Welcome to the fifth issue of the Power Institute Alumni and Friends Association e-newsletter.

Celebrating its 40th anniversary this year 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 Fine Arts Alumni and Friends are to encourage continued interest in the study of fine arts and art historical scholarship through lectures, seminars, discussions and tours.

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

It is well to remember in this anniversary year how much has been achieved by the Department and its Alumni since 1968. Joanna Mendelssohn, who many of you will know from the Master of Art Administration course at the College of Fine Arts, UNSW, has written a very witty piece Student Power and Mince Pies reflecting on the early days of the Department.

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

Recent Alumni Publications

Art: Histories, Theories and Exceptions
Adam Geczy, Berg, Oxford/New York, 2008. RRP $52.95

Art: Histories, Theories and Exceptions explores what art in its broadest sense – from Aboriginal work to the Western art market, from the role of museums to new media interactivity, from the mainstream to the radical – means today. This provocative book will be invaluable to students, practising artists and general readers alike.
Dollar Dreaming: Inside the Aboriginal Art World  
Benjamin Genocchio, Hardie Grant Books, Prahran, 2008. RRP $39.95

Explores how the Aboriginal art movement, born of isolation and deprivation in one of the remotest and harshest places on earth, has in little more than 30 years become a newly minted coin in the international art market, with paintings being exhibited and collected in Paris, Los Angeles and New York.

Goddess Divine Energy  
Edited by Jackie Menzies, Art Gallery New South Wales, 2006. RRP $50

The winner of the 2007 AAANZ Melbourne University Prize for the best large catalogue is Goddess Divine Energy. This magnificent catalogue is the product of an international collaboration spanning several years and involving scholars over many continents. Supported by the Australian Research Council and the Gordon Darling Foundation, this catalogue, and the exhibition that accompanied it are outstanding examples of global scholarly endeavor of the highest international standard. There are many exhibitions and catalogues involving collaboration on this scale but relatively few are the result of initiative originating in Australia.

Richard Larter  
Deborah Hart with essays by Deborah Clark and Joanna Mendelssohn, National Gallery of Australia, 2008. RRP $44.95

Richard Larter recognises and celebrates the work of one of Australia’s most significant and engaging artists and is the first major book on his work. Born in England in 1929, Larter moved to Australia in 1962. His work, which dates from the late 1950s through to the present, is at times audacious and political, at others abstract and lyrical. The book, which includes some one hundred works as well as evocative photographs, confirms the artist’s place as a remarkable colourist, a technical innovator and a painter of radiant luminosity.

Mutant Media: Essays on Cinema, Video Art and New Media  
John Conomos, Power Publications and Artspace, 2008. RRP $42.95

Mutant Media gathers together a selection of John Conomos’ essays across the years, tracking the trajectory of his cinephilia since the 1960s, his ongoing interests in film criticism and theory, as well as his deep involvement in video art and new media since the 1980s.

Modern Times: The Untold Story of Modernism in Australia  
Co-edited by Ann Stephen, Philip Goad and Andrew McNamara, co-published by The Miegunyah Press and the Powerhouse Museum, 2008. RRP $49.95

Richly illustrated and beautifully designed, Modern Times reveals how modernism transformed all aspects of Australian culture across five tumultuous decades from 1917 to 1967. With 25 essays and over 250 illustrations this catalogue accompanies the touring exhibition. (See Ann Stephen’s entry below for more information)
Recent Alumni Events

An Evening at Carriageworks
1 July, 2008

Led by Sue Hunt (CEO, Carriageworks) a group of alumni and friends enjoyed an intimate behind-the-scenes tour of Sydney’s newest contemporary arts and performance complex. The distinctive 19th century industrial architecture of the former Eveleigh rail workshops has been boldly interpreted by Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects to produce a modern space of extraordinary physical beauty. We had the opportunity to see the multi-venue centre with flexible theatre spaces, gallery and exhibition spaces, rehearsal rooms and the scenery workshop. The tour concluded with drinks at the newly opened Anna Schwartz Gallery hosted by gallery manager, Simeon Kronenberg. On view was the gallery’s inaugural exhibition, *MILK* a retrospective of large-scale photographs of Mike Parr’s performance work.

