The Power Institute is a dynamic faculty producing a long list of art and film based professionals working in Australia and internationally. The objectives of the Alumni are to encourage the continued interest of Fine Arts Alumni and Friends in the study of fine arts and art historical scholarship as well as to promote knowledge of the visual arts by means of lectures, seminars discussions and tours.

In this sixth edition we keep you in touch with the most recent activities and with the books, catalogues and major articles recently published by Alumni and bring you closer to the Institute where you began your professional life.

We profile a piece from Alumna, Anna Waldmann, formerly Director of Visual Arts at the Australia Council and now a Visiting Fellow at the College of Fine Arts (University of NSW) and National and International Art Advisor at the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation. She reflects on 'soft globalisation' and the history of public funding of art in Australia.

An invitation is extended to all Alumni to send us your news for future editions of our newsletter by emailing Helena Poropat (Power Institute Co-ordinator at power.institute@arts.usyd.edu.au). You might also like to email this address to other Alumni who may not already be aware of the Alumni Association.

Chair Susan Hunt
Power Institute Alumni and Friends Association

Board Members Pamela Bell, Marah Braye, Dinah Dysart, Deborah Edwards, Christine France, Annette Larkin, Jeremy Smith

Class of 1968/69 Reunion

1968 may have seen students taking to the street in Paris and around the world, but for some the additional memory of 1968 was the commencement of their studies in what was then called Fine Arts at the University of Sydney. Thanks to the persistence of Stewart Reed, one of the inaugural students (who was forced to suspend formal studies from 1969 to 2007!), former students from ‘68 and ‘69 gathered last November to mark the celebration of 40 years of the Power Institute of Fine Arts, to swap student memories and harness the many threads of subsequent careers. Of the original staff – teachers Bernard Smith, David Saunders, Donald Brook, Terry Smith and Jocelyn Gray, and librarian Tony Bradley – only Bradley was able to make it to the reunion. Four of the original nine honours students were present, as were artists, art curators, art writers, collection directors, academics, environmental and political activists, plus a student and company director: the usual eclectic mix to emerge from any disciplinary cohort after opportunities, barriers and inspirations have left their mark. One and all were made welcome by current alumni president, Sue Hunt –
even the absent opera impresario (Peter Bloor) now in London – who also urges all alumni not present to send their contacts for the next reunion.

Power Institute Alumni Prize

The winner of the 2008 Power Institute Alumni Prize in Australian Art is Chloe Watson. The $300 prize recognises outstanding achievement in Australian art in the Department of Art History & Film Studies at the University of Sydney.

Honorary Doctorate for Gene Sherman

Professor Roger Benjamin read the citation presenting Dr Gene Sherman, Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, to Pro Chancellor John McCarthy QC for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters, honoris causa, at the Faculty of Arts graduation ceremony held on 7 November 2008. Close family and friends looked on as Professor Benjamin described Gene’s rich contribution to contemporary visual arts in Australia through her 21-year directorship of Sherman Galleries, noting also her key roles as an art adviser, writer of short essays, a public speaker, art prize judge, radio interviewee, and mentor of many emerging curators and art dealers. Mention was made of Gene’s emigration from South Africa to Australia with her family in 1976; her University of Sydney PhD on the writing of André Gide; her generous support of a diversity of arts organisations; and her ten-year term as Vice President of the University’s Power Institute Foundation Council (1996–2006), during which time she distinguished herself as a fundraiser and donor par excellence – assisting with funding the Schaeffer Fine Arts Library and establishing the Sherman Foundation Research Fellowship in Contemporary Art. The citation concluded with reference to Gene’s transformation of her dealership into Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, a non-profit philanthropic entity established in early 2008 as a platform for cutting-edge art from the Asia-Pacific.

Laura Murray Cree
Recent Publications

Alumni and Power Institute Staff

Icons of the Desert. Early Aboriginal Paintings from Papunya
Roger Benjamin, Cornell University Press, 2008

*Icons of the Desert* marks a new stage in the understanding of Aboriginal art. It is the first focussed study of a group of early boards – the founding expressions of Papunya art painted between 1971 and late 1972. International experts bring their scholarship to bear on the aesthetic, cultural and political dimensions of this work, the fountainhead of the historic ‘dot painting’ movement. Analyses of famous works by Clifford Possum and Johnny Warrangula adapting ceremonial imagery to permanent surfaces and unpublished photographs of Pintupi artists at work are among the highlights of this lavishly produced volume.

