, it was the culmination of many years research on the subject of skins, drapery and boundaries, including research begun and pursued through my PhD *(Slow Art: Meditative Process in Painting and Drawing*, College of Fine Arts, UNSW, 2006). The exhibition, accompanied by a catalogue with a self-authored essay, examined the idea of draperies and garments as skins and boundaries, both physical and psychological. Using object relations theory (particularly the work of Didier Anzieu), as well as the theories of Gilles Deleuze, I examined the symbolism of skins, surfaces and folds with reference to contemporary and historical works of art, and my own art practice. I have also explored the process of making work in relation to the use of objects and their surfaces to make reference to the body and its 'contents'.

After the opening of *Second Skins*, I completed new work that explored the same area but from different perspectives. This, along with the earlier work, served as the basis for a paper delivered at the Sylvia Plath Symposium in Oxford, UK, and formed part of my contribution to the group exhibition *Stilled* that accompanied the symposium. The paper *From Bell Jars to Nets*, examining the influence of Plath's work on my drawings, will be published in July 2007 in the online journal *Plath Profiles,* Indiana University Northwest.

The drawing *Net 1*, completed in October 2007 and forming the central piece in my contribution to *Stilled*, was also exhibited in the inaugural House of Phillips Fine Art Drawing Prize in Sydney in May 2008 (it won). In 2007, I was awarded an Arts South Australia grant to develop and extend my research into a further project based on the idea of containment.

Over the past five years, my practice has revolved around an interest in drapery, garments and fabric. The research culminating in and arising out of *Second Skins* explores and extends the investigation of the theme of garments and the body.

*The coats that appear in Second Skins are a kind of exploration of the inside of the body: 'When I investigate the inside of the coat, I can feel the slippery internal structure. What lies beneath is infinitely more interesting, broadcasting the narrative of construction, of manufacture – the vulnerability implicit in materiality. I am there to give an equal commitment to its existence, to examine it as a kind of gift, an acknowledgement. It always alludes to the body – to the interior of the body with its shiny palpating masses, the sea of the viscera.'* [3]

In our everyday lives, drapery, like skin, is a container for the body, an extra boundary, a second skin we choose to add to our surface. In psychoanalysis, the skin and the idea of the skin are particularly significant. 'The need for a containing object would seem…to produce a frantic search for an object…which can hold the attention and thereby be experienced as holding the parts of the personality together… this containing object is experienced concretely as a skin.'[4] Didier Anzieu posits the existence of an 'ego-skin' *(le moi-peau)* designating the fantasised reality a child uses in early development to represent itself as 'me', based on its experience of the body's surface. 'The child, enveloped in its mother's care, fantasizes of a skin shared with its mother: on the one side, the mother (the outer layer of the *moi-peau*) and on the other side the child (the inner layer of the *moi-peau*). These two layers must separate gradually if the child is to acquire its own me-skin.'[5] The point of connection and interconnection is mapped through a periphery that is not peripheral.

Working with drapery, we find that the fold can extend forever, its surface ever changing, its weight and depth leading us into space. Gilles Deleuze describes the Baroque fold, citing Zurbaran as a prime example:

*'Yet the Baroque … radiates everywhere, at all times, in the thousand folds of garments that tend to become one with their respective wearers, to exceed their attitudes, to overcome their bodily contradictions, and to make their heads look like those of swimmers bobbing in the waves. We find it in painting, where the autonomy conquered through the folds of clothing that invade the entire surface becomes a simple, but sure sign of a rupture with Renaissance space.'* [6]

Through the rupture with Renaissance space, the artist and the viewer become immersed in the absorbing materiality of the folds. Instead of looking into infinite space through the 'window' of the picture plane created by perspective, we are caught and held within the discrete landscape of the fold. Drapery here can contain the anxious gaze – the surface is the centre, the periphery becomes the heart. Space, folding into itself, reaches out to us, embodied/disembodied, materialised and embedded.

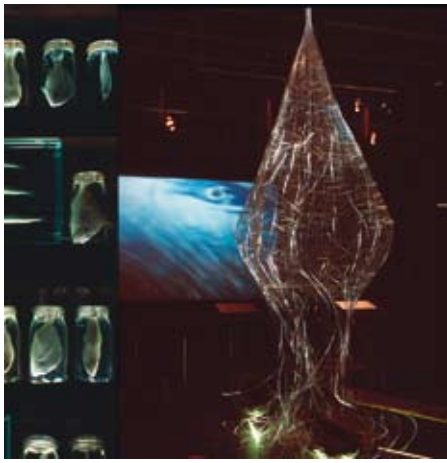
The empty garment in my artworks is a potential container, something in which we might rest. Its imagery is drenched in ambivalence – it is wanted and not wanted, desired and dreaded. The drapery/skin as it hangs before us has the potential to cover and re-create us, to provide us with a new perimeter or to hide and envelop us.

