CREATE YOURSELF
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The term ‘talent’ is a popular one in an art and design college. It can pertain to both students and teachers at any stage of their careers: early on – when a student shows special aptitude and unique thinking, and later – when wider society recognises and rewards the continued application of that talent.

The inherent nature of talent is as widely discussed in a creative institution as the need to nurture and develop it. As every accomplished artist and designer knows, recognition of talent is only the first step in achieving professional success. Hard work, supportive mentors and chance also play critical roles as genuine potential transforms into real achievement.

In this issue of Incubate, we explore the varied paths that have led, and continue to lead, talented individuals towards success in their chosen fields.

We also examine the process wherein accomplished practitioners choose to ‘give back’ as teachers and mentors to the next generation of artists and designers, and the personal rewards that are gained by doing so.

We at Incubate have chosen to define the experience of grappling with one’s talent and finding a way to become a professional artist or designer as ‘transformation’. As a playful take on the transformative process, Incubate’s designer, Christine Messinesi, has reinterpreted the paper doll for the cover of this magazine. By cutting out the various garments and hairstyles (which you will find on the first inside pages) and placing them onto the paper creatures, new identities emerge, change and transform.

As part of the transformative experience wherein students pass from the realm of study into professional work, COFA will be hosting its ANNUAL graduation show later this year. This ANNUAL rite of passage will showcase about 400 COFA students from the areas of media arts, fine arts and design. Several graduating students in the 2010 show, having already embarked upon their creative careers, are featured in this issue of Incubate – the sensational artistic duo, Mills & Morte (see page 26), young illustrator for The New York Times, Gemma O’Brien (see page 23), and international environmental artist, Charlie Schneider (see page 28).

A shift from study to work is not the only change represented by this year’s ANNUAL exhibition. The exhibition itself is moving, albeit temporarily, from the COFA campus in Paddington to Carriageworks in Eveleigh (see 3K Radius on page 20 for more information). This warehouse-style urban arts venue is likely to be home to the COFA ANNUAL exhibition for the next couple of years, until the new purpose-built art and design gallery is finished on the College grounds.

Once graduated from their degrees, many COFA alumni seem to ‘disappear’ for a few years while they work on getting professional jobs, grants or artist residencies. What happens in these few years between graduation and becoming ‘well-known’ practitioners? Gill Samuel visits four alumni who have just made their marks in professional art, design and media scenes and asks how they got there. Their answers are as, paradoxically, different as they are universal – curiosity, passion, struggle, acceptance and determination (see page 11).

This year the Biennale of Sydney is on and, as the first following the death of Nick Waterlow, it is appropriately one of remembrance. The Nick Waterlow Scholarship has been named and will be awarded through the Biennale of Sydney, Nick, who taught at the College and was Director of the Ivan Dougherty Gallery for almost two decades, is perhaps best remembered for his generous nurturing of artists and curators, who now number themselves in the hundreds and span generations. Tracey Clement, in her article on the Biennale, acknowledges the vital importance of passionate and intelligent creative mentoring, such as that offered by Nick Waterlow (see page 32).

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Mentoring Creative Minds is also the title of the article by former COFA head of Media Arts, Andy Polaine (see page 62). Andy, who now lives in Germany and teaches at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, has embraced change many times in his own creative life. He has been a media artist at Animal Logic, a blogger, an editor, a PhD student, an arts administrator and a teacher. Of all the articles in this issue of Incubate, his represents the cyclical nature of learning, teaching, creativity and transformation the most. Summing up the student spirit that continues to exist in the mentor, he says, “Not knowing everything is to know the joy of endless curiosity.”

I hope you enjoy this issue of Incubate.

JO BOSKEN
Practising artists and designers engage in a form of performance magic. They reach into themselves and extract not doves, rabbits or coloured handkerchiefs but the manifestation of their craft, eliciting wonder, recognition, intrigue, discomfort, desire — any number of human responses. How they do it and what they fabricate is shaped by their history, expertise and inner processes.

COFA graduates Darryl Mascarenhas (2004), Michaela Gleave (2004) and Karl Logge and Tessa Rapaport (2007) are creating powerful works that have made them ‘ones to watch’ in art and design spheres.

Mascarenhas graduated with top marks in digital media and has just landed a job as creative director at New York’s Eyeball NYC design, film, advertising and communications company, leaving his current position as partner and creative director at Steam in Sydney. Visual artist Gleave is the recipient of numerous awards, most recently the Marten Bequest Travelling Scholarship to facilitate a research program in Iceland, Berlin and Central Australia during 2010. Designers, experimental artists and teachers Logge and Rapaport have participated in residencies and curated events all over Australia and are this year’s recipients of the Firstdraft Emerging Artist Studio Residency JUMP mentorship with Fiona Hall and The Freedman Foundation Travelling Scholarship for Emerging Artists.

Mascarenhas and Gleave had no aspirations to a creative career before leaving high school, while Logge and Rapaport’s studio practice has, as Logge explains, been shaped by “a series of frustrations”. All cite aspects of their formal training at COFA as key influences in the development of their approach and practice. But that’s not all.

For more information on the Annie Awards visit: www.annieawards.org/index.html

Animator and COFA Digital Media graduate, Phillip To won an Annie Award for Best Character Animation in a Television Production for his work on Monsters vs. Aliens: Mutant Pumpkins from Outer Space by DreamWorks Animation. The Annie Awards are animation’s highest honor, presented by the International Animated Film Society in Hollywood. To has also worked on successful feature films including The Golden Compass and Madagascar Two.
Mascarenhas, who cold-called Eyeball to canvas for a job, says his background of moving schools – twice because he was expelled – enabled him to develop important social skills. “I think there are two sides to the work: there’s the work and then there’s the people, and I’ve found that it’s all about teamwork,” he says. “The people who are good at cultivating both the technical and personal skills are the ones who get ahead.”

Mascarenhas values his COFA training for its focus “on developing your creative brain in the context of what exactly you’re trying to do, as opposed to the practical execution.” COFA also he believes provides a community where “everyone helps each other out.”

