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On a one-week visit to COFA, this was the challenge Star Wars illustrator Iain McCaig gave to the Master of Cross-Disciplinary Art & Design students, as they discussed storytelling and creative process together.

If you had to choose your favourite films to take to a desert island with you, to watch over and over again, what would they be and why?

**LEFT** Iain McCaig, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Star Wars: The Phantom Menace. Pencil and paper. Copyright 2011 Lucasfilm Ltd. All Rights Reserved.

**RIGHT** Iain McCaig, Qui-Gon Jinn, Star Wars: The Phantom Menace. Pencil and markers. Copyright 2011 Lucasfilm Ltd. All Rights Reserved.
McCaig is well known for his visualisations of Queen Amidala and Darth Maul in the Star Wars prequel trilogy. After McCaig’s third visit to COFA in the last five years, staff and students were again left inspired by his descriptions of his extraordinary career, and his experiences working as a concept designer for Industrial Light and Magic, Star Wars: Episodes I-III, and Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, amongst many others. During his week in Sydney, McCaig also visited COFA graduates now working as concept designers at Animal Logic at Fox Film Studio, bringing his previous mentoring of them full circle.

McCaig explored drawing, story arcs and beats in workshops with students and staff, and shared his knowledge and skills in storyboarding and conceptual image development in special lectures. He reflected afterwards that the COFA students he interacted with were “magical thinkers, able to create and critique with joy and abandon.”

McCai discussed the ‘through line,’ his driving desire to serve the story through his work, saying that a good story can “transform you as a person, change your life and unpack your moral code. Story is like a piece of music which has the ability to reset you so that you are yourself again.” As an accomplished musician, the role of music in his artistic practice is very important to McCaig. Music filters through into his designs. For example, he listened to Himalayan voice music while drawing Queen Amidala, whose costume displayed a complex mix of influences.
McCaig uses the creative technique of ‘Reverse Thinking’ in his workshops to provoke more unusual responses from students, asking them to flip their ideas, and consider an opposite point of view. He also explores this in his book Shadowline, where he describes his fascination for “the place where things meet. Light and shadows. Hope and despair. Good and evil. It is a universal watering hole. Ideas gather there. So do artists.”
Another of McCaig’s creative techniques, ‘Conceptual Blending’, is clearly demonstrated in all his work, in which he seeks to “pay attention to what you see that is different”. He draws things many times over from multiple viewpoints, saying that “your first drawing has the thrill of imagination, the next the authority of your research. Your final drawing combines the two, resulting in something familiar, yet strange.”

While at COFA, McCaig also generously gave his time for a special 40 minute video interview for the COFA Online series. Since it was launched on YouTube, McCaig’s interview has generated more than 10,000 views as people have responded to his fascinating perspectives on three key areas: his own creativity, self-management, and work in storytelling.

McCaig said that when the COFA Online video was launched “many esteemed colleagues wrote to me to say that the interview gets to the heart of the creative process. It is my favourite interview”.

Iain McCaig is already looking forward to his next visit to COFA, saying that “in order to learn and grow we need to teach. Otherwise how do you define the stuff that you don’t even think about? By putting it in to words and communicating it to another person, you have graduated to the next level (of thinking) and probably learnt a lot from them too.”

COFA looks forward to welcoming him back.

Emma Robertson
**Hijacked III**

Contemporary Photography from Australia and the UK

**JUNE 30 – AUGUST 19**

In Hijacked III: Contemporary Photography from Australia and the UK, more than 24 artists from opposite sides of the globe offer unique photographs ranging from oblique takes on portraiture and collage to snapshots of society at its best and worst. This exhibition presents far reaching photographic practices which question what it means to look, catch or construct images for the 21st century. This is a Parrtjima Institute of Contemporary Arts touring exhibition.

**Australian Centre for Photography**
257 Oxford St, Paddington. Ph 9332 1455
Tues to Fri noon - 7pm
Sat to Sun 10am - 6pm
acp.org.au

**Powerhouse Museum**
500 Harris St, Ultimo. Ph 9332 1700
Daily 10am - 5pm
Wed 10am - 9pm
mca.mca.com.au

**Museum of Contemporary Art**
140 George St, The Rocks. Ph 9245 2400
Daily 10am - 5pm
mca.com.au

**Lynette Wallworth**
ReKindling Venus: In Plain Sight

**Redlands Westpac Art Prize**

**Love Lace**

**18th Biennale of Sydney**

**Women with Clever Hands**

**Christian Marclay**

**Love Lace**

**UNTIL AUGUST 2**

Lynette Wallworth’s ReKindling Venus is an augmented reality (AR) project. Visitors to Taylor Square are invited to download a smartphone app which uses Wallworth’s images to trigger a virtual portal to coral reefs and connected real-time data. The aim of ReKindling Venus is to highlight the complexity of coral ecosystems around the world as they are subjected to increasing environmental stress. Taylor Square Art is being presented by COFA in partnership with the City of Sydney, and is a NIEA Curating Cities project.

**UNTIL 2013**

Love Lace was one of the highlights of Sydney Design 2011. This massive exhibition of contemporary lace features such unexpected works as a perforated car and replicas of human organs knitted from hair. The 194 artists and designers are from 20 countries and the exhibition features many artists and designers with connections to COFA including staff members Deborah West, Gail Kanning and Patria Gemeinboeck.

**JUNE 27 – SEPT 16**

The 18th Biennale of Sydney (BiS) has two Creative Directors, Catherine de Zegher and Gerald McMaster, which is appropriate, given that their stated aim is “to focus on inclusionary practices of generative thinking, such as collaboration, conversation and compassion”. Zegher and McMaster are working under the theme All our Relations, and they envisage their BiS as an ongoing conversation, beginning with a dialogue between two curators and extending to artists and audiences, creating a “multi-vocal correspondence”.

**JUNE 10**

Curated by DL Louise Hamby with assistance from Lucy Wanapuyingu, Women with Clever Hands: Gapuwiyak Miyallurrunawirr Gang Djambyamada is an exhibition of the fibre work made by women from Gapuwiyak in Anhem Land, an inland community on the Gove peninsula established in 1969. The show covers a 15-year period and features a variety of fibre works made from natural materials including baskets, bags, mats, sculptural figures and items worn on the body.

**UNTIL JUNE 3**

The Clock, a 24-hour-long video by Swiss-American artist Christian Marclay, was one of the standout pieces of the 2011 Venice Biennale, popular with both audiences and critics. In The Clock, Marclay has assembled together thousands of snippets from films, many featuring clocks and references to time, into a continuous loop, synchronised with each minute of a day. Shown for the first time in the Southern hemisphere, the MCA offers those with the stamina for non-stop art the chance to see Marclay’s masterpiece in its entirety. The Clock, will be open 24 hours a day, once a week.

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1. Petrina Hicks, _Emily the Strange_ (from Beautiful Creatures) (detail), 2011, Lightjet print, 100 x 98cm. Courtesy: Stills Gallery.
4. Helen Pynor, _Beautiful Creatures_ (detail), 2010, enhanced human hair, 600 x 700cm. Courtesy: Julien and Stephanie Gruss collection.
Multi-media artist, Khaled Sabsabi, is known for works that examine the difficult and often fractured lives and identities of people living on borders, both in Australia and overseas. In 2011, he won the most recognised religious art award in Australia, the Blake Prize. Sabsabi is a COFA graduate.

David Haines, together with Joyce Hinterding, received the first biennial award in Australia for moving image and new media work - the Anne Landa Award, worth $25,000. Their work, The Outlands, invites viewers to conduct their own exploration of forests, islands and futuristic interiors. Haines is a COFA graduate.
Institutes of creative learning and higher education hold vital positions in society. They challenge thinking and promote excellence and access within the visual arts. Monash Gallery of Art is one such institution. Last year it awarded Prudence Murphy with a career-defining solo exhibition, *Boys with Guns*. Murphy is a COFA lecturer.

HANDPICKED
GALLERY BARRY KELDOULIS

Joan Ross has been a practising artist since the 1980s. Initially trained as a painter, she is now known for her irreverent multi-media installations, which often involve copious quantities of kangaroo fur, and her witty take on the toxic legacy of colonialism. Ross is represented by Gallery Barry Keldoulis. Her most recent solo show there was titled *BBQ this Sunday*, BYO. Ross is both a COFA graduate and a lecturer.

LEARNED BEHAVIOR
MONASH GALLERY OF ART

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ABOVE: Joan Ross, *BBQ this Sunday* (end of the world as we know it) (detail), pigment print on premium photo paper, 76 x 45 cm (unmounted), edition of five. Courtesy: the artist and Gallery Barry Keldoulis.

ABOVE: Prudence Murphy, *Backyard #1* (detail), 2011, from the series *Boys with guns*, pigment ink-jet print, 90 x 700 cm. Courtesy: the artist.
The million dollar deal was brokered through iCinema’s licensing arm, Immersive Realisation, as part of the $6.1 million commercialisation of the technology. Ironically, iCinema director Dennis Del Favero says, “We would never have thought the mining industry would be interested in our system. We had tried and approached a number of different sectors but mining approached us.”

The obstacles to developing an experimental artistic research project as a business proposition are almost mind-boggling. “The challenge is to stay on the cutting edge, and in the university context it’s very hard to maintain that competitive advantage because you don’t have the types of funding and the types of investment opportunity that you have in the commercial sector,” Del Favero explains.

“We have to be open to what the commercial opportunities are and we can’t really dictate what those are going to be. It really depends on the sectors that are actually interested in virtual reality simulation.”

Australian Research Council chief executive officer Professor Margaret Sheil says the process has been evolutionary. “The iCinema project actually involved many, many different grants over a long period. We didn’t fund it as a single unit going forward with a single objective, we funded different aspects of it.”

This began with a Federation Fellowship grant to Jeffrey Shaw who initiated iDome in the 1990s, and continued through project grants and linkage grants with iCinema’s partners, who have driven its development, says Immersive Realisations’s managing director, Damian Leonard.

Immersive reality technology sounds like a tagline for the next step in the movie-going experience. And iCinema can be that. But iCinema viewers can also interact and drive the direction of their 3-D experience, guaranteed to get the gamers excited. Plus they can link to other sources of data information, while remaining in the immersive environment. Suddenly the implications for visual communications and accessing information resemble the infinite ripples radiating from a single central creative idea.

The world-first Advanced Visualisation Interaction Environment (AVIE) iCinema technology is the result of a COFA research initiative, developed in incremental stages with the UNSW Faculty of Engineering over almost a decade, with funding from the Australian Research Council.

