ARTISTS, CURATORS AND STUDENTS AT THE VENICE BIENNALE
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GRADUATE SHOWCASE (on page 56)
This year in June, five Australian artists, a curator, five postgraduate students and four undergraduate students will head to Venice to participate in the oldest and one of the most significant visual arts events in the world – the Venice Biennale. For Australia, this is an important achievement. But for one institution, to which each of these people can be connected, the achievement is even greater. Never in the history of Australia’s involvement in major international art biennales has one educational institution been so represented. The 53rd Venice Biennale is COFA’s time to shine. This issue of incubate has devoted 16 pages to the Australian artists, curator and students participating in the Venice event.

Shaun Gladwell, Australia’s senior representative in the Venice Biennale and graduate from COFA, is featured as the lead story. The national and international buzz around Gladwell and his riveting, street-smart art is considered by many to be unprecedented. Anabel Dean describes the remarkable achievements of this artist on page 7.

Selected by the Australia Council to curate the associated Venice Biennale show, Once Removed at the Ludoteca, COFA’s Felicity Fenner is about to fast-gear the careers of four other Australian artists. They include the nationally celebrated artistic duo of Claire Nealy and Sean Cordeiro, both graduates from COFA, Aboriginal artist Vernon Ah Kee and Japanese-Australian artist Ken Yonetani. Fenner, a lecturer and curator at COFA, is herself no stranger to acclaim after the success of her 2008 Adelaide Biennale. Anyone who saw it would expect no less of Once Removed (read more page 17).

Perhaps the most unique aspect of Australia’s participation in the 2009 Venice Biennale is the degree to which all parts of artistic endeavour, including the study and teaching of, will be represented. Traveling to Venice to support the installation of the Australian artworks are two groups of specialist art students. One group, on full scholarship supported by the Australia Council and COFA, will be integrally involved in the installation and presentation of the Ludoteca show. These COFA Master of Art Administration students include Bronwyn Bailey-Charteris, Marissa Bateman, Marcel Cooper, Rebecca Goosen and Danielle Hair.

The other group heading to Venice, including Jaine Cleary, Jessica Holy, Lisa Rumble, and Elizabeth Thorpe, is comprised of keen COFA undergraduate art education students. Tasked by the Australia Council to produce an educational toolkit on the Venice Biennale and Australia’s participation for use in all Australian schools, these soon-to-be art teachers are fulfilling an official role and will leave a lasting reminder of Australia’s growing artistic status in the world (see page 23).

Back in Australia, design takes centre stage this winter, with emphasis placed on the importance of sustainability. In her article Waste Not, Want Not, Gill Samuels speaks with two COFA researchers in the area of sustainable design, and asks: “How can design contribute to a better, more ecological world?” Rod Bamford and Katherine Moline provide insights as to the challenges and the possibilities in this area (see page 42).

As two highly successful design practitioners, Trent Jansen and Elliot Rich, both COFA graduates, discuss how design can drive greater environmental awareness and change patterns of consumer consumption. Their own distinctive output, Jansen’s objects (stools, lights and chairs) and Rich’s wearable art, directly reference environmental concerns of today’s society (see page 44).

In connection with Sydney Design 09, Liz Williamson, head of COFA’s School of Design Studies, and lecturer Rod Bamford will curate the exhibition Sustain Me (opening 29 July at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery). Their focus is on sustainable practice in the area of design. With a good mix of practitioners, including Japanese ceramicist Yoshikazu Hasegawa, Italian textile designer Luisa Cevese and New Zealand-based furniture and object designer David Trubridge, the show aims to be informative and educational across many fields of design practice. For anyone interested in the future of design, this is a show not to be missed (see page 47).

I hope you enjoy this issue of incubate.

Jo Bosben
Editor
Gladwell is not just well known, he’s probably the best known Australian video artist, and his creation of one video in particular, Storm Sequence (2000), is credited as the flint that sparked real interest in contemporary Australian video art.

“I can’t think of another Australian artist that has had the same kind of interest and focus,” declares Simeon Kronenberg, director of Sydney’s Anna Schwartz Gallery.

A conversation with Shaun Gladwell always has to be brief. From San Diego to Sao Paulo, the Sydney artist is astoundingly busy escorting his work around the globe. Next Stop Venice, where he will represent Australia in the 53rd Biennale.

Gladwell is not just well known, he’s probably the best known Australian video artist, and his creation of one video in particular, Storm Sequence (2000), is credited as the flint that sparked real interest in contemporary Australian video art.

Australia’s Representative in Venice - Shaun Gladwell
“There certainly have been many other Australian artists that have had wonderful international careers, but I don’t think there’s been anything quite like the focus that’s been on Shaun. It’s a great indication of the power of his images.”

Simeon Kronenberg, director Anna Schwartz Gallery.

Gladwell undertook his Bachelor of Visual Art at Sydney College of the Arts and then completed his Masters degree at the College of Fine Arts (CoFA). In 2001, he won a Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship to study at Goldsmith’s College in London and completed a celebrated residency at the Cite Internationale des Arts in Paris.

“It wasn’t until art school,” he says, “that I started to think about ways of collapsing my interest in various extreme sports into my art practice. There has been this crazy long conversation going on with art and life, or art and everyday experience, and I’m interested in that.”

Gladwell’s dialogue will continue at Venice, host to the world’s oldest and largest biennale. This will be the second time that Gladwell has represented his country at an acclaimed international exhibition. But, he confides, “it’s not like you’re selected to show and then all of a sudden there’s a beautiful calm that sweeps over the studio. It kind-of throws it all into gear. It’s a great challenge.”

This time, as the sole exhibitor in the Australian Pavilion, Gladwell will present his Maddest Maximus series.

From these heights, the western-suburbs boy, who might have become a professional skateboarder, chose to explore the creative possibilities of street sub-culture by transforming break dancing, BMX bike riding and graffiti art into virtuoso video performances. He loves the notion of drifting like a window shopper through urban space, fostering performance within landscape, while still maintaining a sincere interest in art history.