Impelled to enrol by his interest in digital formats, Mascarenhas says he had to work hard to keep pace with his COFA classmates. “I sort of fell into this degree. I was a bit of a bad kid in high school and I had no artistic background at all. I always had to put in that extra amount of research-time to get my stuff up to scratch.”

It was a pattern that has paid dividends in his career. After graduating with skills that exceeded most entry-level requirements, Mascarenhas spent his free evenings working on fake ads for Nike for his show reel. “My thing has always been to look at the best in the world and try to be like them,” he says. “No one teaches you the next application, and job criteria are constantly changing.”

Apart from getting expelled, which showed him the limits, he says, falling flat on his face as a junior at Steam when he pitched and sold a $150,000 project that the company didn’t have the technology or resources to fulfil taught him a lesson he says he’s never forgotten. “I’ve always lived on the edge. I just jump into things. I always look at the positive, I never consider the negative stuff. I guess now I give it more thought than I used to.”

But the negative stuff is what has given the outwardly upbeat Mascarenhas direction. “When I was four years old I used to play with this little kid. We were playing with a ball and I threw it to him, and he got hit by a truck and died. After that I didn’t talk to anyone for a year and a half. I think somehow that shaped me psychologically, I haven’t quite figured how.”
For country born and bred Michaela Gleave, the move to Sydney, “into an apartment where I couldn’t see the sky out of the window”, was a trigger for her work exploring “the divide between outside and inside, and the actual and constructed world,” as she puts it.

Gleave undertook a Master of Fine Arts research degree in Sculpture, Performance and Installation, applying to COFA on the strength of its reputation. “If I didn’t do that I was going to quit art. I didn’t even think about myself as an artist. Growing up in a farming area it’s not really seen as an option,” she says.

She decided to attend art school after a gap year when she spent some time in Berlin. “The city was in the tail end of the massive reconstruction after the Wall came down and, having spent all my life where I could see the bush and the weather was inside the house as well as outside because my parents lived in a tumbledown timber cottage, witnessing humanity actively constructing their own reality just blew me away,” she says. “It’s fed my work for the last ten years.”
After requesting in her application to COFA a large studio space, Gleave was assigned the courtyard storage cage. “It was the biggest studio space at COFA and I was very lucky to have had it. It certainly informed what I was doing in there with making weather.”

Characterising her own installations as “dealing with natural phenomena in contrast with built environments”, Gleave says she feels it’s important to make works relevant to contemporary life. “That’s where I want to be positioned in the world. I want to be successful. I want to be in a big city, I want to be where things are happening and where there are opportunities.”

Gleave sits on the Boards of Runway magazine and The Free Association and she’s a former director at Firstdraft Gallery. She says getting involved with artist-run initiatives in Sydney has been a big plus.

As for working with external organisations, such as her Wall Work project for the 2010 Next Wave Festival, she says, “I think the bureaucracy surrounding so much of contemporary life has started influencing the work I make. What has been reinforced for me by this project is that the invisible ‘work’ of an artist is the vast quantities of administration now involved in being a producer of contemporary art.”
Karl Logge and Tessa Rapaport share a unique understanding of each other and the creative process. They speak with one mind to the extent that they finish each other’s sentences. In many of their projects they seem to simultaneously create and rebel, a modus operandi they’ve employed since they met at COFA while studying design nine years ago.

Their partnership in their final year project, which Logge says “didn’t produce a solid outcome, what we had was a range of starting points for our kind of installation way of thinking”, presented a challenge to the College’s marking process.

“In our practice there’s always been a sort of kicking against the design industry and educational structures. What we always try to do is to create a shift from, or a rupture with, that,” he says.

As students they curated exhibitions and worked with others across different institutions to access “a more creatively engaged design discourse”. Rapaport says, involving themselves in the emerging field of design philosophy as “a way of critically thinking about how design functions not so much as an industry but how it’s actually shaping forces in the world”, Logge explains. “And how it links in with so many other fields and parts of life.” Rapaport adds. “It’s funny but I think our interest was sparked by specific electives we took, not necessarily our core design degree. We also sought out the people within the design field who we related to, and who we felt were doing really interesting kinds of work.” Their honours supervisor Richard Goodwin was and is still a key mentor.

Their studio, Makeshift, operates in a number of areas, including experimental art and design as well as teaching, curating and collaborations. Logge says they are predominantly interested in sustainable design, based on the idea of “configuring people’s behaviour and if their behaviour is unsustainable creating designs that will redirect them towards potentially sustainable activities”.

It’s a process that can’t be specifically planned. Instead Makeshift works to explore the mesh created by the different strands involved in the design process: politics, application, even misuse. Their projects are characterised by comprehensive research and engagement with multiple factors.

“We always like to work with people from other disciplines.” Rapaport says. “We’ve worked quite closely with scientists and historians…” “Anthropologists and ethno botanists…” adds Logge.

“In some ways that’s one of the most exciting things about having a position as an artist,” Rapaport says. “You get to have that kind of entry point into other worlds.”

Gill Samuel
Yet like transgender people everywhere, they continue to survive and even thrive. Yet like transgender people everywhere, they continue to survive and even thrive.
COFA graduate Michael Lindeman has won the $20,000 prize for his artwork Paintings, prints & wall hangings. The Sulman Prize is awarded for the best subject painting, genre painting or mural project by an Australian artist. Established within the terms of the late Sir John Sulman’s bequest, it was first awarded in 1936.
As an illustrator for The New York Times and guest speaker at Typo Berlin, current COFA student Gemma O’Brien has arrived as an international typography talent at the age of 22.

O’Brien possesses an unusual talent for drawing letters over every inch of her body, a tin section in the middle of her back,bar a tiny section in the middle of her back, which lies just out of reach of her pen. O’Brien was delighted when dozens of fans leapt to her defence, praising her experiments for being fresh and endearing.

Furious, she retrieved the package and sent it back to Fed Ex, this time covered in abusive black ink. While her entry never made the competition’s deadline, O’Brien’s misfortune struck a chord with thousands of designers around the world. Suddenly her blog, For the Love of Type, received a huge spike in traffic, marking the beginning of O’Brien’s rise to typographic acclaim.

