SLAMmag is the electronic magazine of the School of Literature, Art & Media (SLAM) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, providing updates on the activities of the School and celebrating our research and teaching achievements.

In this issue:
- Head of School welcome
- School news and events
- Student news
- Department news and events
Midway through second semester, we are in the thick of undergraduate curriculum transformation. With tight deadlines and some uncertain coordinates in the broader environment, this has been - and will no doubt continue to be - a demanding undertaking. Under these circumstances, I have been particularly appreciative of colleagues’ ability to keep in touch with the positive pedagogic potential of this whole-of-institution initiative and to turn their collective energies to enhancing the student learning experience in their disciplines. As each of our majors and minors are comprehensively refreshed for delivery in 2018, we are seeing some creative and enterprising curricular innovations emerging.

This was very evident in the performance of SLAM colleagues in the first round of the Strategic Education Grants Scheme. More than 100 applications were assessed across the University with only 29 funded. Jonathon Hutchinson (MECO) led a successful team in the Open Learning Environment (OLE) category and Nick Enfield (Linguistics), Huw Griffiths (English) and Penny O’Donnell (MECO) led successful teams in the Educational Innovation Grants category. Across these four projects, we secured nearly $130,000 of funding, which is approximately 75% of the total FASS allocation. This sets us up well in terms of resourcing our undergraduate curriculum transformation across 2016 and 2017 for 2018.

I thank everybody - academic and professional colleagues - for working productively together on the biggest curriculum transformation project Sydney has ever undertaken.
I'm delighted to join the English Department after teaching at the Université Paris 8 since 2009. As an ARC DECRA Fellow I am working on a project that studies how Samuel Beckett’s bilingual oeuvre engages in a subversive dialogue with the literary traditions of the English and French languages. Specifically, I am attempting to prove that he appropriated and deformed French texts from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, and that this material and its dialogue with tradition is reconfigured when Beckett translates himself into English. The aim is to account for how he employs bilingualism as a method to decolonise language and challenge orthodoxies of national literary traditions and the aesthetics of first generation modernists.

I also work in the field of translation studies, focusing on how different models of authority play out in scenes of translation - I've edited collections on self-translation, collaborative translation, and genetic translation studies.

Otherwise, my four year old daughter and ten month old baby girl keep me busy and help me from taking myself too seriously.
Some highlights in the creative writing area included these Department of English student achievements: Mark Roberts, a Master of Creative Writing student, won the 2016 Byron Bay Poetry Prize which was awarded at the Byron Bay Writers Festival (5-7 August 2016). Toby Fitch has just been awarded his DArts and also released a poetry collection with Vagabond Books (April 2016). Doctoral student Mark Peart has had poems published in Rabbit journal (June 2016).

The Medieval and Early Modern Centre congratulates Samantha Leggett - who has been a strong participant in Centre activities - for the award of a Cambridge Trust scholarship to complete her PhD at Cambridge. We wish Sam every success in this new step in her studies.

Congratulations to Anya Beyersdorf, one of David Kelly’s Doctor of Creative Arts students, who won a global Lexus Short Film fellowship in June.

Nien Cheng, PhD student in the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, attended the XIXth International Oral History Association Conference in Bengaluru, India, speaking on the topic “Don’t try this at home: oral history as performance in Singapore”; and Janet McGaw, recent PhD graduate, presented a paper entitled, “An End to ‘Them’ and ‘Us’: the Boom Years of Broken Hill Repertory Society, 1960-1965”, to the Australian Historical Association Conference, “From Boom to Bust”, in Ballarat.