Biennale of Sydney @ Cockatoo Island – Tour with Marah Braye
21 August, 2008

On a late winter’s day, a group of friends and postgraduate students from the Department of Art History & Film Studies caught the crowded little Biennale ferry which plied its way from Circular Quay to Cockatoo Island. There we were given a special tour by Marah Braye (CEO, Biennale of Sydney). It was the first time Cockatoo Island had been used as a venue for the Biennale. Marah showed us highlights from the exhibition, leading us through the industrial heritage buildings of the site, pointing out artworks, and snippets of information about curatorial and logistical challenges faced by Biennale Artistic Director, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, and the artists who had made site-specific works.

What I’ve Been Doing...

KEN BOLTON Since leaving Sydney around 1980 (having tutored in the department in the mid 70s) Ken Bolton has lived in Adelaide where he works at the Experimental Art Foundation, chiefly running the organisation’s bookshop. He has published a good deal of art criticism in various magazines since the late 1980s, including a monograph on the artist *Michelle Nikou* (Wakefield Press, 2005). He has also published many poetry titles (see <http://www.austlit.com/a/bolton-k/index.html> for more detail) and edited the book on poet John Forbes, *Homage To John Forbes* (Brandl & Schlesinger, 2002).

ROBYN CHRISTIE Currently serving my fourth consecutive term as a member of the National Trust Board, I am committed to working with this unique, community based conservation body. My association with the Trust goes back to the early eighties and is intimately connected with my undergraduate degree at the Power Institute. I was fortunate in my final honours year to have Joan Kerr as a supervisor of my thesis. Her work is an extraordinary legacy of scholarship, depth, wit and delight. She also took a keen interest in all her students and mentored them with enthusiasm. Upon finishing
my degree Joan introduced me to Dinah Dysart and I began my career at the National Trust’s S.H. Ervin Gallery. The Julian Ashton exhibition was about to close and the gallery was a vital, new attraction on the Sydney art scene. The AGDC had just dissolved and we had to create virtually every exhibition ourselves. Although there was minimal funding, we enjoyed a close relationship with the Mitchell Library Pictures section and, experiencing few restrictions from the shackles of insurance claims, we managed some extraordinary exhibitions. We proudly assisted and hosted Joan’s Edmund T. Blacket exhibition, a wonderful feat and coalescence of the interests of the Trust and fine arts.

**TONY GEDDES** After 6 years teaching art at high school and Wollongong TAFE, I escaped to the Art Gallery of NSW where I was the education and public programs officer. In this position I also spent a long term as the manager of the NSW Travelling Art Exhibition (a program started by Bernard Smith after WW II). I was fortunate to receive a professional development scholarship in 1988 to conduct research in America. This involved an internship at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York followed by study visits to a number of other art museums across the country, including the Getty in California, the Dallas Museum of Art in Texas and the San Francisco Museum of Contemporary Art.

Not long after I returned to Sydney, I moved to Western Australia to become the Director of the Bunbury Regional Art Galleries. This experience opened my eyes to the vital role played by regional art galleries and museums outside the capital cities. After five years I returned to Sydney to become Curator of Art at UTS, where I also lectured in arts administration. Here I had the opportunity to establish the UTS Art Gallery with firm support from the Vice Chancellor and Chancellor of the day. I also organised and co-curated with Belinda Allen (UNSW) the travelling exhibition *Cinderella’s Gems*, which brought together selected works from the art collections of all universities in NSW. This ground-breaking show opened the vaults for the first time, so that the wider community could see and appreciate the wealth of visual arts contained in these institutions. Not one to remain too long in a single place, I then crossed the Harbour Bridge closer to home to become Director of the newly opened Mosman Art Gallery & Cultural Centre in 1999. Uncharacteristically, I will soon celebrate a decade in the same job, however, I believe I’m now one of a rare breed that has worked in state, regional and university art galleries. Nevertheless, I have yet to experience the world of commercial galleries, so it seems there is still much more to art and life.