“I don’t think anyone realized I was a 21-year-old design student until I arrived in Berlin,” says O’Brien, who originally used the ‘Mrs Eaves’ pseudonym to disguise her age, fearing she would not be taken seriously if people knew she was still a student. At Typo Berlin, O’Brien gave a presentation about Australian typography, which was voted the highlight of the three-day conference by the audience.

O’Brien’s upcoming exhibitions include Stereotyped at Object Gallery, which opens in September 2010. She is currently finishing an illustrated children’s book as part of her final-year design project at COFA, which can be seen in the 2010 COFA ANNUAL exhibition.

Barbora Messek

COFA ANNUAL 2010
Exhibition Running: November 24-30
Location: CarriageWorks,
243 Wilson Street, Eveleigh, 8571 9099
Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm, Saturday, 9am - 1pm
www.carriageworks.com.au
Sex and death. As two key components in the perpetual cycle of life, these primal processes are so common that they ought to be mundane, yet they both are wrapped in layers of mystery. Separately they each have their followers, but together they exert an irresistible cultural pull, and not just on tabloid newspaper editors.

The two part-time Master of Art by coursework students met on their first day at the College in 2007. Hindmarsh was pursuing an artistic interest in love, sex and romance, while Thorne was exploring the theme of death. This, coupled with the fact that they were also sharing a studio, made a collaboration seem almost inevitable. In 2006, Hindmarsh adopted the nom-de-plume Mills (lifted from classic pulp romance title Mills and Boon), Thorne became Morte (from the Latin for death) and they joined forces.

The artists wanted a Sydney-based story for their first Mills & Morte project. For inspiration, they began doing some research at the Caroline Simpson Library at the Mint. From there they were referred to the Justice & Police Museum where they met Assistant Curator Rebecca Edmunds who introduced them to Eugenia Falleni’s incredible true-crime tale of sex and death.

In 1920, Falleni was convicted of murdering Annie Birkett: her wife. Falleni was married under the name Harry Crawford. She had lived successfully as a man for years and only revealed her secret when she was arrested. Predictably, the newspapers went wild and Falleni became an unwitting media sensation as the infamous, “man-woman murderer”.

Hindmarsh and Thorne took a more sensitive approach to Falleni’s complex story in their Mills & Morte exhibition, Something Amazing About Harry: Secrets & Sins, held in an old prison cell at The Mint in early 2010. The duo made extensive use of archival photographs and of both male and female clothing in their exploration of Falleni’s troubled past and gender bending identity.

Salacious and scandalous sex-meets-death headlines are no doubt driven by a desire to make a quick buck rather than by an interest in enduring art, but they are just another example of centuries of creativity which has been fuelled by this heady cocktail: from Shakespeare’s doomed lovers, Romeo and Juliet, to the pointedly erotic pierced flesh of Caravaggio’s Saint Sebastian and Marilyn Manson’s fetishised Goth posturings. Collaborating under the evocative name, Mills & Morte, current COFA students Dominique Hindmarsh and Susannah Thorne join a long line of artists, writers and musicians who just can’t get enough of the sex/death combo.

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In Something Amazing About Harry, Mills & Morte presented a cohesive body of work, yet each artist also retains her individuality. Thorne describes their collaborative process as “a cross-fertilisation in which we share materials, share ideas and images, share research.” Hindmarsh explains that “instead of working together on one piece we work side by side... It’s fantastic to have someone to spin ideas off.” Thorne adds, “How we hang a show is a big part of it; the works are talking to each other.”

As Dominique Hindmarsh and Susannah Thorne delved deeper into the truth–is–stranger-than fiction history of Eugenia Falleni, with the support and guidance of Rebecca Edmunds, they quickly realised that there was more material there than one exhibition could hold. Something Amazing About Harry examined the period of Falleni’s incarceration, 1920-1931, just one episode in her labyrinthine life. Mills & Morte are planning at least three Falleni themed shows. Visit the COFA ANNUAL 2010 for the next instalment.

Tracey Clement

COFA ANNUAL 2010
Exhibition Running: November 24-30
Location: CarriageWorks, 245 Wilson Street, Eveleigh, 8571 9099
Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm, Saturday, 9am - 1pm
www.carriageworks.com.au
When Banksy’s stencil of a parachuting rat was recently painted over by Melbourne Council’s over-zealous graffiti removers, the debate over the ephemeral nature of street art was ignited all over again. Weighing in on this argument is COFA’s own resident stencil artist Charlie Schneider, whose practice involves the application of clay slip wallpaper to public spaces.

Keenly interested in street art’s conceptual “reclamation of space”, Schneider is committed to keeping his own artistic footprint as light as possible. “Accordingly,” he explains, “I choose to use clay instead of paint because of its impermanence. I can make a mark, a statement, without permanently imposing my work in other’s space.”

The 29-year old American artist has been undertaking a Masters by Coursework at the college this year, majoring in Sculpture, Performance and Installation. At the core of his practice is an interest in place and the impact of “invasive species” on the ecology of the native environment. The designs in Schneider’s wallpaper stencils often reference introduced species that are specific to the region of his art intervention. A clay slip mix is then used to paint the handmade stencils, ‘colonising’ the space with his temporary work.

“The majority of my work takes place at urban and wilderness interfaces, where it is apparent how much we’ve changed our environment. In these interface sites, wallpaper visually represents how we’ve introduced our own patterning on the landscape; we’ve pushed, pulled, bulldozed, paved, and transformed the landscape in the most striking of manners – we’re just inured to the extent we’ve altered it.”

In August last year, Schneider completed his most ambitious intervention to date, stencilling the spillway for the Montichello Dam in California with a wallpaper motif of the Yellow Starthistle. Working with a team of nine assistants – who Schneider calls “a community of collaborators” – the artist installed the work over an eight-day period, abseiling across the surface of the dam. In this way Schneider’s practice combines his interests in adventure, science, ceramics and nature.

Staged in the natural environment, Schneider’s work is not at the mercy of graffiti police, but rather the weather. Reflecting on the discovery that his epic work had washed away after a few short weeks, he says, “I was somewhat shocked and disappointed when Dam Wallpaper disappeared. I was hoping to show more people the work, and perhaps stage performances in the space. But I accept that my work won’t be seen by a lot of people.”

