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Change is in the air. And, as most people would attest, it can be both exciting and confronting.

In this most recent issue of Incubate, we explore the types of changes that occur as creative practitioners develop a fuller sense of self and self-expression. And in parallel with this, we examine large-scale institutional change, specifically, that taking place at COFA, and the impact it has on teaching, learning and creative expression.

COFA is moving into its second year of campus reconstruction. In a nutshell, this means that the knockdown of three significant buildings, representing approximately one third of the campus, is complete and it’s now possible to see across a leveled football field size plot of land. The best views of this significant expanse of dirt can be had from the 2nd and 3rd floors of the largest remaining campus building – F Block. It’s from here that spectators can imagine the possibilities presented following large-scale demolition, or as we referred to it in Incubate: breaking ground.

COFA has literally ‘broken ground’ with the goal of reshaping what a creative, educational institution can be. The full vision of this creative learning centre is one that offers exciting opportunities to students and to the public alike. Gone is puzzle-box, enclosed structure of the old COFA, and coming is an outward-facing new COFA. The new-look campus will still host major exhibitions, video screenings, dialogue with international practitioners, and hold great studios, computer labs and editing suites. But significantly, once complete, it will be more accessible to an interested public. (For anyone interested in viewing the transformation of the campus, but unable to get to Paddington, COFA’s Facebook page posts images of weekly developments.)

In keeping with the concept of breaking ground, and the rewards that come from doing so, Incubate reviews the practices of 11 emerging artists and designers (see page 8) and asks them what things most significantly influence their processes of creative expression. We were curious to assess the methods used to inspire new bodies of work, and, in particular, we wanted to examine how practitioners overcome the challenge of starting something new: the internal process of breaking ground. As you will see when reading about the choices made by these artists and designers, a unifying theme is their daringness to explore the ‘unfathomable’.

Other articles in this issue Incubate also examine the role of risk-taking in creative career development. The Year Das Was (see page 45) tells of a group of young graduates who thought it would be great to publish a magazine by artists, designers and art theorists about artists, designers and art theorists. The result is not just a thriving publication, Das Super Paper, it’s also an online archive and, believe it or not, a cinema.

License for the Fragrant and Fleshy (see page 36) is the story of Natalie Hughes, a design graduate, presented with the opportunity to mount a full-scale theatre production of Under Milk Wood, a 1950s radio drama by Welsh poet Dylan Thomas.

Intimidating? Only a little for this emerging talent, as she overcame multiple obstacles and succeeded in staging a play in the Melbourne Fringe Festival to critical acclaim.

Not to be outdone in creative interpretation of theme of this issue, the designer of Incubate, Christine Messinesi, has drilled holes through the entire magazine. These are rivet holes for future building. She’s also layered the pages with textural imagery referencing cracked surfaces. Pictures of award-winning art and design works have been strategically placed on top of these illustrated fractures. Messinesi is graphically ‘breaking ground’ while underscoring the necessity of transition inherent in the creative process.

Stay tuned for future developments.

Jo Boslen
Editor Incubate
The redevelopment of COFA’s Paddington campus is well and truly underway. Buildings have been demolished and huge holes have been excavated. The ground has literally been broken at last and the campus is infused with an atmosphere of anticipation and change as the old makes way for the new. But at COFA, this in itself is nothing new. Every year students finish their degrees and make major transitions as they get ready to leave the safety of university and embark on their professional careers in art, design, media, art education and art theory.

Incubate spoke to Lauren Vassallo, James Kape, James Gatt & Adrian Clement, Jennifer Tran, Eleanor Hanlon, Nick Haswell, Mazzy Knole, Emma McMunnigall, Rebekah Gotsby-Smith, and Carly Hush when they were on the cusp of this transformation. These soon to be graduating students talked about how they find inspiration, what they learned at COFA and their own potential for breaking new ground.

COFA’s Big Building Project

COFA UNSW is embarking on a $58 million redevelopment of its Paddington campus. The new facilities will enhance teaching and learning in all degree programs. Benefits to COFA staff & students include new facilities, a new COFA gallery, extra space to enable additional students and teaching and learning will be enhanced throughout all courses.

Project Managers: Capital Insight
Design & Construction Contractor: Hindmarsh Construction Australia Pty Ltd
Architect: Architectus
http://redevelop.cofa.unsw.edu.au

Architect’s impression of the new COFA entrance from Oxford St by Architectus, 2011
As a designer, Emma McMunnigall is interested in making a difference. She is inspired by the work of Design for the other 90% and also by things around her, especially images from the natural world, which often find their way into her textile designs. As she explains, “The Australian Waratah is one of my favourite sources of inspiration... I believe inspiration can come from anywhere but I usually find it in the things that I love. In saying this, I fall in love easily, whether this be with the curve of a tree branch, the colour of a painting I saw in a gallery or a song I have heard.”

Rebekah Golaby-Smith, better known as Bek, just completed her Bachelor of Art Education, which allowed her to also concentrate on Sculpture Performance and Installation (SPI) during the Fine Art component of the degree. Bek draws inspiration from the things around her, from what she is currently working on and from her memories as well. When she spoke to Incubate, just prior to the Annual, she was finding inspiration in farm animal figurines, but she admits, “If you had asked me this question whilst making my last project I would have said crocheted blankets in pastel colours and semi automatic weapons.”

Carly Hush is a musician as well as a designer of ceramics and graphics. She is interested in combining these diverse areas of expertise into one interdisciplinary practice. As you might expect, her sources of inspiration are wide ranging, “I like to surround myself with the images, objects, words and music that inspire me,” she says, “Their tangible presence helps me to create a space that can block out the day-to-day things that interfere with the creative process.”
Incubate: What is the single most useful thing you have learned at COFA?

Lauren: To never take anything at face value, to always be open to creative possibilities, to always be open to other people’s critique of my work. I think COFA creates a real community through its teachings and this has been just as important in learning as the projects I have done.

Incubate: How have you ‘broken new ground’ or how would you like to?

Lauren: My major graduating project, The Blue Bird: A Living Textile, was inspired by tattooed circus performers. What I really wanted to achieve with this piece was to break down preconceptions about the tattooed female form. I recreated a French fairytale and had the final image tattooed on my back. Without my presence, without me standing in front of the panel, the story was incomplete.

Incubate: What are your plans and goals for the near future?

Lauren: I would like to further investigate tattoo art and design and how I can keep pushing the boundaries of what textile design can be viewed as. I would also like to complete my Masters at COFA.
Incubate: What is the single most useful thing you have learned at COFA?

James: I think it would probably be learning to design with an attention to detail. I have thus far found in all cases that a little extra thought does in fact go a long way and can even determine the success of a project.

Incubate: How have you ‘broken new ground’ or how would you like to?

James: Well, I’d like to preface this by saying I have been very lucky this past year! My final design project, a magazine called Sometimes (for clothing boutiques Somedays in Sydney and Somewhere in Melbourne) was realised as an actual magazine with over 2000 copies distributed and more than 600 people attended the launch in each city. I can safely say it was probably one of my proudest moments to date. It also helped me land my current job working as a fulltime designer for one of Australia’s most successful events companies, Fuzzy.

Incubate: What are your plans and goals for the near future?

James: I just want to keep doing what I do! It is so satisfying creating work, which is then seen and recognized around Australia. I would love to however take this to a global level and perhaps even move overseas.
Incubate: What is the single most useful thing you have learned at COFA?

Pineapple Park: The most useful thing we have gained studying at COFA is meeting each other and starting our collaboration.

Incubate: How have you ‘broken new ground’ or how would you like to?

Pineapple Park: We once read that minimalist sculptor Donald Judd was a classicist mistaken for a revolutionary insofar he wasn’t breaking new ground, but merely attempting to preserve the quality of art. Similarly, Pineapple Park is not so much about breaking ground as it is about making exceptional and quality work. We don’t believe the key to making successful art is doing things first, but doing things better.

Furthermore, we are not here to change the world, but rather people’s experiences with and of it. We have attempted to do this in our work by reconfiguring and appropriating existing spaces, and through the processes of simplification and reduction.

Incubate: What are your plans and goals for the near future?

Pineapple Park: In 2011, Pineapple Park will be making new work and exhibiting in Toronto and New York.
Incubate: What is the single most useful thing you have learned at COFA?

Jennifer: My lecturer, Bonita Ely, once said to me “making art makes art”, and it has been a guiding principle for my practice. Every material I find, I have to do something to it. Most of the time, things stop at the level of experimentation. Others evolve and transform into artworks. Whatever the result, things always start with the actual ‘making’.

Incubate: How have you ‘broken new ground’ or how would you like to?

Jennifer: Within the genre of light art, the system of inert, electronic and mechanical components enabling illumination is commonly contextualised as utilitarian; in other words practical but not pretty. My research attempts to challenge this preconception by arguing that the technical and practical aspects of the light have formal properties completely independent of their utility. My aim is to engage with the capacity of industrial detritus to articulate a rigorous, highly aestheticised discourse located not in the history of electronics but in the story of contemporary art and its relationship to life.

Incubate: What are your plans and goals for the near future?

Jennifer: I want to continue to work in the industry as an artist and further develop my research.
Incubate: What is the single most useful thing you have learned at COFA?
Eleanor: The more ridiculous the idea the better!
Incubate: How have you ‘broken new ground’ or how would you like to?
Eleanor: I’m not sure the ground is new or old or subject to breaking but I think artists and audiences are both the deciders of how they see new and old and breaking.
Incubate: What are your plans and goals for the near future?
Eleanor: The friends I’ve made at COFA are positively rad. I plan to make and discuss with these fine folk and continue investigating ways of wasteless, self-sustaining living. I also plan to teach art to young people.
Incubate: What is the single most useful thing you have learned at COFA?
Nick: The most important thing I gained that first time, coming in straight after high school, was a real sense of myself as an independent creative entity. The second time around, the single most important thing I’ve learned, having focused on theoretical and research-based aspects of Art Education, has been a grasp of the richness and power of academic language.

Incubate: How have you ‘broken new ground’ or how would you like to?
Nick: This phrase would most relate to my recent Art Education Honours project entitled, ‘Image, text, interpolation: Empowering Indigenous school students and communities through picturebook accounts of Indigenous historical narratives’. This project brought together two significant, temporally distinct, Australian picturebooks which have previously not been connected or considered together in terms of their historical narratives, their potential to develop Indigenous student and community agency, or their development as a specific publication genre.