Kronenberg, predicts that Maddest Maximus will become just as important as Storm Sequence or Gladwell’s equally iconic Pataphysical Man (a much quieter video of a man spinning on his head on the floor with arms outstretched in a way that evokes Leonardo da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man).

For Gladwell, success is simply the means by which he is able to dedicate his life to his art. For now, he remains focused on ideas and production of video work with a dedicated crew of collaborators. “My work,” he says, “doesn’t intend to say anything in particular but is open to many possible readings. I leave the metaphors open but pregnant. I don’t try to be didactic or pontificating.”

Speaking of which, time for talk is up, and Gladwell must get on. The world is waiting.

Anabel Dean.
INHERITANCE

UNTIL JUNE 6
Tracey Moffatt’s photographic series, Scarred for Life, presents poignant and comic tableaux of dysfunctional family life. With these well known works for inspiration, Bridi Cole, Tamara Dean, Lex Grant, June Indrefjord, Bronok Kozka, Kaye Nee, Fiona Morris, Aaron Smith, Martin Smith and Toni Wilkinson use photography and video to explore the truism, “You can choose your friends, but you can’t choose your family.” Sometimes serious and sometimes satirical, Inheritance is a waste and full family album.

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

Rites of Passage in Art, Spirit and Life
28 MAY – 27 JUNE
Curator David Elliott. Artistic Director of the upcoming 17th Biennale of Sydney, presents one projected masterwork each by Susan Hiller, Anays Raudysereenwok and Bill Viola. As the title suggests, each artist focuses on mortality and death in their own unique way. Viola’s video, Hatsu Yume (1987), visually explores the classic dichotomies of light and dark, nature and culture, life and death. Raudysereenwok’s video, This is Our Creation (2005), questions the banality of our ideas about life and death. Hiller’s audio-visual installation, Magic Lantern (1987), includes a synchronised soundtrack of Latvian scientist Konstantin Raudive’s recorded ‘ghost’ voices.

WHAT

Large Art 1720 - 2009
UNTIL JUNE 13
This new exhibition looks at the way contemporary artists are exploring the classical dichotomies of light and dark, nature and culture, life and death. Curator Lyndal Bird presents a focused selection of pieces from every aspect of his career as an artist, from 1980 until the present. Large Art includes paintings, sculpture, performance and installation works, and a new sound piece, Chacoon, which what will perform live at certain times during the exhibition.

SYDNEY DESIGN 09

AUGUST 1 - 16
Sydney Design is Australia’s longest running design festival. This year’s Sydney Design 09 includes the best of both Australian and international design, showcased across an extensive program of lectures, exhibitions, tours, films and other special events. Sydney Design also showcases emerging designers through Young Blood: Designers’ Market and WORKSHopped. Young Blood: Designers’ Market is a chance to support Australia’s rising design talents as they sell a wide range of products. WORKSHopped, co-produced by the Powerhouse Museum, features Australian furniture, lighting and product design by emerging designers.

DOUBLE TAKE

Anne Laura Award 2009
UNTIL JULY 19
The Anne Laura Award is the first biennial award in Australia dedicated to mixing image and new media arts. This year’s Sydney Design 09 includes the best of both Australian and international design, showcased across an extensive program of lectures, exhibitions, tours, films and other special events. Sydney Design also showcases emerging designers through Young Blood: Designers’ Market and WORKSHopped. Young Blood: Designers’ Market is a chance to support Australia’s rising design talents as they sell a wide range of products. WORKSHopped, co-produced by the Powerhouse Museum, features Australian furniture, lighting and product design by emerging designers.

FINK FOSTERING DESIGN

JUNE 26 – AUGUST 30
As the creative force behind successful design firm F!NK, Robert Foster has also mentored numerous up and coming talents. F!NK Fostering Design presents a retrospective of the entire F!NK range alongside one-off objects designed by Foster and pieces made in collaboration with emerging designers such as Elisabeth Kelly, Sean Booth, Bronwen Riddiford, Rachel Bowak, Oliver Smith and Rhian Nicol. This exhibition was curated by Merlyn Gace and toured by Craft ACT.

LOUISA BUFARDECI

JULY 28 – OCTOBER 25
En-pal Austrash, Louisa Bufardeci, exhibits alongside Japanese artist, Zin Ito, in the MCA’s fourth ‘international pairing’ project. The exhibition is comprised of two simultaneous solo shows, rather than a collaboration, and Bufardeci has selected ito based on shared affinities. She presents selected to based on shared affinities. She presents selected works spanning an eight-year period, as well as a new site-specific floor piece made for the MCA foyer using statistical data about Sydney’s population.

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY
103 COWPER ST, PADDINGTON, NSW 2021
TUES - SUN 10AM – 5PM
www.acp.org.au

NAN DOUGHERTY GALLERY
55 GINZA AVENUE, PONSONBY, AUCKLAND
MON – SAT 10AM – 5PM
www.nan.com.au

NATIONAL ART SCHOOL GALLERY
151 DERBY ST, DARLINGHURST, NSW 2000
MON – SAT 10AM – 5PM
www.nas.edu.au/nas_gallery.htm

POWERHOUSE MUSEUM
10 Ulster Rd, Ultimo, NSW 2007
MON – SAT 10AM – 5PM
www.powerhousemuseum.com

ART GALLERY OF NSW
500 ULSTER RD, ULTIMO, NSW 2007
TUE – SAT 10AM – 5PM
www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au

OBJECT GALLERY
487 BONDI JUNCTION, SYDNEY, NSW 2022
MON – SAT 10AM – 5PM
www.object.com.au

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
48 DARLING ST, THE ROCKS, NSW 2000
MON – SAT 10AM – 5PM
www.mca.com.au

3K RADiUS
Incubate: Do you ever think, “Whoa Nellie, stop the horses, this is all going too fast?”