Twelve Australian Photo Artists
Blair French and Daniel Palmer, Piper Press, 2009

*Twelve Australian Photo Artists* offers a comprehensive survey of the work of twelve artists whose photographic practice has been central to the development of contemporary Australian art: Pat Brassington, Brenda L. Croft, Destiny Deacon, Simryn Gill, Bill Henson, Rosemary Laing, Tracey Moffatt, Debra Phillips, Jacky Redgate, Julie Rrap, David Stephenson and Anne Zahalka. Lavishly illustrated chapters trace the development of each artist’s work from the 1980s to the present, drawing out their key themes, while simultaneously providing insight into the changing conceptions and uses of photography by artists.

On Paper
Lucian Freud, with introduction by Sebastian Smee, essay by Richard Calvocoressi, Random House, 2008

*On Paper* charts the works on paper, including the etchings, over Freud’s entire career. It includes the formative early work, the sketches in preparation for painting his masterpiece, *Large Interior W11 (after Watteau)* (1983), the sketches of the completed painting in the studio and the astonishing later studies of his mother. The book ends with the etchings of recent years. The works on paper are an extraordinary achievement, providing even deeper insights into the work of the greatest figurative artist of our time.

Gallery A Sydney 1964–1983
Editor John Murphy, Campbelltown Arts Centre and Newcastle Region Art Gallery, 2009

This handsome 240-page catalogue documents an exhibition curated by John Murphy to commemorate one of Sydney’s most influential galleries. Contributors of major essays include Power Alumni Christine France and Hannah Fink plus another eight art critics and historians. It is beautifully illustrated with reproductions of the art and contemporary photographs. The exhibition finished at Campbelltown on 3 May but is on display at Newcastle Region Art Gallery from 9 May – 19 July 2009.
Marella: The Hidden Mission
Exhibition catalogue, Penrith Regional Gallery & The Lewers Bequest, 2009

Zona Wilkinson and Anne Loxley have curated an exhibition that tells of the history and experiences of Aboriginal children who were removed from their families to live and work at Marella Aboriginal Mission Farm in western Sydney from 1953 to 1978. Former residents tell their personal stories and paintings and drawings by contemporary Aboriginal artists such as Richard Bell, Harry J. Wedge and Margaret Adams provide moving responses. There are essays by Wilkinson, Loxley and Keith Munro, and colour reproductions of many of the works of art. The exhibition will be at Penrith until 28 June then it tours to Moree Plains Gallery (15 October – 30 November 2009) and to Cowra Regional Art Gallery (6 February – 7 March 2010).

The Men’s Fashion Reader
Peter McNeil, Vicki Karaminas, Berg Publishers, 2009

*The Men’s Fashion Reader* brings together key writings in the history, culture and identity of men’s fashion, with exciting illustrations of men’s dress from a range of historical periods, and including readings from key scholars and new writers across a wide range of fields, *The Men’s Fashion Reader* is the essential introduction to the subject.

Tim Johnson: Painting Ideas
Wayne Tunnicliffe and Julie Ewington, Art Gallery NSW and Queensland Art Gallery, 2009

Tim Johnson has made a significant contribution to Australian art over the last 40 years. Featuring key works from the 1970s to today, *Tim Johnson: Painting Ideas* explores the humanist conceptual project underpinning the artist’s practice, his engagement with Indigenous culture and collaboration, and his search for spiritual meaning influenced by Buddhist and other philosophies. This book is published in association with the major retrospective exhibition organised by the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Queensland Art Gallery. Co-curated by Wayne Tunnicliffe, and Julie Ewington, the book also features contributions by Roger Benjamin, Donna Leslie, Chris McAuliffe and Naomi Flatt.

Recent Alumni Events

Richard Neville: Treasures of the Mitchell Library
6 May 2009

Mitchell Librarian and Alumnus, Richard Neville, led our small group into a back storage room at the State Library of NSW, pulling out racks studded with drawings, portraits and scenes from our recent and colonial past. He gave us background stories on the characters and scenes portrayed, as well as the artists who painted them. With a flourish of the dust cover, Richard revealed the *piece de resistance* of the evening –
Richard Neville revealing the contents of the Macquarie Collector’s Chest

the Macquarie Collector’s Chest. A masterpiece of cabinetry, it houses a fascinating natural history capsule of the landscape, fauna and flora of the Newcastle (NSW) region of the early 1800s. The chest found its way to Strathallen Castle, Scotland upon Governor Macquarie’s retirement. Richard related the fascinating tale of how this one-of-a-kind chest came to be returned to Australia.