Raphael Lataster, Postgraduate Teaching Fellow in the Department of Studies in Religion, has just covered FASS in glory in the inter-faculty rock-climbing event. He says: "Fantastic news! I had the honour of representing my beloved FASS in the rock-climbing event of the interfaculty competition. I brought a rock climbing buddy (Jemma) along for support, and… I was best male, Jemma was best female, and we took home the gold for Team FASS".
A highlight for us all in the department this semester is the exhibition, *Floating Time*, curated by department colleague Stephen Whiteman, Minerva Inwald, an Honours graduate of the department and a current PhD in History, and Bingqing Wei, a PhD student in the department. The exhibition, running from 1 August to 25 November, focuses on Chinese prints of the Post-Mao era and is a wonderful example of how staff, students and museum collections and curators can collaborate to great and original effect. The exhibition is accompanied by a substantial book, and we congratulate them all. Stephen and his co-curators talk about the show on *Books and Arts*.

We also look forward to the September opening of Roger Benjamin's exhibition at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, a project that grows out of Roger's expertise and interest in the Maghreb and cultural crossings between the French and Arab worlds.

We have been hosting some distinguished guests in recent months, including Claire Goldstein of UC Davis, who gave a Power talk on Astronomy and Louis XIV, co-presented a lecture with Mark de Vitis and then participated in a lively afternoon symposium on histories and theories of dress and costume organised by Mark and including papers on farthingales and prison dress.

We were also delighted to host Dessa Goddard, Director of Asian Art at Bonhams worldwide, who gave a talk on collecting Asian art, co-taught with Stephen Whiteman, appraised the University’s art collection and found time for an informal Q and A lunch with Masters students.

The Photography Ontology Symposium, presented by Sydney Ideas, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, SLAM, the School of Language and Cultures and the Power Institute, was held in June, with keynote speakers Professor Andres Zervigon (Rutgers) and Professor Shawn Michelle Smith (SAIC Chicago). The symposium was organised by the Photographic Cultures Research Group and Art and the Document (Sydney College of the Arts) with conveners Donna West Brett, Natalya Lusty, Martine Antle, Giorgia Alu and John Di Stefano. Podcasts are now available.

Colleagues have been very busy at major conferences. Cat Moore is speaking at the Quadrennial “gathering of the clans” of art history, CIHA, being held in Beijing. Many departmental colleagues, including Jennifer Milam and Mark Ledbury, and former students will be in Melbourne in early September for the conference Humans Kind, organised by the University of Melbourne, School of Culture and Communication, and the National Gallery of Victoria. We are delighted that two keynotes from that conference, David Solkin and Mark Hallett, will be in Sydney for a Power Lecture in September.

Also visiting for Power talks in the coming months are Tamar Garb, Rachael de Lue and Frédéric Ogée, and we are preparing to host a symposium in November celebrating 20 years of 4A. We have long collaborated with this innovative Asian art space, and we're convening a lively event to mark their highly successful first 20 years.

Film Studies colleagues have been involved in a number of conferences, symposia and events and one highlight is Bruce Isaacs’ new monthly series “Close-up: Rewatching Film Classics” for *The Conversation*, which he kicked off recently with his take on Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*.
2016 is the Sydney Intellectual History Network’s third year of collaborative research programming, much of which involves scholars from within SLAM. Launched in 2013, SIHN was originally formed to rethink the disciplinary focus of intellectual history and to draw on multi-disciplinary expertise to consider how ideas from the past impact thinking in the present. Over the past year, the network has taken a special interest in the study of the Enlightenment and future activities will focus in this area. We welcome input and participation from researchers within SLAM with interests pertaining to Enlightenment thought.

A number of early career researchers from SLAM are actively involved in leading SIHN’s activities. Olivia Murphy organised the symposium Romantic Climates in March of this year and Jessica Hamel-Akré, a SLAM visiting research student, presented her research in the SIHN sponsored symposium Then and Now, organised by Ursula Potter. Olivia, Jessica and Ursula also contribute to regular meetings of SIHN’s Long Eighteenth-Century Reading Group led by Amelia Dale and Elias Greig. This year they have put together a program involving young scholars from English literature, art and garden history, and historical studies who come not only from the University of Sydney, but also from Macquarie, UTS and Monash. Although involving disciplines based outside of SLAM, SIHN welcomes your interaction with our two 2016 Scholars-in-Residence, Professor Robert Stern (Philosophy, University of Sheffield) and Professor Lino Pertile (Italian Studies, Harvard).