Cordeiro: They say that every overnight success is the result of ten years of hard work. So maybe we are slightly ahead of schedule. We visited the last two Venice Biennales and amused ourselves by asking, “what would we do if we represented Australia in the next Biennale?” Suddenly we found ourselves in that position. So in a way we were prepared.

Incubate: When did you first realise you wanted to become an artist?

Cordeiro: I decided to follow this path while destroying a friend’s refrigerator in Redfern back in 1993.

Healy: When I was secretly doing all the developing of my sister’s homework for her photography class at COFA. It occurred to me then that I did not have to be working in advertising at all, perhaps I should quit and go to art school.
What other careers (if any) did you consider pursuing as a child or young adult?

Chef, builder, garbage man, doctor, psychologist, soldier of fortune, engineer. Being an artist is one of the few professions that can combine a little of all these things if you like.

How did your family encourage (or discourage) your artistic ambitions?

After I dropped out of a Bachelor of Maths and Science my family built me a shed for me to get my portfolio together. Very supportive, even if wary.

My sister was there and she was having much more fun that I was in advertising.

What factors influenced your decision to study at CoFA?

I think I went to the open day and was very impressed by the equipment they had in the sculpture studio.

Most of our ideas get shelved in fact. But we do document that initial concept, it gets written down in a small black book. With time and reflection, kind of like a bottle of wine, the idea somehow matures with time. Usually the idea is tweaked by the other, and through the process of fabrication the idea changes so much that you can hardly feel that one of us owns the idea any more. On a practical level we have different skills and we both utilise these skills to see the project to an end.

What are some of the challenges involved in working together?

Too much verbal communication can destroy an idea. We tried an exercise or project where we created his and her libraries that were identical, and read the books at the same time. In time, we were hoping that our thought patterns etc would be the same, so that we could communicate without talking, and bring a more subconscious approach to the work rather than talking something to its death.

Do either of you have solo projects on the boil? Is this something you want to pursue?

We don’t really have enough time for solo projects! I do origami and cryptic crossword puzzles when I want to do my own thing. I also have a half finished kite that I started last year that is gathering dust.

I have my yoga practice. We had always thought that we would keep up our solo practices, but there just does not seem to be any time for it at the moment. Who knows? Maybe in the future this may emerge.

Your works seem to channel an urge to create order out of chaos; they embody a kind of taxonomy of the unquantifiable. Is this true?

Many of our works have an internal logic that dictates the way in which they are ordered. Often, the idea of movement is the starting point to the way we articulate the objects we work with. For instance, physical permutations derived from imagined economic or freight parameters may be the starting point within an installation or object. In a funny sense your reference to taxonomy is literally pertinent to the Greek meaning of the word, via French taxis (arrangement) and nomia (distribution). Much of our work is about the arrangement of distribution or the distribution of arrangement!

After Venice, what goals do you have left to achieve as artists?

Not really sure…. I always wanted to be the first artist in space. I’d love to do a residency on a space station. How cool would that be? Maybe a project that collects space junk. The US Strategic Command says there are about 190,000 pieces of space junk out there.

To get a gig that pays well.

Sean Cordeiro and Claire Healy will represent Australia at the VENICE BIENNALE in the group show ONCE REMOVED. Held in The Ludoteca, a former convent in the Castello district, opening in June. Their first child is due one month later.

ONCE REMOVED is curated by CoFA’s own Felicity Fenner and also features works by Vernon Ah Kee, Ken Topyright, Kim Tiddy. 12 NOVEMBER 2009. Both Sean Cordeiro and Claire Healy have Bachelor and Masters degrees in Fine Arts from the College of Fine Arts, UNSW.
In 2008, Felicity Fenner was looking for a suitable venue for her group show, *Once Removed*, which would form part of the Australian contingent at the 53rd Venice Biennale. The convent rooms of the Ludoteca had great artistic promise, but Fenner was momentarily more intrigued by the door in one wall. “What’s behind that door?” the curator asked the Italian official who was guiding her around proposed sites. As Fenner recalls, he opened the door to reveal the honey-coloured marble interiors of a 16th century chapel on a canal. “Oh,” I said, “is this available for hire?” He looked at me. “It would cost your country much money!” he said. Fenner smiles and continues: “That was it. Negotiations were on. I was madly emailing back home to the Australia Council saying, ‘Come on. You’ve got to find a way. We’ve got to have it.’” In the end, it didn’t cost too much money, and the canal frontage assured that Australia would have a more commanding position at the most important contemporary art show in the world. In some ways this anecdote is revealing. It provides an insight into a lively curator who is determined to make people take notice. The last time Fenner attracted such public attention was as curator of the 2008 Adelaide Biennial, *Handle with Care*. The exhibition drew unprecedented numbers and elicited high praise from one respected art critic, Sebastian Smee, who wrote in the *Australian* newspaper, “This year’s Adelaide Biennial is the best show of its kind I’ve seen.” It was an intense time for Fenner, who has been the senior curator of COFA’s Ivan Dougherty Gallery and a lecturer in the Master of Art Administration course at the College for many years. Following her success in Adelaide, Fenner was invited by the Australia Council to submit a proposal for a group exhibition of early-career artists at the 2009 Venice Biennale.

By then it was the last week of the Adelaide Biennial, and Fenner was in London at a Tate Britain conference talking about curatorial strategies in contemporary biennial exhibitions. “I was,” she recalls, “literally sketching up ideas on the back of my note pad, emailing artists to see if they would be in my Venice proposal, asking them to send images.”
Within a fortnight of Fenner’s return to Sydney, the Australia Council announced that she would curate a group show at the Ludoteca, and that CoFa graduate Shaun Gladwell would exhibit in the Australian Pavilion at the Giardini. Fenner’s ‘wish list’ for Once Removed included two other globally itinerant CoFa graduates: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro.

Life Span, their towering installation of 195,774 obsolete video tapes, will consume the convent chapel and nearly touch the Ascension fresco that adorns its ceiling. The video in this monolithic meditation on the meaning of life and spirituality has a viewing time equal to the average human life span: 66.1 years.