Incubate: What are your plans and goals for the near future?
Nick: I plan to spend 2011 in Finland, the UK and Spain, working on various creative projects involving music and literature. I would like to undertake a comparative analysis of the educational systems of Australia and Finland, in relation to Indigenous education.

Incubate: What is the single most useful thing you have learned at COFA?
Mazzy: To believe in my ideas and just keep going. It’s very important to get that idea that’s inside and make something of it.

Incubate: How have you ‘broken new ground’ or how would you like to?
Mazzy: I think people break new ground all the time. I like to give an experience when people watch my videos where they want to discuss the images and sounds I put forth. I always encourage people to talk to me or each other about what they see. I believe that creating discussion especially about visual culture is extremely important and by doing this people can gain a new perspective on a variety of subjects they may not usually think about. For me that is breaking new ground.

Incubate: What are your plans and goals for the near future?
Mazzy: I’m going to continue making videos and go from there...
Incubate: What is the single most useful thing you have learned at COFA?
Emma: I have learnt that even if someone sets you what appears to be an insurmountable task or project, if you apply yourself you will always find a solution. So never be too quick to say it is impossible and never be quick to doubt yourself.

Incubate: How have you ‘broken new ground’ or how would you like to?
Emma: I would love to work on design that has the ability to affect humanity in a positive way. Thinking and designing in this way will give me the opportunity to break new ground on a positive level, again and again.

My major project at COFA (for Hands that Shape Humanity) was built on the philosophy that one small action can cause a huge effect. My project’s aim was to give women in Australia the power to help women in Vietnam deliver healthy babies through encouraging and embracing the power of consumerism.

Incubate: What are your plans and goals for the near future?
Emma: My current plan is to get my work into production and to sell it throughout Australia. At the moment I am testing my ability to run my own business by starting market stalls, but just as importantly I plan to travel and to see the world.
Incubate: What is the single most useful thing you have learned at COFA?

Carly: To trust the process.

Incubate: How have you ‘broken new ground’ or how would you like to?

Carly: My Honours project explored the possibilities for creating a new graphic language to aid in the teaching of concepts within Western Classical Music. It was based on the idea that innate understandings or interpretations of colour, shape, line and space could serve as an alternative to learning music through traditional staff notation. This initial research only scratched the surface of the possibilities I hope to explore… I would like to take this to the next level, creating a language of symbols that could be applicable to a range of musical genres.

Incubate: What are your plans and goals for the near future?

Carly: In addition to further developing my Honours research I would like to pursue my other interest in object design, particularly in the area of ceramics. I aspire to spend some time working in a small studio situation creating pieces as both designer and maker.
ALPHASTATION /ALPHAVILLE

JUNE 17 – JULY 23
Queensland based artist Luke Roberts is known for self-portraiture that invokes an intricate, didactic mythology which highlights his unique perceptions on a range of topics from religion to aliens and sexuality. His solo show, AlphaStation/Alphaville includes a new body of photographic work as well as pieces which stretch all the way back to his first childhood experiments in performance and photography. The exhibition title is a nod to both the artist’s birthplace (the rural town of Alpha) and to Alphaville (Jean-Luc Godard’s 1965 sci-fi movie).

DAVID CORBET: Indices for a Small Planet

JUNE 14 – 25
David Corbet is an artist, writer and communications designer living in Sydney. He is also currently completing his MFA at COFA. In Indices for a Small Planet, Corbet will present part of his ongoing research, The iPhone Project. In this incarnation it will take the form of a multi-screen projection in which each frame of a large grid of images is updated through numerous images, at different rates. The photos were taken on an iPhone in Australia, India and Mexico and range from landscapes and architectural details to studies of beautiful boys.

TELL ME TELL ME:
Australian and Korean Art 1950 – 2011

JUNE 16 – AUGUST 24
Tell Me Tell Me takes the 1976 Biennale of Sydney, which included a visit from Korea’s visionary multimedia artist Nam June Paik, as its starting point. This group exhibition explores the relationship between generations of artists, from the 1970s to the present, working within Australian and Korean artistic, social and cultural contexts. Artists in the exhibition include Nam JunePaik, Charlie Soto, Lew U Pan, Park Byoung Chan, Ken Unsworth, Rosalie Gaccione and COFA alumnus Newell Harry.

THE AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AWARDS

UNTIL JUNE
In the 2011 Australian International Design Awards exhibition, ten industry designers and six student designs are on display. The designs were selected by the Powerhouse Museum for their design excellence, innovation and their potential to improve our environment, health and wellbeing. A pocket-size ultrasound system won the major prize. The high resolution screen shows images instantly and the portable unit allows doctors to examine patients quickly in emergencies.

ARCHIBALD, WYNNE & SULMAN PRIZES 2011

UNTIL JUNE 26
The Archibald Prize is one of Sydney’s most eagerly anticipated annual events. COFA graduates are often selected and have won the portrait prize several times: Wendy Sharpes (1996), Adam Cullen (2000), and Dul Kathryn Barton (2008). The Archibald is accompanied by the Wynne Prize for landscape painting or figurative sculpture and The Sir John Sulman Prize for subject painting, genre painting or mural project.

MICHAEL STEVENSON

UNTIL JUNE 19
Annual Manual: Australian Design Now is the next exciting permutation of Annual Manual, which was previously known as Australian Design Now! In its current incarnation it will take the form of a multi-screen projection in which each frame of a large grid of images is updated through numerous images, at different rates. The photos were taken on an iPhone in Australia, India and Mexico and range from landscapes and architectural details to studies of beautiful boys.

ARCHIBALD

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MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

UNTIL JUNE 19
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DAVID CORBET, PRODUCTION STILL FROM THE IPHONE PROJECT, PHOTOGRAPHY AND D-SCREEN DVD, 2011.

CHARLIE SWOPE, BIRDS, 4.3.0, PAL, STEREO SOUND, 1.26 MINUTES, 2008.


MICHAEL STEVENSON.

INTRODUCTION: AL PHA STATION (STILL), 2008 HD AND 16MM FILM TRANSFERRED TO DVD. 25.28 MINUTES, LOOPED. SPANISH LANGUAGE WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND DEAN KNIGHT GALLERY. SYDNEY; VILMA GOLD, LONDON; AND HANNAH MCKAY GALLERY, WELLINGTON.
HAPPY HOUR

DRINKS
ART &
CONVERSATION

Every Tuesday Night during Term
5.30 - 6.30pm
COFA Campus
Cnr Greens Rd & Oxford St Paddington
Ground floor of EG02

www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/events/happy-hour/

above

2010 Gallery Barry Keldoulis Award
Winners are Nathan Babet, Tara Cook, Shalini Jardin, Ben Norris and Hugh Marchant.

Five COFA Bachelor of Fine Arts Honours students jointly won the Gallery Barry Keldoulis Award. The winners were selected from a shortlist of works exhibited as part of the annual Halfway House exhibition on at COFA hors.

Halfway House
issue 6 / 30

Every Tuesday Night during Term
5.30 - 6.30pm
COFA Campus
Cnr Greens Rd & Oxford St Paddington
Ground floor of EG02

www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/events/happy-hour/
COFA Bachelor of Design graduate Sam Dunn won the silver Promax for “Best Use of Typography” at the 2010 ANZ Promax/ BDA Awards. Dunn won the award with a short title sequence created for the “Ripe – Clip of the Week” on Channel [v]. The Promax/ BDA Awards recognise excellence in on-air promotion, branding and advertising. The awards are judged by an international committee from Europe, UK, USA and Australia.

COFA Bachelor of Digital Media & Bachelor of Design graduate Trent Jansen won the inaugural Space + Edra Design Residency. Jansen spent two months under Edra Art Director Massimo Morozzi’s guidance at the Edra headquarters in Perignano, near Pisa and the Milan showroom. Space established the residency to cultivate local talent and to connect Australian designers with world leading Italian manufacturers.
How are you to know if you have found the right vocation? One indication might be when all the avocational and digressive games that you play before you actually sit down to work can be absorbed into the work itself. A throwaway paradox? Not necessarily.

COFA Design student, Elliott Bryce Foulkes (E.B.F) sits opposite me with an honest confidence as we scroll through a maze of colour, squiggly shapes and half-finished letters that decorate his computer screen. "Typography is a form of procrastination for me," he informally admits. While some of us might urgently clean our room or compulsively check our email in preparation of work-proper, E.B.F has mastered the near-impossible art of productive-procrastination; he designs fonts even when he should be designing fonts. They have a moniker for this kind of buoyant focus in the history of typography: a typophile. First diagnosed in 1930s New York by an organisation of typographers who collectively worked under the name, E.B.F would do well as a belated member of this group.

As we continue to navigate his computer screen, we eventually arrive at the end of the maze where I immediately discover the culmination of all those exploratory shapes and digital scribbles: an attractive and concisely designed 30th birthday card. E.B.F shows me his process. He begins with what initially seems like the markings of a lost language and stretches them, tames them, orders them into something recognisable. Everything falls into place and the design process becomes legible. The code is deciphered.

This rewarding moment occurs again when E.B.F shows me Reveal, a tangled procession of ribbon that seems to work at your eyes until a version of the alphabet slowly creeps out from the abstraction. Once you start to notice A…B…C…D…E etc the alphabet is miraculously obvious, and you wonder how you ever mistook it for entwined ribbon in the first place.

This interplay between legibility and illegibility, and the cognitive and perceptual readjustments that occur from within this interplay, is a point of interest for E.B.F. In fact, the first lesson I learn about typography from our meeting is that if you are willing to go about representing language differently, you also need to be willing to experiment with how communication generally functions. This adds value to E.B.F’s typographical procrastination, as though he has diligently assigned himself the task of questioning how language can shape our experience of reality on a day-to-day basis.
This inquisitive and judicious approach clearly informs E.B.F’s project, *Speech Patterns: Typography Sans Type* (2010). Described as an “interactive installation, which visualises the project connects the spoken word with projected symbols and abstract patterns that progress, mutate and accumulate speech without the use of letterforms or written language”, depending on the user’s parlance.

Such projects suggest that E.B.F thinks of language as a tool that is utterly necessary but admittedly limiting and toilsome. His work spills over into linguistics and its many subdivisions (such as sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics). As the father of this discipline, Ferdinand de Saussure noticed that a word or signifier does not embody or possess an inner relationship to that which it refers. Rather, it is, as he terms, an “arbitrary bond” with “no actual connection”.