Through Arc @ COFA’s studio residency, Schneider completed a similarly ambitious intervention in the Australian landscape, wallpapering a 50m long spillway dam at Fowler’s Gap, near Broken Hill.

Before starting an MFA in Chicago this September, Schneider will also be completing a commission for Newcastle TAFE, collaborating with an Indigenous artist from Gerringong and exhibiting in the 2010 Sculpture by the Sea.
Lynda Draper’s solo exhibition, Home Altar, is the culmination of her studio research, developed with the assistance of the PLANEX Scholarship which she won in 2008. The aim of the inaugural scholarship was to assist a Masters by Research student in the School of Design Studies at COFA. The MFA graduate received $20,000 over two years to enable her to develop a new body of work.

Home Altar is on at Gallerysmith in Melbourne from June 17 – July 24.

www.gallerysmith.com.au

n February 2010, when the Artistic Director, David Elliott, launched his vision for the 17th Biennale of Sydney (BoS), he dedicated his ambitious project, The Beauty of Distance: Songs of Survival in a Precarious Age, to the “new and continuing influence of Nick Waterlow”. At the same press conference, citing Waterlow’s “belief in the necessity of art and artists,” Luca Belgiorno-Nettis, Biennale Chairman, announced that the BoS keynote address will from now on be named in Waterlow’s memory; an apt way to recognise and honour a man who, according to Nettis, “set the benchmark for biennales going forward”.

As another way of recognising Waterlow’s legacy, the BoS have also created The Nick Waterlow OAM Curatorial Fellowship, in conjunction with The Australian Council for the Arts. The two-year, fulltime fellowship will be awarded to a young curator who will be mentored by the Artistic Director and will work for the BoS team on the planning, administration, programming and delivery of the 2012 Biennale.

For years, Waterlow was a tangible link between COFA and the BoS. He was teaching at COFA (then Alexander Mackie) when he was appointed Artistic Director of the 3rd BoS, European Dialogue. It opened in 1979, and even today remains one of Australia’s landmark art events. Waterlow went on to become the only art director in the history of the event to be asked back. He also curated the BoS in 1986, and 1988. During his tenure as Director of CODR’s Ivan Dougherty Gallery, a position he held from 1991 until his untimely death in 2009, Waterlow maintained strong links with the Biennale. He served on the Board of the BoS from 1994 to 2005 and he chaired the international selection committee for the 2000 Biennale.

In 2008, the College began to forge another key relationship with the BiS through the School of Art History and Art Education. A team of COFA students produced a special educational resource for the 16th BoS. The Biennale Public Education students are all working on the Biennale. Some are doing internships in the BoS offices, others will provide tours during the exhibition, and a group of 15 is enrolled in a Special Projects Elective in order work on this year’s educational resources for use by a range of audiences.

LANDMARKS & LEGACIES

SafARI

SafARI in an unofficial satellite event of the Biennale of Sydney. Staged across a range of Artist Run Initiatives (ARIs), the project cleverly allows unrepresented artists to make the most of the BoS hype and grab a well deserved piece of the limelight. The event was founded in 2004 and was the brainchild of two COFA graduates, Lisa Corsi and Margaret Farmer. SafARI debuted in 2006 and was held again in 2008.

SafARI 2010, held May 5-30, was full to bursting with COFA graduates. Co-curated by Corsi and Danielle Harris (another COFA grad) with Alex Maciver, it featured works by an impressive list of the College’s alumni from Fine Arts, Design, Art Education and Art Administration including: Nils Crompton, Biljana Jancic, Leahlani Johnson, Vince and Vaughan O’Connor and Tom Polo. And behind the scenes, graduate Elizabeth Stanton took care of publicity, while current COFA Design student Lauren Austin handled graphic design.

According to Snepvangers, Head of the School of Art History and Art Education, COFA students are asked back because “they have a proven track record. They have gained a reputation, she explains, for providing “new, diverse and interesting resources for use by a range of audiences”.

This year, Masters of Art Administration, Bachelor of Art Theory and Bachelor of Art Education students are all working on the Biennale. Some are doing internships in the BoS office, others will provide tours during the exhibition, and a group of 15 is enrolled in a Special Projects Elective in order work on this year’s educational resource under the supervision of Dr Gay McDonald and Kim Snepvangers.


LEFT SafARI, an unofficial satellite event of the Biennale of Sydney. Staged across a range of Artist Run Initiatives (ARIs), the project cleverly allows unrepresented artists to make the most of the BoS hype and grab a well deserved piece of the limelight. The event was founded in 2004 and was the brainchild of two COFA graduates, Lisa Corsi and Margaret Farmer. SafARI debuted in 2006 and was held again in 2008.

German artist Christian Jankowski worked with Professor Ross Harley, Head of COFA’s School of Media Arts, and graduate Andrew Frost to produce his video work for the Biennale of Sydney.

Jankowski is known for manipulating arts media to make his artworks. His BoS piece, Tableaux Vivant TV: Live from the Inside, was screened on ABC TV’s Art Nation and included performances by media personalities Anne Fulwood, Angela Bishop, Kylie Kwong and Penellia Kernebone as well as performances by COFA’s Dean, Professor Ian Howard, and alumni artists Dom Angello, from Soda_Jerk, and Stephanie and Richard Nova M7r7e, aka Ms & Mr. Jankowski’s project was shot with the assistance of COFA students and graduates Hugh Marchant, Josephine Skinner and Karl Emmett and the can be seen at the Museum of Contemporary Art during the Biennale.

According to Jankowski, his piece “is about describing an artwork and also the distance between artist and journalist, and journalist and audience.”

To see Jankowski’s BoS videos visit:
http://www.abc.net.au/arts/video/tv_program/ARTNATION.htm

Object’s highly selective annual graduate exhibition is a reliable predictor of the future success of its finalists, who are drawn from all over Australia and consistently include COFA alumni. 2010 is no exception.

This year’s promotions for Object: Australian Centre for Craft and Design’s annual exhibition of works by Australia’s most talented graduates feature a gnawed kitchen chair painted Barbie pink. The teeth marks are clearly human.