Brisbane-based artist Vernon Ah Kee (an Aboriginal Australian who also has Chinese ancestry) and Ken Yonetani (a Japanese migrant to Australia) complete the Once Removed line-up. Their personal experiences underpin two more installations, which focus on themes of social displacement and environmental ruin.

“My idea was to create a feeling of being slightly at odds with the world,” Fenner explains. “There will be a kind of suspension of disbelief in looking at all three works. They depict a slightly surreal reality and for me that has a nice resonance with Venice itself. Venice is like one big stage set. You persuade yourself it’s real, but it’s actually being preserved, propped up to stop it sinking under the water.”

Water, quite literally, threatens to claim one of the installations if the tide rises. “We’re hoping that the bottom layer of videos in Claire and Sean’s work will be resilient because it normally floods in Venice at the beginning of winter,” Fenner says. “There were 50 centimetres of water in there last year so it’s possible, in October, we could get some water.”
In different ways, water is equally important to the other artists. In Vernon Ah Kee’s Cant Chant, Aboriginal surfers reclaim the beach in Billabong board-shorts and Bolle sunglasses. Unmistakable reference is made here to the mass displacement of Ah Kee’s people and their continued experience of alienation from the iconic aspects of Australian cultural life. Ken Yonetani’s delicate sugar coated Sweet Barrier Reef sculptures explore the schism between man and nature. The coral in his Zen garden of sugar is dead. It’s a ghostly lesson on the human failure to recognise damage caused by disengagement with the natural world. “I guess we’ll need lots of cockroach baits and rat traps,” Fenner interrupts herself. “That’s my fear: the vermin in Venice in summer and the sugar sitting there for six months.”

Thinking about the practical reality of this exhibition reminds Fenner that no sugar sculptures or stacks of videotapes could have been delivered to Venice without the help of COFA. Fenner and five fully funded COFA Art Administration students will be on duty in the exhibition during the opening week: five days straight, eight hours a day. More than enough time to attract growing attention.

Anabel Dean
The Fate of Five

It was a challenge for Marissa Bateman to explain to an Italian baker that an Australian artist wanted him to make cakes that looked like sea urchins.

“And that was just part of the job,” says Bateman, “to plan and install the exhibition, Once Removed, at the Venice Biennale.”

“If I had finished my degree when I was supposed to, at the end of last year, I would never have had this opportunity,” Bateman explains. “It felt like destiny because I had to drop a subject last year to accept a job, which ultimately fell through, so I've been knee-deep in things I’ve never been involved with before, like talking about marine class plywood and climate controlled shipping containers, air versus sea freight, and how you might repair a damaged sugar sculpture.”

And cakes. “At the moment I'm frantically trying to contact Venetian bakers to get 30 cakes because Ken is doing six performances. His sculpture is about consumption and greed and so he gives these vivid coral-shaped cakes to the audience while they're walking around his Zen sugar garden.”

Bateman laughs, “I have checked with Ken to see if he's bringing his own cake moulds if worst comes to worst with the bakers.”

Bateman knows that the networking opportunities of the Biennale are beyond her imagination and she feels extremely grateful to COFA for funding her, and the four other student assistants, to travel to and stay in Venice. “I cannot explain how excited I am by it,” she says. “I cried when I found out that I was chosen. I've studied for seven years and I've always dreamed of going to Venice at the end of my university career. To be part of it now, it's as if the world is just so full of amazing opportunities and I could do anything.”

The team (which also includes Bronwyn Bailey-Charteris, Marcel Cooper, Rebecca Goosen and Danielle Hairs) needed to demonstrate strong academic performance, an aptitude for teamwork and some experience of exhibition installation, before being assigned to one of the five Australian artists exhibiting at Venice.

In assisting artist Ken Yonetani, Bateman has already been exposed to a mind-boggling list of logistical necessities. “I've been knee-deep in things I've never been involved with before,” she says. “The notion of how you engage audiences in contemporary art is confronting, and this is why it's such an interesting project.”

Kim Snepvangers, Head of COFA’s School of Art History and Art Education, says the innovative aspect of this strategic partnership between the Australia Council and COFA is its capacity to allow COFA art and design education students to engage in an authentic collaboration with key industry partners.

“On the one hand, the students act as the para-professionals working directly with the curator, the artists, outside agencies like the Australia Council, the advisory panel and other universities, to provide a resource for viewers of diverse ages, backgrounds and experiences,” Snepvangers says. “Everyone wants to know about it, but contemporary art is at times, confronting, and this is why it’s such an interesting project.”

The selection of three COFA graduates as artists at the Venice Biennale highlights the College’s crucial role in training the next generation of Australian artists, designers and theorists. But COFA’s contribution to the world’s oldest and most prestigious contemporary art biennale has gone even further this year with the production of an online Education Hub that provides direct engagement with happenings in Venice via a range of web-based resources.

Six students from COFA’s Bachelor of Art Education course have been chosen to work with the Australia Council on a national educational resource for young people and teachers. The resource will provide background and historical information about the Venice Biennale, Australia’s representation at the Biennale over the past 50 years and delve into the artwork of this year’s five Australian representatives. Interviews with Biennale artists and curator Felicity Fenner form a key part of the resource.

The COFA students have been researching and writing since late 2008 developing the content for the online resource, which will be hosted on the Australia Council's Venice Biennale website. In addition to the online Education Hub, a printed visual resource, made possible by a partnership between the Australia Council and COFA, will be distributed nationally to 12,000 schools and tertiary institutions.

One of the Art Education students, Elizabeth Thorpe, extols the virtues of this thought-provoking initiative. “I’ve found it really challenging to have to start from scratch and turn our research into a useful resource for teachers and students and those without an arts background. It’s been a real eye-opener. You have to think very differently because it’s nothing like writing an art essay or a critique of a show.”