In June 2011, it was demonstrated at the Sydney Film Festival through the artwork Scenario. At the same time one of China’s leading mine safety research and development bodies, the Shenyang Research Institute of Chian Coal Technology and Engineering Group (CCTEG), completed installation of iCinema’s Advanced Safety Training Simulators (iCASTS) at the Shunhoa Energy Institute in the city of Fushun in China’s Liaoning Province.

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Dennis Del Favero
iCinema

Selling Innovation
Creative Technology Supports World Industries

ABOVE: Jeffrey Shaw, Dennis Del Favero, Matt McGinity, Adrian Hardjono, Volker Kuchelmeister, Mining Simulation System, 360-degree, 3D mine safety-training simulation in the iCinema UNSW Advanced Visualisation Interaction Environment (AVIE).

“...We would never have thought the mining industry would be interested in our system. We had tried and approached a number of different sectors but mining approached us.”

DENNIS DEL FAVERO
iCinema
While the partnership with the Shenyang Research Institute Victoria a Gold MUSE award in February, to virtual heritage Sound ByTES School of Creative Media. Hong Kong’s City University, where Shaw is now Dean of its overseas medical company that saw the technology online component, and museum exhibitions such as the Rio Tinto opportunities.

Leonard says that most enquiries come to nothing, citing the overseas medical company that saw the technology online and wanted a data-based video clip “as a piece of wow factor” for their sales system.

“The cost of establishing the AWE system’s content and programming and developing it correctly is the chief obstacle as this is an unknown until the client specifies their requirements, especially for the larger interactive and learning outcome focused systems.”

While the partnership with the Shenyang Research Institute allows CCTEG to market the supply of AWE as a training system for hazardous or emergency situations to the mining industry in China, Leonard also has his eye on broader opportunities.

“We have identified,” he explains, “that China has a very large range of museums and exhibition installations showcasing both cultural, science, technology and industry.” He says he can also see an application to tourism.

MARKETING THE TECHNOLOGY
To date, the application of AWE technology ranges from interactive cinema, with audience participation as a guiding component, and museum exhibitions such as the Rio Tinto branded Volcanic 3D in AVIE by iCinema UNSW at Melbourne Museum, which earned iCinema industry partner Museum Victoria a Gold MUSE award in February, to virtual heritage documentation of a historic site in Mongolia, through to Hong Kong’s City University, where Shaw is now Dean of its School of Creative Media.

On the front home, Immersive Realisation has entered into an agreement with the Queensland Mining Industry Skills Centre (MISC). The organisation is positioning itself to meet the burgeoning skilled labour shortage, which it predicts will reach crisis point in 2014, by deploying Accelerated Skilling Hubs (ASH), initially through the Rio Tinto Northparkes Mines training centre in New South Wales. The hubs will use immersive reality simulation to fast-track training for the industry. The Centre has also formed a partnership in Chile and is also consulting in other South American countries, India and Papua New Guinea.

These kinds of collaborations call for meeting demanding benchmarks involving private companies, governments and unions. Leonard says that speed is the challenge in delivering outcomes to clients and that a system tailored to a specific clienteal has to be delivered through a stepped process.

CROSS-POLLINATION
Sheil is positive about the interdisciplinary collaboration behind iCinema’s evolution and, by extension, its prospects for the future.

“Naturally we were delighted when they signed that agreement with China and the mining industry generally because that’s exactly the thing we’ve wanted to encourage,” she says.

Sheil sees a real dynamism in the interaction between the creative areas and more applied areas and feels this engenders a progressive environment. “If we look at where disciplines move forward they’re often when people start to look at something in a different way or with a different perspective, so the collaboration between artists and engineers with the creativity on one side and the practicality on the other creates opportunities that wouldn’t be there if you did that individually.”

She says she thinks that is where Australia’s comparatively small population and limited research resources can work as a strength. “When you sit back and think, what particular advantages do we have in doing research in Australia that can then be turned to drive innovation in the economy, the big advantage you get from this size – even though we are geographically large our intellectual communities are relatively small – that means there are opportunities for someone like Dennis to work with the engineering school at UNSW in a way that doesn’t present itself or need to present itself overseas. You want to have a diverse culture across a society.”

Del Favero remains firmly committed to the artistic basis of the iCinema design. “The challenge is to use the technology in a way that’s not just determined by commercial demands but is determined by the artistic interests that drive the iCinema Centre itself,” he states. “The technology really comes second because it’s driven by the types of objectives we have for our artistic projects.”

Del Favero says the primary objective behind the development of iCinema technology, such as the AVIE system, is the creation of a visualisation system that allows users to organise the meaning of the content for themselves. “If you take that as the general principle,” he explains, “you can see clearly it can evolve not just in artistic use, but also use in information science or atmosphere science. It gives you the ability to start controlling visual imagery in a way that is unprecedented.”

“The challenge is to use the technology in a way that’s not just determined by commercial demands but is determined by the artistic interests...”
DENIS DEL FAVERO
Australian Research Council

The advantage (Cinema technology confers he says “is that you can, to some extent, create a new paradigm to the way people interact with the images”). But, to retain that advantage, which Del Favero sees as increasingly relevant in the developed world where people are bombarded with thousands of images daily, “we really need to look at projects that are funded and that enable that sort of interaction, or that kind of usage, to move forward, because if you don’t keep on evolving and changing you are quickly outpaced by other developments”.

This is the unadorned commercial reality of developing a breakthrough concept: someone has to foot the bill in order for it to progress. And where would Del Favero like to see iCinema go next? He says the use of artificial intelligence as a means of interaction is “quite exciting”. By giving the system itself the ability to participate with the user, or an audience, he says the types of interaction that are possible increase exponentially and become “more open ended to the way the image itself thinks or feels”.

Gill Samuel

 “… collaboration between artists and engineers with the creativity on one side and the practicality on the other creates opportunities that wouldn’t be there if you did that individually.”
MARGARET SHEIL
Australian Research Council

SOUND BYTES

VOLKER KUCHELMEISTER SETS NEW WORLD RECORD
Volker Kuchelmeister recently set a new world record. He produced the largest-ever 3D panoramic picture, nearly 80,000 pixels long. The Lecturer in COFA’s School of Media Arts and School of Design Studies says, “I didn’t come up with the headline, but I like it. World record sounds like good.” The work, titled Juxtaposition, was created during a four month long fellowship at City University, Hong Kong in 2011.

kuchelmeister.net

DENIS DEL FAVERO
Australian Research Council

Australian Research Council

volker kuchelmeister, artist, Juxtaposition, presented in Art Permanent (cylindrical anaglyphic 3D projection environment) during the Beyond 3D Festival at RAK Centre for Art and Media. Karlsruhe, May 2011.

Australian Research Council

volker kuchelmeister, section of Juxtaposition panorama (red-cyan glasses required for 3D effect), 2011, in anaglyphic 3D format.
NIEA RECEIVED AN ARC LINKAGE GRANT

COFA’s National Institute for Experimental Arts (NIEA), and its researchers, were awarded an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant for their project Curating Cities: The Social and Ecological Potential of Public Art Practice. Professor Jill Bennett, Director of NIEA, explains the ambitious scope of the project: “The Curating Cities concept is to move beyond the idea of curating art, and instead to use art to curate (literally, care for) the city... What we are interested in is the possibility of deploying art, curatorial practice and creative thinking across a much wider domain, looking at the city in its entirety as, say, a planner might.” By bringing artists in to projects normally run by bureaucracies, the Curating Cities strategy is to shake things up and promote behaviour modification. “We are advancing the idea of art as modelling change,” Bennett says, “but in ways that will be a little more adventurous than conventional campaigns.”

curatingcities.org

RICHARD GOODWIN WON THE WYNNE

COFA’s Professor Richard Goodwin won the 2011 Wynne Prize with his vehicular sculpture, Co-Isolated Slave. Goodwin says he didn’t go in the prize thinking he might win. “I was being mischievous,” he explains. “I felt compelled this year to enter because my work with machines really challenged figuration in sculpture and the Wynne audience deserves to see more sculpture.” On receiving the news, Goodwin says he was “extremely amused and happy”. But for him, the biggest win wasn’t getting first prize, it was having his work join the Transfield collection, owned by the Belgiorno-Nettis family, “now that is truly great”.

richard-goodwin.com

ABOVE: Richard Goodwin, Co-Isolated Slave, 2011, mixed media.

SODA_JERK ARE ON A ROLL

COFA Bachelor of Art Theory graduate Dominique Angeloro and her sister Dan took out two major grants, back to back, as the collaborative duo Soda_Jerk. Soda_Jerk won a British Council, Realise Your Dream Award just days before winning the 2011 Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship. Dom explains that while they haven’t 100% locked down their travel plans yet, they will be “focusing on research in North America and the UK... As sample-based artists, the history of found footage film-making is key for us. So being able to spend time in San Francisco with found footage hero Craig Baldwin is something that makes our collective head spin.”

sodajerk.com.au

ABOVE: Soda_Jerk, After the Rainbow (detail), 2009, 2-channel video installation.

CoFA’S NEWEST RESEARCH GROUP

COFA’s newest research group, in.site, works across the fields of contemporary art, curatorial practice and viewer engagement. In September 2011, they ran a successful international symposium titled, Reprogramming the Art Museum. During 2012, the team will be working towards a book publication based on content covered at Reprogramming the Art Museum and video interviews of leading Australian curators, artists and architects.

www.insite.unsw.edu.au

DR KERRY THOMAS WON A NATIONAL TEACHING AWARD

In 2011, Dr Kerry Thomas, Senior Lecturer in COFA’s School of Art History and Art Education, won an Australian Award for University Teaching. She was recognised for leadership that shapes the direction of art education and empowers prospective visual arts teachers to make their own distinctive contributions to the field. When asked how she felt to be given such a prestigious national award, Thomas said, “It is both a great honour and deeply humbling.”

olt.gov.au

SOUND BYTES
COFA GRADUATES DOMINATE 2011 HELEN LEMPRIERE TRAVELLING ART SCHOLARSHIP

Nine out of twelve selected finalists in the 2011 Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship exhibition were COFA graduates with degrees in Fine Arts, Design and Art Theory. According to the Dean of COFA, Ian Howard, “Although we are a large art school, it is exceptional that nine out of twelve finalists, and so many previous winners, have come from COFA. It’s a clear indication that the college is at the forefront of ideas and practice in the visual arts.”

artspace.org.au/gallery_project.php?i=154

KATE MITCHELL AWARDED RESIDENCY IN JAPAN

COFA Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Fine Arts graduate Kate Mitchell undertook a residency with Artspace curator Mark Feary in Yokohama, Japan as part of BankART Life III: Shin Minatomura – A Small City for the Future.