Stephen Miller, An Introduction to the Archives of the Art Gallery of NSW
29 October, 2008

Alumni and friends were treated to a diverting and interesting talk from Stephen Miller about the history and scope of the archives at the Art Gallery of NSW. He showed us a range of items and related their sometimes quirky anecdotal histories and how they came to be part of the collection. After the talk we were able closely examine these wonderful treasures at first hand – a rare opportunity!

Events for the Diary

Andrew Sayers: The New National Portrait Gallery
30 June at 6 for 6.30pm
Illustrated talk about the new National Portrait Gallery in Canberra.
Mills Lecture Theatre, RC Mills Bldg, University of Sydney. Cost: $15

Felicity Fenner: 2009 Venice Biennale
28 July at 6 for 6.30pm
Felicity Fenner, curator, will give an illustrated talk on the Australian exhibit at the 2009 Venice Biennale.
Mills Lecture Theatre, RC Mills Bldg, University of Sydney. Cost: $15

Kirk Ambrose (Power Lecture)

Imagining Savage Piety in Romanesque Sculpture
4 August at 6.00pm
An assistant professor at the University of Colorado since 2001, Kirk’s research and teaching interests lie in medieval art and art-historical methodology. His first book, The Nave Sculpture of Vézelay: The Art of Monastic Viewing examines the capitals of

Left to right: Megan Martin, Pamela Bell and Anita Callaway

Left to right: Sue Hunt, Christine France, Catherine De Lorenzo and Stephen Miller

Stephen Miller at the Art Gallery of NSW
this celebrated 12th century site in relation to various aspects of cenobitic culture.
Mills Lecture Theatre, RC Mills Bldg, University of Sydney. (Free)

**Patricia Simons (Power Lecture)**

**15th Century Italian Painting**

25 August at 6.00pm

Dr Patricia Simons is Associate Professor in the Department of the History of Art at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She has published extensively on the representation of gender and sexuality in Italian Renaissance art and on visual constructions of authority and identity.
Mills Lecture Theatre, RC Mills Bldg, University of Sydney. (Free)

**John Kaldor & Tony Bond: The Kaldor Art Projects**

10 September, 6.00pm

Since Christo and Jeanne-Claude created *Wrapped Coast – One Million Square Feet*, Sydney in 1969, Kaldor Public Art Projects has invited many leading international artists to Australia. In a 40-year pioneering tradition, successive influential art projects have played an important role in bringing groundbreaking trends to the Australian public. These events have contributed significantly to changing the understanding of contemporary art in Australia. John Kaldor and Tony Bond will give an introduction to the exhibition which opens at the Art Gallery of NSW on 1 October.
Mills Lecture Theatre, RC Mills Bldg, University of Sydney. (Free)

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**What I’ve Been Doing...**

**ALISON CLARK** (BA Hons, 2001) Several years on and I have traversed the commercial and public gallery sector, arriving in local government to oversee the development of two new art spaces, curate a range of exhibitions, facilitate community art projects and, in general, encourage an engagement with contemporary visual culture in the community. As the Visual Arts Coordinator at Willoughby City Council my key project for 2009 is the inaugural Willoughby Sculpture Prize to be held from 26 September to 5 October. Artists from across Australia were invited to respond to the 2009 theme to *rethink, reduce, reuse, recycle*. 48 works have been selected to be exhibited in the heritage listed Incinerator building and throughout the surrounding parklands of Willoughby, and range from small and finely detailed works to large scale sculptural pieces constructed from a variety of materials. An exciting component of this project will be the launch of the refurbished Walter Burleigh Griffin Incinerator, to be returned to the community as an art gallery and artist studios.

**EMMA COLTON** (BA Hons1, 2004, current PhD candidate) I gained my first art industry experience in the Sydney commercial gallery sector, working for Eva Breuer Art Dealer and Brenda May Gallery, followed by a stint as Art Administrator at Bonhams & Goodman. Having also lectured and tutored at the University of Sydney and the University of Western Sydney, I took up the role of Conservation Assistant at
the Australian National Maritime Museum. Six months later I moved into the Curatorial section, and began working with the museum’s extensive textile collection for an exhibition of swimwear scheduled for mid-2009. In March this year I traded my beautiful harbour views for a carp-infested lake! I now find myself living in our nation’s capital, having taken up a year-long contract at the National Gallery of Australia.