Forthcoming SIHN workshops will explore questions of The Ethical Demand, Dignity, and Periodisation. Sparked by the FCRS group led by SIHN members Nicola Parsons and Huw Griffiths, the Periodisation workshop is organised by Amelia and Elias, and will bring together researchers from literary studies, philosophy, art history, cultural studies, and intellectual history based at the University of Sydney, UTS, the University of Melbourne, the National Art School, and Southern Cross University.

SLAM scholars in Studies in Religion and English may be interested in hearing Sophie Gee (Princeton) talk about her research into Daniel Defoe in the SIHN seminar Sacrifice and Revelation.

For the details of these and other events, please check our webpages and sign up for our notices.
The Celtic Studies programme continues to flourish, providing the opportunity for students to take a range of historical, literary, and linguistic units in the field. Recent generous endowments support teaching of Celtic languages. The generosity of Mr Warwick Grigor has made possible the ongoing provision of Scottish Gaelic units, while a gift from Mrs Rosemary Samios allows the opportunity for senior undergraduates to make further study of Gaelic in Scotland.

The main activity for the Celtic Studies programme in second semester is the Ninth Australian Conference of Celtic Studies. The conference will take place at the University of Sydney, from Tuesday 27 to Friday 30 September 2016.

The theme of the conference is 'Memory and Foresight in the Celtic World' with some 36 scholarly presentations on aspects of this theme, or on other topics in the field of Celtic Studies.

Keynote lectures are by Professor Will Christie (Australian National University), Professor Cairns Craig (University of Aberdeen, Scotland), Dr Tomás Ó Carragáin (University College Cork, Ireland), and Professor Cynthia Neville (Dalhousie University, Canada). There is also a public lecture by Dr Martin Goldberg from the National Museums of Scotland.

For all details see the conference circular.

Two themed sessions are also offered. One of these concerns the theme of penance and prophecy in the thought of Gildas, the notable early-British writer. A second themed session concerns a notable event in early Scottish history, the expulsion of the Columban monks by King Nechtan in AD 717.

The conference benefits from generosity arising from many sources, including the Faculty of Arts of the University of Sydney, Humanities Research Centre (ANU), Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Scottish-Australian Heritage Council, Sydney Society for Scottish History, and many private donors. The hard work of the organising committee - Lorna Barrow, Sybil Jack, Suzanne Jamieson, Pamela O'Neill and Lynette Olson - is also very gratefully acknowledged.

Details on registration for the conference can be found here.
In July and August the Department of English welcomed ARC DECRA Dr Anthony Cordingley and new continuing member of staff Dr Fiona Lee. Anthony brings a specialty in Beckett and translation studies and Fiona adds her expertise in Southeast Asian literature to the department’s growing investment in world literatures in English. See the ‘New faces’ feature in this edition of SLAMmag for more on Anthony and see issue 03 of SLAMmag (Spring 2015) for more on Fiona.

Professor Paul Giles continued the world literatures theme by participating in the Institute for World Literature Summer School at Harvard University in July. This prestigious annual program brings together experts in the field from around the globe to deliver seminars and lectures.

During the mid-semester break, Dr Peter Minter presented a Creative Writing Masterclass entitled ‘Decolonising Ecopoetics’ at the J.M. Coetzee Centre for Creative Practice, University of Adelaide, and edited ‘Decolonisation and Geopoetics’, a new issue of Plumwood Mountain, an Australian peer-reviewed ecopoetics journal named after the distinguished Australian feminist and environmental ethicist Val Plumwood.