Mitchell admits that trying to communicate without a shared language was challenging. She says she had to resort to playing charades at times. For Mitchell the turning point of her residency was “that moment when you realise that all of the things that are different, and at times difficult, result in new levels of patience and understanding of how different systems operate… It is that moment of knowing that everything is always worthwhile, regardless of how you feel at the time, which is the most exciting part.”

shinminatomura.com

KRISTONE CAPISTRANO WON BLACK SWAN PORTRAITURE PRIZE

A current Bachelor of Fine Arts (Hons) student at COFA, won $35,000 by taking out the Lester Group Prize in the 2011 City of Perth Black Swan Portraiture Prize.

Capistrano generously put a portion of her winnings towards her Mother and Father’s mortgage and hopes to use some to travel. As she explains, “I just returned from an amazing pilgrimage to the Holy Land two months ago. I would love to go back to Bethlehem and Galilee and do some projects with the Palestinian communities over there.”

When asked how winning the prize has helped her career as an artist, she replies modestly, “The prize is just a small milestone. For all I know, this could be the last arts prize in my life!”

blackswanprize.com.au

MICHELLE TINTA WON THE 2011 PREMIER’S COFA VISUAL ARTS SCHOLARSHIP

Michelle Tinta, Visual Arts teacher at St Josephs College, Hunters Hill, won the 2011 Premier’s COFA Visual Arts Scholarship.

Tinta’s research interests lie in the intersection of digital and analogue photographic processes. She will use the $10,000 scholarship to travel to American institutions in New York, Chicago, Santa Fe and San Francisco during June and July 2012.

Tinta will also attend a specialist photography workshop in Maine and she says, “It is my goal that this research may contribute to an existing body of photographic educational resources, with a particular focus on practice, offering some challenging and enriching experiences of alternative photographic processes in this digital age.”

det.nsw.edu.au

ANNE STARLING WON THE 2011 SILK CUT AWARD

Current COFA Master of Fine Arts student, Anne Starling won the 2011 Silk Cut Award for linocut prints. Starling was able to choose between a trip to Amsterdam or a cash prize. After much deliberation she decided to take the money, but she still plans to go to Amsterdam. As Starling explains, “I am very interested in visiting Forbo, the factory that produces Silk Cut Linoleum. So rather than take an all-expenses paid two week trip, I’ll plan my own itinerary and visit museums and galleries in other countries in Europe over an extended period.”

silkcutlino.com
Known for its exhibitions of experimental contemporary art, Factory 49 highlighted the abstract work of Nicole Ellis in the solo exhibition, *Fabric Works*. Ellis is a COFA senior lecturer.

After a life-time of contribution to Australian art, Col Jordan was given the honour of major solo show at the Peter Pinson Gallery in Sydney, entitled *Col Jordan: Edge of Paradox*. The gallery recognises long-standing and achievements in the arts. Jordan is a COFA Emeritus Professor.

SOLO SELECTION AT PETER PINSON GALLERY

CONTEMPORARY HIGHS

Above: Col Jordan, *Mosaic 5: Shielding the Circle (detail)*, 2010, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 100 cm. Courtesy Peter Pinson Gallery.

Above: Nicole Ellis, *Blue-Pink Swatch*, 2010, cotton, felt, interface, double sided tape, 90 x 81.5 cm. Courtesy the artist.
Recognised for the important role that the Gallery Barry Keldoulis (GBK) plays in finding and showcasing emerging artistic talent, the GBK awards signal ‘those artists to watch’. Dara Gill, is one GBK Awardee, having participated in the group exhibition, *Where Are They Now?* at Gallery Barry Keldoulis in Sydney. Gill is a COFA graduate.

Internationally acclaimed video and installation artist, Sam Smith, distorts our sense of time and space. His integrated sculptural and film works were a highlight at Australia’s preeminent contemporary commercial galleries, Grantpirrie Gallery, featured in the solo show, *Cameraman & Stills*. Smith is a COFA graduate.

**MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS**

**GRANTPIRRIE GALLERY**

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What adds to this sense of startling precocity is the way they have so successfully invented their own rich tradition of performance and body art – weaving together the provocations of feminist performance art of the ’60s, or Vito Acconci’s over-intimate situations, with pantomimes, vaudeville and slapstick, B-movies and magic shows. Identifying influences as broad as The Simpsons, stand-up comedian Andy Kaufman, and Leigh Bowery, Doley describes their work as “traversing lots of different fields... we don’t see it just as visual art or just as performance... and not theatre, but sometimes it falls into theatre.”

It should come as no surprise then that Brown Council was born out of a drama club run through the UNSW student’s association, and their first performance as a group was a variety night involving the birthing of a giant fish and a costume change into “amazing leotards”. According to Barrett, “It’s always been about a variety night. It’s about entertainment.”

It seems extraordinary that Brown Council, the performance and video collaboration of Kelly Doley, Frances Barrett, Diana Smith and Kate Blackmore, is only four years old. They met as students at COFA when Dooley was studying painting, Barrett art theory, and Smith and Blackmore were majoring in film, and have fast become a fixture among Sydney’s performance and video events.

In 2011, they exhibited at the MCA in Primavera, in Seoul, with the MCA again as part of Tell Me Tell Me, and at ArtSpace as part of Nothing Like Performance. They have also just won the Qantas Encouragement of Contemporary Art Award.

The entertainment value is inarguable, but there is also a strategy of infiltration, subversion, and giving audiences what they don’t want. For the last few weeks they have been trying to hawk photo opportunities “with an artist” to unsuspecting tourists at Circular Quay only to be met with cries of “You’re not a *#@kin’ artist!”

A comedy may have also surprised audiences when it was included on the program for the Adelaide Fringe Festival. This is a show that includes all the standards of old-fashioned slapstick—including monkey dances and a pelting with tomatoes—but after four hours of slapped faces and thrown cream pies, the hilarity tends to fade and audiences are left uncomfortably reflecting on their own complicity with the awfulness on stage.

Discomfort and confounded expectations are as much a part of comedy as of post-conceptual art and, like Kaufman or Bowery, Brown Council play on the dual freedoms offered by comedy and by art: the freedom to provoke, disturb and entertain. As Doley puts it, “It’s so important to approach ideas and artwork with a sense of humour. If you don’t, things get a bit too serious… There’s something about humour, I find, that’s a really good communicative tool. Once you’ve got them laughing, you can stab them.”

Brown Council mine many of the oldest tropes of performance—enforced intimacy, horror, gag, carnivale, pain, exoticism and seduction—but this isn’t a rehash of spectacle with a conceptual gloss. They are more like a mad slum quack or carnival mesmerist whose talent is inventing new ways to shock tired nerves. They fascinate and disconcert us by revealing a bit too much behind the velvet curtain, or lingering too long at the cut-away that should save us from seeing what is most unbearable about the entertainment business, and, perhaps, ourselves.

Anthony Springford
As a Brisbane-based artist, Ah Kee feels little connection to artworks depicting vast desert landscapes painted in ochre pigments. To offer an alternate view of contemporary Aboriginal life, he draws the faces of his relatives. “My family is not a good family or a bad family, it’s just an ordinary Aboriginal family that is sophisticated and emotional and dynamic,” says Ah Kee. “My artworks portray Aboriginals as a modern people. They are stripped of the romantic and the Stone Age, and they engender an intense gaze because it reveals their intelligence and history.”

In 1999, when Ah Kee was in his late 20s, he enrolled at a Queensland art college. “A lot of Aboriginal artists create artworks in order to secure a sense of identity. But I have never questioned my identity,” he explains. “When you grow up in Northern Queensland and have dark, curly hair, society dictates that you are Aboriginal.” Ah Kee already had an innate understanding of the themes he would explore as an artist, but wanted to deepen his understanding of art theory.

He immersed himself in the works of Gordon Bennett, Richard Bell, Barbara Kruger, and Lawrence Weiner, and began creating typographic artworks featuring bold, provocative slogans using Universal font. “We had an assignment to make a poster, and I came across posters designed by the Russian constructivists. I loved their radical use of text and I wanted to make words with the same kind of impact,” says Ah Kee. Today, his typographic works are often displayed alongside his portraits and video installations.

Ah Kee has forged a successful career as an artist over the past decade. He is represented by Milani Gallery in Brisbane. He has had a solo show at Artspace in Sydney, he has exhibited in the Sydney and Venice Biennales and three of his portraits hang at the Queensland Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane.

“When I enrolled in art school, I knew I wanted to pass and get a job and work within the visual arts. By the time I finished third year, I was completely sold on art theory. I learned to think as an artist in theoretical terms,” says Ah Kee, explaining the impact of his art school education on the techniques and theories he continues to explore in his work today.

A dozen pairs of dark eyes gaze intently at passers by, demanding to be acknowledged for who they really are. Each pair of eyes belongs to a portrait, sketched in charcoal and pastels, by Aboriginal artist Vernon Ah Kee. He believes his portraits offer a more realistic portrayal of Aboriginal life than popular indigenous styles such as ‘dot painting’, a technique inspired by traditional spiritual ceremonies in the Western Desert region. To Ah Kee, such images portray a utopian, stereotypical view of Aboriginality that is increasingly out-of-touch with how the vast majority of Aborigines live.
Jonathan Jones is another Aboriginal artist whose practice was profoundly affected by an art school education. Based in Sydney, Jones applied to COFA’s Aboriginal entrance program in 1996. At the time he knew nothing about presenting artworks and documenting processes, so he hauled a set of metal sculptures onto campus where a panel of academics critiqued them. “The interview panel included COFA Professor Liz Ashburn and artist Peter Yanada McKenzie, and it was an intimidating moment. Both Liz and Peter went on to inform my practice enormously,” says Jones.

COFA’s Aboriginal entrance program assesses candidates on their artistic potential as opposed to their grades. This meant Jones could study at COFA despite dropping out of high school, and he became “the first person in my family to ever go to uni and get a tertiary education”.

McKenzie selected Jones for an exhibition at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery called What is Aboriginal Art? while Jones was still a student. It was the first of several opportunities and fellowships that arose as a result of studying at COFA. After completing his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, Jones was awarded the New South Wales Indigenous Fellowship in 2002. He created a limited edition artist’s book made up of embroidered light maps and patterns. “The project was invaluable as it enabled me to summarise, document and distill a whole series of works that I had been processing over a number of years,” he says.

In 2008, the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation that champions innovative contemporary art, invited Jones to host his first solo exhibition. “To have the backing of Gene Sherman and her team meant that the sky was the limit in terms of creativity, vision and support,” says Jones.