It’s part of a two-piece installation by Hannah Ritchie Young, one of two UNSW College of Fine Arts graduates whose final year projects appeared in Design Now! 2010 from 10 April to 30 May at the Object Gallery in Surry Hills, Sydney. The chair is exhibited with photographs of Young wearing, Alice in Wonderland-style, a pink dolls house around the city of Cardiff while participating in an international exchange elective offered through COFA called the Porosity Studio (Cityscapers: Cardiff Chimera 2020) in Wales last year.

“The work got the most amazing response,” she says. “I was walking through this grim community housing estate and all the children ran up to me. They loved it.”

Titled Princess Faffabout and her Edible Architecture, the work is a playful response to the urban environment that crosses the divide between built form and the body by exploring the notion that the comfort of familiar surroundings can be internalised, and external objects transformed. “The way that I thought about that was that if I could eat it then that would become a part of me and there’s no longer that divide. Strange stuff!” Young explains. She says the quirky pieces were inspired in part by the children’s books by Roald Dahl, who was born in Cardiff.
Fellow COFA graduate, Jessica Benhar’s project, Behind the Stuff.com, takes the form of three short animated videos, which deliver easy-to-digest sustainability messages crammed with facts and figures conveyed in cartoon form. She’s hoping they will go viral.

“In my generation, we’re looking for the next internet phenomenon so I guess it’s kind of inbuilt, looking for something that’s going to be popular,” Benhar says.

Taking information graphics as her starting point, the illustrator and graphic designer added a crash course in flash animation to her fourth year workload in order to format her messages for maximum impact.

“I found it much more powerful to engage people with animation, sound, movement and music. I thought it was cool that we could take these really important statistics that everyone should know and make them into something that was accessible to the everyday person,” she says. “That’s why I chose to display it on the internet. I’m aiming for something that’s going to reach the widest audience possible.”

Young and Benhar’s projects were selected for the Design for the Built Environment and Design for Communication categories respectively from more than 250 submissions from applied arts and design student courses in universities around Australia. The six categories also include Design for Studio Production, the Body, the Home and for Industry.

Object’s internal selection panel includes practicing designers, including their Communications and Development Manager, Annalys McLeod, who was a finalist in 2003. The panel for two awards also includes external judges, such as editor of Vogue Living, David Clark and editor of DQ (Design Quarterly), Alice Blackwood.

To get into the competition, final-year university students are nominated firstly by their teachers, and then invited by Object to tender submissions by sending a 200-word summary and slides documenting their work. The tenders are then evaluated by the curatorial panel. Regardless of this extensive selection process, McLeod says there are still “so many outstanding works that it is hard to choose”.

Three finalists are selected for each category, amounting to just 18 in all. What’s significant, especially in terms of COFA’s consistent representation in the final selections over nine years, is the exhibition’s accuracy in identifying rising design talent.

The exhibition is a platform for emerging designers across all the craft design disciplines – ceramics, fine art, jewellery, textiles and communications, and includes industrial design but also innovations in creative design – and is now a national survey of all the Australian fine arts and design institutions,” says School of Design Studies head Liz Williamson. “Over the years the COFA graduates included in the exhibition have gone on to great success.”

The list includes award-winning furniture designers Trent Jansen (2004), and Henrietta Gothe-Ellis (2003), and jeweller and lacquer specialist Bic Tieu (2003), as well as a roll call of other distinguished alumni, such as Edward Wong, Tom Fryer and Zoe Macdonell.

Since its inception the highly competitive national exhibition has evolved through name changes from This Way Up to New Design to its current Design Now! and continues to extend its reputation for identifying talented graduating designers whose work should be watched – by the industry and by their contemporaries.

Gill Samuel
New Territory
Discussions on Design Research

Five evening sessions in August and September

Session 1: On Designing
5 August 6-8pm
Chair: Jacquie Clayton
Panel: Karina Clark, Trent Jansen, Zoe Veness, Katherine Moline, Prof Richard Goodwin.

Session 2: On Drawing
12 August 6-8pm
Chair: Vaughan Rees
Panel: Sue Field, Associate Prof Emma Robertson, Peter Dwyer, Bruce Carnie.

Session 3: Design Research Context
19 August 6-8pm
Chair: Rick Bennett
Panel: Katherine Moline, Rod Bamford, Selena Griffith, Anna Lise de Lorenzo (tbc), Tessa Rapaport & Karl Legge (tbc).

Session 4: On Objects
26 August 6-8pm
Chair: Liz Williamson
Panel: Mark Ian Jones, Lynda Draper, Brook Morgan, Wendy Parker.

Session 5: On space, Location and Collaboration
2 September 6-8pm
Chair: Prof Richard Goodwin
Panel: Joni Taylor, Nikki di Falco, Michael Garbutt, Hannah Young, Josh Harle (tbc).

Venue: Artstore Room @ COFA
Corner Oxford Street & Greens Road, Paddington NSW 2021

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Ph: 9385 0643
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Program Details will be available at www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/events

30 JULY - 10 OCTOBER
Roderick Bamford, a lecturer in COFA’s School of Design Studies, exhibited his Sonic Loop series of porcelain vessels at the 2010 Shanghai Expo. In this series Bamford utilises rapid prototyping technologies to achieve his aims. As he explains, “I wanted to express the gesture of musical movement, a fluid drawn trace in three dimensional form, with minimal intervention. Its sense arises from a convergence of ephemeral digital detail and material substance.”

http://en.expo2010.cn
We often hear that the designer today is placed in a complex and challenging position. On the one hand, the designer must navigate the cluttered and crowded landscape of objects, spaces and people; responding to urban growth, high-density living, ecological issues and accelerated demands. On the other hand, the designer must address each specific project with contextual awareness and athletic tact, balancing both the specifications of the client with the expectations of the public. Add to this the competitiveness of the industry and the fact that all design projects require an eye for a problem, and it is clear that the designer does not simply design. Far from simple, design is a complicated game.