My role as Assistant Curator of Australian Prints and Drawings is funded by the Gordon Darling Graduate Internship program, and is geared towards cultivating young curators. I am currently working on an exhibition of Jessie Traill prints, cataloguing a wonderfully diverse range of contemporary Australian prints, and managing new acquisitions for the department. For the last few years I have also been working on a doctoral thesis examining the work of Arthur Streeton in Cairo, and am very excited to have at my finger tips a collection that includes so many of the works relevant to my study.

**JOYCE EVANS** After completing third year Fine Arts in 1971 I resettled in Melbourne, fell in love with photography, and opened the Church Street photographic centre in Richmond Victoria. This bookshop, gallery and educational centre was the first commercial photographic gallery in Melbourne. It was an exciting time showing the best of Australian, international, 19th and 20th century photography. I met so many icons of this field. Andre Kertesz, Max Dupain, Bill Henson, Fiona Hall, Brett Western, Arnold Newman, Rennie Ellis and David Moore were some of the artists. I also showed some classic greats such as Julia Margaret Cameron, Atget, Berenice Abbott, Paul Strand, Alfred Stieglitz, Karin Szekessy, Henri Cartier Bresson.

With the 1982 depression I found it necessary to close the gallery. I then took up photography. I had my first exhibition at Reality Art Gallery in Toorak in 1986 and have shown consistently since then in commercial and public galleries. I taught history of photography at RMIT for a time. I worked at MGA as an assistant director when it first opened. I went on many scientific and explorative expeditions including a year working with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in Central Australia, and I also recorded country towns and events for the National Library of Australia. I did some commercial work, as well as a major series of portraits both commissioned and freelance.

At this point in my life I am still working as an approved valuer of photographs for the Australian Government’s Cultural Gifts Program. I have done a couple of books, I am a member of Degree South, a co-operative of eight photo journalists, and presently am compiling my work in order to do a book on ‘My Australia’.

I am still exploring Australia and have just come back from a trip to Thursday Island. My life is very rich in experiences and photography has been very rewarding to me.

**HARRIET FESQ** I completed both my BA (Art History and Theory and History) and MA Curatorship (with Merit) at the Department of Art History and Film Studies, from 2001–2004. I have been coordinating the Indigenous art program Durrmu Arts in the Peppimenarti Community, Northern Territory (250km south west of Darwin) since June 2007. The fledgling art centre may be one of the smallest in Australia but has attracted national and international attention due to its fine, considered weaving and painting work. The women artists who make up the program are traditionally weavers
and after the initial introduction to acrylic painting in 2001 have transcribed their weaving designs onto canvas. Senior artist, Regina Pilawuk Wilson, is the most renowned artist at the centre, having won the Telstra National Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Award (General Painting) in 2003. Her work is to be exhibited at the 3rd Moscow Biennale in September this year. More information can be found at the centre’s website: <www.durrmuarts.com.au>.

I also work as a freelance visual arts writer and have contributed to publications such as *Art & Australia*, *Art World* and *Runway*.

GAEL NEWTON is currently Senior Curator of Photography at the National Gallery of Australia. She has been working for the past four years on a history of photography in the Asia-Pacific region. The Gallery’s first project in this long-term program, the exhibition *Picture Paradise: Asia-Pacific Photography 1840s-1940s* was shown in Canberra in 2008 as part of the Vivid Photography Festival.

Her dream for some years has been to write an ‘other world’ history of photography – a history of the medium in our half of the world as opposed to the axis of London – Paris – New York which prevails in so called ‘world’ histories of photography. She says this project has changed her life and sense of identity. ‘Today I think of myself as a citizen of the Asia-Pacific and campaign endlessly for ‘our’ photography history and native born photographers to get the profile they deserve.’


ANN STEPHEN who was recently appointed Senior Curator, University Art Gallery and Art Collection, first arrived at the University of Sydney in 1979, when she enrolled in an MA with the Power Institute. Since then she has curated and published on many aspects of the visual arts including such titles as *The Necessity of Australian Art* with Ian Burn, Nigel Lendon and Charles Merewether, (Power Publications, 1988); and *On Looking at Looking: The Art and Politics of Ian Burn*, (The Miegunyah Press, 2006).