E.B.F’s project confirms, but also scratches, Saussure’s itch, making visual what Saussure might have meant when he described the linguistic sign as an “interesting object of study; for language furnishes the best proof that a law accepted by a community is a thing that is tolerated and not a rule to which all freely consent”.

For E.B.F, the installation highlights what typography is not: a visual representation of spoken language. “As a mode of communication, speech conveys valuable information neglected in the formalised practice of typography”. As the user speaks, patterns are generated, suggesting that there is a vibrant life beyond conventional representations of language, a life that the written word allowed to completely抗拒.

In this way, *Speech Patterns: Typography Sans Type* locates the missing links and blind spots of the written word, allowing users to see and survey their utterances as illuminated abstractions.

Tom Melick

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“...I personally would like to bring a tortoise onto the stage, turn it into a racehorse, then into a hat, a song, a dragon and a fountain of water. One can dare anything in the theatre and it is the place where one dares the least.” — Eugene Ionesco

How do you take a play written for radio, involving the discursively loaded dreams of 64 characters living in a fictional Welsh village, and transform it into a visual excursion featuring only one actress? Ionesco may provide the historical inspiration, but he will only get you so far. Some transformative artistry is required.

Natalie Hughes, a recent COFA Design graduate, was faced with this challenge when she took on the art direction for a 2010 stage adaptation of Dylan Thomas’ *Under Milk Wood* (first performed on BBC radio in 1954). The production was the brainchild of Zoe Norton Lodge (actress) and Vanessa Hughes (director, and Natalie’s sister), who found themselves in the receptive arms of Sydney’s Sidetrack Theatre and the Melbourne Fringe Festival.

But let’s go back to the beginning – to the fragrant and fleshy words of Thomas – so that we can better understand Hughes’ interpretive undertaking. *Under Milk Wood* takes place in ‘Llareggub’, an imagined settlement whose name was apparently created by reversing the peripheral phrase ‘bugger all’! The narration describes/hollows the dreams of various characters (such as, my favorites, ‘Captain Cat’ and ‘Lord Curr Glais’) as they interact with each other, as if in a Freudian house party, as well as with the landscapes Thomas so seductively describes.

Natalie Hughes sites many influences, including the Icelandic weather-wizard Olafur Eliasson, Yayoi Kusama, Bill Viola and local theatre-director Benedict Andrews. Yet it was Baz Luhrman’s reinterpretation of Giacomo Puccini’s *La Bòhème*, which Hughes saw at the protean age of eleven, that contained the initial blast. “It was this production that changed my life and first made me believe in the possibility of design and art being an integral part of our reality,” she recounts. Ionesco, Thomas and Luhrman might agree, since aren’t dreams just another way of thinking about reality?

Tom Melick

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“...The sunny slow lulling afternoon yawns and moons through the dozy town. The sea lolls, laps and idles in, with fishes sleeping in its lap. The meadows still as Sunday, the shut-eye tasselled bulls, the goat-and-daisy dingles, nap happy and lazy. The dumb duck-ponds snooze. Clouds sag and pillow on Llareggub Hill.”

This invented land is neither here nor there, but meaningful because of this fact. Hughes’ task was to therefore represent Llareggub’s community of sleepers for a live audience, establishing the onerific topography of the play with immediacy and affectively.

Influenced by “a life spent travelling” (including a year on exchange in Milan while studying at COFA) and a desire to give her journeys a “tangible reality”, Hughes drew on cartographic experiments as a way of locating a befitting aesthetic for Thomas’ terrain.

The result was a map-like world on dual scales. On one hand, Hughes created a miniature rendition of Llareggub wherein houses doubled as lights that supplied intimate illumination for the performance. She also used an array of large projections that bled into the fabric that dressed the stage.

And, of course, there was lots of milk placed throughout the space – which Hughes originally imagined being spat from the ceiling in a fine mist (a feature the other members of the production were not so eager to bring to fruition). These games with images and lights bring to mind early experiments with projections, from Paul Sharits’ *Shutter Interface* (1975) to seeing Princess Leia as a hologram in *Star Wars*. Hughes sites many influences, including the Icelandic weather-wizard Olafur Eliasson, Yayoi Kusama, Bill Viola and local theatre-director Benedict Andrews.

Under Milk Wood was performed at Sidetrack Theatre, Sydney and Arts House (Hub), Melbourne Fringe Festival, both in 2010.

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The career journey of Dr Gene Sherman is now familiar to those with even a passing interest in the Australian Arts Landscape. First migrating to Australia at age 18 from South Africa, she and her family returned to South Africa after only nine months in Melbourne. The Sherman family then travelled to England before returning to Australia to establish a home in Sydney. This migration, plus extensive travel, has engendered a truly global mindset within Dr Sherman and her whole family.

Professionally, Dr Sherman spent 17 years in academia, firstly completing a masters by thesis and then a doctorate in French literature at the University of Sydney, before commencing teaching there. Following this, she joined Sydney’s prestigious Ascham Girl’s School in the role of head of languages.

Sherman Galleries, originally run by Celia Winter-Irving and named the Irving Sculpture Gallery, opened in 1981. In the mid-1980s, as Australia’s attention started to drift towards Asia, Dr Sherman joined the gallery and began shifting the focus from contemporary Australian and international sculpture, to that of art from the Australian-Pacific region. In 1989, the gallery moved from its original location near the University of Sydney to Paddington, and thirteen years later it consolidated two Paddington premises into one enhanced exhibiting space in Goodhope Street. In 2007, Sherman Galleries closed and was reborn as the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation (SCAF), a Sherman family philanthropic enterprise dedicated to the public exhibition of significant contemporary art from Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. SCAF has four key aims as illustrated in the mission statement:

1. To exhibit significant works by innovative and influential artists from Asia, the Pacific and Australia, providing a space that can house works not always suited to private galleries,
2. To publish texts communicating to broad audiences including both the art industry and educational sectors,
3. To develop educational programs in association with the projects, illustrated by the launch Contemporary Art for Contemporary Kids, a partnership with Queensland Art Gallery’s Children’s Art Centre
4. To continue to develop the Sherman Visual Arts Residency (SVAR), a program for international artists considering short, medium and longer-term exploratory trips to Australia, particularly to Sydney.

On September 24, 2010, COFA announced that Dr Sherman and her husband Brian will donate $2 million towards the new COFA Gallery. This generous gift will contribute to the construction of two new purpose built galleries, the first to be known as the Sherman Gallery and the second named in memory of Nick Waterlow, former curator of COFA’s Ivan Dougherty Gallery, who died in 2009.

This brief summary of Dr Sherman’s experience, and the progression to the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, does not begin to touch on the leadership and educational role she has had within the Australian arts and academic community; from the sponsorship of scholarships, to contribution to publications, guest lecturer and philanthropist. Not to mention her donation of contemporary Japanese fashion to the Powerhouse Museum.

Given her incredible life experience, Dr Sherman can provide remarkable guidance to those interested in a career in the creative industries. What follows are some of the key themes and life lessons she has learned to date.

PrePlan, Prepare and be Organised

‘If you don’t plan ahead, create templates and stick to the templates, then things go awry. Life being what it is sometimes, this is what they do.’

A constant in Dr Sherman’s life is her focus on planning and preparation, often over considerable periods of time. She commenced the planning process, with the support of her husband Brian, nine years prior to the launch of the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation.

As a mother with two young children undertaking a doctorate, organisation and planning was paramount. Dr Sherman dedicated eight years to her masters and PHD, and at every stage she had a five-year, one-year, six-month, monthly, weekly and daily plan.

But what happened if circumstances interrupted her ability to complete her daily plan? She would set her alarm for the middle of the night, get up and complete her allocated tasks.

It was a combination of strict adherence to her templates, accompanied by a regular review process that saw her consistently achieve long-term goals that would leave many of us struggling.

Capitalize on Your Strengths and the Strengths of Those Around You

‘I’m both an educationalist and an ongoing learner. Every day I learn things consciously and subconsciously, and when somebody tells me something I find interesting, I try to learn something from it.’

Throughout her career, Dr Sherman has built on her learning progressively, ensuring that she takes every new experience and consolidates it with existing knowledge. Her career at Sydney University gave her the teaching skills to take to Ascham. Her leadership experience at Ascham was then drawn upon as she made the move into gallery management.

Dr Sherman speaks openly about her passion for learning every day, and it is this, along with her ability to communicate and build relationships, which forms the foundation of her success.

We are never alone in developing our skills and achieving our goals. Dr Sherman describes her mother-in-law as her ‘secret weapon’ in her ability to achieve such a mammoth task as simultaneously raising a young family, working and completing a doctorate. She never hesitates in recognising the support she has received from her family, both her mother-in-law who lived with the family for ten years, but also her husband Brian who has played a crucial business mentoring role throughout her career. She says her achievements are their achievements.

Like many successful people, she has cultivated guides and mentors along the way. Whilst her husband coached her in the financial and business side of running a gallery, it was William Wright AM who joined the already established Sherman Galleries in 1992 as curatorial director, who Dr Sherman cites as being a key mentor and guide in the art world. Over time their roles as mentors may diminish, but Dr Sherman always maintains and values these relationships.

Career Lessons

From Dr Gene Sherman

Above, Dr Gene Sherman, Cathedral, Celia McPherson, Melbourne and City, Dr Brian & Louise 2005, Photo Doris Vordermeier
‘Cross-pollination is so important. I was a university academic for 11 years, so of course when I came into the gallery world, I was an example of cross-pollination and in a way it was very natural to me.’

We often surround ourselves by like-minded people, and despite the increased flexibility in the modern employment market, most do tend to have linear career paths within the same, or similar industry. There are significant advantages, however, to building bridges between industries and this is something Dr Sherman has succeeded in doing on many occasions.

She has made a conscious effort throughout her career to bring the arts industry and educational institutions closer together. She speaks of her surprise when organizing a crate exhibition in the mid-1990s where she found many of the academics who attended had never seen a crate in which art is transported. It was then she realized that those on the academic side of the industry had very little practical experience. Over the past 30 years, Dr Sherman has sought to bridge the gap between the practical and the academic elements of the arts industry to enable maximum opportunity for all. Clearly, the Sherman’s recent contribution to COFA demonstrates the value with which they hold relationships with the arts education sector.