**TERRY SMITH** In May 2008 I completed a wonderful year as the GlaxoSmithKlein Senior Fellow at the National Humanities Center, Research Triangle Park, Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, which is dreamland for humanities academics. While there I worked on three major projects, and a number of smaller ones. The big ones were proofing an anthology that I am editing with Okwui Enwezor and Nancy Condee, *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity* (Duke University Press, anticipated October 2008; writing three new chapters and revising manuscript of *What is Contemporary Art?* (University of Chicago Press, anticipated Spring 2009); and writing six chapters of a textbook, *Contemporary Art: World Currents* (London: Laurence King, and New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, anticipated 2010). All this was possible due to the support of the staff and my fellow Fellows in this exceptional retreat.
It was great to be back in Australia during the winter, working on the textbook in the Schaeffer Library, much aided by John Spencer and Peter Wright. I took time out to visit Germany to give the lecture 'Art Against Media; The Early Television Works of Peter Weibel,' at the Zentrum fur Media und Kunst, Karlsruhe, July 2008. This was part of a Digital Arts Edition project – jointly undertaken between ZKM, the iCinema Center at UNSW and my Department at the University of Pittsburgh – that will unfold over the next three years in Sydney and Pittsburgh. In August, at the invitation of Rex Butler, I visited Brisbane where I gave 'Contemporary Art: Paradoxes and Antinomies' as the Daphne Mayo Lecture at the University of Queensland, spoke on 'Architecture After the Aftermath: Dwelling, Worlding' at the Gallery of Modern Art, and participated in a panel discussion at the Institute of Modern Art. It was gratifying to see so many of our graduates active in the Brisbane art scene: they are prominent in art history in all local universities and as curators at GOMA. As well, I gave a Masters seminar on 'Architecture between Spectacle and Use' in the Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney, where I am a Visiting Professor.

More recent news is that I have been elected to the Editorial Board of College Art Association’s Art Journal in the US, and invited to be a member of the founding Advisory Board of the journal World Art, based at the University of East Anglia, UK. With trips to China, New York and St Louis in the offing, the rest of the year should be as exciting as it has been to date.

ANN STEPHEN As curator at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, Ann Stephen’s latest project, with Andrew McNamara and Philip Goad is the exhibition Modern Times. The exhibition reveals how modernism transformed Australian culture across five tumultuous decades from 1917 to 1967. It surveys, for the first time, the impact of modernism across art, design, architecture, advertising, photography, film and fashion in Australia. Spanning a period of major social change – two world wars, the depression and a technological revolution – modernism encapsulated the possibilities of the 20th century, from the ideals of abstraction and functionalism to the romance of high rise cities and the healthy body.


ANNA WALDMANN recently left the Australia Council for the Arts where she was Director of Visual Arts. Before joining the Australia Council she worked at the Art Gallery of NSW and at the NSW Ministry for the Arts. She graduated with an MA in Fine Arts from the University of Sydney in 1988. For more than 20 years she has been actively involved with the development of contemporary art and the presentation of exhibitions, publications, cultural exchanges and public projects for museums and contemporary art spaces at a national and international level. She has undertaken a variety of cultural roles including working with state and regional art galleries, funding agencies and all levels of Government, on policy development, exhibition management, research and publications. Anna has been a member of numerous art and cultural committees, judged competitions and has published books, catalogues and articles on Australian and European art.
As Director of Visual Arts, Anna was involved in numerous international exhibitions and events such as the Australian representation at the Venice Biennale, and the Sao Paulo, Berlin, Liverpool, Kwangju and Istanbul biennales and Documenta. Anna now works as an independent art advisor. <www.annawaldmann.com>

VANESSA WRIGHT Since completing my Fine Arts degree at Sydney University in 1988 I have worked in several industries but during the last ten years I have been working in publishing (as an editor and manager) and am now freelancing from home for several companies (including Harper Collins, an HR consulting firm, Welfare Rights Centre in Sydney, among others).