ACAAA marks three years in July

The Australian Centre for Asian Art and Archaeology was founded in mid-2006 with grants from the International Centre for Excellence in Asia-Pacific Studies at ANU and the Faculty of Arts. Its Charter was recently recognized by the University and together with the activities of its Advisory Committee (chairman Dr John Yu), the Centre looks certain to be the pivot for Asian Art and Archaeology-related activities into the future. ACAAA’s Advisory Committee is actively engaged in fund-raising for fellowships and posts, and we are grateful for a donation which will fund the annual Francis Stuart Essay Prize for an essay on Asian art history. From late July the directorship passes to Professor Adrian Vickers, and there are two Deputy Directors, Professor Roland Fletcher, who will look after archaeology, and Dr Thomas Berghuis, who will concentrate generally on art history and on contemporary art activities including seminars and workshops with other institutions.

The Centre brings together a wide range of interests in Asian art and archaeology across the University, and has held a very successful series of seminars which have brought local and national scholars to talk. It has also successfully co-organized the conference on New Approaches to Buddhist Sculpture in China with VisAsia at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, a workshop for Asian, Australian and Australian-Asian artists with Gallery 4A in Sydney, and this year in August will host a workshop on War Art in Asia and the Representation of War with the Humanities Research Institute of ANU.

Through the Dr S. T. Lee Annual Lecture in Asian Art and Archaeology and other funding agencies, ACAAA has brought distinguished art historians to Sydney such as Professor Eugene Wang from Harvard, Dr Annabel Gallop from the British Library, Professor Yin Jinan from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, and recently hosted a lecture by the distinguished Korean artist resident in Japan, Lee Ufan, to talk on his own work. He came here with VisAsia in connection with the exhibition of Korean works from the Musée Guimet in Paris, and his lecture indicates the sort of inter-institutional collaboration which ACAAA will build up. If Power Alumni members, among whom are several curators, would like to suggest possible visitors as speakers, we are only too happy to assist in funding applications and in hosting them at the University.

If you wish for further information, or would like to be put on the electronic mailing list for details of our activities, please contact acaaa.acaaa@usyd.edu.au

John Clark, Director, Centre for Asian Art and Archaeology

Art at the University of Sydney

Collecting Passions: A Century of Modernism from the Home of Justice Roddy Meagher
26 July – 27 September 2009

The history of collecting art in Australia contains few stories as alluring as Roddy Meagher’s – behind the illustrious legal career is a gentle connoisseur passionate for the visual arts who has spent his adult life collecting, since studying Arts at the University of Sydney. Meagher made forays into the birth of modernism through French graphic art from Manet, Toulouse-Lautrec, Bonnard, Rouault and several works each by Matisse and
Picasso, as well as British art of the mid-20th century by Augustus and Gwen John, Gaudier-Breszka, Ben Nicholson, Graham Sutherland, even Lucien Freud. The heart of Meagher’s collecting is a broad range of Sydney modernists from Roland Wakelin, Margaret Preston and nineteen works by Grace Cossington-Smith, to seminal figures of abstraction including the itinerant Ian Fairweather, John Passmore, and Godfrey Miller. Roddy Meagher has now made it his purpose to pass on that passion, through the splendid collection he has long nurtured, to a new generation of Australians.


Forthcoming Exhibitions of Note

Impressionism and Realism: A Landmark Exhibition from the Met
30 May – 20 September 2009
Queensland Art Gallery

The Queensland Art Gallery will be the only venue in the world to show the exhibition American Impressionism and Realism: A Landmark Exhibition from the Met, featuring 71 Impressionist and Realist paintings from the Metropolitan’s collection of American paintings and sculpture. They have never been exhibited together and are unlikely to be lent again as an exhibition.

The exhibition comprises paintings by 34 artists, including leading figures such as Impressionists John Singer Sargent, Childe Hassam, Mary Cassatt and William Merritt Chase, and Realists John Sloan and William Glackens. Also included is a selection of paintings by James McNeill Whistler, Winslow Homer and Thomas Eakins, who flourished around 1900 and influenced both Impressionists and the Realists. Highlighting how Australian artists responded to key artistic developments of the time, more than 30 iconic Australian paintings will also be included by Tom Roberts, Charles Conder, Frederick McCubbin and Rupert Bunny.