Dr Sherman has also demonstrated the considerable benefits of mixing business expertise with artistic knowledge. Creative people who can ground themselves with the fundamentals of business theory will be at a distinct advantage.

Our Personal Environment

‘I never saw the world as confined to one set of ideas, or one set of practices. You couldn’t if you had my background.’

The ability to understand and benefit from global trends has been a factor in the success of Sherman Galleries. Dr Sherman’s skill in identifying Australia’s shift towards Asia in the cultural, political, economic and artistic arena led the Sherman Galleries to be one of the first to specialize in Asian art. This then paved the way for art spaces such as 4A and White Rabbit.

Dr Sherman provides three lessons to determine success in this area. First, developing and listening to intuition, and in her case it was her father who played the role of visionary. At age six her father told her two pearls of wisdom, to be a global citizen. The second lesson is to be a global citizen.

The second lesson is to be a global citizen. Dr Sherman grew up in a family that spoke five languages collectively, and her passion for travel and the study of European and Asian cultures is well documented. While many families are global in nature today, this was a more unusual circumstance in the mid-1950s. Dr Sherman has always understood this knowledge of other cultures as a strength to be nurtured and built upon.

Finally, to understand your environment you must foster intellectual curiosity. There is not a day that goes by where Dr Sherman doesn’t expand her knowledge through reading. Not just reading for professional development, but reading widely and broadly across any subject that catches her interest. Prior to travelling to Japan, Dr Sherman chose to read Japanese literature translated into English for two years.

Instrumental

‘It comes naturally to me. I have to work at doing it, but I don’t have to work at thinking I’m going to do it, it’s my nature plus my training.’

The last lesson we can gain from Dr Sherman’s experience is probably the one of most importance; that of applying dedication to everything you do. It is clear from every anecdote Dr Sherman shares, she has never waivered in her dedication to achieve whatever goals she has set herself, whether that be six years completing a doctorate or nine years in transitioning a commercial gallery into a contemporary art foundation. She applies that dedication even to her fashion choices. For 25 years she wore only three Japanese fashion designers. Not a single other thing.

The underlying theme from listening to Dr Sherman is passion. Dr Sherman describes herself as a coming together of passion and pleasure, a combination of disparate forces: the artistic, the academic, the business, and the cultural. Some would say it’s a perfect storm. Whatever endeavor she has directed herself towards, she has done so with passion. This is a lesson we can all learn from.

Kim Goodwin

The second lesson is to be a global citizen.

University Art Museums Australia (UAMA)

Nick Waterlow OAM Scholarship in Art Administration

Nick Waterlow Scholarship in Art Administration: This $5000 scholarship will be awarded annually to a student studying the Master of Art Administration at COFA. The scholarship was made possible by the generosity Ann Lewis AO, in conjunction with the gifts of many COFA alumni and Waterlow’s friends and admirers.

In 2011, Kim Goodwin, who wrote the above article, won the inaugural scholarship.

The Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council established this endowment as a professional development opportunity which allows an emerging curator to work closely with the BoS Artistic Director.

Waterlow Gallery

A new purpose-built gallery at COFA was one of Waterlow’s long-held dreams. This gallery is now being built, and the financial support of Dr Gene Sherman and Brian Sherman AM means that one of its internal spaces will be named in his memory.

 Beauty of Distance: Songs of Survival in the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council for the Arts and the BoS established the fellowship as a professional development opportunity which allows an emerging curator to work closely with the BoS Artistic Director.

The second lesson is to be a global citizen.

The Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council established this endowment as a professional development opportunity which allows an emerging curator to work closely with the BoS Artistic Director.

Dr Gene Sherman

Dr Gene Sherman. This article was originally published in an issue of ArtWrite, a blog written by COFA students in the course ‘Writing for Different Cultures and Audiences’. (http://blogs.cofa.unsw.edu.au/artwrite)

http://blogs.cofa.unsw.edu.au/artwrite
FOLLOW US AS THE MCA GOES OFFSITE!
The MCA galleries will be closed for construction from 20 June. While the Museum’s galleries might be closed, the MCA’s exciting range of exhibitions and programs continue at the National Art School Gallery, Darlinghurst, and various sites around The Rocks.

National Art School Gallery
17 June – 24 August

The Rocks
9 September – 13 November
Primavera 2011, the MCA’s annual exhibition for young artists aged 35 and under, takes to The Rocks, for the first time in its 20 year history.
Sculpture by the Sea

American artist and COFA Master of Fine Arts student Belem Lett won the 2010 Brett Whiteley Travelling Art Scholarship for work, refraction 2.0. The scholarship is awarded to a talented young artist with an established body of work. The winner is awarded $25,000 and a three-month residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, which is administered by the AGNSW.

American artist and COFA Master of Fine Arts student Charlie Schneider won The Damon Courtenay Memorial Young Sculptor Prize, as part of Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi 2010. Schneider won the award with crown-of-thorns wallpaper (acanathaster planci). Schneider’s practice involves the application of clay slip wallpaper to public spaces.

Below Left: Photo Wilk, 2010. Above: Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi, is the world’s largest outdoor sculpture exhibition.
University students are meant to voice their opinions and challenge accepted community standards. It’s believed that such practice leads to effective critical thinking and problem solving skills, thus equipping students to become productive labour force members.

The producer, editor, and designers of Das Superpaper have pushed the standards to such an extent that now, after finishing uni and moving into their chosen professions, they are driving the practice of independent thought in three modes of creative media and communications. In only three years, Das Superpaper has expanded, now encompassing Das Cinema and Das 500 (the online provider).

“The aim of Das,” explains producer Nick Garner, “is to provide free, accessible and up-to-date coverage of the emerging and contemporary art world.”

Editor Bronwyn Bailey-Charteris concurs, “It’s fantastic to have a space to explore the practices of emerging and contemporary artists.” Bailey-Charteris jokes that when Garner first asked her to come on board as editor, “I thought he just wanted a proof reader! Looking back I don’t think I knew that an Editor actually controlled content.”

Collaboration is the foundation of the Das empire. All COFA graduates from different disciplines, Garner and Bailey-Charteris work with Jasmine O’Loughlin Glover, Elliott Bryce Foulkes and Will Leong, who represent the Das design talent. Together they have enjoyed what Garner terms an “evolutionary process”. She says that “As we’ve gone along, there have always been the things we don’t do, for lack of space, time, capital or it’s just the wrong medium, but it is a matter of can’t – not won’t.”

In an attempt to overcome this obstacle, Das Cinema was born with the aim of bringing “visual arts, theatre, film, music, fashion and design to the viewer”. It’s an ambition that Garner himself describes as “precocious”. Das Cinema presents interviews with artists alongside videos of their work in a free and completely accessible environment. More recently the Das empire has extended to an online platform, Das 500, where writers can contribute content of no more than 500 words relating to artworks and exhibitions across Sydney.

Having already achieved so much in such a short space of time, it’s difficult to see where Das could possibly go from here. Garner insists the next step is to infiltrate Das Superpaper into secondary school art classes, commenting, “…this seems like an exciting way to get the interesting art, artists and Artist Run Initiatives… into the hands of those who make up the wider art community”. Finding a place for Das within the community is one of the motivating forces behind the project. It’s a desire, as Garner puts it, to encourage an audience to “come with us on this.”

Naomi Gall
Nick Garner completed a BFA in 2006.
Bronwyn Bailey-Charteris completed a BFA studies in 2007 and a Masters of Art Administration in 2010.
The Paper Mill in Angel Place feels about as far removed from Sydney’s CBD as you can possibly get, yet it is here, amongst suits and high heels, that Sydney’s newest Artist Run Initiative (ARI) finds its home. Spacious and slightly industrial, the gallery is inconspicuous amongst the cafes and bars of Angel Place, however, after speaking with three of The Paper Mill’s Directors, it would seem as if this is actually the whole point.

“It’s less about the fact that we happen to be a gallery,” Anne-Louise Dadak explains, “and more to do with us being a creative space and activating an area which is otherwise very commercial.” Responding to a call for proposals by the City of Sydney, Stephanie Peters and Sian McIntyre put forward the idea of a gallery that primarily focused on paper-based works.

“We believed that paper works could be represented more in Sydney,” explains Peters, “going back to a medium that everyone uses at some stage in the creative process.” McIntyre elaborates, “Paper is this accessible, self-sustainable material that people can relate to and interact with daily.” Accessibility appears to be the driving force behind this initiative, with the gallery operating workshops, artist talks and residencies. It’s this idea of seeing behind closed doors, at what McIntyre dubs “the underbelly side of the creative process,” that sets The Paper Mill apart from other galleries in Sydney.

The Paper Mill

Three of the four Paper Mill Directors are COFA graduates: Dadak has a Bachelor of Design and McIntyre and Peters both have a Bachelor of Fine Arts. COFA, says Dadak, promotes “a really nurturing environment for like minds to meet.” McIntyre agrees and says COFA students are “spoil’d” to have the opportunity to learn in a space where people appreciate and respect creativity. “You then get out in the real world and see someone walk into an artwork and realise not everyone is like that.” All three graduates emphasise the ongoing support of what they refer to as the “COFA community” with lectures and staff often attending openings.

While the City of Sydney provides assistance to The Paper Mill in the form of subsidised rent, this patronage is set to expire in July 2011. “It’s hard because when you only exist within a six month period you can’t apply for official funding... This is where the short term nature begins to be a bit of a constraint,” comments McIntyre. This is not to say that The Paper Mill will cease to exist in the latter half of 2011 – quite the opposite – having gained invaluable experience, McIntyre, Dadak and Peters intend to keep The Paper Mill, and everything it represents, going even if that means moving to a different location.

Despite the fact that the gallery has only just opened, the response has been overwhelming. Given its CBD location, a diverse audience walks through the doors. And while they might not necessarily love the show, “they acknowledge,” says Dadak, “that the city needs this type of cultural space.”

Naomi Gall

“It’s less about the fact that we happen to be a gallery,” Anne-Louise Dadak explains, “and more to do with us being a creative space and activating an area which is otherwise very commercial.”
While most art collectives are notorious for competing egos and internal rivalry, Dirty Hands stands united by a passion for innovation and a profound respect for tradition and craft.