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Kim Snepvangers

It will be an important learning curve for students who, with the guidance of Senior Lecturer Dr Gay McDonald, must put into practice the real world application of contemporary ideas. “The notion of how you engage audiences in contemporary art in an exhibition like this is challenging,” Snepvangers says. “Everyone wants to know about it, but contemporary art is at times, confronting, and this is why it’s such an interesting project.”

The COFA art and design education students involved in the development of the Online Education Hub are: Jane Cleary, Jessica Haly, Sally Leaney, Lisa Rumble, Teli Seidman and Elizabeth Thorpe.
MAIN GALLERY

Design Now! is Object’s annual graduate exhibition that presents the best and freshest work of Australia’s up and coming designers. Design Now! 2009 will showcase the work of the 18 finalists selected from over 200 applications.

Object Gallery 18 April – 21 June 2009
Melbourne Museum 14 August – 22 November 2009

Design Now! 2009 presented by Object Gallery Major Sponsor Living Edge

PROJECT SPACE

seize|collide explores the function and uses of visual communication within culturally diverse contexts.

Object Gallery 18 April – 21 June 2009

www.object.com.au

Object Gallery: St Margaret’s 417 Bourke St Surry Hills NSW 2010
Phone: +61 2 9361 4511 Open 11am – 6pm Tues – Sun (Closed Mon) FREE ADMISSION
Object Office: 415 Bourke Street Surry Hills NSW 2010
Phone: +61 2 9361 4555 Fax: +61 2 9361 4533 Email: object@object.com.au

Object: Australian Centre for Craft and Design is a non-profit organisation supported by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments. Object is assisted by the New South Wales Government – artsNSW, and its Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.
Many teachers in the late 1980s embraced the computer, but the dominance of technologies over pedagogical outcomes quickly alienated education communities. Early online art and design education courses were often a nightmare due to a combination of inadequate technologies and inappropriate concepts, such as the central hub/fountain distance learning model or the desire to create a facsimile of the classroom. In 2009, how things have changed! In contrast to technologists determining how learning occurs, COFA Online courses are designed around the needs of the people who use them. They work, and they are becoming increasingly popular. These products of an intense collaborative colloquium process represent a concurrent re-conception of learning processes and behaviours for both students and teachers. A week-long orientation is an important transition into this new international community. Students are asked to construct a personal diary as a way to build a group reference point, thus ensuring that those enrolled are not just mere user names. Working with Coordinator Simon McIntyre, there are now nearly 1000 Australian and international students enrolled in the COFA Online art and design courses. Choosing from a suite of 23 undergraduate and postgraduate modules, students are not actually learning to paint and draw, but rather to develop abilities to find creative solutions, make connections, and collaborate effectively within a framework of broad theoretical knowledge across the many fields of art and design. The teachers who run the courses are also scattered around the world, bringing new skills and viewpoints to this unique learning environment. The success is due not only to the high quality content, but also to the flexibility of the Omnion software developed in house by COFA online director Rick Bennett. The delivery platform allows a raft of ongoing conversations so that the focus of all the courses is cross-disciplinary interaction. Feedback and evaluation is constructive but overwhelmingly determining how learning occurs, COFA Online courses are designed around the needs of the people who use them. They work, and they are becoming increasingly popular. These products of an intense collaborative colloquium process represent a concurrent re-conception of learning processes and behaviours for both students and teachers. A week-long orientation is an important transition into this new international community. Students are asked to construct a personal diary as a way to build a group reference point, thus ensuring that those enrolled are not just mere user names. Working with Coordinator Simon McIntyre, there are now nearly 1000 Australian and international students enrolled in the COFA Online art and design courses. Choosing from a suite of 23 undergraduate and postgraduate modules, students are not actually learning to paint and draw, but rather to develop abilities to find creative solutions, make connections, and collaborate effectively within a framework of broad theoretical knowledge across the many fields of art and design. The teachers who run the courses are also scattered around the world, bringing new skills and viewpoints to this unique learning environment. The success is due not only to the high quality content, but also to the flexibility of the Omnion software developed in house by COFA online director Rick Bennett. The delivery platform allows a raft of ongoing conversations so that the focus of all the courses is cross-disciplinary interaction. Feedback and evaluation is constructive but overwhelmingly positive. As current student Margaret Blaszczycz comments, “because of the online nature of the course, I feel that (maybe paradoxically) a higher level of participation is stimulated... it allows, perhaps even demands a more considered exchange and more in-depth reflective comment. The emphasis in the course is on collaboration, and from time-to-time students experience difficulties with regard to inequity in contributions within a group or team, but this is true of both online and face-to-face collaboration. And being online is a real life scenario, the management of which is a desirable skill to have not only in the education setting but afterwards.”

Most students find that COFA Online courses are empowering. The classes are always small. The fact that every interaction with the website platform is archived gives students great confidence because they (and their colleagues) can see skills develop as the course progresses. Transparency works both ways. The teachers are engaged, prepared and responsive to questions, comments and dialogue. While this new teaching method liberates the time and social constraints that usually occur in classroom environments, Philippines based participant, Jay Garcia, has noted some difficulties, for example it is harder to discern non-verbal nuances because he says; “you don’t exactly know what the other is ‘really’ saying or thinking just by what they write”. However, he continues, “the program is designed for asynchronous participation and deadlines are more spread out. It allows you to actually have a life and study at the same time. It allows for more realistic time management...with this program there’s a lot of breathing space, which allows you to think, and research, and compose, and work, and say hi to the wife and kids. And all that comes from a virtual ‘classroom’.”

Significantly, the diverse cohort of COFA Online cannot get enough of their new community. “Like certain websites and online games, it becomes addictive. McIntyre says that teachers often have to advise students to “back off a little” from exceeding the required contact hours. As Head of COFA’s Digital Media program, Professor Ross Harley states: “Today everyone lives online, is plugged in and networked. What COFA has done is develop courses and platforms that are both fluid and exciting, enhancing the pre-existing cultural forces of online social networking. I can only see this form of education expanding exponentially, with COFA leading the way.”