Congratulations to Dr Huw Griffiths who, along with Education and Social Work colleagues Drs Jen Scott Curwood and Alison O’Grady, has been awarded a large Education Innovation Grant for “‘Words make things Happen’: Transforming Shakespeare in the English Curriculum’. This project will develop collaborative and professionally relevant approaches to Shakespeare pedagogy within the unit of study ‘ENGL2640 Shakespeare’ in 2017 involving BA/BEd students. It will be a pilot study for later development of a project-based unit.
The interdisciplinary research group, ‘Urban Expansion and Densification: Perspectives from the Humanities and Social Sciences’ (FASS SSSHARC) has been meeting regularly this year to hear papers based on the projects of individual group members. On 17 August it was the turn of Dr Brigid Rooney who shared ideas from her book project, ‘Retro-suburbia: the novel and the suburb in Australia 1900 to the present’, with colleagues from History, Archaeology, Gender and Cultural Studies and Anthropology.

Associate Professor Mark Byron was Visiting Professor at Ferris University in Yokohama, Japan in first semester. He taught a wide range of subjects including American poetry, Australian literature and film, and East-West aesthetics. During his time in Japan Mark also participated in a symposium in Beijing jointly held by the Australian Academy of the Humanities and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and gave eight other conference papers and public lectures.

Recent publications

Nick Enfield and Gwen Hyslop received a $35,000 grant from the University for the development of an “Online Core Linguistics Resource” project, aka “OCuLaR”. This innovation will develop an online resource for linguistics students to master the core of the discipline through an adaptive learning resource of linguistic ‘problem sets’. 100 sets will be developed for use in learning the core analytic tools of linguistics in first and second year. The resource, which will be implemented through flexible online teaching software, will have a reach of 550 students per year.

Gwen Hyslop presented a poster (with Sarah Plane) at the 15th Conference on Laboratory Phonology at Cornell on 16 July.

Gwen is a visiting researcher at the Department of Linguistics, UW Madison, for the rest of 2016.

Monika Bednarek gave invited guest lectures at the University of Basel, Switzerland (“‘Bad’ language and characterisation in televisual conversations’) and at the University of Giessen, Germany (“‘Wicked’ women in contemporary pop culture”). She is now back in Sydney after completing her fellowship at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (Germany). Monika would be happy to chat to anyone interested in applying for a fellowship at the institute.

Monika also recently joined the editorial advisory board for the John Benjamins book series Studies in Corpus Linguistics and published the following co-authored work:


Recent publications


**Myfany Turpin** is a linguist who was recently appointed at the Conservatorium of Music in the context of her ARC Future Fellowship on central Australian song. For the time being, she has an office in the Department of Linguistics.

Myf has been in central Australia working on Aboriginal song-poetry at Willowra with linguist Mary Laughren; and at Balgo and Billiluna with linguists Felicity Meakins and Tom Ennever (University of Queensland). She has also been working with Kaytetye speakers on a phonology project with Mike Proctor and PhD student Forrest Panther. Myfany and Linda Barwick have also commenced an ARC Linkage project to improve community access to digital cultural records in partnership with the Central Land Council, which involves documenting legacy recordings.

Cultural Media Project team (ARC Linkage grant) with their first box of legacy recordings: Myfany Turpin, Jenny Green (Melbourne University), Anna Yeo and Brian Connelly (Central Land Council), Linda Barwick (Sydney University), Rachel Nordlinger (Melbourne University) and Petronella Vaarzon-Morel (Sydney University).
Maïa Ponsonnet recently visited the Aboriginal communities she works with in the Northern Territory during two successful field trips, one in June and one in July. In June, she joined a small team (two other linguists and a photographer) taking part in a “culture camp” organised by the Mimal rangers around the Dalabon language in Arnhem Land. Among other activities were language workshops on landscape and season vocabulary, as well as a small, public ceremony.

Maïa then went to the Northern Territory again in July to collect data for her DECRA project on the language of emotions in Bininj Gun-wok, Jawoyn and Rembarrnga, three other languages spoken in the Top End in the Katherine region.
Ahmar Mahboob was a Visiting Professor at Central Escolar University, Manila, from 4 to 24 July. During his stay in Manila, he also gave a talk for the Linguistics Society of the Philippines, De La Salle University, Far Eastern University and National University.