Today, he is considered one of the most distinctive Aboriginal artists to emerge over the past decade. His works consist of fluorescent lights, tarpaulin, corrugated iron and electric lights, and are closely affiliated with Western minimalism despite incorporating traditional Koori line work.

Jones is far more interested in people’s similarities than differences, and his ability to synthesise and present his concepts are now expertly honed. In addition to working as an artist, he is curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

COFA continues to create opportunities for Aboriginal artists like Ah Kee and Jones to study at university. According to Tessa Allas, associate lecturer at COFA’s School of Art History and Art Education, “Contemporary Aboriginal art practice and art curatorship, writing and education is a much undervalued resource in the Australian art landscape. COFA is hoping to address this issue by investing heavily in future students. The Australian art arena will be greatly enriched by such an investment.”
Taylor Leon won the COFA Indigenous Student Award in 2011 in recognition of her academic progress. A $2,000 grant has helped the current undergraduate student subsidise her studies and bolster her confidence as an artist. “The greatest lesson we learn at COFA is that we should be prepared to not always please others with our art. Because of this, I’ve grown into an artist far more willing to confront others. All I seek now is my own approval,” says Leon.

Leon agrees that most people have a very narrow definition of what ‘Indigenous art’ represents. “It conjures up images of dots and skeletal-looking animals made by ‘primitive’ Aborigines out in the deserts of Australia,” she says. “I’m definitely no expert on Indigenous art, but I know this is so far from the truth.”

In addition to the Aboriginal Art Scholarships, COFA offers residencies to working Aboriginal artists who are finalists in the Parliament of NSW Art Prize. Called the COFA Professional Development Award, the residency at COFA has been won in the past by well known artists such as: Graham Davis King, Frances Belle Parker, Gordon Byron, Penny Evans and Fabri Blacklock. David Nolan won the 2011 Award for his work Flash Bax.

Ah Kee recently travelled to Sydney to take part in another residency program at COFA, which is available to all professional artists. For two weeks he worked with Michael Kempson, a senior lecturer in the School of Art, Head of Printmaking and director of Cicada Press, to hone his printmaking skills. Next year, the printmaking studio will host another three Aboriginal artists from around the country.

“I had a cadre of students at my will to help with printing and prepping. Having this technical support was invaluable in preparing my next exhibition,” says Ah Kee, explaining why residencies remain important to his development as an artist.

Jones recently travelled to Mumbai to prepare a solo exhibition at a leading private gallery. The exhibition explores links between Indian and Aboriginal postcolonial cultures, and revisits many of the themes and materials Jones began to explore in his formative years as a student at COFA.

“The opportunities that have come my way since being accepted to COFA’s Aboriginal entrance program have been integral to how I have developed and grown as an artist and curator,” he says. “It’s impossible to imagine where I would be without them.”

Barbara Messer

Most people have a very narrow definition of what ‘Indigenous art’ represents. “It conjures up images of dots and skeletal-looking animals made by ‘primitive’ Aborigines out in the deserts of Australia,” she says, “I’m definitely no expert on Indigenous art, but I know this is so far from the truth.”

TAYLOR LEON
COFA’s Indigenous Award Recipient

“These scholarships are vital to Aboriginal arts practice in NSW,” says Allas. “Some prospective students have the desire to improve their practice and arts knowledge, but have very little resources that can enable them to attend university. These scholarships will help ‘level the playing field’, so to speak.”

In 2012, COFA replaced the existing scholarship program with new Aboriginal Art Scholarships worth $10,000 per annum for undergraduates, or $20,000 per annum for postgraduates. Recipients will also receive a laptop, staff mentorship, travel and conference support, and professional development opportunities.
Complicit Collaboration and a Bored Robot

Collaboration is no cakewalk. To conceive of a concept, come to an agreement, contribute labour time, energy, conversation, research and the rest of it requires a particular kind of patience, as well as the ability to suspend (at least in part) stiff-necked self-interest. Cross-disciplinary collaboration requires an additional step; it asks each individual to move beyond his or her province in order to acknowledge and respond to an additional step; it asks each individual to move beyond his or her province in order to acknowledge and respond to an interest, forging connections that build upon different skills and perspectives, representing our human-techno present.

But there’s a catch. Simply meeting and talking to people from other fields and disciplines, even by a facilitating organisation or program, and there is a quiet history of such activity that proves this can be a successful way to encourage collaborative work. The Underbelly Arts Festival, initiated in Sydney in 2007, contributes to this history.

The festival’s website reveals the experimental scope of its enquiry. What would happen if you brought up to 150 artists together under the one roof for ten days to develop new work? What would happen if you then opened this process to the public, allowing them behind the scenes to witness art in the making?

Both questions provide the right gambit: an open platform for collaborative work to occur and be seen by the public. Artistic labour can be observed, materials are exposed, the artist is made visible and collective progress becomes legible. While we all know that artwork does not come about via immaculate conception, seeing it develop in context becomes an important part of understanding collective labour and how it can function.

In 2011, several COFA staff members participated in the Underbelly experiment. Liz Williamson, Head of the School of Design Studies and Petra Gemeinboeck, a Senior Lecturer in the School of Media Arts, collaborated with Rob Saunders, a Lecturer at the University of Sydney. They collectively developed Complicit, a mechanism combining traditional methods of repair (darning) with a CNC robot (short for Computer Numerical Control, which is all you’ll get from me on this topic).

As their title suggests, and Gemeinboeck confirms, the project addresses the "complicit relationship between non-human and human agents, and the common environment we share but also create". A simple counting game that asks the thinker to list every item of technology they use habitually, or every button they press during a day, easily proves Gemeinboeck’s point. But how does this human and non-human coupling play out in Complicit?

The project presents a robot equipped with the all-too-human capacity for becoming restless. The computer is programmed to have an aversion to boredom and acts to alleviate it through creative destruction. "The machine starts out on a pristine plain wall, and explores that until it gets bored… it has at its disposal a chisel to change the environment, to literally discover new things. It will continue to do so because it gets bored otherwise," Gemeinboeck explains, adding, "the wall becomes the playground…" It also becomes a symbolic site for the robot, artist and viewer alike.

The computer is programmed to have an aversion to boredom and acts to alleviate it through creative destruction. As a collaborative exercise, Complicit draws upon the specific skills of Gemeinboeck, Williamson and Saunders in relation to the action and curiosity of the machine. As Gemeinboeck notes, "collaboration brings together different backgrounds, both in terms of disciplines and culture, as well as different points of view. Many questions or ideas can only be explored through the coming together of different disciplines and approaches. I see it as a great opportunity and privilege to work with people who have such different skills and perspectives, and it’s usually an enormous learning experience." Embedded in the project is the collaborative negotiation with the robot itself, marking a site where artists, mediums and technology find grounds for engagement.

Complicit is a metaphorical loop representing our human-techno present. Such a relationship brings to mind the art historian and critic Boris Arvatov, who, in 1926, wrote in Kunst und Produktion, ‘art goes hand in hand with technology and science and then once this happens it becomes an equal and organisational effect and progressive factor in the formation of society’. It is this line of thought that puts a few questions on the table. Can art play a role in technological advancement? Does it stand a chance against technological progress? Where are we to situate human tradition in relation to advanced robots and technological persuasion and dominance?

By provoking questions like these, Complicit reflects common opinion, which usually finds itself divided into two camps. On the one hand, industrialisation and technology spell out a man-made end, a utopian prospect; human liberation as the final consequence of human hubris. On the other hand, they offer optimists a utopian prospect; human liberation as a result of robotic mastery. While art can appear feeble in such persistent debates, projects like Complicit provide a working demonstration of how an artwork contributes. It is a questioning that caters to no simple answer, a question that comes through looking.

Tom Melick Watch Liz Williamson and Petra Gemeinboeck discuss their Underbelly project online. cofa.unsw.edu.au/cofa-talks-online/cofa-talks-online?view=video&video=286
According to Miller, his work is “a memory machine of sorts” and the images he used were personal ‘data shadows’, the traceable data record that each of us produce every time we use the technology we now take for granted: ATMs, mobile phones, credit cards and the internet.

Shadowy Data

Brad Miller, video artist and Lecturer in COFA’s School of Design Studies, also participated in Underbelly Arts 2011. Miller presented Data_shadow, a four projector installation which created a continuous, 20 metre long wall of images. According to Miller, his work is “a memory machine of sorts” and the images he used were personal ‘data shadows’, the traceable data record and that of each produce every time we use the technology we now take for granted: ATMs, mobile phones, credit cards and the internet. Data_shadow was an immersive and interactive installation that utilised a machine with a tracking system to add sound elements in response to the location of the audience.

Miller explains that for several years he has used original photographic and video content to explore memory, mnemonic associations and identity. Miller posits that “the associations created by photography and social networking sites have a subtle but complex influence on identity and our construction of self.” His research probes “the nature of self in the age of ubiquitous networks” and responds to a culture in which he found his research probe the self could be more the self by buying or having a certain thing to define you. To define me.”

Data_shadow is an iteration of Miller’s ongoing responsive visual database project. The first version was called augment_me and was exhibited at Artspace, Sydney in 2009. In 2012, Miller will exhibit augment_me at The Contemporary Art Foundation, Bergen, Norway.

Tracey Clement

Watch Brad Miller discusses his Underbelly project: online.cofa.unsw.edu.au/cofa/talks-online/cofa_talks.html?view=video&video=280

Man on the Move

Peter Nelson is having a run of very good luck. Not only did he win the 2011 Art & Australia Award for Emerging Artists and a residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris through COFA, but when his phone was stolen in a Paris cafe he managed to reason with the thieves and get it back.

It might come as a surprise to learn that the most significant thing to happen to Nelson while he was in Paris was an accident. A friend spilled beer all over his computer, destroying it. In the four weeks it took to get a replacement, the artist spent all his downtime reading and this was to have a profound impact on his work. In particular, the theories of Charles Avery were influential. Nelson explains, “His work does nice things with imaginary realms and the use of narrative fiction and sculpture.”

Over the next few months, Nelson is involved in group exhibitions at Flinders Street Gallery, Shafter Gallery and INDEX Space, as well as an upcoming residency at Serial Space. He is also speaking at a conference at Monash University in Melbourne. And all of this will transpire over a four week period in which Nelson also has to continue to write his masters paper.

The upcoming INDEX exhibition will show Nelson’s new work that incorporates drawings and cardboard sculptures. The exhibition will also involve a time-lapse video the artist took of himself building the work. Calling upon a friend to edit the film, it will be sped up so the figure disappears and it appears as if the sculptures are building themselves. This is a new element to Nelson’s practice and one that he is particularly excited about. He is also excited about the opportunity to return overseas, once his masters is completed in 2012, to either undertake more study or a residency. So it would seem that Peter Nelson is literally a man on the move.