When one hears the word ‘printmaking’, what comes to mind is decidedly medieval. Illuminated by flickering candlelight, one’s thoughts turn to printmaking legends like Albrecht Durer. Printmaking conjures images of etching plates cobwebbed by spidery detail, esoteric tools and the acrid stench of printing ink filling lightless workshops. However, like most ideas about artists, this is a fantasy. While the pungent pigments and attention to detail remains, printmaking is no longer the domain of hermits and madmen.

The artist collective Dirty Hands are champions of contemporary printmaking. Born out of COFA’s printmaking studios in 2007, their ongoing projects stretch the boundaries of the medium to their fullest.

With a membership as fluid and dynamic as the printmaking techniques they employ, their current membership is comprised of Alice McCombie, Fernanda Porto, Gokcen Altinok, Helen Daley, Jess Hodgkinson, Linda Nicholls, Mehwish Iqbal, Sian McIntyre and Stephanie Peters.

Dirty Hands showcases both the diversity and flexibility of the printmaking medium, spanning traditional fine printing, sculpture and installation practice. The result is a constellation of exciting, poetic and sophisticated print-works that leap from the walls, crawl across floors and peer from lofty ceilings.

The group reflects the fluidity of ideas and artistic practices central to COFA’s printmaking studios. Having supported each other throughout their studies, these alumni share a wealth of techniques, experience and time-honoured expertise.

After completing their studies at COFA, the Dirty Hands collective formed as a way of maintaining creative momentum after graduating. Meeting regularly, the group works to challenge each other to create new and exciting work, which then forms the foundation for their exhibition projects.

Having debuted at COFA’s student-run Kudos Gallery, Dirty Hands continue to exhibit regularly. Their last show was called Dirty Hands, Torn Edges. The exhibition title was taken to its logical conclusion at Hardware Gallery in Newtown. While ‘torn edges’ refers to the traditional printing technique of the torn deckled edge, the show also presented work at the cutting edge of the medium. Dirty Hands, Torn Edges showcased a variety of sophisticated forms, ranging from classical printing methods such as etching, to bold, contemporary installation artwork.

The group has also recently exhibited at Carriageworks’ Finders Keepers market, Sydney’s best DIY art, craft and fashion market. A definite crowd favourite, the abundant craftsmanship of Dirty Hands print-collections are poetic and genuinely refreshing in equal measure.

Outside of the collective, group members maintain diverse individual art practices also. Most recently, Sian McIntyre and Stephanie Peters attested to this diversity, becoming directors of Sydney’s new Paper Mill artist-run gallery. With several exhibitions in the works and plans of establishing a printmaking studio & workshop, this stellar group prove that getting your hands dirty can be very rewarding.
Artificial intelligence (AI) and 3D technology made iCinema’s Scenario, a unique, interactive film experience, a reality. Scenario transformed the infamous Fritzl case in Austria, in which a man kept his daughter in a bunker for decades, into an eerie fairytale with multiple outcomes. The film was a collaborative project involving iCinema, led by COFA Associate Professor and Director of iCinema Centre for Interactive Cinema Research, Dennis Del Favero, and Associate Professor Maurice Pagnucco from the Faculty of Engineering. The film also featured playwright Stephen Sewell, who was Literary Fellow at UNSW.

COFA Associate Professor and Director of iCinema Centre for Interactive Cinema Research, Dennis Del Favero, has also been awarded an Australian Research Council (ARC) Australian Professorial Fellowship (APF). Dennis Del Favero’s APF is the first and only one to be appointed in the Creative Arts. APFs are one of the most prestigious ARC Fellowships and provide opportunities for outstanding researchers with proven international reputations to undertake research that is both of major importance in its field and of significant benefit to Australia.

Eleven of COFA’s media artists, including both staff and current postgraduate students, were awarded grants by the Australia Council for the Arts. Together they received over $200,000 to realise their media arts projects. Grant recipients include COFA Senior Lecturer Michele Barker & Associate Professor Anna Munster; Denis Beaubois, Bachelor of Fine Arts; Master of Fine Arts & Master of Fine Arts & Master of Art; Alexander Davies, Bachelor of Fine Arts & PhD Media Arts; Associate Professor Phillip George; Dr Petra Gemeinboeck; Photomedia Lecturer Lynne Roberts-Goodwin; Alex Kershaw; Tanya Peterson, Bachelor of Art Theory & Masters of Art Theory; Stephanie and Richard nova Milne, Bachelor of Fine Arts & Master of Fine Arts.
Samstag Winner

The Samstag Program has been running for 18 years and consists of a scholarship and as of this year a residency in New York, known as the Australia Council for the Arts and Anne & Gordon Samstag ISCP Residency. Each residency will provide $25,000 over a 6 month period. This year COFA Master of Fine Arts student Alex Kershaw received this residency and will be formally acknowledged as a Samstag Scholar.

Venice Architecture Biennale

COFA Professor Richard Goodwin, and recent COFA Bachelor of Design graduate Alanna Howe’s work was included as part of the 2010 Venice Architecture Biennale. Professor Goodwin, working as part of team RAG Urbanism, exhibited Sydney 2050: Fraying Ground. Alanna Howe, working with team Arup Biomimetics, presented Ocean City. The theme of the Australian Pavilion, hosted by the Australian Institute of Architects, was Designs for Australia’s Cities 2050+.

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By interrogating the readymade tropes of global mass media, Sabsabi aims always to bring the individual back into the picture and to ensure that the viewer takes responsibility for the sense they make or take from what they’re seeing. “We’re told that it’s in our genes, or it’s human nature that we love violence and we will always fight to advance ourselves. If you accept that, then that’s all you will have.”

Khaled Sabsabi came to Australia from Tripoli in 1978. His parents had not intended to emigrate permanently, but as civil war took hold in Lebanon the family began laying down roots in Western Sydney. While the war dragged on, Sabsabi’s family would wait anxiously for scraps of news about close friends and relations. “Lebanon was in our hearts, the region was in our hearts,” says Sabsabi. “But at the same time, you had to establish yourself here, growing up, and be able to make a life for yourself.”

The dual-identities that develop through the migrant experience can create anxiety and uncertainty, but they can also generate a flexible cross-cultural awareness. Sabsabi explains, “Going between Arab culture and Western or Australian culture, you have the ability to experience and to see and to analyse both cultures, both traditions, both histories.”

In 2003, Sabsabi returned to Lebanon and then travelled through Syria, Northern Africa and Europe on a Community Cultural Development Fund Fellowship provided by the Australian Council for the Arts. Inspired by the artists he interacted with in the region, Sabsabi returned to Australia with a commitment to refine his skills and clarify his artistic purpose. He revived a lapsed MA at COFA and began to focus on time-based art.

Sabsabi began his creative life as a hip hop performer, and has produced sound art, immersive installations and theatre pieces. As a video artist, he continues to work across borders of discipline, nationality and culture to create artworks that challenge personal ideologies and the passive consumption of media spectacle.

“The ‘media machine’ has resources that we couldn’t imagine having access to, or being able to utilise,” Sabsabi says. “What we have is an idea. What we have is an alternative view of how things should be.” By interrogating the readymade tropes of global mass media, Sabsabi aims always to bring the individual back into the picture and to ensure that the viewer takes responsibility for the sense they make or take from what they’re seeing. “We’re told that it’s in our genes, or it’s human nature that we love violence and we will always fight to advance ourselves. If you accept that, then that’s all you will have.”

In 2010, Sabsabi won The Helen Lempriere Travelling Scholarship. The $60,000 award will allow him to return to Lebanon where he plans to create a video work in collaboration with Beirut DC, a collective of independent artists each holding some renown in the region.

Sabsabi was inspired by the tenacity of Beirut DC and their ability to transcend their difficult circumstances, overcome local and international pressures, and still present challenging independent video work. “It’s a great thing for them to exist,” says Sabsabi. The travelling scholarship will enable him to “learn from the people, the artists’ collective, and their way of looking at the world. My education is entirely from a Western institutional background, so working with them will give me a different outlook.” Working with Beirut DC will also give Sabsabi access to the collective’s video archives, a vast library of independent work from the region that spans features, animation, documentaries and video art.

Sabsabi is excited to be setting a precedent for future cultural cross-pollination in the region. “The idea of exchange,” he says, “is really important to me, that they can see an Australian-Lebanese coming in and being genuine about the collaboration. As a country, we should be able to engage more from a cultural perspective with that region, and perhaps this might make it a little easier for other Australian artists to go in and do this.”

Nick Terrell
Kuchelmeister is fascinated by the fleeting nature of dance: each movement forgotten as the next comes to life. By filming dancers from multiple viewpoints using stereoscopic cameras, the viewer becomes omnipresent: no longer limited to a single point of view.

Kuchelmeister is not the first cinematographer to notate body movement on film, but he’s perhaps the most advanced in using 3D technology to create more immersive, intimate film experiences.

“Until recently, 3D was really just a tool to sell more expensive movie tickets. But today it is used more cleverly as a creative storytelling tool because it offers an added dimension,” says Kuchelmeister.

Since James Cameron’s 3D movie, Avatar, broke box office records in 2009, 3D films have raked in more than three times as much as regular films at the box office. This inspired Kuchelmeister to launch Australia’s first 3D filmmaking course, Stereographic 3D Cinematography, in COFA’s School of Media Arts.

Stereographic filmmaking uses camera pairs to capture two slightly different perspectives, which, when fused together, create the illusion of three-dimensions.

Last year, 27 digital media and architecture students became the first to complete the course, with just five weeks to direct their own 3D short films as their final project.

“IT’s an interesting time for stereoscopic technology because there is a lot of room for improvement and innovation. The industry is still establishing itself as the technology evolves,” says Kuchelmeister.

Stereographic films were popular in the 1950s, and again in the 1990s with the advent of IMAX cinemas. The technology has always been fiddly and expensive, and if the two cameras or projections weren’t perfectly synchronized, the audience would leave with a headache.

Today, 3D digital technology is far more sophisticated, and Kuchelmeister says he was impressed by how quickly his first-year students picked up the art of multi-dimensional storytelling.
Taking a Bite of the Big Apple

As the song says, if you can make it there, you’ll make it anywhere. For more than a century, New York city has exerted an almost inexorable pull on creative types keen to prove themselves. And of course, COFA graduates are not immune to this magnetic force. Melissa Chiu, Elizabeth Corkery and Graeme Sullivan are just three alumni who have made their mark on the big apple.