Xu Fang knows this game well. With twenty years of design and teaching experience in both Australia and China, he is well aware of the pertinence and pressures of his profession. In 2008, Xu Fang joined the School of Design Studies at COFA, bringing with him a wealth of academic and professional knowledge. Having studied at the Academy of Arts and Design at Tsinghua University, Beijing – and subsequently lecturing there in the 1980s – Xu Fang’s education and occupation have been framed by the fastest growing economy in the world and the greatest period of urban expansion and transformation in history. This fierce pace in China, the land of meteoric modernisation, has only increased in velocity and shows no signs of slowing.

Xu Fang’s education and occupation have been framed by the fastest growing economy in the world and the greatest period of urban expansion and transformation in history. This fierce pace in China, the land of meteoric modernisation, has only increased in velocity and shows no signs of slowing.
The New Urban Square — completed in 2005 — is a nine-hectare public space in a newly developed area of Lin Quing city in the Shandong Province, Northern China. Xu Fang utilised local construction materials and methods, selected suitable flora based on the weather conditions of the area, and studied the activities and needs of the local residents. According to Xu Fang, the project departs from “those politically driven, large-scale open spaces,” which so often dominate discussions on architecture and urban planning in China. Instead, the square appears as a kind of puzzle to be traversed. Decorative stone reliefs, clusters of shrubs and hedges, and chequerboard pathways dotted with varied sitting areas converge to form a functional and multifarious whole. For Xu Fang, the textured space allows “people to gather and engage in various activities…leaving enough room for both predictable and unpredictable changes.”

The creation of open space for different types of human activity within the city should not be overlooked. With almost 700 cities currently in China (compared to approximately 200 cities during the 1970s), public spaces and parks, such as The New Urban Square, become a vital element in the overall organism of a city. Considering this, there is perhaps no better place than China to apply American Historian Lewis Mumford’s assertion that “the city is a theatre of social activity”. Indeed, the drama of renewal happening throughout China has been a keen focus of Xu Fang’s practice, especially in demonstrating to clients and students that the ‘new’ is not necessarily opposed to the ‘old’. As he reports, a common procedure is to “sweep away the old and build the new,” which has left “large numbers of cities and towns destroyed or badly mutilated.” This tendency harks back to the destruction of all things feudal during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 70s. For Xu Fang, sustainability, both historical and material, is an alternative tactic and a persuasive philosophy.
His design solution followed an eccentric metaphor: to wash the face and replace the teeth. By restoring and repairing the facades (washing the face) and rebuilding the collapsed units that could not be rehabilitated (replacing the teeth), Xu Fang demonstrated that new developments do not always need to extinguish the spirit of the old. As such, he achieved the goal of providing “an alternative to the [popular] solution of demolishing the old and building the new in the name of reform.” This sensitivity to context, history and place strikes a particular harmony in Xu Fang’s current endeavour, designing The National Museum of Overseas Chinese History, a 13,000 square metre building, located in the Zhao Yang’s old district of Beijing. Due for completion in 2012, Xu Fang and his team’s winning design was the result of rigorous research into the abundant history of Chinese migration. As he outlines, there were many issues to consider in relation to the project, such as “struggling with the past and the future, balancing the cultural values of East and West, and negotiating both convention and change.” The challenging question remained: how does one demonstrate this complexity in a building?

Xu Fang responded to this problem by examining China’s migratory history and weaving his reflections on the country’s abundant past and unerring future into the structure itself. The building balances spatial and material opposites; orthodox methods are utilised to construct traditional Chinese houses that grace the façade of the museum, whilst the main body of the building is strictly contemporary, with a geometrically compelling glass exterior, which allows plenty of natural light and the gaze of curious visitors to enter its exhibition space.

Once again, Xu Fang’s design has cunningly tucked the new into the old, reflecting a philosophy that relies on the past, present and future in equal measure.
Gary Carsley is an artist who blurs the line between painting and performance. In fact, he is an artist who blurs the divide between many things. Past and present, outside and inside, clothing and architecture, furniture and landscapes: they all blend and change in Carsley’s interpretations. With an artistic career spanning many years and multiple continents, Carsley’s practice encompasses a variety of remarkable projects, including public art commissions in New York, Singapore and Sydney; an IKEA project funded by the Warhol Foundation at PULSE art fair in New York; and extensive exhibitions in Australia, Asia, America and Europe.

As a student at the City Art Institute (now COFA), Carsley was known as more of a performance artist. Now Carsley employs all avenues of making in his artistic practice, including reproductive technologies such as cameras, scanners and computers.

Carsley is well known for his Dragarreotypes (the name being a play on the words drag and daguerreotypes). In his first large-scale commercial photographic process, Carsley’s Dragarreotypes featured digital images of real gardens and parks altered to such an extent that they resembled beautiful faux wood laminated foiled patterns. In these works, nature masquerades as artificial and the process references the notion of dressing in drag. Carsley began making his Dragarreotypes in 2002, and since then, parks and gardens from around the world have found their way onto and into office blocks, stairwells, chairs, IKEA wardrobes and other flat packed assemblages.

His most recent work, A Bush Knot (an anagram derived from South Bank, exhibited at the Queensland College of Art Gallery earlier this year), presents a comment on the history of South Bank in the city of Brisbane. South Bank was the site of the 1998 expo, and in Carsley’s words it is “clogged with dis-orientalising emblematica”. The South Bank 17-hectare parkland area includes Australia’s only man-made beach and lagoon found in a city centre, and more than 30 restaurants, cafes and a range of cultural centres. Yet what was missing from the site was some reference to the area’s previous occupation and inhabitants.

Through recreating the floor plan of South Bank in the gallery space and breaking the parkland images up in an act of dragging the present and past into the topographical map of the site, Carsley provides visitors with various re-interpretations of the site; historically, sociologically and visually. His recreation of space, time and place, done to great visual effect, ensures Carsley captivates his viewers. But what is more, his complex and layered analysis ensures that there is much to think about even when the works are no longer in view.

Amy Griffiths
On Feb 15, 2010, international art stars Gilbert & George dropped in to COFA for a casual chat to staff, students and the public. They came, they went and they left some real pearls of wisdom behind.

“All my life I give you nothing and still you ask for more.”