Naomi Gall

His exhibition: Extensions of a No-Place, is on at Flinders Street Gallery, May 29 - June 16, 2012.
Well-known Sydney designer, Roderick Bamford, has further pushed boundaries in ceramics. His new works were showcased in the exhibition, Hyperclay, at one of Australia’s leading centres for art and design, Object Gallery, Sydney. Bamford is a COFA lecturer.

The exceptionally detailed and exacting artwork of Kurt Schranzer was featured once again in a major solo exhibition, No Right Turn, at Penrith Regional Gallery and The Lewers Bequest. Schranzer is a COFA graduate and lecturer.
Who: Sara Spence is the brains behind Dubble You. The design graduate applies her skills to a wide range of concepts, from bio-degradable plastic water bottles to homewares and jewellery.

What: Tea towels featuring words of wisdom from pop stars like Snoop Dogg and Michael Jackson.

Why: Dish drying drudgery just became fun!

Where: dubbleyou.com.au

COFA’s talented staff, students and alumni have been busy getting their products to the people. Incubate answers the four big Ws: Who, What, Why and Where. There are 13 fresh items to choose from. Get ‘em while they are hot!
Who: Tom Ellard was the last man standing in the pioneering Aussie electronic group, Severed Heads. He’s now making music solo, as well as lecturing in COFA’s School of Media Arts.

What: Music and videos by a one-man band.

Why: More than three decades after joining Severed Heads, Ellard continues to blaze a trail.

Where: severedheads.bandcamp.com and youtube.com/user/TomEllard

Who: Zoë Jay Veness is an award winning jewellery designer. She already has two COFA design degrees, but has gone back for more and is currently working on her PhD. She also teaches in COFA’s School of Design Studies.

What: Colourful brooches made from cleverly folded paper.

Why: There is more to jewellery than gold and diamonds.

Where: studio2017.com.au

Who: During the fourth year of her COFA design degree, Louise Martiensen undertook a Professional Experience Program placement at Mud Australia. They put the teapot she designed while she was still a student in to production!

What: Mud Teapot, Porcelain, 250 x 80 mm.

Why: A good excuse to put the kettle on.

Where: mudaustralia.com

Who: Lucy Simpson draws on her Indigenous heritage to create a range of products for her label, Gaawaa Miyay. She graduated in 2010 with a Bachelor of Design degree.

What: Cushions made from Simpson’s patterned fabrics.

Why: It is possible to be simultaneously comfy and sophisticated.

Where: gaawaamiyay.com
Who: Samantha Wilson was studying photography at COFA when she set up a fashion label with her best friend. They describe Sanoii + Six as their “love child”.
What: An independent clothing label, home-grown on the NSW Central Coast.
Why: Style doesn’t have to come from the big smoke.
Where: sanoiiandsix.com

Who: Design graduates, Georgie Swift and Milenka Osen joined forces to create quirky stationery, jewellery and homewares for their label TMOD.
What: Scratchie gift cards.
Why: Because receiving should be as good as giving. And each card comes with a scalloped heart charm to keep.
Where: tmod.com.au

Who: Trent Jansen, COFA design graduate, is one of Australia’s best-known up-and-coming designers.
What: Reflective Cycle Signs made from recycled road signs and old inner tubes.
Why: Cycling should be stylish as well as safe and each Cycle Sign is unique.
Where: trentandhenry.com

Who: Karina Clarke is an independent designer and teaches at COFA’s School of Design Studies.
What: My Best Friend’s Burial Bones are ceramic memorials for pets.
Why: Fido or Fluffy may be gone, but they don’t have to be forgotten.
Where: mybestfriends.com.au

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Why: Fido or Fluffy may be gone, but they don’t have to be forgotten.
Where: mybestfriends.com.au
Who: Emily O’Neil won Young Designer of the Year in the 2011 Australian Publisher’s Association Book Design Awards for her work at Allen & Unwin, just four years after she finished a COFA design degree.
Why: You can judge a book by its cover and this one is actually a great read.
Where: allenandunwin.com

Who: Dr Susan Best teaches in COFA’s School of Art History and Art Education. She is also the Art History Postgraduate Coordinator.
Why: The book has been described as a “subversive art history”. (See story on page 78.)
Where: ibtauris.com

Who: Dr Alan Krell is a writer and an Associate Professor at COFA in the School of Art History and Art Education.
Why: In Krell’s hands, fire becomes a hot topic! (See story on page 74.)
Where: reaktionbooks.co.uk

Who: Tim Gaul spent two years working at Animal Logic as both a pre-visualisation artist and a lens animator on the film, Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga’Hoole. He is a COFA digital media graduate.
What: Legend of the Guardians is a feature length, Aussie made, animated film based on a series of books by Kathryn Lasky.
Why: Good vs evil stories with talking owls, what’s not to love?
Where: wbshop.com
By the late 1940s, when discourse in Sweden was focused on national influences under the guise of a particular Swedish version of Functionalism that had become known internationally as Swedish Modern, exotic and obvious non-Swedish influences appear to have been downplayed or even suppressed, suggesting that they were both undesirable and out of line with the prevalent discourses.

The Swedish artist and designer Vicke Lindstrand (1904-1983) made his own, less spectacular, debut at the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition with exotic glass designs for Orrefors Glassworks. Over the following decade, he went on to produce significant and critically acclaimed work and maintained a position on the inside of Pred’s pure and simple line. During the 1950s, Lindstrand was artistic director at another well-known Swedish glass factory, Kosta. At Kosta, Lindstrand inhabited a peripheral position in Swedish and Scandinavian modern design.

In the mid 20th century, despite internationalising trends in global design, international influences in the work of Swedish designers were significantly less visible in period discourse in favour of ‘Swedishness’ or regionally influenced Scandinavian Design. This was most certainly the case with Lindstrand. His significant body of work reveals pluralistic tendencies and divergent influences that were not consistent with the prevailing aesthetic concerns in Sweden and Scandinavia.

To be known as a Swedish designer during the 1950s necessitated subscribing to the Swedish version of Functionalism that was established by the 1940s. To be on the outside of Pred’s defining line meant being peripheral to what was promoted as mainstream Swedish design.

Ethnologist Tom O’Dell has pointed out the “overwhelming tendency to describe Swedishness as national identity in terms of the aesthetics of modernity.” According to Michelle Facos, the concept of Swedishness emerged from the Romantic movement of the late 19th century in which it sought to promote national identity through indigenous culture, tradition and values. O’Dell has noted the clichéd values commonly perceived as typically Swedish: rationalism, practicality, functionalism, a belief in science, reservedness, and an appreciation for moderation.

Lindstrand’s work was widely influenced and he was far from the clichéd practical and rational Swede. Lindstrand was not reserved nor is moderation manifest in his work. Rather, his work could be restrained in one instance and exuberant in another. He was described by the critic Ulf Hård af Segerstad as “the formidable every artist: frantic, active and incessantly on the lookout for the latest in new trends and developments around the world.” This did not sit well with regard to Swedishness or the regional thrust of Scandinavian Design.

Design historian Lesley Jackson has argued that Sweden’s pre-eminence in design in the 1950s was not surprising given its achievements in ceramics, glass and furniture during the 1920s and 1930s and the continuity facilitated by its neutrality during the Second World War. This enabled some designers, including Lindstrand, to play a major role both before and after the war. Sweden had progressively sought to emphasise the Swedishness of its design and applied art by focussing on climate, landscape and tradition as catalysts for their design aesthetic.
During the early 1900s, in Alvar Aalto’s architecture, furniture and glass designs in Finland, Bruno Mathsson’s furniture and glass designs in Sweden, Lindstrand was often influenced by themes that were non-Swedish. His earliest work for Orrefors referenced the exotic: African, Asian and mythical imagery being particularly prevalent. If we examine the most highly represented objects from his oeuvre, those included in exhibitions and publications, more abstract influences are the norm, whereas exotic themes are mostly absent. Lindstrand’s acclaimed Pärffiskekaren (The Pearlfishers) vase of 1931 is an early example of exoticism. The activity of pearl diving, depicted in Lindstrand’s engraved illustration, was practised in Asia, the Caribbean and South America until the early 1900s, an exotic, non-Swedish activity. Throughout Lindstrand’s Orrefors work there are themes and engravings that also reference the other – African, American jazz musicians, African and ‘Oriental’ or Asian women. During the 1940s, he focussed on African wildlife in textile and ceramic designs.

There is a discernible continuity of themes and influences in Lindstrand’s work in glass, ceramics, textiles, painting and sculpture that were not exclusively figurative or literal but also abstract. The influences of Surrealism, Abstract Art and associated movements are apparent in his 1950s work. These influences were most notably manifest in Lindstrand’s Abstracta series of 1951, referencing Jackson Pollock’s 1940s ‘action paintings’, tapping into the notoriety generated by Abstract Expressionism. The New York based movement was a widely influential aesthetic in applied and decorative arts, including Swedish and Scandinavian design, yet completely absent from Scandinavian design discourse. The apparent Swedishness of Lindstrand’s work may be seen to have had an impact on his reception. His works selected for official exhibitions, such as the North American touring exhibition Design in Scandinavia (1954-57), are examples of what might be considered ‘Swedish’, or conversely ‘un-Swedish’, which in turn determined their fit as ‘Scandinavian’ or ‘un-Scandinavian’. The narratives and rhetoric prevalent in Swedish and Scandinavian design discourse of the 1950s were formulated in Sweden during the late 1940s.

What differed in the discourse of Scandinavian Design was the inclusion of more overt references to peasant crafts and traditions, references that can be traced back to the Nordic National Romantic movement of the nineteenth century. O’Dell observes the absence of ethnicity, and the exclusion of anything that is not seen as Swedish, from what he describes as a homogenising discourse. From what he describes as a homogenising discourse, where rationality and practicality define the ‘usual’, divergence, he argues, remains absent and ethnicity singular and unproblematic. Lindstrand’s work exemplifies this phenomenon.

Lindstrand was often influenced by themes that were non-Swedish. His earliest work for Orrefors referenced the exotic: African, Asian and mythical imagery being particularly prevalent. If we examine the most highly represented objects from his oeuvre, those included in exhibitions and publications, more abstract influences are the norm, whereas exotic themes are mostly absent.
Lindstrand’s experience with both the selection process for Design in Scandinavia, and his critical reception in Sweden during the 1950s, was problematic. Murphy points out that Swedish design ideology acts as an exclusionary force that determines what fits the category and what it is allowed to represent. Swedish design has become a powerful (and marketable) symbol of Swedish identity that is not representative of the entire population. Lindstrand’s work did not always conform to what Murphy describes as the “Swedish cultural geometry”, the formal qualities of typical Swedish objects, characterised by straight lines, simple curves, clear function and monochromatic use of colour in materials of wood, steel, glass, textiles and plastic. This was a decisive factor in the inclusion or exclusion of Lindstrand’s work in discourse.