In July Jim Martin gave the opening plenary address at the 43rd International Systemic Functional Congress, held at the Indonesia University of Education in Bandung. Jim’s address focused on the challenges of adapting the principles of literacy curriculum and pedagogy of the ‘Sydney School’ to the Indonesian context, where these genre-based programs have been adopted for language teaching across sectors (including the teaching of the national language Bahasa Indonesia, English, and the nation’s 700 other languages).
Student learning about social media is the big winner, following a $70K windfall for the Department of Media and Communications (MECO) in the first round of the 2016 Strategic Education Grants, announced in late August.

The two projects to receive funding draw on MECO’s expertise in digital cultures and digital media research, and are designed to keep the department’s educational offering attuned to trends in industry, policy and professional work, particularly the social media paradigm-shift.

Dr Penny O’Donnell’s Education Innovation project aims to significantly transform the first year learning experience using flipped classroom techniques, tools and technologies. Penny will work with Dr Kathy Cleland (Digital Cultures), Philip Glen (Digital Media Unit) and Lucy Watson (MECO) to create a suite of 16 quality learning resources to support student-led learning in MECO1002 Media and Communications Landscapes. The broader aim of this pilot project is to enhance professional learning about the theory and practice of student-led learning.

Dr Jonathon Hutchinson’s Open Learning Environment (OLE) project aims to provide undergraduate students from any faculty across the University with the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills in social media design and use. Jonathon is leading a team of educational experts — Susan Atkinson, Philip Glen, Tom Cavdarovski, and Jonathan Hunter — in the design and evaluation of a new 6-credit point undergraduate social media communication course. The OLE will draw on the affordances of the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) model, while also providing student access to up-to-date local expertise to support and enhance their learning.

The projects will be completed in time for Semester 2, 2017.

Recent publications
Following the success of our hosting of the Australian Early Medieval Association (AEMA) Conference (11-12 February) and Postgraduate Advanced Training Seminar ‘The Manuscript Book’ (9-10 February), the main focus of the Medieval and Early Modern Centre in the period since February was the quinquennial review of the Centre. As this was the first full review since changing from Centre for Medieval Studies to Medieval and Early Modern Centre, it was demanding in terms of preparation. The review praised the interdisciplinary strength of both the makeup and the activities of the Centre, as well as the extent to which its conference/workshop activities have promoted a strong regional profile. The review also offered helpful advice on directions for the future. Our thanks to all members who contributed to the successful navigation through the review.

The Centre, both as a financial sponsor and through its individual members, contributed substantially to the ‘Cultures of Modernities in the Pre-Modern and Early Modern Period’ conference (15-18 June) organised by the Global Middle Ages Faculty Research Group. Congratulations to our colleagues Sahar Amer and Hélène Sirantoine for their leadership of this exciting event.

Dr Tarrin Wills (formerly of the Department of English) has moved to the Department of Nordic Studies and Linguistics, University of Copenhagen, to continue his work on Old Icelandic literature. During his time in Sydney, Tarrin was a tireless organiser of activities related to the Centre and will be greatly missed.

In September we are glad to welcome Dr John McNicol of the Institutt for Arkeologi, Konservering og Historie at the University of Oslo as a visiting scholar.

The management of the Centre has recently seen changes. Dr Juanita Ruys has stepped down from the board to be replaced by Dr Jan Shaw (English) and Dr Hélène Sirantoine (History) has also joined. Professor Jonathan Wooding, having seen the Centre through its review, also will shortly step down as Director. Associate Professor Daniel Anlezark (English) will take over as Director from 3 October.
Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Foundation of Studies in Religion

In 1976 the department of Religious Studies was established at the University of Sydney. This innovation resulted from the then Vice-Chancellor, Sir Bruce Williams, and Chancellor, Sir Hermann Black, sharing a deep and abiding interest in the academic study of religion. In 1976 the Foundation Professor, Eric J. Sharpe (of the University of Lancaster) was appointed, and in 1977 the first lecturer in the department, Garry W. Trompf, was employed. The department was first located at Harper House in the grounds of St Andrew’s College, then moved to the Griffith Taylor Building, before arriving at its present home in the John Woolley Building in 1991. In that year the Board of Studies in Divinity was amalgamated with the Department of Religious Studies to form the School of Studies in Religion. This body reverted to departmental status when the current school system of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences was inaugurated.