We project the body onto the image. In looking at it, we can participate in the violence of the gaze as it offers up and reveals the object to us. What was inside is brought outside, dissected, pinned and pulled apart. Is the skin a for cover for the true self, wrapping and deceiving, or is it a true expression of self, the concrete imprint of our being in the world? 'The skin is permeable and impermeable. It is superficial and profound. It is truthful and deceptive. It regenerates, yet it is permanently drying out.'[7] The skin 'cannot refuse an impression,' and it is seen and read as expressing our smallest felt experiences – even those too small (or too large?) to be held to the structure of language. Our 'micro' feeling states are all apparently projected onto the screen of our skin – or could it be that the skin is the feeling state, the core of our sensations?

Dr Amanda Robins

# How Does "Edgy" Research Foster Innovative Teaching?

www.usyd.edu.au/sca/



Anne Ferran: *INSULA: book 1* (detail), inkjet print on archival paper

Merilyn Fairskye: *CDG/#/1/sec* pigment print on rag paper

Robyn Backen: *Catching... the Harbour* (detail), sound, installation, sculptural and photomedia

At Sydney College of the Arts, we believe you bring your research into your teaching, not the other way around. So, how does "edgy" research foster innovative teaching? We have developed courses at SCA that reflect our strong interest in research-led teaching, making use of research and scholarship as a way to shape the learning experience of our students. This approach encourages imaginative student enquiry into the relationship between thinking and making, theory and praxis. Three case studies of research and teaching by SCA lecturers Anne Ferran, Robyn Backen, and Merilyn Fairskye offer a glimpse into how research leads to innovative teaching methodologies and creative outcomes for student learning.

### Narratives of Time

Anne Ferran's research has explored the changing nature of analogue and digital media in relation to the location and construction of historical narratives. The varied ways historical information is 'archived', and the definitions of the archive itself, are particularly relevant to her practice. Ferran traces, reconstructs and interprets the visual remnants of historical events through use of photographs, video, and digital media. As such, the physical presence of history and its place within Australia's cultural memory and identity are key areas of her research.

The various projects Ferran has undertaken with museums, collections, archives and sites have focussed on finding ways to bring out gaps and silences in historical and material records. For her, this is never a straightforward process, given her principal media – photography and video – are so dependent on the concrete and the visible. These projects have confirmed for her that so much of what is called subject matter or content is an outgrowth of the research methods used, and that the choice of research method is an intensely creative act.

This aspect of Ferran's research was showcased through her major solo exhibitions of the works *1– 38* and *INSULA* – mixed-media installations shown in Sydney at Stills Gallery and the University's SCA Gallery, respectively. Working with a small archive, discovered at the New South Wales State Library, of 38 female psychiatric patient photographs taken at Gladesville Hospital in the 1940s, Ferran drew attention to the way in which the personal identities of these women had been effaced by the institutional gaze of the camera within the hospital. The work presented closely cropped images, on walls and in book form, of hands and facial gestures appropriated from the original archival images, and brought these histories to light for the first time.

In her undergraduate teaching, Ferran has been able to bring this approach to the strand called Cultural Research, formerly known as Documentary. Students in Cultural Research tend to approach their individual projects in ways that are wholly content-oriented; they agonise over their subject matter and take their research method (photography) entirely for granted. Ferran reverses the relationship, making the development of creative and original research method/s the focus. Initially she asks each student to research a contemporary photographic artist and articulate not what their work means but what their research methods are. This is mind-bending for students. When they propose their own projects, she requires them to ensure that the research method is fully considered and as well articulated as possible. Once the method is established they begin to focus on the aesthetics, the interpretation and the final resolution of their work.

### The Science of Discovery

Robyn Backen's research explores the historical and contemporary crossovers between media arts in relation to science and technology. She has explored issues pertaining to Australia's geographical history through various processes of mapping, seeking to articulate the layers of memories held within the landscape. Moreover, her artworks often investigate the powerful currency of new technologies in terms of their endless need for renewal – a theme of use-value and obsolescence.

Backen's research provides a useful example of the ways in which media art can develop synergies with other disciplines and industries to illuminate Australian history, in particular, site-specific histories. The exhibition *Catching…the Harbour* resulted from Backen's collaborative work with Australian Museum archaeologist, Dr Val Attenbrow; Australian Museum marine biologist, Brooke Carson-Ewart, and project co-ordinator, John Kirkman. The exhibition pursued a social interpretation of the theme of Sydney Harbour. It drew attention to the Harbour's complex layers of Aboriginal history, underwater habitats, and diverse marine life, and the subtle relationships between them. Backen's sound, installation, sculptural and photomedia-based works created for the exhibition drew attention to the specific histories collected by the Australian Museum in the form of artefacts, whilst transforming these, along with representations of historical harbour locations,to extend their cultural significance in terms of Australia's national identity and Indigenous history.