Art at the University of Sydney

Foresight
19 October 2008 – 25 January 2009

The University of Sydney Union Art Collection began 1913 and now numbers over 650 paintings, photographs, prints, drawings and sculptures by Australian and international artists. The art collection’s policy was formulated to include the works of emerging artists, political art works and indigenous art, as well as maintaining and building upon the historical aspects of the collection. Through judicious purchases and gifts many of Australia’s best known artists entered the collection as emerging artists.

This exhibition showcases some of the best works in the collection, which is now managed by the University Art Gallery. Artists include: Emily Kngwarreye, Shaun Gladwell, Bill Henson, Del Kathryn Barton, Anne Ferran and Michael Riley.

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/museums/whatson/exhibitions/art_current>

Forthcoming Alumni Events

Stephen Miller, An Introduction to the Archives of the Art Gallery of NSW
Wednesday, 29 October, 6.00pm
Meet in the Art Gallery NSW foyer
Cost: $15 / Students free. Bookings essential: 9351 6908

Reunion of the Class of 1968 & 1969
Saturday, 29 November, 2008
A reunion is being held of the first students of Fine Arts at the Power Institute/Department Fine Arts. The celebration is open to anyone who attended classes in those first years.
For details contact: Stewart Reed email: srhm@ozemail.com.au or Joanna Mendelssohn: j.mendelssohn@unsw.edu.au

Spring Back to Sydney Reunion in 2008
Saturday, 8 November
Come and visit our table devoted to Fine Arts Alumni in the Main Quadrangle.
Spring Back to Sydney is a special reunion for alumni who graduated in a year ending in 8. It is a fantastic opportunity to revisit the campus, faculty or college and relive the unique experience with your fellow alumni. All 'eights' graduates and their families are invited to celebrate this wonderful occasion. A full day of festivities, cultural and sporting events and family activities are planned.

Program and bookings at <www.usyd.edu.au/spring_back>

Forthcoming Exhibitions of Note

Namatjira to Now
18 October 2008 – 15 February 2009
Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane

The great Albert Namatjira's adoption of the European medium of watercolour for his landscape paintings remains an inspiration to contemporary artists from Ntaria (Hermannsburg) and surrounding regions of Central Australia. Since the 1930s artists there have been producing vibrant and highly regarded art that has made their country celebrated throughout Australia.

This exhibition will highlight work by Indigenous Australian artists from the Hermannsburg School and will include watercolours (from the original and subsequent generations), ceramics and acrylic paintings on canvas.

Andreas Gursky
National Gallery of Victoria
November 2008

Hans Heysen
Art Gallery South Australia, Adelaide
14 November – 8 February 2009

Curated by Rebecca Andrews, Assistant Curator of Australian Art, this timely exhibition will be the first comprehensive survey of Sir Hans Heysen's work, since the Gallery's own centenary retrospective of 1977. It will mark eighty years since the public was first introduced to Heysen's pivotal Flinders Ranges landscapes in 1928, and also commemorates the 40th anniversary of the artist's death.
**Hans Heysen** will tour nationally to the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery (VIC), Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery (TAS), National Gallery of Australia (ACT), Queensland Art Gallery (QLD) until late 2010.


**Degas: Master of French Art**

12 December 2008 – 22 March 2009
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Tickets now available for purchase online

For the first time ever in Australia, audiences will have the opportunity to see an exhibition on one of the most important and admired Impressionist artists – Edgar Degas (France 1834–1917). Presenting an extensive and thorough examination of Degas’ painting, sculpture, drawing, monotypes and prints, the exhibition will highlight his role as a key figure in the development towards modern art. 

*Degas* traces the evolution of the artist’s style from finely crafted paintings to exuberant canvases with brilliant palettes and loose brushwork. The exhibition will also showcase works from Degas’ favoured subject matter – the ballet, the race-course, the café-concerts, milliners, laundresses, brothel scenes and bathers.