To celebrate forty years of Studies in Religion, the department hosted a reception and occasional address on 25 August in the Woolley Common Room. There were various speakers before the address by Emeritus Professor Terry Lovat (University of Newcastle), Professor Annamarie Jagose, Head of the School of Literature, Arts and Media, honoured the traditional owners of the land upon which the Woolley Building stands, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and graciously welcomed the guests. Professor Eric J. Sharpe retired in 1996, the 20th anniversary of the department. His widow, Birgitta Sharpe, shared her memories of their adventure in moving to Australia, a place that they knew little about but came to love, and reminisced about the friendly scholars who welcomed them to the University, such as Dr Hugh Cairns of St Andrew’s College, and Professor Ken Cable, who chaired the Divinity Board. Emeritus Professor Garry W. Trompf, who introduced Terry Lovat, reflected on the colleagues that he had worked alongside over his 39 years in the department.

Terry Lovat, a graduate of the department, delivered a lecture, “Studies in Religion and Theology: The Dream From Which We Always Wake Too Early!”. He argued that the academic study of religion has the capacity to engage with varied theologies and to assist in rendering religious beliefs and practices intelligible, an essential factor in the maintenance of civil society in modern multi-ethnic, multi-faith communities. The lecture was well-attended, with friends, current and former students of the department in evidence, together with academic colleagues from a number of institutions. Afterwards, there was a dinner at Yuga restaurant, Glebe, at which Dr Alex Norman (Western Sydney University), a graduate of Studies in Religion, gave a brief speech and proposed a toast to the successful future of the department. We are now in happy anticipation of the fiftieth anniversary of the department in 2026.

Departmental Seminars

The Department of Studies in Religion runs regular research seminars for staff and graduate students. The presentations to date in Semester 2 were:


16 August: Jay Johnston: “Rewilding Religion: Badger Aesthetics”
I have very much enjoyed the opportunity to concentrate on a number of related research projects and publications. The edition of a massive (500 page!) papyrus codex in Coptic from ca. 400 CE is nearing completion. Publication has been agreed with EJ Brill of Leiden for four fascicles, the first to be published next year. This unique work is held in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin; it contains entirely unexpected and detailed information about Indian and Iranian religions circulated in Egypt in Late Antiquity. It also records early biographical material about Mani (founder of Manichaeism) and accounts of religious debates between sages held in the Sasanian courts of the third century, together with vital historical information about the Persian dynasty and its culture. This has enabled me to make substantial revisions to the standard accounts and I was pleased to present some of the first outcomes of this as the Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion at the start of June (School of Oriental and African Studies, London).

In between historiographical and textual work I have amused myself with attempting to unravel details of early medieval magical papyri in Egypt, including numerous spells, codes and a wealth of arcane lore. Much of this material stands as a direct antecedent to texts such as the Picatrix that were so influential on the development of esotericism and the occult sciences into the Renaissance. For example see the adjacent image of a tenth-century parchment.
Jay Johnston reports on her current research