For almost two years now, Backen has been coordinator of the Master of Studio Art, which has allowed her to guide students towards a deeper critical awareness of their evolving practices at postgraduate coursework level. She works with students from painting, sculpture, printmaking, ceramics, jewellery and glass. Backen translates the idea of constant renewal by encouraging her students to develop a practice that will sustain them after leaving the academic institution. This emphasis on renewal is then extended through study briefs. These correspond to ways of thinking about the professionalisation of practice in relation to a broad spectrum of industry demands and objectives. Backen encourages her students to consider the concept of installation art as a way of thinking through architectural space as it relates to notions of selfhood. In this way, site-specificity becomes a teaching methodology whereby Backen enables students to contextualise their work in relation to broader global issues.

### Global Roam

The interrelationship between the global geography and its virtual counterparts in internet and satellite navigation systems – continues to offer new ways for Merilyn Fairskye to consider the dynamics of subjectivity and space. The way our bodies move through space and how we map this opens questions concerning how we experience, locate ourselves within, and connect to, a particular sense of place. Her research has investigated the concept of place in relation to old and new media practices. She has explored the ways in which time, motion and connectivity between geographies and people have shifted in the light of both socio-political and technological change. Through this frame, she has looked at issues of nationalism and globalisation in terms of media communication and the politics of identity.

The nature of Fairskye's practice means that an extended period of informal development, then research, then further development, is usual. This process can include both extensive pre-production and the writing of grant applications and proposals for public commissions. Her studio methodology often starts intuitively – an accumulation of images over time, both still and moving; an informal archive of things that interest her - without a particular destination in mind. Eventually some of the images coalesce around a single image or sequence and a work takes shape.

This approach translates in implicit and explicit ways into her teaching in the undergraduate program at SCA. *Snap to Grid* was an undergraduate stream designed to facilitate increased understanding by students of the creative and expressive possibilities of the computer as digital darkroom/studio. The second semester included a component called Public Execution, which involved students in researching, conceptualising and visualizing individual site-specific projects not intended for actual construction. Students had to locate and research a site of personal significance, write a proposal, document the site through appropriate means, develop a concept, defend it, and then develop a model of the proposed artwork in situ, and finally produce a to-scale version of the actual artwork. Although real-life public art contexts and procedures were considered in detail, since students were working with maquettes, it was agreed money would (in theory) be no object. Adopting Fairskye's own video research methodologies, the use of a single image/motif as a starting point for conceptual development, students were encouraged to explore the interdependency of the still and moving image in relation to their chosen site of investigation.

Ms Anne Ferran
Ms Robyn Backen
Ms Merilyn Fairsyke

# Arrivals and Departures

www.alva.uwa.edu.au/

*Arrivals and Departures:* airport runways of the world mapped and translated as sculptural signature of place.

Philosopher Gilles Deleuze speaks of the 'the fold' as an infinite layering of existence correlating with the 'nomadic' experience of contemporary life.

Aircraft runways are structures that enable millions of travellers to physically transition between wildly disparate cultural and geographical locations – yet rarely have we a moment to notice them as they vanish into the distance. Viewed from an aerial perspective, runways read as motifs or emblems inscribed on the surface of the earth. Though they share a common function, each runway system is an individualised expression of, and response to, specific geographic and social conditions – presenting in this way 'signatures' of peoples and places.

In this creative research project, a number of airport runway systems were transcribed using computer aided drawing (CAD) programs. The resultant diagrams highlight the 'textual' quality of each airport, and when arranged on a page, a new 'alphabetic order' is created. Regional runways sit next to international, and while both exhibit a similar regard for functionality in allowing aircraft to take off and land, each conveys a singular 'character,' with a shape and plan reflecting specific cultural sensibilities.

In this creative research project, each runway scheme is translated into sculptural form. Materials and dimensions are selected which are specific to the 'identity' of each runway. The sculptural translations are made using specific materials indigenous to the geographical location of each airport; for example, the sculptural translation of Basel airport is constructed out of European oak, while Beirut airport is made from Lebanese pine and Tel Aviv is made from olive wood. Baghdad airport is in black rubber, while the materials used in constructing the translation of Western Australia's Shark Bay airport included shark cartilage, complemented by Reykjavik airport rendered in clear perspex. In all the works, a 'politics of difference' is explored as each runway creates an index of peoples and places.

The installation of these sculptural translations of airport runways connects these points of reference and suggests new destinations. Arrivals and Departures explores difference and sameness – between 'being over here' and 'being there'. The works created become playful, poetic and political explorations of a world in which we may travel from Uluru to Tel Aviv or from Shark Bay to San Francisco, or return from LAX to Parrapurdoo, in remote Western Australia, (population 90).

Variations on these works have been presented through exhibitions at Goddard De Fiddes, Perth; Helen Lempriere, Melbourne, and Lawrence Asher, Los Angeles.

Mr Jon Tarry

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