Lindstrand’s designs for engravings referenced a broad range of illustrative themes from Africa to New York, architecture to literature, and celebrity to peasantry. Lindstrand developed new techniques to set his engraved illustration apart from his previous achievements, which were (mostly) the subject of positive critical commentary. However, in visual discourse (illustrations, exhibitions) a preference for peasant themes is evident, themes which exhibited more institutionalised Swedishness. This can be seen in Lindstrand’s works selected for the Design in Scandinavia exhibition.

The obvious choice of Fisknät (The Nets), depicting peasant imagery, brings into question the omission of his iconic Träd i dimma (Trees in fog) vase, depicting a typical Swedish (and Scandinavian) winter image. The answer might be found in the Italian Sommerso technique used in the production of Träd i dimma, a divergent, non-Swedish influence. O’Dell argues that “the question which has to be asked in the explanation of Swedishness, is what has been forgotten, whom is forgotten, and what is denied access to [the Swedes] emotions through its exclusion from the discourse of national identity.”

Design has become integral in the make up of Swedish national identity and much has been filtered and excluded from discourse. Scandinavian Design resulted in the application of a further filter to curate a regional aesthetic that excluded international influences. Lindstrand’s internationally influenced objects were too firmly associated with other cultures to be effectively utilised in marketing a regional Scandinavian identity. Swedish historian Jan Brunius too has noted this tendency, observing that Scandinavian design exhibited “a certain complacency and conservatism in its exclusion of design inspiration from abroad.” The inspiration was in fact there, it just wasn’t made visible.

Mark Ian Jones

This article is based upon an extract of his COFA Design PhD thesis entitled On the Periphery, An examination of Mid-twentieth Century Swedish Design and the reception of Vicky Lindstrand.
Kareena Zerefos was employed as a graphic designer when she realised she was frustrated with working at a computer. Since graduating from COFA in 2005, with a Bachelor of Design, majoring in graphics, she had done well in her field. “One of the things that was nice when I started out in Sydney,” she says, “was that my career began to move along quite quickly.” But her increasing desire to use her hands meant that the illustrations she was doing on the side soon became her main focus. It was time for a change.

Zerefos moved to London in early 2011, and success is coming, if a little bit more slowly. “It’s much more difficult because there are so many more artists here,” she explains, “but it pushes me to get my work seen by people.” Already her list of achievements is growing. Zerefos has taken part in a group show in Brick Lane’s East Gallery and her most recently completed body of work, Beyond the Menagerie, was exhibited in a solo exhibition at Libby Edwards Gallery, Melbourne, in October.

Receining childhood memories and old photographs, Zerefos uses a range of media: graphite, ink, markers, gouache, to create evocative vignettes full of whimsy and allure. Her illustrations are, quite simply, breathtaking. Soulful-eyed children captivate with their gaze and menageries of animals twist and turn upon the page. They perfectly express the artist’s themes of escapism and make-believe, and succeed in eliciting emotive responses from the viewer; a longing for innocence lost, the desire for freedom, bittersweet nostalgia. Zerefos has also recently developed an interest in ancient Greek mythology and the delicately executed metamorphotic subjects in her Beyond the Menagerie series reflect this.
Before moving to London, Zerefos was working in a studio on her own and the experience determined the way in which she wanted to practise once abroad. “I was going crazy and feeling anti-social on my own,” she says, “so when I got to London I wanted to move into a multi-disciplinary space that was inspiring.” She found her niche within The Papered Parlour, a shared creative hub of designers, craftspeople and visual artists in the heart of Clapham Common.

What it has meant for Zerefos is that she can immerse herself within a community of artists while also expanding her practice through working collaboratively. “The side projects are that little bit of COFA-ness that I still carry with me today,” she explains. “Collaboration was regarded as a great vehicle for experimentation, and that has stuck.” In the past she worked with jewellery designer Zoe Sernack and she is currently working with paper engineer Helen Friel; a new pairing that could potentially give rise to anything from a pop-up book to a sculpture.

Although initially worried about not being taken seriously as an Australian artist in London, Zerefos has come to realise that the city thrives on cultural diversity. “I feel very much a part of this community,” she says. “COFA always encouraged international pursuits, and the idea of being part of a global community.” So while Zerefos may still return to Sydney to visit, she has found her place in London. “When you’re studying art and design,” she says, “you see so many things that come from Europe and the UK, and now I think I could be a part of that if I give it a go.”

Leanne Amodeo
The Potent Mix
Psychology, Art and Childhood

“I do little more than straight stitch, which is mostly crooked, and on a sewing machine. Yet, I feel a huge sense of accomplishment in a half-hour art-making session, and I hope to encourage others to make stuff, simply because it’s so beneficial.”

Research shows, for example, that there are both immediate and long-term benefits in reducing stress for people who make art.

Eliza Muldoon
Lecturer, Writer and Creator

A conversation with some of these art practitioners is already well established through the Arts Interview website that Muldoon co-founded last year to support her teaching role in the Master of Art Administration degree at COFA. The weekly arts interviews in blog format encourage reflection and dialogue across a range of issues with musicians, artists, writers, directors, producers, photographers, painters, performance artists and festival workers. It’s not so much about what they do but about how they do it.

The idea of a website sprung from Muldoon’s frustration, as an academic, that there was so little documented research into the processes behind artistic creation. In 2009, a chance to start the conversation came when her actor husband, Rhys, was working on a play with the American director Steven Soderbergh (responsible for Erin Brockovich, Ocean’s Eleven, Sex Lies and Videotapes).

“I knew that Soderbergh was incredibly efficient: he’d locked in the play really quickly and had all this time left over so he made a short film with the actors. I was wondering what made him so efficient, maybe it was the way he made decisions, and since I was teaching ‘organisational psychology’ at COFA, I thought ‘I should ask him’.”

The Soderbergh interview was the spark that kindled the Arts Interview website that is now regarded as a valued resource connecting influential art practitioners with student interviewers and art industry specialists.

“It’s hard to go up to someone with 15 years experience and say: ‘Hi, I’m an emerging arts worker and I know that you’ve encountered 50 others tonight, but I’d like to chat to you because I think that you’re amazing,’” explains Muldoon. “The site has given us, as interviewers, a chance to chat and it’s prompted really interesting responses. Arts Interview has been more illuminating than I ever imagined it would be. It has not only offered me insights to support my lectures, it has helped to promote the role of people in arts organisations to the industry as a whole.”

The book publishing deal with Allen & Unwin is another unintended consequence of the crafting sessions. Lazing on a Sunday Crafternoon is now planned for release in September 2012.

“I do little more than straight stitch, which is mostly crooked, and on a sewing machine,” Muldoon laughs. “Yet, I feel a huge sense of accomplishment in a half-hour art-making session, and I hope to encourage others to make stuff, simply because it’s so beneficial. Research shows, for example, that there are both immediate and long-term benefits in reducing stress for people who make art.”

Muldoon’s experience proves the theory that the level of engagement with art as a child is directly related to level of engagement as an adult. Her fascination for the subject prompted her to study both Psychology and Clinical Art Therapy at university. Participation in community art projects at Young, and later Redfern, further developed her belief that art improves individual and social wellbeing.

Community art projects revealed a basic truth: some people discover insight and find strength through art. “It’s not for everybody, but it is for a lot of people, including some who don’t yet realise it’s for them,” she says.

There are so many ways to connect with art as a buyer or a visitor, attending a festival or making craft on a Sunday afternoon. “Many people will discover, as I did,” says Eliza Muldoon, “that even if they’re not particularly good at art making they can go and see someone else’s work and be transported, amazed, inspired and enlightened.”

Anabel Dean
Arts administrators and endowment brokers believe there is a reliable formula for turning economic value into cultural value. And though they might not put it quite so bluntly, every donor shares this belief. Donors might not see the bare economic bones of this transformation because they prefer to dwell on the very real alchemy that takes place when a pile of money becomes an artwork, a gallery, a studio, a scholarship, a commissioned work or any other source of ongoing creative output.

In Australia, the government has traditionally taken a leading role in arts funding. At the same time, the private sector has remained more dormant here than in other countries with similar attitudes to the public value of the arts. But, in the last few years, the balance between public and private support for the arts has shifted. A recent Survey of Private Sector Support by the Australia Business Arts Foundation shows that since the ‘global financial crisis’, federal and corporate belts have tightened and their sponsorship of the arts has declined. At the end of 2007, sponsorship accounted for 52% of arts funding, by 2010 it had fallen to 44%. Over the same period, giving from individuals and non-government sources has risen steeply, not only as a percentage (which you would expect, given the decline in sponsorship) but also in raw volume. Over the four financial years, from 2006 to 2010, the accumulated total of private gifts to the arts rose from $87 to $123 million dollars.

So why might more individual Australians be choosing to give? What do they get out of it? Huon Hooke, Viktoria Marinov, Designer Rugs and Shane Simpson have all given to COFA in different ways and for different reasons. But their acts of generosity are linked by the fact that unlike large-scale corporate donations or government spending, private gifts are able to recognise and commemorate idiosyncratic passions, lifelong commitments and cherished relationships.

“Any philanthropist who says they don’t get pleasure from being able to help is fibbing. Giving is pleasurable. Involvement in things you care about is one of the joys of life.”

SHANE SIMPSON
Chair, COFA Advisory Panel
As executor of the estate of the late sculptor Bronwyn Oliver, Hooke has been learning how to balance the pragmatic side of philanthropy with the personal. Hooke has the opportunity to commemorate his former partner and the responsibility to administer her estate as she might have. So when the Dean of COFA, Ian Howard, got in touch with Hooke to discuss the redevelopment of the school and to suggest that he would like to name some part of it after Bronwyn Oliver, Hooke was thrilled by the idea and had little hesitation to arrange the particulars. "It would be to a discipline or professional pathway. For the past four years, Designer Rugs have been collaborating with third year textile design students at COFA to produce a selection of art rugs. Designer Rugs produce a handful of the best designs as rugs, with a winner ultimately chosen from the realised designs. "Money is important to philanthropy," he admits, "but not having money is no excuse for not being philanthropic." For Simpson, "the financial gift is important, but the extension of the gift to include personal association and commitment is when the initial gift can be leveraged into something really significant."
Li Wenmin creates beautiful images of a fractured life. She has applied her creations to paper, canvas and ceramics with equal strength. Her work appears in regular group shows and last year featured in the solo exhibition, Seeking, at Flinders Street Gallery. Wenmin is a COFA graduate and lecturer.