As noted in issue 04 of SLAMmag my recent SSP leave enabled the project Lived Belief: Prehistoric ‘Religion’ and Its Antiquarian Spirit to advance in leaps and hops. In addition to this Cornish, Scottish and Scandinavian archival adventure I have continued to romp in the areas of aesthetics of religion and material culture and religion. To my immense delight several years ago I was adopted as an international member by the research group AESToR.NET: Aesthetics of Religion, funded by the German Research Fund (DFG). The flagship volume, designed to introduce this paradigm to Anglophone audiences, is on track for publication in 2017 (unfortunately not in time for Christmas stocking filler, but perhaps a nifty Valentine’s gift!): A. Grieser and J. Johnston, (eds.). The Sensory Sacred: Aesthetics as a Connective Concept for the Study of Religion (de Gruyter, forthcoming 2017). Various other shorter endeavours have been flung in different directions, including “Objects and Ancient Religions”, Religion: Oxford Research Encyclopedias, and “Binding Images: The Contemporary Legacy and Efficacy of Late Antique Ritual Sigils, Spirit-Beings and Design Elements” in New Antiquities: Transformations of Ancient Religion in the New Age and Beyond, eds. D. M. Burns and A. Renge.

On a final note, publication in October of “Enchanted Sight/Site: An Esoteric Aesthetics of Image and Experience” will bring joy unbound, as it is one of those ‘sleeper submissions’ reviewed and accepted, but the volume to which it belongs takes unexpected years until its entire content is set to the editors’ satisfaction. I’ve been waiting, waiting. When it finally arrives it’ll be classed category J4: research ‘output’ deserving of celebratory snifter.

Boscawen-un stone circle, west Cornwall, UK. Image courtesy Jay Johnston
In his capacity as President of ADSA, Glen McGillivray attended the 2016 annual conference of the organisation. Held in the southern Queensland regional city of Toowoomba, the conference examined the theme of “Resilience: Revive, Restore, Reconnect”.

Our department was well-represented at the conference. Mark Seton, Honorary Associate with the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies (TaPS), presented a paper titled “Relationship Stress in Performing Arts” based on the work he has been doing with Ian Maxwell on actors’ wellbeing; Paul Dwyer presented a paper “Acting with Integrity: Applied theatre workshops in medical training” based on a pilot project he ran with the Sydney Medical School; and TaPS postgraduate student, Jeremy Johnston, presented on his work on Jerzy Grotowski and Peter Brook in Australia. Departmental Chair, Laura Ginters, was a judge for the Rob Jordan book prize for the best book on a subject related to drama or theatre studies by an ADSA member, which this year had a record seven entries.
Scenes of the Real Symposium (July)

In late July, Ian Maxwell convened “Scenes of the Real: In between and across: mediating realit(y)ies in performance and performance ethnography”, a symposium keynoted by Professor Richard Schechner of NYU. Professor Schechner is recognised as the founding figure in Performance Studies, and TaPS was honoured by his willingness to share his work and insights in an intimate setting. Registrations for the event were limited to 30 participants, and drew participants and presenters from the University of Sydney, UNSW, the University of Wollongong, Deakin University, Monash University, Charles Sturt University, Macquarie University, the National Art School and the University of Canberra.

Unfortunately, a fortnight prior to the event, Professor Schechner was advised not to travel by his cardiologist. Undaunted, all participants, speakers and presenters decided to proceed with the event; Professor Schechner was able to Skype into the symposium from his New York office, generously spending 70 minutes with the group in a warm, collegial and engaging session.

Over the following two days, presentations interrogated the boundaries, tensions, and potentials engendered by the encounter between performance practice, theory, and ethnography, ranging in form from conventional scholarly papers through to readings of creative work in development and an artists’ talk about work currently being exhibited at the Sydney College of the Arts.

In early November, Ian Maxwell will be convening another symposium, titled “10 Questions about the Australian Theatrical Avant-Garde”, which will raise questions about the impact of European and North American theatrical modernism from the late 1960s into the 1980s.