**Postcard from the Past**

**Joanna Mendelssohn: Student Power & Mince Pies**

It seems to be the season for remembering 1968, that year of student revolutions and radical change. Feature articles in magazines focus on liberated attitudes, music, drugs and politics. But for those interested in art, there is another reason to honour 1968, for that was when the academic discipline of art history (then called Fine Arts) was first taught to undergraduates at the University of Sydney. Without the ongoing base of teaching, learning and research in the field that flowed from that initiative I doubt if we would now have the lively culture of art exhibitions, publications and scholarship that so informs Sydney and its environs.

Art history was never a part of the original agenda for Australian universities. Their original liberal arts were confined to music and literature, but in 1946 Keith and Elisabeth Murdoch established the Herald Chair of Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne. Then in 1961 the University of Sydney discovered that John Wardell Power, a long time expatriate, had left his estate to the university to teach ‘the latest ideas and theories in the plastic arts’. Although elements in the university’s Philosophy department strenuously resisted such frivolity, by 1968 there was a professor, lecturers, postgraduate students, and a hoard of eager undergraduates.

It is only now, forty years later, that I realise how the way this fledgling department regarded its students has shaped my own approach to teaching. Because the implementation of the Power Bequest had been delayed, and because the formal teaching of art history had been confined to another state, there was a hunger for the discipline. Many older students, and even graduates, came to first year lectures. As a result of this our Fine Arts tutorials and lectures had a completely different atmosphere from
the rest of the university’s first year courses which were all jam-packed with school leavers. Indeed in 1968 the academic staff were so interested in their colleagues’ activities that they all regularly attended the mass lectures. Their interest understandably waned in later years.

Bernard Smith, Donald Brook, David Saunders and others actively encouraged first years to become involved in external lectures, special events, and social events. We were there for the visiting American critic Clement Greenberg’s first Power Lecture and also for smaller events, equally important. And so through Fine Arts, but not through my other university activities, I came to understand the surprising different backgrounds of some of my fellow students. Most importantly Kate Smith, Bernard’s wife, invited undergraduate students to their house in Glebe for Christmas drinks with mince pies that she made herself. This humanity was the opposite of the modern corporate model university. Years later, when family circumstances kept me at home on weekends, I would host barbecues at my house for masters students, and think of Kate.

Perhaps it was that sense of community that enabled us to survive the crisis two years later. At the beginning of 1970 there was no one to teach the scheduled third year course on the European Baroque. Students were asked if we would accept a series of random assorted guest lecturers and organise our own tutorials based on Wittkower’s *Art and Architecture in Italy* until the problem was solved. These tutorials were totally organised and taught by students, working our way through the book, chapter by chapter, organising our own slides and writing our own mini-lectures without any academic staff supervision. Any modern university that treated its students like this would be open to litigation, yet the group I was in was ably led by a combination of the ardent Trotskyist Gavin Gatenby and Catherine De Lorenzo, who now lectures at UNSW. ‘We took ownership of our own learning and thus were well placed to appreciate nuance and style’, Catherine remembers. Because we’d been placed in a position where students were given collaborative decision making responsibilities we came out of our degrees with both an understanding of our real worth, and an expectation that others could also contribute.

We also learnt scepticism. After our 17th century specialist, the colourful Anton Wilhelm from Liechtenstein, finally arrived half-way through the year he treated us to a wide-eyed European response to life in the Antipodes. I remember with joy his tutorial conducted in the saleroom of a visiting British art dealer. ‘Why is this painting a fake?’ he asked us, loudly, about a purported Van Dyke. We had to give the precise reasons by brush stroke, composition and colour. The furious London dealers did not intervene, but I don’t think future classes were made so welcome.

Out of this rich but chaotic experience came a life-long love of art and scholarship. A surprisingly large number of students from those early under resourced years became professional art historians, curators, writers, and art dealers. Maybe it is time to reconsider the modular corporate ways of the modern university. While it is probably not a good idea to give a gaggle of students a book or two, throw them in the deep end to learn from each other, there is a case to be made for giving students more ownership of their learning, to encourage them to collectively learn from each other. And as well as formal consultations we could aim to support students with dinners, drinks and mince pies at Christmas.

This article was published in ‘Unleashed’, 28 August, 2008

<http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/stories/s2349856.htm>