Rew Hanks mixes historical portraiture with modern thinking. The Devil’s Garden, his solo show at Watters Gallery, demonstrated an unusual talent in observing the past and present in visual form. Hanks is a COFA graduate.

*TIME AGAIN AT WATTERS*


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Incubate: What led you to make the switch from writing about people to writing about things, or in the case of fire, an elemental force?

AK: It looks like there has been a great shift, from the animate to inanimate, but the approach of looking at meanings within changing social and cultural contexts remains the same. You could say I’ve moved from a more defined art history, albeit one that was always a social art history, to what is broadly known as cultural studies. Once you are working in that area, everything is pregnant with possibilities!

Incubate: Have you had any personal experiences that might have made you interested in fire as a topic?

AK: No, I haven’t had any personal fire related disasters. But certainly in the context of Australia there is the frequency of wild fires or bush fires. Then there was 9/11, and the movies that were celebrating, eulogising and mythologising fire fighters; all these things came into play.

Fire is ubiquitous in our lives. In the book I talk about the beginnings of the mythology of fire and the relationship of fire to language: of heat and hearth and home, of intimacies. Fire has been around forever. With the Indigenous peoples of Australia we find the beginnings of a mythology of fire. It predates Prometheus, it predates Western narratives of fire.

I speak about Jane Eyre and the sexuality of fires; about fire and its representations by artists such as the 17th century Dutch painter, Judith Leyster, and the contemporary American Ed Ruscha, and artists who actually use fire, such as Yves Klein and Ana Mendieta. And, of course, I look at some of history’s fabled infernos, amongst others: The Great Fire of London, The Great Fire of Chicago, and the horrendous firebombing of Dresden during WWII. Although much has been written about these topics, nothing had been done that brought everything together under one cover.

Krell is an Associate Professor in COFA’s School of Art History and Art Education. If the College ran a popularity contest, there seems little doubt that he would win, hands down.


If you Google Alan Krell (and let’s face it, who doesn’t?) the number one hit is a Facebook page with the title, ‘Alan Krell – We Love You’. Enough said.
Incubate: You raise the point several times that fire embodies the essence of the sublime: the ability to be simultaneously both beautiful and terrifying. Is this why it is so compelling as a subject for artists? Who do you think has best captured fire as sublime?

AK: Absolutely, the contradictions and paradoxes in fire are part of what makes it so interesting. To answer your question, I would certainly say Eugene von Guérard’s painting, *Bushfire between Mount Elephant and Timboon*, March 1857, 1859, the relentlessness of a vast bushfire set against the night sky and a full moon; Shane Fitzgerald’s photograph, *Inferno, Arnhem Land*, 2002, with its molten lava-like strip of yellow-gold in the foreground; and some of Yves Klein’s work, something as seemingly simple as his *Fire Column*, 1961.

Incubate: What is the most surprising thing you discovered while researching fire?

AK: Towards the end of writing, in the postscript, I came across images and articles in *The Sydney Morning* about a building that would (hopefully) withstand a bushfire; that was extraordinary. And the DVD ‘fireplace’, I knew about it, but actually getting it and speaking to the person who made it, that tickled my fancy. The section in which I speak about fire and folk tales and children’s tales for me was a great eye-opener. I loved doing that. And there was work that I’d never seen before, or perhaps had seen but hadn’t concentrated on. For example, the film, *Der Lauf Der Dinge* (The Way Things Go), 1987, by Peter Fischli and David Weiss. I was familiar with it, but I’d never really earnestly looked at it, and I think it’s the most captivating, beguiling, absurd, poignant, wonderful artwork.

Incubate: Where do you go from fire? What can we expect next from Alan Krell?

AK: I’ve sent a proposal to my publisher for a book on feet and their imaginative promise. If there is a theme in my work - one day when I’m dead and buried and someone does a PhD on me! - they will find this: a preoccupation with contradiction, with paradox, with irony. You can see it in barbed wire, and fire of course. And, indeed, in Manet. So what draws me to feet is precisely this: they move from the abject, the base (literally and figuratively) to the fetish and the divine. Paradox is a big theme with me. I think it’s at the heart of living.
Incubate: You have chosen to focus on the practice of four women: Lygia Clarke, Eva Hesse, Ana Mendieta and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha. Why did you choose to highlight these artists?

SB: There are a number of reasons for the choice of these four. First, they are all brilliant artists whose most radical innovation has not been properly recognised – the introduction of feeling into the language of late modern art. Secondly, the work of Clark, Hesse and Mendieta has had a huge impact on the work of subsequent generations of women artists. Cha is not as well known, but should be. I saw a retrospective of her work in 1995 at the whitney Museum in New York and the germ of this project — to think about what women artists contributed to the established languages of minimalism and conceptual art — really started then. Those two movements are the touchstones for how contemporary art is written about and how it is presented in most museums, so it seemed to me really important to think about how women artists contributed to and opened up those vocabularies.

Incubate: Hesse, Mendieta and Cha all died young and, in the case of Mendieta and Cha, in rather tragic circumstances. What links the artists you’ve chosen?

SB: The fact that three of the four artists died tragically early is a coincidence. I don’t think that their deaths tell us that much about their art. Having said that, I have to confess I was enthralled by Robert Katz’s book, Naked by the window: The Fatal Marriage of Carl Andre and Ana Mendieta. His account of Mendieta’s death and the various attempts to indict Andre is a real page-turner.

What unites the four artists is the introduction of an affective dimension to the avant-garde protocols of their time.
Incubate: There is clearly a focus on the feminine throughout your book. Why did you decide to profile female artists and make this focus paramount to the book?

SB: I think my book is part of a more general re-evaluation and reappraisal of women’s art and the impact of feminism on art. There have been a lot of exhibitions around the world on these themes such as: WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution (2007), Global Feminisms (2007), Gender Check (2009), Women artists elles@ centrepompidou (2009), Modern Women (2010) and Donna: Avanguardia Femminista negli anni ’70 (2010).

Often these reappraisals separate women’s art from the main art historical debates. I wanted to put my discussion of the feminine avant-garde back into the main art historical debates of the period so that they disrupt the dominant accounts. Clearly, the fact that they disrupt those accounts indicates the histories were premised upon their exclusion.

So my focus on the feminine is because I care passionately about the proper acknowledgment of the brilliance of women’s art. I also care about men’s art being properly acknowledged but I think this happens by default.

Incubate: Ideally, what would you like people to take away from this book?

SB: I guess I’d like to provide tools, or stimulation, for others to think about feeling in art.

Incubate: What’s your next project?

SB: I’m working on two projects: a book length project on photography and witnessing and an exhibition of Latin American kinetic art for the Sydney University Art Museum that will be opening in July 2012.
Mike Parr is perhaps best known to many for his performance art; disturbing and often bloody works, inflicted upon the artist’s own self as a form of corporal punishment. The drawings in Parr’s latest exhibition can clearly be seen as an extension of these performances. The troubled figures and faces leer out, and threaten to bodily occupy the gallery space from within their two dimensional cells.

The first thing that struck me upon entering the gallery was Dumbfounded, a black sheet swathes the famous skyline of Manhattan Island, and like a witnessing bystander, I hover around looking down the cityscape remembering the moment I switched on the television to watch the news of 9/11 unfold.

This depiction of Manhattan, titled Recover, is one of four works by Elvis Richardson that features in Mike Parr: The Golden Age, a joint exhibition with Daniel Muir Cunningham. Parr’s abrasive methods work well to underscore the incorrectness of scale, and like a witnessing bystander, I hover around looking down the gallery space to feel quiet and reflective. The only sound is heard alone through headphones, creating a momenti noni atmosphere that counterbalances the fear created through media saturation.

Mike Parr: The Golden Age
Ann Schwartz Gallery
www.annschwartzgallery.com
August 27 – October 22, 2011

A black sheet swathes the famous skyline of Manhattan Island, and like a witnessing bystander, I hover around looking down upon the cityscape remembering the moment I switched on the television to watch the news of 9/11 unfold.

This depiction of Manhattan, titled Recover, is one of four works by Elvis Richardson that features in Mike Parr: The Golden Age, a joint exhibition with Daniel Muir Cunningham.

With the 10-year anniversary of September 11, 2001 recently passing by, Richardson and Cunningham ask us to consider how the relentless portrayal of this event in the media has shaped our collective memories and created a sense of “uncomfortable pleasure” in the spectacle. The artists have sincerely considered this notion by presenting only five works between them, allowing the gallery space to feel quiet and reflective. The only sound is heard alone through headphones, creating a momenti noni atmosphere that counterbalances the fear created through media saturation.

Video features prominently in the exhibition, an atmosphere that alludes to the medium that first delivered the news of 9/11. Richardson and Cunningham deliberately use imagery that is poetic and understated to communicate their ideas. Both artists present a meditation on mourning.

Richardson’s works, Recover, Tomorrow, Now 7 Years Later, and The End, are each suggestive of a four step process for grieving; a course that followed after the cameras stopped filming. In Cunningham’s animation, Hold Your Breath, a group of men and women ascend through the sky peacefully holding balloons. They seem to offer redemption for the individuals labelled ‘The Jumpers’, whom leapt from the burning World Trade Centre buildings to defiantly choose their own fate.

The Fall Before Fall is evocative and serene, lulling you into a contemplative state of self-reflection and remembrance.

Lucy Ainsworth
Lucy is currently completing a Master of Art Administration degree at COFA.
The White Rabbit Gallery in Chippendale houses an impressive collection of contemporary Chinese art, ranging from painting and sculpture to photography, film and installation. The works featured in Beyond the Frame, although physically contained within the four-foot gallery, aim to transcend the confines of borders and boundaries.

As I enter the ground floor, I am confronted by Shi Zhiying’s five-metre high wood sculpture, *In the End*. Both works explore boundaryless nature, its beauty and danger. I find beauty in the dark, detailed wave patterns in *High Seas* that graduate into the vast white horizon. The beautiful wood-grain patterns on Jianshu’s trunks are held upright by its tentacle-like roots. Yet I see danger in the rough, wild waves of High Seas and in the instability of Jianshu’s uprooted tree trunk with a lustrous, sharpened tip.

Moving up to the first floor, Dong Yuan’s *Daily Scenes*, 42 still life paintings of the Beijing urban scenery from her apartment stairwell, plays with the idea of framing on multiple levels. Silhouetted windows and doors frame the trees, the sky and the generic orange and white apartment buildings. Looking closer at the meticulous detail, I came to appreciate her patience and virtuosity. Through framing and detailed rendering, Yuan challenges traditional artistic subject matter. Each frame depicts a moment in time, and there is an unexpected sense of stillness and serenity in the otherwise unnoticed, mundane daily scenery.