Craig Judd

As recognition of their achievement, COFA ONLINE has recently been awarded a two-year Learning and Teaching Award, of $219,000 from the Australian Learning and Teaching Council. The funds will partly fund the development of series training videos and additional hire for teachers around the world, offering them a personal and supportive role in the course and task administration. The products will be freely available and discovered through UNESCO, Thesys and Google.
Tanya Dyhin’s imagination has been sparked by photography’s ability to capture time. And while the peculiar science of the camera is familiar to us all, Dyhin’s images ignite a sense of wonder about the magic at the heart of this technology.

Much of Dyhin’s photography is marked by sensitivity to the dynamics of place, especially those unpopulated contemporary sites that suggest remnants of human presence. Her interest in transitional urban landscapes is evident in her photographs of Melbourne’s graffiti-covered laneways, with their ephemeral inscriptions of culture, and she is currently working on a project that further explores the conceptual terrain of the “contemporary ruin”. In her earlier Shadow Dancer series, the artist also examined the intersection of movement and light, using a slow shutter speed to trace a body’s journey through space. Her recent photographic series, Sites of Accumulation, reveals empty interiors ghosted by eerie streaks of light. Shot on location at the Prince Henry Hospital at Little Bay, the Sydney-based artist was granted access to the site just months before its scheduled redevelopment. “I am drawn to places and sites which display – or may be about to display – inevitable mark of change,” she explains. “There is something quite beautiful in that moment before change strikes, when histories, time, and memories converge.”

Shot entirely on 35mm film, Dyhin used in-camera techniques to produce the unusual light effects, employing digital technologies only in the development and post-production stages. She says that this “intersection of analogue and digital processes is of interest to me because it allows for a manipulation of time, light and movement, and challenges our perception of what it is that we think we are actually looking at.”
In 2004, while working on her Bachelor of Art Theory at the College of Fine Arts (COFA), Dyhin got a serious case of ‘fine arts envy’ after an assignment wherein she co-curated an exhibition of student work. Feeling “incredibly inspired to be making and exhibiting work” herself, she switched to the Bachelor of Digital Media, where she “enjoyed the emphasis on developing a cross-disciplinary approach to making art.” Graduating with Honours last year, her Sites of Accumulation series took out COFA’s Lucy Aspinal Prize for Photomedia and gained her a finalist spot in the 2009 Wilson HTM National Art Prize.

In her nine to five, Dyhin now teaches in the Photomedia department at COFA and works as a freelance music photographer, documenting live performance and the behind-the-scenes action of the industry. However, artistically her practice retains a sharp focus on the conceptual aspects of the photographic medium. “My interest in light crosses from the scientific to the spiritual,” she says. “I have a desire to analytically understand the world around me, and my exploration of light is an investigation of the very element that allows me to make my work. Its representation is a reflection of that exploration and also a desire to extend the capabilities of the human eye.

Dominique Angeloro
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The resistance to sustainable design dates almost from its inception. Moline cites the Global Tools group of Italian designers, active from 1973 to 1975, who were seeking to design for more than just society’s elite. After studying how rural communities used and maintained manufactured goods, they came to the conclusion that they were simply aestheticising poverty and abandoned their research. According to Moline, “the same issues hover around sustainability now. People see it as a form of renunciation.” She says consumer attitudes are the biggest factor in achieving change. “We’re seeing so much ‘green-washing’, where a product is repackaged printed with green ink, but the way they are manufactured or distributed has not changed.” Moline sees one solution at the level of infrastructure and government policy. A recent SBS television forum, in which building industry representatives discussed sustainable practices, identified the need for regulations to level the playing field. “Because,” explains Moline, “it costs more to work sustainably. The industry can’t change until there is a real mandate.” Another problem noted in commercial business is the knowledge gap between proposed government standards and sustainability policies and their implementation by designers currently working in the field. Emerging designers, says Moline, need to be more resourceful in devoting research time to the relevant technologies. She believes “the role of education is to provide experiences to enable young designers to understand what has to be done.” A few years ago COFA third-year design students worked with non-government organisations based in East Timor, a project rethought due to issues of sustainability. Faced with challenges such as designing an inexpensive stage and seating to be transported by truck for travelling educational shows, Moline says some students were motivated while others were overwhelmed. The value of the program’s challenge, however, means that it will be run again this year.

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Faced with a global financial crisis, Moline sees positive possibilities. “There is opportunity for people to change their thinking. We know this has already started. Australians have stopped spending and I think there is a confluence of forces making it very possible, and in many cases necessary, for people to rethink how they live with or without resources and to make decisions. This is just the start of it. Who knows what’s going to happen.”

COFA Design Studies lecturer Katherine Moline thinks the change to more sustainable practices won’t be entirely voluntary. She says Australia, and the developed world, view a surfeit of manufactured goods as the norm. “People need to realise they can’t accumulate loads of stuff. It’s a big psychological shift and I think people have resisted until now,” she explains. The change to more sustainable design practices is not entirely voluntary. She says Australia, and the developed world, view a surfeit of manufactured goods as the norm. “People need to realise they can’t accumulate loads of stuff. It’s a big psychological shift and I think people have resisted until now,” she explains. The change to more sustainable design practices is not entirely voluntary. She says Australia, and the developed world, view a surfeit of manufactured goods as the norm. “People need to realise they can’t accumulate loads of stuff. 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“Most people don’t understand what a carbon, or more importantly an ecological footprint is,” says furniture and object designer Trent Jansen. “I wanted to take the footprint metaphor into the physical to give people a more approachable, tactile way to understand it, so it’s not just an abstract concept.” Jansen, a COFA design graduate, recently curated the Footprints exhibition for charity organisation Oxfam. He spent a week lifting and carrying and covering floor spaces at the Museum of Contemporary Art and Blank Space gallery with paper tulips. The tagline for the exhibition was, he says, ‘Turn your carbon footprint into a tiptoe’. The newspaper tulips crowding the floor space forced visitors to literally tiptoe through them to view the exhibition. “By the end of the day about a third of them were squashed. They are spaced so people have to be extremely careful where they put their feet,” he says.