When Melissa Chiu graduated from COFA in 1994, with a Master of Arts Administration degree, she never imagined that ten years later she would find herself working as the Director of the Asia Society Museum, one of New York’s most highly regarded specialised institutions. According to Chiu, it was just “good luck and timing.” Of course, looking back with the benefit of hindsight, her progress seems more like the logical result of a well-planned career trajectory.

Chiu was raised in Sydney by a Chinese father and a white Australian mother. Even though she didn’t come from a family that was particularly interested in art, Chiu always knew that she would become involved. For her, “The decision was less about whether or not to do art, rather it was more about which field it would be in. The revelation was that I knew that I didn’t want to be an artist!”

In 1997, The Asian Australian Artists Association in Sydney launched Gallery 4A with Chiu as its founding Director. The gallery was the first in Australia to specifically showcase contemporary work by Asian and Asian-Australian artists. The gallery brought both the artists and Chiu to the attention of an international audience. As Chiu explains, Australia had a leadership role in terms of awareness of contemporary Asian art at the time, in the USA “it was a very new field.”

Inordinary circumstances.” Nevertheless, her persistence paid off and 2004, she was promoted to Director and now she is the Vice President of the Society’s Global Arts Programming as well.

Chiu seems to have a dream job in one of the world’s most exciting cities, but as she explains, “prospects were very slim and many positions were being given to people who would have been over-qualified in ordinary circumstances.” Nevertheless, her persistence paid off and she is currently working as an art buyer for a major advertising agency.

The Asia Society Museum was so impressed with Chiu’s capabilities and specialised knowledge that they created a new position just for her. In 2001, Chiu moved to New York and became their Curator of Asian Contemporary Art, the first such position in any American museum. In 2004, she was promoted to Director and now she is the Vice President of the Society’s Global Arts Programming as well.

Moving to the USA had always been an option for emerging artist Elizabeth Corkery. She has dual citizenship thanks to her American mother. But it was a semester as an exchange student at Pennsylvania State University in Philadelphia, while she was still studying printmaking at COFA, that sealed the deal. Corkery returned to Sydney and completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts (Hons) degree with a plan for the future in place, “I'd love to return to Australia. It would just be a matter of the right opportunity presenting itself.”

While Elizabeth Corkery started her US experience in Philly then ended up in New York, Graeme Sullivan has done the opposite. After more than a decade teaching Art Education at Columbia University, he has recently become the Director of the School of Visual Arts at Penn State. While being offered the job didn’t exactly come as a surprise, Professor Sullivan admits, “I hadn’t expected to be lured away from New York, but the ‘pull’ factors in returning to an art school within a large research university prompted the move.”
Sullivan is excited about the possibilities of his new position and it is safe to say that for him, art education has been a lifelong passion. He began his career with a Diploma in Art Education from Alexander Mackie College of Advanced Education (now COFA). After graduating in 1974, he taught high school in Sydney before traveling to the USA where he completed Masters of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degrees at Ohio State University. Back in Australia, he began teaching at tertiary level and when he left for New York in 1999, Sullivan had been lecturing at COFA for eleven years.

For Sullivan, the move to New York was prompted by the desire to “work on a bigger canvas”. As he explains, “By the late 1990s the development of advanced research degrees, Masters and PhDs, in art education (in Australia) was still in its infancy so I decided to go to the US to take up the opportunity to work with larger and diverse groups of graduate students… and the dynamics of New York meant that art education could readily be seen to be centrally located within the contemporary art world.”

Sullivan is an artist as well as an educator and has been working on an anonymous Streetworks project for nearly two decades. He creates site-specific pieces from found materials and places them in public places, from libraries and subway stations to alleys and parks, which “allows them to be stumbled on by others.”

Sullivan has just begun at Penn State; he has big plans and no intention of leaving soon. But he is not closing any doors. As he says, “Presently the challenges that interest me are still located mostly in the northern hemisphere… Yet in visits back home and through liaison with colleagues in Australia I am continually energized by the creative energy and intellectual urgency that I always find.” Sullivan acknowledges that, “Australia remains my central point of reference and I will return at some time,” adding, “My great faith in the unlimited capacity of human potential to do extraordinary things is not limited to geography, so who knows where the next creative bump might come from.”

Melissa Chiu, Elizabeth Corkery and Graeme Sullivan are all at different stages of their careers in very different fields. But the museum Director, emerging artist and art school Director have one thing in common. They all prove that with tenacity, talent, hard work and a good education, not only can you take a bite out of the big apple, the world is your oyster!
In one scene, Chook Woman revels in the contamination of a waterfall; in another, she gazes awestruck as a machine robs the earth of its minerals. To Ely, Chook Woman is the perfect symbol of human greed and misogyny.

When sculptor Bonita Ely received a half-woman, half-chicken toy as a gift from friends, she was so delighted by the toy’s garish appearance she named it ‘Chook Woman’.

In August 2010, Chook Woman could be spotted amongst Ely’s photographs at Campbelltown Arts Centre in a postcard series playfully titled, Fun With Chook Woman on the Georges River.

In one scene, Chook Woman revels in the contamination of a waterfall; in another, she gazes awestruck as a machine robs the earth of its minerals. To Ely, Chook Woman is the perfect symbol of human greed and misogyny.

“She’s got tits that stick out and a little bow in her hair and very long legs. She doesn’t see the pollution, and she thinks the mining is wonderful,” says Ely, eyes twinkling with bemusement.

Accompanied by 14 photographs of the polluted Georges River, the exhibition reflects a few of Ely’s defining traits: her passion for the environment; a fascination with inter-species relationships; and her larrikin sense of humour.

“I think humour is an extraordinary way of communicating. If people come away having had a good belly laugh, it gets people talking about issues that are otherwise too hard,” she says.

Ely defines herself as a sculptor, yet dabbles in drawing, painting, performance and photography. Her artworks belong to the vernacular of Australian experimental practice, well known for blending social commentary with a disregard for convention.

Barbara Messer

Dr Bonita Ely is Head of Sculpture, Performance and Installation at COFA, and an inaugural member of COFA’s Environmental Research Institute of Art.

Ely also revisited one of her best-loved personas last year: the bubbly cooking demonstrator of Murray River Punch (1980). This time, instead of concocting a toxic punch, Ely dished up a paste of shredded beer cans, sulphuric acid, dried river sediment and weed killer; a recipe that reflects a river in drought.

“I don’t usually return to my personas, but there is so little water in the Murray River today, I realized I could take the concept to another stage,” says Ely. “When I drove to Mildura to collect the ingredients, I drove through a plague of locusts. It added a nice piquancy to the punch.”

Raised in Robinvale on the Murray River, Ely has always been sensitive to the impact humans have on the environment. In 1972, she produced her first major environmental artwork, The World Is My Ashtray, which showed a sexy, provocative nude posing on a great big ashtray.

Next came 20th Century Mythological Beasts: at home with the Locust People, an artwork that combined humans with locusts, highlighting our ravenous appetite for natural resources.

Thirty years on, Ely’s environmental warnings proved apt.

 Recognising that our desecration of the environment continues, she asks rhetorically, is there hope? “Sometimes I wonder if our resources will run out and we’ll be forced to adapt to being just another creature inhabiting the earth,” says Ely.

But for now, she’ll continue to create art that encourages people to examine their behaviour. “I’m like a great big eye witnessing and contextualizing what’s happening for people who can’t see things themselves,” she says.

Barbara Messer
COFA Associate Professor from the School of Art, Paula Dawson, was awarded an Australian Council of University Art & Design Schools (ACUADS) Distinguished Research Award for 2010. The ACUADS Distinguished Research Awards recognizes a distinguished career in significant research achievements and publicly acknowledges the major achievements and leadership qualities of a senior colleague as determined by their peers.
COFA Design Festival & Sydney Design

Where: COFA
Cnr Oxford St & Greens Rd, Paddington
August 2-19
www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/events/design-festival

Where: Various Venues
July 30-August 14
www.sydneydesign.com.au

COFA Design Festival
presented by the Powerhouse Museum

COFA Top in Australia
COFA UNSW received top results in the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) 2010 National Report. The ERA is produced by the Australian Research Council (ARC) and is the first comprehensive review of research undertaken in Australian higher education institutions.

COFA UNSW emerged as the top-ranked institution in Australia for Studies in Creative Arts and Writing (Field of Research (FoR) code 19.) Overall, COFA achieved the best result of any art and design school in Australia. COFA was rated as “well above world standard” in the Art Theory and Criticism and Film, Television and Digital Media categories and was rated “above world standard” in Visual Arts and Crafts.

COFA • DESIGN FESTIVAL & SYDNEY DESIGN
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<th>Date</th>
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<td>Love Lace opens at Powerhouse</td>
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<td>31st July</td>
<td>See-Saw at Gaffa Gallery, 11am-5pm</td>
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<td>1st August</td>
<td>Known/Unknown at The Paper Mill, 11am-5pm</td>
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<td>Interpretations at Damien Minton Gallery, 6.30pm</td>
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<td>New Territory Design Research opens at Gaffa Gallery, 6pm</td>
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<td>Reworking the Paste-up opens at 70 Mary St, Surry Hills, 6-9pm</td>
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<td>David Trubridge in conversation COFA EG02, 6-8pm</td>
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<td>Recent Past opens at 50 Kensington St, Chippendale, 6-8pm</td>
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<td>ReForm opens at Tosh Lane, Zetland, 4-8pm</td>
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<td>7th August</td>
<td>Rug Up opens at COFAspace, 6-8pm</td>
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<td>Machines for Drawing opens at 42 Kensington St, Chippendale, 6-8pm</td>
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<td>8th August</td>
<td>Tony Di Spinga Lecture COFA EG02 7.30-9.30pm</td>
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<td>Tony Di Spinga Workshop COFA EG02 10am-12pm</td>
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<td>12th August</td>
<td>Red Bamford, Semi Loop, 2008</td>
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<td>13th August</td>
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<td>14th August</td>
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<td>18th August</td>
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[www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/events/design-festival](http://www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/events/design-festival)
**Design Talks**

New Territory Design Research Discussions:
- **Design: Cool and hot ... or not?**
  COFA, EG02
  Cost: Free
  Thurs, Aug 4, 6pm
  Chaired by Assoc Prof Rick Bennett
  Panel: Heidi Dokulil, Happy at Happy Talk
  Liane Rossler, Designer, Seed Planter, and Happy at Happy Talk
  Prof Richard Goodwin, Artist & Architect
  Duncan Underwood, Digital Eskimo

- **Design & Digital Crafting**
  Designers: David Trubridge, Rod Bamford & Cinnamon Lee
  COFA, EG02
  Tues, Aug 2, 6.30-8.30pm
  Designed Here, Made There
  Speakers: A panel of three professionals including Dr Kevin Murray and Jacqueline Clayton
  Tues, Aug 9, 6.30-8.30pm
  In these panel discussions, design practitioners and other creative professionals discuss the role of design in the face of global environmental challenge and ask: Are designers and design part of the problem or the solution?