**Gilbert & George** quoting a title of their own artwork from 1970.

“We try very hard not to hold opinions on matters we cannot affect.”

**George** on politics.

“We wanted to be the artists your mother wouldn’t be ashamed of.”

**Gilbert** on why they wear such dapper suits.

“Shit asks questions, apples don’t.”

**Gilbert** on their series of scatological photos.

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**Every Tuesday during term at 6pm.**

College of Fine Arts, Cnr Oxford St and Greens Rd, lecture theatre: EG02

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COFA Talks can be watched online at: [http://online.cofa.unsw.edu.au/cofa-talks-online/cofa-talks-online](http://online.cofa.unsw.edu.au/cofa-talks-online/cofa-talks-online)

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Afghanistan
Stephen Dupont

GALLERY 1+2
15 OCTOBER – 20 NOVEMBER
TUESDAY TO FRIDAY
12.00-7.00PM
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10.00AM-6.00PM


Jeweller Bic Tieu graduated from COFA in 2007 with a Masters Degree in Design. During her studies, Tieu developed an interest in traditional Japanese lacquer techniques. In 2009, she travelled to Japan, with the support of an Ian Potter Cultural Grant and Hermanns Imports Scholarship Award, to undertake a residency with lacquer master Kitamura Tatsuo at the Kitamura Koubou in Wajima. As an acknowledgement of her achievements and dedication, Tieu has been invited to extend her studies at this internationally-recognised studio throughout 2010. Tieu is able to spend another year in Japan with the assistance of a second Hermanns Scholarship and an Asialink grant.

The NaTIONaL INSTITUTE FOR EXPERIMENTAL ARTS presents

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WHAT
Symposium 27-28 July 2010
Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House
Including Project Launch 27 July, 6pm, Opera House Marquee

BOOKINGS
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COST
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Jeweller Bic Tieu with Sakura Interpretation (Traditional Japanese Tea Caddy with Cherry Blossom designs in Makie) (detail). Photo: Bic Tieu, 2010.

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A Gene Expression

Essentially speaking, the basic make-up of a human being is absolutely no different to the trees and the stars. It’s a cliche, but the fundamental particles that eventually form your body come either from the beginning of the universe, or from exploding stars,” says Ruth Gordon, science communications officer at the Children’s Medical Research Institute (CMRI).

This poetic, humbling depiction of human development forms the inspiration for a unique creative partnership between CMRI and COFA. Since 1994, CMRI’s fundraising arm – Jeans for Genes – has hosted dozens of exhibitions, charity days and concerts, and millions of Australians have participated in these events, raising $26 million in 16 years. This year, CMRI launched a new fundraising campaign highlighting the importance of genetic research and targeting a new generation of potential donors. To help the campaign appeal to young adults, CMRI approached COFA’s textile design students with an unusual challenge: to create artworks and designs inspired by their own bodies.

“I’m really pleased that CMRI approached COFA because I immediately saw the potential for creating designs that explore the link between science and design,” says Liz Williamson, Head of the School of Design Studies and Coordinator of Textiles at COFA. “Designers have always looked to science for inspiration, but it seems to be occurring now more than ever. It’s easy to see how the diverse shapes and patterns of cells can be very easily translated into textiles,” says Williamson.

The fusion between science and art is an age-old phenomenon. In the 16th century, Leonardo da Vinci was the perfect example of an artist who was fascinated by science, working variously as a painter, sculptor, anatomist, architect, engineer, botanist, mathematician and inventor. His genius blurred the lines between seemingly disparate disciplines, and proved that the fields of science, art and design do not have to be viewed in isolation from one another.

Most people know very little about the science of life. They have a vague notion of the organs, blood, bones, genes and DNA that sit beneath their skin, but when it comes to explaining their genetic evolution, they’re less certain. This is an issue CMRI hopes to address by encouraging people to think more deeply about what makes them who they are.

In April 2010, COFA’s second-year textile design students were asked to create a series of textile prints based on the theme, A Gene Expression: What Makes Me, Me? For six weeks, these students were exposed to three different fabric-making techniques: felting, screen printing, and shibori, which is the Japanese art of dying fabric while binding, stitching, folding, twisting, or compressing it.

All three techniques equipped students to re-imagine their biological make-up, while pushing the boundaries of traditional textile-making techniques to create innovative shapes and patterns.

“We’ve chosen three very different techniques because each one can be explored, experimented with and manipulated in new and exciting ways. This exploration is akin to the approach of scientists. Like scientists, design students begin with basic knowledge, envisage possibilities, gather information, experiment with techniques, and create unexpected, sometimes groundbreaking results,” says Emma Peters, designer and lecturer at COFA.

Peters and Williamson were delighted to discover the beauty of human genes. Beneath the microscope, the ingenuity of the human body becomes breathtakingly apparent. Trillions of cells appear in an endless array of shapes, configurations, patterns and textures.

“By understanding the most basic inner workings of our cells, CMRI hopes to advance the prevention and cure of many diseases that rob children of the healthy life that should be their birthright,” says Gordon. “Many diseases that effect adults, such as cancer and epilepsy, have similar basic origins, so our research has the capacity to improve the future health of every man, woman and child everywhere,” she says.

The exhibition’s theme, A Gene Expression, is both scientific and creative. It reflects the medical term – gene expression – that describes the process of DNA code being ‘read’ and transformed into working proteins. Creatively, it also describes the journey of self-expression that COFA students will embark on as they interpret their own biology in an intuitive and emotive way.

“We’ve created a brief that asks students to behave like scientists, yet gives them the freedom to experiment, research and interpret the theme however they choose,” says Williamson. “They are using design for a beneficial reason, and forging a merger between art and science.”

A group of scientists, artists and lecturers from COFA will judge the students’ creations, selecting 12 artworks that express the theme in the most provocative and visually engaging way. These works will be auctioned and all proceeds will be donated to Jeans for Genes. However, all 90 second-year textile students involved in the project will exhibit their work at the COFASpace Gallery in July this year.