As a successful practicing designer, Jansen is committed to sustainability, using discarded road signs for his Sign Stools and all-wood components for his Pregnant Chair. He is also concerned about developing approaches that give designs lasting relevance.

“Conceptual sustainability goes one step beyond materials and processes, where the object evokes emotional attachment to make somebody keep rather than discard it,” Jansen explains. “For example, with the Pregnant Chair, I was thinking about what is universally beautiful and important and I wanted to imbue an object with these qualities.” The simple timber chair expresses the mother and child relationship through incorporating two panels in the seat that flip open to allow a miniature version, the baby chair, to pop out.

Elliat Rich, another COFA design graduate, presents a piece in the Footprints exhibition that also engenders a conceptual component. Her wearable artwork is a chest panel in the form of delicate fern fronds that light up in synchronisation with the action of the lungs to express symbiotic plant and human interaction. Rich says it is intended to take the sustainability concept away from merely quantitative and materialistic considerations to look at why it is important. “The environment isn’t ‘the other’, it is the system that we too are an element of,” she explains.

Rich says she found it a challenge to express her sustainable design ideals in client-driven work, especially in a commercial centre such as Sydney. She has moved to Alice Springs where much of her work is now related to the central desert region. These days, Rich chooses clients according to whether she can see the value of the organisation’s activity. “At the moment,” she says, “I’m working with the Centre for Appropriate Technology to develop water management kits for people living in remote communities.” She is also contributing to a number of Big hArt projects. The organisation is involved with empowering unrepresented groups like single mothers or indigenous language speakers. She says she does quite a bit of work for non-profit organisations. According to Rich, “designing sustainability into an object is only one portion of the bigger picture. The overall goal of what the object allows people to do. The object is only a stepping stone to a more sustainable way of living.”
Liz Williamson, COFA’s head of Design Studies, together with design lecturer, Rod Bamford, is curating an upcoming exhibition titled Sustain Me. Williamson has selected pieces from a core group of designers who have engaged in sustainable practices for an extended time. Each designer also has undertaken substantial bodies of research and has applied rigorous standards in the fabrication of their work.

The list includes: Japanese ceramicist Yoshikazu Hasegawa; Italian textile designer Luisa Cevese; New Zealand-based furniture and object designer David Trubridge; Australian jeweller Mark Vaarwerk; and local furnishing textiles company Instyle Textiles.

“All these people demonstrate very well how they engage with design practices that are about sustainable issues. I think such practices are going to become far more embedded in design. It’s already a concept that our students understand will be integral to their professional lives,” Williamson says. The exhibitors in Sustain Me cover a very broad range of design practice. Hasegawa’s research is into the process of working with pre-fired materials in mass production. Instyle, too, is involved with mass production and produces a range of vibrant and contemporary textiles manufactured to stringent ecological standards. Cevese creates works with textile off-cuts fused with plastic, including tote bags, which Williamson would love to see covering a wall. Mark Vaarwerk fabricates immensely sophisticated jewellery pieces from plastic bags and bottles and is currently researching uses for other household items, such as vacuum cleaner parts. David Trubridge, renowned for his sensitive works in ply and other sustainable woods, is submitting several two-metre tall lights in the form of Baskets of Knowledge, made from bamboo, plastic and plywood.

The exhibition will also include video components, expanding on the designers’ methodologies and approaches.

“The main purpose of the exhibition is to try to tease out what sustainability is all about, and to question ‘What is the context for sustainability?’ ‘How does it impact on designers?’ And, how are people informed about the real reasons for sustainability, including financial, economic, cultural or environmental. I see the educational aspect of the exhibition as vitally important,” Williamson says.

Sustain Me opens at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery on 29 August.

For more details, visit www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/galleries/idg
To say ceramics has a long history is to make a massive understatement. Its history is in fact so long that broken bits of ancient pots unearthed millennia later are used to name and date mysterious cultures from pre-history. For archaeologists and historians, ceramics provide a tangible record of long forgotten people from across the globe; people who didn’t always see the need for a written language, but who had mastered the almost alchemical art of transforming clay into objects, both utilitarian and beautiful.

It may be because of its links to the very early beginnings of human material culture that ceramics is often perceived as being stuck in a bit of a time warp; the medium of choice for mud-slinging hippies wanting to work with their hands in an approximation of a simpler age. And while this use of the medium remains current, in the 21st century, ceramics can also be an incredibly high tech material with applications in the space, medical and automotive industries.

As a medium, ceramics refuses to be pinned down. Throughout its lengthy development, the history of ceramics has been one of innovation, change and exchange. Its history spans both time and cultures, yet for centuries China has been one of its most significant players. As Jacqueline Clayton points out, "it’s not for nothing that it’s called china."

Clayton, who is the Coordinator of Ceramics for COFA’s School of Design Studies, goes on to add, “The relationship between ceramics as it has developed in the West, and the legacy from the East, is profound.” This legacy, a complex history of interaction between China and Europe (and later Australia) which includes both coveted luxury goods and two dollar shop teacups, is the subject of an exhibition curated by Clayton titled, Another Silk Road.

Another Silk Road is a satellite event of the Australian Ceramic Triennale, an international conference which addresses the theme ‘Facing Asia’. Clayton narrows this focus to China and uses the phrase Another Silk Road as a metaphor that acknowledges that the flow of information between East and West has always gone both ways. As Clayton puts it, this group exhibition considers “the role and impact of cultural exchange between diverse individuals, all ceramic artists, with China as the key common axis.”

By continuing an ancient tradition of reciprocity, the eight exhibitors in Another Silk Road: Jiansheng (Jackson) Li, Guang Hui Chen and Ying Yush Chen from mainland China, Ching-Yuan Chang from Taiwan, and Australian residents Tammy Wong, Douglas Cham, Julie Bartholomew and Wen Min Li, add another chapter to the ongoing and dynamic history of ceramics.