**Live Futures 2020: Metamorphosis**

- **COFA** Multiple locations on campus
- **Check website for more details.**
- **Sat, Aug 13, 10am-4pm**
- **Cost: Free**

Live Futures 2020 is an annual festival and call-to-action through collaboration between different industries to co-create positive futures.

**Tony Di Spigna**

- **Lecture**
  COFA, EG02
  Thurs, Aug 18, 7-30-9.30pm
  Cost: students $15, industry $25
  Booking essential: www.eventelephant.com/tondispignatalk/summary.htm

- **Workshop for COFA Students**
  COFA, EG02
  Fri, Aug 19, 10am-12pm
  Cost: FREE for 40 COFA students
  Booking essential: www.eventelephant.com/tondispignatalk/summary.htm

- **If you love typography don’t miss Tony Di Spigna. The New York based graphic designer is a world-renowned designer of fonts. He is the man behind such typefaces as Serif Gothic, Playgir, Fattoni, and exclusive fonts custom-made including Coca Cola.**

**David Trubridge**

- **In Conversation**
  COFA, EG02
  Fri, Aug 5, 6-8pm
  Cost: Free
  David Trubridge is one of New Zealand’s most respected designers of furniture and lighting. Trubridge has exhibited at the Milan Furniture Fair, the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York, Tokyo Designer’s Block and the Pompidou Centre and VIA Design Centre in Paris, to name just a few highlights. David Trubridge will discuss his work and philosophy in conversation with COFA academic Dr Michael Garbutt.

**Red Objects Exhibition**

- **Research into Experimental Design (RED) Objects is a group of COFA’s School of Design Studies academics who explore the parameters of design, including recent work by Liz Williamson, Rod Bamford, Karina Clarke, Jacqueline Clayton, Katherine Moline and Wendy Parker.**

**Love Lace**

- **Powerhouse Museum**
  Sat, July 30 - April 2012
  Cost: free with museum entry

Love Lace is one of the highlights of Sydney Design. This spectacular, ground-breaking exhibition of contemporary lace features unexpected works such as a perforated car and replicas of human organs knitted from hair. The 194 artists and designers are from 26 countries and include many COFA graduates and staff members.

**Rug Up 2011**

- **COFA, COFAspace**
  Aug 9–12, 10am–5pm
  Opening: Tues, Aug 9, 6-8pm
  Cost: Free

Rug Up showcases rug designs by third-year textile design students at COFA. Each student responds to the challenge of designing a rug for a specific environment: a cultural organisation, school, hospital or socially aware institution.

Now in its fourth year, the Rug Up project is sponsored by Sydney’s leading rug manufacturer, Designer Rugs.
The Code is Not Coloured

While discussing my master degree research, my mother reminded me that my one-time art dealer Ray Hughes said I should paint a few good pictures rather than hundreds. My reply was, “As a maximalist, I’ve never done anything that way.” This approach is not original. In 1807, English polymath Thomas Young published *A Course of Lectures on Natural Philosophy and the Mechanical Arts*, attempting to outline all the known theories of colour. Then in 1888, Dennis Sepper described Goethe’s colour science methodology as “naive induction”.

I remember Leong Chan, my first art director and now supervisor, patiently sharing his graphic art knowledge with me. Wendy Parker, my other supervisor, notes that the apprentice tradition sustained workshop knowledge (historically, at a master’s death the apprentice inherited the workshop, tools and his wife). Recently I suffered colour management hell. Digital workflow had transformed print technology. Gary G Field notes this transformation is far more frightening than the privacy issues concerning social networking.

In the 1980s, scientist W.D. Wright called for the end of the two colour cultures of science and art. He asked: “Do we really need a philosophy of colour?” Yes, in a world where a coded analogue of our own visual process is projecting preverbal Platonic shadows directly into our minds albeit in colour, the location of reality is once more thrown into question for philosophers. If graphic artists cease being technological experimentalists – as they had once been, becoming merely users of machines and purveyors of good taste, they will become monochromatic and fail. Colour reproduction is inextricably linked to science and without graphic artists science will be the greatest loser.

John Henry Martin

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**John Henry Martin** is soon to complete his Master of Design (Honours) at COFA. The following is an extract from his thesis examining the topics of light, colour, modernity, and the graphics arts.

As photographic historian, Joseph Solomon Friedman identified early 20th century analogue colour reproduction technologies as the initiation of this division. Objective methods attempted to record the external qualities of objects and subjective ones tried to emulate the human visual process. Subjective technologies succeeded because only the colour response of the subject can be measured, the colour of an object cannot. These measurements allowed colour to be coded and digitised. The code provides only an approximation of colour response in the y-axis. Colour is and will always be determined by the interaction of the subject (such as graphic artist or client) and the object (such as printing or computer screen) under specific conditions (light). As Isaac Newton identified: “For the rays to speak are not possible with them there is nothing else than certain Power and Disposition to still up a Sensation of this or that Colour,” and so too the code is not coloured.

Graphic artists intuitively negotiate science, philosophy, art and design on a daily basis. Since René Descartes elaborated upon the similarity of the camera obscura to the eye, light, colour and modernity have remained everyday fodder for philosophers and scientists alike. The contribution of graphic artists in this dialogue is overlooked. Graphic artists are defined by their use of image masters for mass reiterations; this includes early letterpress and now websites. The philosophy and science of light divided subject and object in the West. This object/subject division delineates the beginning of modernity. This division raises a question for designers, scientists and philosophers: is colour objective or subjective?

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Historian S H Steinberg notes that there was little that was revolutionary about Johannes Gutenberg’s 15th century invention of printing from moveable type. Using wine press technology, known throughout Europe since Ancient Rome, he replaced the wooden master of the woodcut with the punches of a jeweller, and adopted jewellers’ replica casting techniques so he could produce, as Steinberg notes, “unlimited quantities of metal type”. His achievement was to change printing from a technical craft to a mechanised and industrial process.

In our time, there has been another major change in which nothing new has been invented: the science and technology of light and optics have combined with the technology of printing. Allowing digital workflow in the graphic arts, amateurs are no longer dependent on proprietary processes. For example, Kodak photographic laboratories are no longer needed to produce coloured images and the popularity of the Internet would be impossible if its content was confined to monochrome images and text. It is the reproduction of colour that initiated the information revolution.

Here there is a problem and a question. The problem: firstly, colour amateurs expect a one-to-one relationship between the coloured world and the coloured world perceived, secondly, colour amateurs expect a one-to-one relationship between the coloured world and the coloured world recorded then reproduced. Colour scientists, philosophers, graphic artists and photographers do not. The question: what was the impact of moveable type to change society from the Medieval to the Renaissance? What will be the impact of the fusion of light and optics with printing? What will be the impact of the digitisation of a human perceptual process (colour vision) and its mechanisation and computerisation?
Can art create social change, reclaim damaged environments, alter patterns of behaviour, and help people recover from trauma? And if it can, can the methodology of its effective practice in these situations be identified, recorded and replicated?

The kind of research conducted at COFA’s new National Institute for Experimental Arts (NIEA) is predicated on the belief that, beyond its aesthetic value, art can play a practical role in transformation of the world and how we live in it.

“I think art often works as a means of trying to implement behavioural change because it can be challenging and cut across normative ways of behaving and thinking,” says Professor Jill Bennett, COFA’s Associate Dean Research and director of NIEA.

NIEA was founded at the beginning of 2010 with the purpose of promoting interdisciplinary experimentation across the broad themes of media and innovation, environment and sustainability, and culture and society. The Institute uses a variety of COFA venues to host events, including the iCinema Centre and the COFAspace Gallery. In the future, NIEA will also utilise COFA’s new purpose-built gallery and laboratory facility (currently under development).

Bennett says the Institute was designed to pull together and promote COFA’s top-level research and test the boundaries of art practice.

Bennett believes that “a legacy of a rarified notion of art” exists in Australia and questions, “What’s the practical value of this?” Such a concept, she feels, “museum-ifies art” causing it to operate “in a symbolic realm… but now we are seeing a lot of work that is much more interdisciplinary. Artists are working with a whole lot of other areas in collaborative teams to actually try to produce ‘real’ outcomes.”

Bennett articulates this idea in her upcoming book, Practical Aesthetics, to be published 2011-12, and says it’s a concept that is gaining importance globally as distinctions between disciplines break down.
Off campus activity

Many of the research projects that NIEA houses characteristically extend well beyond the campus, with partnerships with external stakeholders as well as collaborations with international partners in Asia, Europe, Africa and the United States.

Professor Dennis Del Favero is the director of the groundbreaking Cinema Centre for Interactive Cinema Research. He is also a deputy director of NIEA, and in these two hats is able help lift the research status of COFA and UNSW. He is leading an Australian Research Council funded five year project investigating how climate change is affecting understanding of landscape. The UNSW Centre of Excellence for Climate Change Research and SBS Television are partners in the project, as well as City University, Hong Kong and the University of Pittsburgh in the United States.

SBS will dedicate an internet-based interactive channel to this project, which uses iCinema’s 3D Advanced Visualisation and Interaction Environment (AVIE) cinematic platform to integrate archived material with user contributed uploaded content to build a global picture of the effects of climate change.

Within the local purview, COFA’s Centre for Contemporary Art and Politics (CCAP) is running a three-year Australian Research Council funded project to examine how members of indigenous culture use media technologies, one of several projects running in Arnhem Land. Other CCAP research projects are concerned with the impact of AIDS and the role of social upheaval in shaping societies.

Bennett says she’s currently excited about the NIEA project called HotHouse, which launched as a symposium in collaboration with Object: Australian Centre for Craft and Design and the City of Sydney at the Opera House in July 2010. A direct result of this project, says Bennett, “is that we got invited to the Metabolic Studio in Los Angeles. That was a large-scale operation to promote the idea that art can innovate where bureaucracy fails.”