CMRI has a long history of embracing creativity in order to communicate. Previous events include Do It with Denim, a project with fashion students, and Jammin for Jeans, which involved Australian musicians. The partnership with COFA is CMRI’s first collaboration with textile design students, and was inspired by COFA’s reputation as a creative institution that encourages its students to look at the world in a different way.

“Design has a role to play in conveying information and effecting change. Designers, artists, musicians and actors all use their work to reflect their experiences and tell stories. This project is about taking people beyond facts and figures to create more emotive, topical responses. Design can be a very powerful tool in changing how people see and understand certain issues,” says Williamson.

Peters agrees. “When textile design and science meet, the results can be very exciting. Amazing ideas in science are being applied to textiles, such as self-healing and self-cleaning fabric. In this project, we are looking for breakthroughs and enlightenment of the visual kind, communicating genetic research in an emotive way, to engage and elicit an emotional response from the viewer.”

By spreading awareness through Jeans for Genes projects, CMRI hopes to raise funds to continue or expand its research programs that have delivered some astonishing breakthroughs in recent years. The institute recently developed a test that detects 15% of all cancers, which will aid the search for treatments and provide more accurate information regarding life expectancy.

Many people don’t realize that a human life begins with just one microscopic cell, which divides into two, then four, then eight, ultimately creating trillions of cells that hold the secret to our selves. Strip back the layers, and we are all nothing but a writhing, pulsing mass of breathtakingly beautiful cells, genes and proteins.
Every year there are a handful of students who create inspiring and brilliant work and a handful who only just manage to trundle over the finish line. The top students are easy to teach and always a pleasure, but in many respects it is helping the student in difficulty that makes teaching the most rewarding.

Mentoring Creative Minds

Last week one of my Master of Design students in Switzerland quietly approached me and asked, “Andy, have I missed something? I have this feeling everyone else knows something that I don’t.” It took me a while to convince her that there was no conspiracy and this feeling is a normal state of affairs.

I have been teaching creative disciplines for over 15 years, several of which were at COFA in the School of Media Arts before I returned to Europe. Over the years I have seen and heard many variations of one question from my students — when do we learn the secret to success? It is hard to persuade them that this is the wrong question to ask.

In the early 90s I was a student of the then very new discipline of ‘interactive media’. This was the beginning of the era that has inverted or flattened the pyramid of practical knowledge – most students knew more about the craft skills of interaction design than the lecturers.

I am used to working in a discipline that is constantly changing and emerging and this has given me the slightly illusory notion that I am closer to my students in age and mentality than some of my older colleagues. Of course, the reality is that the students remain the same age each year and I get older. My old media references to music and films usually give the game away. (How can my students have been born in the 80s?)

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Nick Vickers has made his mark on COFA, and vice versa. Four out of his five tertiary qualifications come from the College in its various incarnations. So it comes as no real surprise that Vickers found his vocation at the College. What is unexpected though, is that he discovered his calling not while studying Art Education or Fine Art, but when he got a job as the manager of COFA’s Student’s Association (now ARC). When caffeine deprived students at COFA grab a cuppa it’s Vickers they should thank; one of his first initiatives was to set up a coffee shop. But more importantly, every time they admire the work of their peers, or present their own artworks for public scrutiny in one of the College’s two student galleries, they are enjoying his ongoing legacy.

It may seem obvious now that an art and design school should have an onsite gallery, or two, but it was Vickers who saw the need and made it happen. Vickers set up COFA’s first student gallery, Arthaus (now Kudos), in 1984. As he explains, “It was so important because there weren’t enough commercial galleries to take on any of the up and coming artists and the old order still prevailed which meant you weren’t really entitled to an exhibition until you were at least in your late 20s or early 30s. And the general mood at the time was, ‘We want to world and we want it now; we want to have a go at this.’ And I wanted to have a go at it too!”

Vickers did more than just have a go; he found his professional direction. By the time he left the College in 1997 he had established and managed three versions of Arthaus and initiated a second COFA gallery, The Works (now COFAspace). He was also already curating and coordinating exhibitions elsewhere, both nationally and internationally.

It was 1987 when Vickers had his light bulb moment. He had always wanted to be a painter, but, “The opportunity to set up a number of different galleries with the Student’s Association at COFA led me on a bit of a voyage of self discovery.” He explains laughing, “I realised that I was getting more pleasure out of hanging works that I wished I had painted myself than out of the ones I was fiddling around with at home! The writing was on the wall for me.”

Vickers completed a Graduate Diploma in Gallery Management and Master of Arts Administration degree at COFA and went on to have a distinguished career as a curator and arts administrator. He was the Director of The Sir Hermann Black and Delmar galleries, while also working on other independent projects nationally and overseas, such as well-known exhibitions like the Blake Prize for Religious Art.

In April 2010, Vickers returned to COFA, where it all started. This time he joined the College as its Alumni Coordinator. Nick Vickers is back – ready to make his mark all over again.

Tracey Clement
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Bookings: contact After Hours aah@ag.nsw.edu.au

EXCLUSIVE COFA ALUMNI EXHIBITION FLOOR TALK:
Michael Esson: Wanderlust – A Drawing Dialogue

An informative and entertaining evening with drinks and light refreshments.

Where: Tin Sheds Gallery, Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney, City Rd, Darlington.
When: Tuesday, July 13, 6pm
Bookings: contact Nick Vickers nick.vickers@unsw.edu.au

ALUMNI MORNING TEA: COFA ANNUAL 2010

Join us for morning tea and catch up with fellow alumni to view art, design and media works by COFA’s latest graduates.

Where: Carriageworks, Wison St, Darlington
When: Thursday, November 25, 10-11am
(The COFA ANNUAL 2010 is open for viewing November 23-29)
Bookings: contact Nick Vickers nick.vickers@unsw.edu.au

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Did you graduate from Alexander Mackie, City Art Institute or the College of Fine Arts? Stay in touch and we will keep you up to date with what’s going on at COFA as well as inviting you to special COFA alumni events.

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Any shape
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In 2004, Finsbury Green became Australia's first carbon-neutral printer. Finsbury Green is also certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

Cover: 300gsm Envirocare (100% recycled)
Text: 10gsm Pacesetter Laser (FSC mixed source 70%)