Another Silk Road

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Tracey Clement

EXHIBITION: Another Silk Road, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, 2 - 25 July.
For opening details see: www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/gallery/idg

CONFERENCE: Australian Ceramic Triennale 09, July 16-20.
For more details see: australianceramicstriennale.com

TOPI: Julie Bartholomew, Qing Prada (detail), photo by the artist.
TOPL: Julie Bartholomew, Qing Prada, photo by the artist.
TOPI: Douglas Cham, Banana kids (detail), photo by the artist.
BELOW: Ying Yush Chen, To Be..., photo by the artist.
BELOW: Ying Yush Chen, To Be..., photo by the artist.

Graduate Showcase: page 52.
Traditionally the occupation of art historian has not been considered especially sexy. However, Dr Fae Brauer, a Senior Lecturer in art history at COFA, and what pops up is a series of conference papers she has presented with titillating titles such as “Bulging Buttocks: Picturing Virile Homosexuality and the ‘Manly Man’” or “Filles Fatales: Immoral Girls and the Paedophilic Eroticism of ‘Blessed Innocence’”. In fact, Brauer’s ‘Manly Man’ or Fillies Fatales: immoral Girls and the Art, Sex and Eugenics: Corpus Delecti, a master race. The following is an extract from this book.

Dr Fae Brauer, a Senior Lecturer in art history at COFA, and what pops up is a series of conference on 1 January 1934, the third reich law for the Prevention of Sterilization law, was applied. Two hundred and fifty thousand congenital mental deficiency, hereditary disease and physical people diagnosed with alcoholism, manic-depression, or psychologically ‘degenerate’. Immediately american and culminating in the extermination of Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, first step in a complex and systematic eugenic campaign, the leaders in the present political regime who are responsible for new undertakings in reconstruction of the social order'. Rockefeller continued funding the Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft, while IBM initiated a commercial contract with Hitler to produce medical questionnaires and disability cards. In turn, the Nazi government not just commanded the eugenic research and policies fostered in America and Britain, but acknowledged American sterilization laws as their precedent.

Support for the Nazi eugenic campaign was galvanized by visual cultures. The National Socialist Social and Political Office (NSRPa) produced leaflets, art, sex and eugenics posters and short films to be shown in cinemas, pointing out to Germans the cost of maintaining asylums for the incurably ill and insane. After lavish premières in Berlin, the films, The Inheritance (Das Erbe) and The Victim of the Past (Opfer der Vergangenheit), were shown in all German cinemas. Through films, posters and paintings by them were being showcased in this French Kunst), together with a copy of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity, published in 1985. Before eugenics was stigmatized by the Holocaust, and Western histories sanitized of its prevalence, the eight essays in this book demonstrate that eugenic societies, conferences, designs, exhibitions, installations, films, paintings, photographs, and sculptures flourished throughout America, Britain, France, Germany, Australia and New Zealand, in order to generate ‘the ideal body’ and to breed ‘the perfect race’.
These days, Ursula Sullivan, is a successful art dealer, one half of Sullivan and Strumpf Fine Art. But back in 1986, Sullivan was young and transfixed by the grief-stricken and abstract female face on her TV screen. Picasso’s *Weeping Woman* had been stolen from the National Gallery of Victoria and the media was saturated with images of the missing painting. For the artistically sheltered thirteen year old, it was a defining moment. “It absorbed me,” she says. “I’d never seen anything like it before. She was both beautiful and ugly, green and abstracted and crying. I felt completely confused by it.”

Sullivan admits that she discovered art slowly. Her childhood in a Newcastle housing estate was “devoid” of artistic influences, but she has since made up for lost time. The *Weeping Woman* moment solidified what was to become Sullivan’s lifelong interest in art. “Seeing that painting,” she acknowledges, “marked my entry point to the art world. I realised for the first time how powerful art can be and I had an overwhelming desire to know more about it.”

Sullivan began her studies at the Queensland College of Art, but discovered it was art and business that really interested her. It wasn’t long before the diverse range of Sydney’s art galleries beckoned. She transferred to the College of Fine Arts (COFA), and while studying also worked part-time at Woollohra based Eva Breuer Gallery where she first met her future business partner Joanna Strumpf.

While Sullivan graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from COFA, and is grateful for the language the degree gave her to think and talk about art, she admits “that as an artist I was utterly terrible. I didn’t enjoy painting and I never had any desire to compete with all the fabulous artists in the world.” the switch from artist to art dealer suited her. She went on to manage several high-profile commercial galleries, including Savill Galleries in Melbourne and Liverpool Street Gallery in Sydney.

A shared love of contemporary art, and recognition of the need for emerging artists to be represented, was what saw the doors of Sullivan and Strumpf open in 2004. Sullivan discusses the “thrill” of discovering unknown artists. The gallery’s representation of the politically subversive ceramics conservator, Penny Byrne, was one of those moments. “Artists put themselves on the line. They’re open to massive amounts of criticism and judgement... and praise. It’s a harsh life to lead, but to watch someone grow and progress in the art industry is very rewarding,” she says.

When asked what criteria Sullivan and Strumpf use for choosing the artists they represent, she thinks carefully: “We try not to follow too many rules. Every artist is entirely different so it’s important to keep adjusting. Our only rule is to maintain integrity and honesty with our artists and do the right thing ethically by them.”
If you are interested in finding out more about these graduates from the College of Fine Arts and their work, let us know. Email incubate@cofa.unsw.edu.au

Regardless of which institute you graduated from - the Alexander Mackie College of Advanced Education, the National Art School (before 1975), the City Art Institute or the College of Fine Arts - you automatically become part of the COFA Alumni Community.

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

Enjoy the Powerhouse Museum at night and view the Sydney Design 09 exhibition and hear a talk by the curator.