This Studio project has become one of NIEA’s case studies, as well as a research partner and is involved in active environmentalism and urban development; transforming brownfield toxic sites in the LA area by mobilising communities to participate in urban agriculture. In one activity, a former brownfield was planted out in corn to create an enormous parkland. In another, Vietnam veterans living in a rehabilitation facility created a strawberry garden, providing occupational therapy.

Curating Sydney

NIEA has recently received ARC funding for its five-year project, curating cities. This project involves collaborating with the City of Sydney, Object Gallery and Carbon Arts. Bennett says exemplary international projects provide methodologies for how the cultural sector can deliver change. “What we’re really looking at is how art can model change to the point of actually offering different ways of behaving, consuming, inhabiting space, using resources and so on. Part of our project is to get the data to review world best practice and then come back and curate the city of Sydney.”

She says Curating Cities will have artists working with climate scientists, engineers, designers and planners to address questions usually directed to governmental institutions.

“We’re doing a little pilot project this year with Object Gallery about distributing creative ideas to the community. It’s called, Try This at Home. It’s a totally take-home project and it’s a simple way of showing that the end point of art isn’t necessarily an end product, maybe the gallery or the exhibition is just a starting point.” This sort of project also fosters networked participation, the basis for achieving change at a micro level and one of HotHouse’s founding tenets.

In 2012 and beyond, larger labs will look at the South Sydney area. “It’s quite easy to do art in the traditional cultural hubs but South Sydney is more of a challenge because it’s not really clear how to work art projects in these areas,” she comments, citing extensive industrial zones, different qualities of housing and the polluted Alexandria canal as factors.

“Our idea is all about curating the city as a whole, not just looking at a specific location but looking at the flow of water, people, energy, what happens on the margins of the total community and to think about the larger ways that art can address that.”

Bennett says that sustainable art doesn’t necessarily conform to a single form captured at a particular point in time. “Some of the most interesting models are the ones that are constantly evolving and changing because they need to be adaptive to respond to urban ecology.”

Already what began as the HotHouse Symposium has mutated and, according to Bennett, sprouted lots of tentacles. “What we’re studying are these very new models of what is sometimes called distributed aesthetics.”
Necessities of the Living

Part of the COFA philosophy is to encourage students, educators and professionals to undertake ethically responsible approaches to community assistance.

Recently, several COFA staff members have worked on collaborative projects with communities in China, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and India, which embody this ethos.

“We’ve always had a very international perspective and the benefits go both ways,” reflects the Dean of COFA, Ian Howard. “When we turn up at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, they tell us that COFA brings really good ideas and we do, but the uptake of good ideas in China is just phenomenal.”

For example, in late 2010, the Howard travelled to China where he marshalled forces for a working group between the People’s Liberation Army Museum in Beijing and the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra to produce what he describes as “the world’s best interactive, immersive display within a military museum.”

“This,” says Howard, “is the underlying thesis of my entire life; to bring civilian, military and political cultures together, in a closer liaison, for better communication. If any of these components is missing, the decision making is very poor, so bringing them together is what I’ve been working for as a practicing artist for over 40 years.”

“We can make this happen,” he says emphatically, and it is this mantra that COFA staff seem to be responding to as they lend valued expertise to numerous projects through the Asia Pacific region.

In 2010, Rick Bennett was finally granted an audience with the director of Manila’s Ayala Museum on his third visit to the Philippines in three months. His proposal was to use recycled rubbish to create a public art installation in the imposing museum forecourt.

“It was an epic meeting,” recalls Bennett. “I think the Director’s entourage were a bit appalled and thought ‘it’s just going down to the MCA here and saying ‘I want to show on this site’ but I could see that Mr Guillermo Liz was impressed.’

The Director hesitated for a moment.

Then he said, ‘I’ve got good news and bad news. The good news is that you can have the site for five weeks. The bad news is that you have to take it in four weeks time to coincide with our national river pollution awareness campaign.’

Under Bennett’s stewardship, COFA’s Omnium Research Group had pitched the perfectly-timed concept, originally arising from a textiles project within a class of fine arts students at COFA. The task that was expected to take six months would never have been possible without the Filipino artisans from Cavite. This extraordinary group of women set to work immediately, gathering discarded chocolate wrappers and chip packets for transformation into hundreds of colourful hand-woven flags, scattered as sentinels to the pollution that chokes Manila’s waterways.

The DasManila project, a partnership between COFA and two De La Salle universities in Manila gave recognition to the artisans and pushed art onto the streets.

“It’s probably a sweeping statement,” Bennett concedes, “but art is perhaps a luxury for countries that can afford it; and for those that can’t, money is spent on the necessities of living. The Ayala Museum is very concerned to get works out to the public but mostly that’s inside the Museum. The people I met in the Philippines generally thought museums were for them. They put themselves in their socio-economic bracket. They think it’s too posh, that’s where rich people go and, even though it’s free to get in, they wouldn’t dream of walking inside.

The concept of ‘art for all’ fits with Williamson’s approach to art for all. She has spent much of the last decade fostering international relations with major Art Schools in Thailand in the cities of Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Her regular visits to the country have excited interest among students contemplating international study at COFA. Perhaps more importantly, however, Ross has brought paintbrushes to remote hill tribe villages and schools for the disabled.

Ross was invited by the Dean of Art and Design at Bangkok’s Chulalongkorn University, Professor Chunnarong Pornrungrueng, to participate in the pioneering Art for All Foundation in 2003. Their bond is now firmly established and their objective is clear: to develop a caring society through new approaches of art for people from all walks of life but especially the disabled and disadvantaged.

“I’m interested in how the perception of self and of place is manifest in those who live an isolated life,” Ross explains. She returns dearly every year to help children use art to imagine new places and ideas. Recently, Ross has been teaching painting and drawing with murderers and drug runners imprisoned on death row. Her goal is to use art to cultivate and promote moral values through co-operative learning.

Not an easy task, she says, when the painter in chains and his fate is uncertain.

“You’re working with these people and you don’t know if they’re going to be there next time. You can be on death row for 50 years and only get two hours notice that you’re going to be executed. There’s that incredible tension and it’s very confronting.”

On Ross’s last visit, 746 men were on death row, heavily shackled but, she says, very receptive, and that’s why I think I could do a lot more good. I can try to give them somewhere to escape in to their minds… a way to channel all that frustration and energy.”

Another COFA staff member working to improve quality of life in Asia is Liz Williamson. This internationally respected textile artist, who is Head of the School of Design Studies at COFA, has helped to revitalise the work of skilled contemporary and traditional weavers from Vietnam, Cambodia, India, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal and Thailand for much of the last decade. “I’ve often said that my interest and expertise in weaving has taken me everywhere… and it has,” she says.

Many skilled Asian artisans came to Williamson’s attention in 2001 when she was teaching at a UNESCO workshop in Vietnam attempting to revitalise traditional woven products to ensure continued income generation and future employment. Williamson recognised the opportunity to introduce new weaving techniques, and to develop design and colour combinations, thereby extending the range of the traditional hand-weavers and giving them a chance to enhance their livelihoods.

Williamson also regularly visits India and has established a relationship with a group of weavers in West Bengal who were encouraged to create structures and designs that she had woven for many years. While Williamson’s work had been done in wool, the Milanakan weavers reinterpreted the designs in fine silk threads. This provided a valuable shift in their experience as it generated sales to galleries and museums rather than just fair trade outlets.

“Even though projects like these are on a small scale, it’s having an impact for the communities,” she says. “In the School of Design Studies, we’re interested in beneficial design that will impact upon and improve peoples’ lives in a number of ways. Projects like these are central to our objective.”

Anabel Dean
Eva Müller, Landscapes on Hold, Room set-up of the whole installation (detail converted to black and white), 2010.

Sophie Clague, Triangulation (detail converted to black and white), 2010.

COFA Master of Art graduate and PhD candidate Eva Müller won the 2010 Arc Emerging Artist and Designer Award with her work titled Landscapes on Hold. The Arc Emerging Artists and Designer Award is a non-acquisitive award, open to current COFA students working in all disciplines. The finalists exhibition is held annually at Kudos gallery.

COFA Bachelor of Fine Arts student Sophie Clague won the 2010 Australian Decorative Fine Arts Society (NSW) award with her body of work, titled Triangulation, Blueprint and Untitled (memory). The body of work consists of three assemblages made out of wood, elastic, copper and string. The Australian Decorative Fine Arts Society Award was established in 1989 to foster interest and excellence in the decorative and fine arts, and to cultivate an appreciation of practice.

Decorative & Fine Arts Award

Emerging Artist Award
Landcare Australia Trophy

Landcare Australia Limited initiated the competition to design a new trophy for the National Landcare Awards, which celebrate the work of individuals and groups from around Australia who are making a significant contribution to the environment. Geneva Meldrum’s winning trophy design is based on the root system of a tree, enclosed in a glass casing and sealed with reclaimed wood.

COFA Bachelor of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Design student Geneva Meldrum’s design was chosen for the Landcare Australia trophy.

COFA aims to enhance creative thinking, assist in the making of experimental art and connect with our students and public. It is a place where people learn and foster their interests in art making, the design process and media arts. Together we can make Sydney smARTer and contribute more to our vibrant city.

The money our donors give to scholarships, projects, workshops, and teaching facilities supports our current work and radically improves our future potential.

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<td>$200</td>
<td>Would assist in showcasing student works at the COFA Annual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>Would enable the development of world-class art and design conferences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>Would assist in the provision of scholarships for students to travel nationally and internationally to enhance their creative achievements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>Would support internationally renouned Artists, Designers and Theorists to deliver Keynote Addresses at COFA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500,000</td>
<td>Would provide a dramatic upgrade of the COFA library and naming rights for the building.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here’s how
For more information on supporting COFA, please contact:
Sally Marwood
at (02) 9385 0674 or sally.m@unsw.edu.au
Thank-you!
STAY IN TOUCH

ARE YOU A GRADUATE?

- COFA
- The National Art School (before 1975)
- City Art Institute
- Alexander Mackie College of Advanced Education

COFA WANTS TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOU!

Send your contact details to:
Nick Vickers, Alumni Co-ordinator
Phone: (02) 9385 0699
Email: alumni@cofa.unsw.edu.au
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