In the next room, Guo Fei’s interactive series: *Autumn, The Elderly Man with His Lower Lips Drooping*, 2006, features life-sized fibreglass sculptures of hospitalised mental patients were sculpted the way he had remembered them. I notice a kind of empathy in Zhengyu’s rough, gestural hand-marks in the grey moulded sculptures. I wander through the empty space between the squatting elderly man with his lower lips drooping, and the middle-aged man hunching, with hands in both pockets, defeated. I see their startling facial expressions: confusion, frustration and hopelessness. This is made more striking when I look into the black, reflective, bead-like pupils of their grey eyes. Their features and expressions seem exaggerated, but they are all the more believable, which is what makes the work so emotionally powerful.

*Beyond the Frame* features a mix of personal, playful and politically conscious works. It is worth seeing just to appreciate the impressive technical virtuosity, but even more so for those willing to move beyond their own boundaries.

Noël Myaing

Noël is currently undertaking a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at COFA, majoring in Drawing and Painting.

On the second floor, Lu Zhengyu’s *Mental Patients* also works from memory. Life-sized fibreglass sculptures of hospitalised mental patients were sculpted the way he had remembered them. I notice a kind of empathy in Zhengyu’s rough, gestural hand-marks in the grey moulded sculptures. I wander through the empty space between the squatting elderly man with his lower lips drooping, and the middle-aged man hunching, with hands in both pockets, defeated. I see their startling facial expressions: confusion, frustration and hopelessness. This is made more striking when I look into the black, reflective, bead-like pupils of their grey eyes. Their features and expressions seem exaggerated, but they are all the more believable, which is what makes the work so emotionally powerful.

Noël Myaing

Noël is currently undertaking a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at COFA, majoring in Drawing and Painting.

Love Lace is an exhibition of winning entries and finalists in the Powerhouse Museum International Lace Award. With 130 works from 20 countries, it is presented as a comprehensive survey of the best contemporary lace practices around. Although lace is traditionally associated with delicate textiles, curator Lindie Ward broadened its definition to include any “openwork structure whose pattern of spaces is as important as the solid areas.” Artists were therefore given licence to produce works from any material, and in any form, generating inspired and paradoxical interpretations of lace.

The space is quiet, etched out by a series of rooms and niches which invite visitors to journey through the labyrinth, making delightful discoveries at every turn. And the works are exquisite! Ranging from traditional to non-traditional materials, and from large-scale pieces to intricately-designed fragments, this exhibition is testament to the scope and expanse of human imagination and ingenuity. Here, lace becomes anything the artist can imagine and create.

The works made from industrial products and techniques which challenge the delicate, feminine connotations of lace are particularly intriguing. Meghan Price’s *Habitat Wave*, for example, is a water-jet cut, powder-coated steel piece which mimics shapes made by intersections between nature and culture — where birds and pedestrians meet perhaps — reminding us of the randomness of the patterns in our own lives. In a provocative marriage between traditional crocheting techniques and non-traditional material and subject matter, the competition’s overall winner, Anne Mondro’s *Detroit’s Shadow*, is a model of the original Ford Model T made from steel and copper wire. It is an homage to the artist’s hometown and other abandoned industrial sites of that era.

The success of the video works is perhaps the biggest surprise in *Love Lace*. Cecilia Heffer and Bert Bongers’ *Interlace* is a work of multiple superimpositions of real lace, digital lace and their shadows. It is a lace environment drawing connections to our own junctures between the real and digital. Gail Kenning’s *Evolutionary Lace* is also noteworthy. It challenges the hand-crafted process which is revered in lace making by designing a program that imitates existing patterns.

Even though these are competition entries, the pieces are in direct and constant dialogue with each other and are an intense investigation into lace; an achievement which is a credit to the curatorial team. The works push the boundaries of what lace can be, while staying faithful to its subtle, yet constant, interplay between positive and negative space. What binds all this together so incessantly is the lighting, which plays a vital role in connecting the works to each other and the visitors. Lighting is utilised masterfully to cast shadows, and thus manipulate structures. Consequently, whole new works and ways of reimagining lace are constructed. Furthermore, one becomes very conscious of the intervention of our selves, transforming visitors into participants in this magical theatre of shadows.

Finally, in this exhibition, lace becomes a metaphor for our coexistence with others, forcing us to consider the ‘lace’ within our own lives. We reflect upon how we take up space, and the positive and negative spaces we have created. The tiny crevices we leave unoccupied reveal as much about who we are as the ‘filled’ spaces do. Love Lace is truly an exhibition which inspires, amazes and delights!

Vi Gargas

Vi graduated from COFA with a combined Bachelor of Art Theory/Arts degree in 2010 and is due to complete her Masters of Art in 2012.
Brown Council’s single channel piece, Appearing Act, is the most engaging video work on offer. In it whimsical costumes undermine a restrained performance as the players simply emerge through a hole sawn in the wall and stand blinking. That nothing happens draws attention to our social requirement of constant action. Sadly, the other video works are weaker. One, an aesthetic triumph of stairs shot from above, lacks conceptual engagement. The other is an unfathomable melee of over-performance and costumes courtesy of Lady Gaga.

A favourite in this space is another Makeshift work, viewed through the barred windows in the gloomy rear of the foyer. Tiny glow-in-the-dark animals are balanced on the moist rock wall, a perfect reminder of our lost fauna. The work is fittingly delicate, bringing ghosts into the light.

Primavera 2011 is an exhilarating exhibition of sophisticated and engaging work by exceptional young artists. It is an unbelievable tragedy that the rollercoaster ride is halted by one barren foyer. We can only hope that the next time the MCA is forced outside, they’re willing to risk the whole ride.

Emiline Forster

Emiline is currently undertaking a Master of Art Administration degree at COFA.

It’s a day of lukewarm sunshine and I am wandering around the Rocks, trying to avoid being jostled by tourists. Two harassed looking Swedes edge into the red phone box in front of me and I glance up to see a quaint little house for possums perched atop the heritage-listed rectangle.

No, it’s not the bizarrely artistic result of drunken revelry. The house belongs to Makeshift (Tessa Zettel and Karl Khoe) and is one of the many satisfyingly subtle works in the MCA’s annual exhibition of young artists, Primavera, which this year ventures outdoors. The show is a smorgasbord of the unexpected.

Makeshift’s wildlife accommodation is not the only work addressing how our cities operate. Down the street a hole in the wall leads to Keg de Souza’s inflatable igloo. Entering the dome of recycled umbrella skins is like falling down the rabbit hole, only to be cleverly yanked back to earth by the beautifully drawn map that brings to light the less savoury histories of the area. Back on the street, further confrontation awaits in the form of Eric Bridgeman’s ludicrously colourful propaganda, which plays on ideas of race in sport. Slip down a side alley for some relief and Tom O’Hern’s straggly metallic cavemen leer down on you from the high windows. It is deliciously overwhelming.

I can’t wait for more and seek out the ‘Main Exhibition Site’, the foyer of the Cleland Bond building. Having successfully convinced visitors to read works in connection to their context, we are suddenly faced with sterility. It doesn’t work, and the generally excellent pieces in this space appear lacklustre by comparison. The exhibition dies here.

Hiromi Tango’s engorged pink womb presents an inviting, if eye-smarting, little hidey-hole. The bobbins, buttons, threads and personal objects woven together make lying inside an intensely personal experience. Opposite and down a little is Rebecca Baumann’s spectacular blue automated colour field, painstakingly cut rectangles in varying shades of blue ticking over randomly like structured melancholy. As much as I love the work, I can’t help but think that it would have been incredible nestled into stones beneath the eave of a building, echoing any rain that fell.

PRIMAVERA 2011

In and around The Rocks

www.mca.com.au

September 8 – November 15, 2011

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## Calendar of Events

### MAY
- **COFA Talks:** 1 May
- **Kudos Gallery:** 1 May
- **COFA Space:** 7 May
- **COFA Talks:** 8 May
- **COFA Space:** 14
- **COFA Talks:** 15 May
- **Kudos Gallery:** 15 May
- **COFA Talks:** 22 May
- **COFA Space:** 28 May
- **Kudos Gallery:** 29 May

### JUNE
- **COFA Space:** 4 June
- **Kudos Gallery:** 5 June
- **Kudos Gallery:** 19 June
- **ILIRI:** 25 June
- **Kudos Gallery:** 26 June

### JULY
- **Kudos Gallery:** 3 July
- **COFA Space:** 9 July
- **Kudos Gallery:** 10 July
- **COFA Space:** 16 July
- **COFA Talks:** 17 July
- **Kudos Gallery:** 17 July
- **COFA Space:** 23 July
- **COFA Talks:** 24 July
- **COFA Space:** 30 July
- **COFA Talks:** 31 July
- **Kudos Gallery:** 28 July

### AUGUST
- **COFA Space:** 6 Aug
- **COFA Talks:** 7 Aug
- **COFA Space:** 13 Aug
- **COFA Talks:** 14 Aug
- **Kudos Gallery:** 14 Aug
- **COFA Space:** 20 Aug
- **COFA Talks:** 21 Aug
- **COFA Space:** 27 Aug
- **COFA Talks:** 28 Aug
- **Kudos Gallery:** 28 Aug

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**COFA Talks**
- COFA lecture theatre: EGO2
- Cnr Oxford St & Greens Rd
- Paddington, NSW
- Hours: Tues 6-8 pm
- [cofa.unsw.edu.au/events/cofa-talks/](cofa.unsw.edu.au/events/cofa-talks/)

**Kudos Gallery**
- 6 Napier St, Paddington, NSW
- Hours: Wed to Fri, 11am – 6pm,
  Sat, 11am – 4pm
- [cofa.unsw.edu.au/galleries/campus-galleries/kudos-gallery/](cofa.unsw.edu.au/galleries/campus-galleries/kudos-gallery/)

**ILIRI**
- COFA
- Cnr Oxford St & Greens Rd
- Paddington, NSW
- [cofa.unsw.edu.au/research/research-units/iliri/](cofa.unsw.edu.au/research/research-units/iliri/)

**COFA Space**
- COFA, E Block, Ground floor
- Cnr Oxford St & Greens Rd
- Paddington, NSW
- Hours: Mon to Fri, 10am – 5pm, Sat 10am – 4pm (special events only)
- [cofa.unsw.edu.au/galleries/campus-galleries/cofaspace/](cofa.unsw.edu.au/galleries/campus-galleries/cofaspace/)