Salvador Dalí: Liquid Desire
13 June – 4 October 2009
National Gallery of Victoria

This is the first comprehensive retrospective of the work of Salvador Dalí ever to be staged in Australia. The exhibition is drawn from the holdings of the two largest collections of Dalí in the world: the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí in Figueres, Spain; and the Salvador Dalí Museum in St Petersburg, Florida, USA. Salvador Dalí: Liquid Desire is a kaleidoscopic and panoramic exhibition that will surprise and delight visitors as it explores the life and art of one of the most colourful and influential figures of the twentieth century.

McCubbin: Last Impressions 1907–17
14 August – 1 November 2009
National Gallery of Australia

Frederick McCubbin is one of the foremost Australian Impressionists, most well known for his images of the bush. This exhibition traces the radical changes in his
work after he viewed the works of the European masters JMW Turner and Claude Monet in London. It includes a diverse range of joyous Australian paintings, from the bush to city life, interiors and portraits.

Postcard from Anna Waldmann

After 13 years as director of the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council, I believe more than ever that the sense of dislocation, of personal and cultural shifts, that defines the 21st century can be negotiated through art and artists who have the ability to redefine our parameters by shifting the conventions of national and cultural traditions.

We often speak about ‘soft globalisation’ – it’s what I attempted to do over more than a decade: to place Australian art in a broad international framework through specific strategies, projects and overseas studios. I made sure that our artists were visible in Shanghai, Kassel, Venice, Sao Paolo, Berlin, Istanbul, Liverpool, Gwangju and Yokohama.

The public funding of art in Australia has a long history. From 1855 when £2,000 was voted by the Victorian Government towards the purchase of works of art, to 1927 when the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board was able, for the first time to recommend and support the purchase of works towards a national collection, to early 1973 when Prime Minister Gough Whitlam announced the new Visual and Plastic Arts Board of the Australia Council. Whitlam said at the time: "The greater our public investment in the arts the greater the eventual awards will be".

We share an art scene at a critical point. There is a more entrepreneurial, budget-conscious approach to art, a surge in audience expectations and a growing interest among contemporary artists in modes of expressions which defy traditional spaces and exhibition strategies. We witness the competition for the public or private dollar that leaves little room for choices and differentiation and risk that sometimes overssteps the ethical line and sacrifices freedom in search of sponsorship and popular approval.

Are these changes a response to a seismic shift in the structure of the art world? Will institutions that fail to grow simply wither away? Does expansion threaten the experimental impulse? Do contemporary art spaces mainstream? Do commercial galleries and private museums, free from the restraints of government funding, show potentially controversial art? Do we all move to the unreality of websites, or do we have our exhibitions dictated by the commercial imperatives of our sponsors?

Trying to cross the gap of knowledge and experiences through conferences, exhibitions, residencies and exchanges, we try to match our identities with the rest of the world. We try to make cultural dialogue a reality.

Because art has become a global exchange, there is often a certain kind of generic, contemporary art idiom in operation. The rise and rise of biennales, paralleled by the increase in size, number and power of art fairs and private museums, open up scenarios of cultural relativism, potential disempowering and market imperatives, of events bewildered by their own cultural and artistic identity, of artists and curators becoming cultural entrepreneurs and talent scouts, and transmitters of a zeitgeist.
I know however, that Australian artists are good at questioning, lateral thinking, intellectual risk, creativity and experimentation. Their practice is robust and situates itself strongly within a growing horizon where nationality has in many ways become redundant.

On the whole, when it comes to culture the public do not directly care much about the things that politicians worry about: economic regeneration, social inclusion, healthy communities and the rest. As a recent cultural commentator put it: “What draws people to the arts is not the hope that the experience will make them smarter or more self-disciplined. Instead it is the expectation that encountering a work of art can be a rewarding experience, one that offers them pleasure and emotional stimulation and meaning”.

The engine room of our culture lies in individuals, places and institutions that work with our artists and the public to make sure that all is not lost and forgotten. Claes Oldenburg said in his 1961 poem manifesto I am for an Art: “I am for an art that is political – erotic – mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum”. It’s a heady idea. And hard not to agree with him.

Anna Waldmann was Director of Visual Arts at the Australia Council. She is currently a Visiting Fellow at the College of Fine Arts (University of NSW), National & International Art Adviser at the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation and a member of the editorial advisory board of Art & Australia.

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**Donate**

Donations from as little as $20 will help support the Power Institute Alumni Prize in Australian Art awarded annually to a student of Australian Art History in the Department of Art History & Film Studies. Donations to the Power Institute Alumni & Friends Association, University of Sydney are fully tax deductible. For more details contact the Power Institute.

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**POWER INSTITUTE**

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