Other conferences

In a visit to the University of Oxford in June, Laura Ginters presented a paper entitled “A Play by Any Other Name: The Ragged Cap aka Señora Carrar’s Rifles” to the 15th International Brecht Symposium about her discovery of the first play by Bertolt Brecht to be performed in the southern hemisphere. She was also an invited speaker at the Archive for the Performances of Greek and Roman Drama’s 16th Annual Joint Postgraduate Symposium on Ancient Drama (“Memory and Imagined Futures in the Theory and Practice of Ancient Drama”): she spoke about the 1886 production of Agamemnon at the University which led to the formation of the Sydney University Dramatic Society.

Tribunal (Griffin Theatre Company/Powerhouse Youth Theatre)

As flagged in the last edition of SLAMmag, Paul Dwyer has been collaborating with PYT to create a new work, Tribunal, staging an Australian Truth and Reconciliation Tribunal in which the truth and lies around the politically contentious labels of ‘refugee’ and ‘asylum seeker’ are interrogated. The sold out season has just concluded at the Griffin Theatre, and has been warmly received by reviewers. Kevin Jackson, for example, wrote on his influential blog that “In the week of The Nauru Files and our Minister for Immigration, Peter Dutton’s response, this work could not be more relevant. […] The Text Editor (and a performer) Paul Dwyer has shaped a very subtle evening supported with a Sound and Video Design by James Brown of elegant simplicity. […] I encourage you to spend time with The Powerhouse Youth Theatre and their important work, Tribunal […] Do go. Much can depend on it.”
In The Rex

The major project: Theatre Kantanka and The Obscene Madame D

In July the department welcomed Theatre Kantanka as company-in-residence in the Rex Cramphorn Studio for the creative development of their new work The Obscene Madame D. The performance script had been developed by the company from the novel of the same name by acclaimed Brazilian writer, Hilda Hilst.

Kantanka’s four week development was the department’s major project for 2016 during which, across 2 weeks of the possible 4 in rehearsal, undergraduate students from PRFM3961 and PRFM3962 along with some Honours students (and the UoS coordinator, Amanda Card) observed and documented the creative process, exploring the skills that go into crafting those ‘magic moments’ an audience will later encounter in performance. Those moments were on wonderful display when the company, at the end of their residency, offered 2 showings of the work for students, TaPS & SLAM academics and staff, friends and industry representatives. The Obscene Madame D was a clever, disturbing piece of immersive theatre, and the company is now working to gain support for their second stage development to performance.

In the week leading up to their development, Kantanka used the University’s Radio Studio to record the script for The Obscene Madame D. The collaborators on this project were Carlos Gomes, Katia Molino, Gail Priest and Sam James, all established artists with extensive experience as devisors and performance/sound/film makers.

One of the handmade objects by Carlos Gomes for Theatre Kantanka’s development of The Obscene Madame D in the Rex Cramphorn Studio. Image courtesy Barbara Campbell

L-R: Carlos Gomes directing Arky Michael and Katia Molino in June recording the script for The Obscene Madame D. Recording and image by Gail Priest
In the Archives…

Elizabeth Burke and Pierre Thibaudeau have been spending time in the Department of Theatre & Performance Studies Archive Room examining the collection of 35mm slides that includes documentation as well as visual material from the archives of Entr’Acte Theatre – the company Elizabeth and Pierre founded and ran from 1979 to 1999. Other boxes in the archive hold video cassettes in every format from 1 inch Beta to Sony HD, reels of magnetic audio tape, black & white publicity stills, printed programmes and posters, company reports and teaching materials.

Upcoming

Coming to the Rex Cramphorn studio for a three week residency in September/October are independent dance artists Martin del Amo and Sue Healey. They will be conducting choreographic research for their upcoming project The Seeing Space, focusing on issues around presence, presentational aesthetics and the observer/observed relationship. The residency continues del Amo and Healey’s ongoing collaboration which has included both the creation of solos for each other and the development of collaborative duets.

For regular updates on what’s happening in the Rex, see our blog.
In July 2016, the Writing Hub warmly welcomed our new continuing member of staff, Dr Alyssa O’Brien. Before commencing at Sydney, Alyssa was a lecturer in Stanford University’s Program in Writing and Rhetoric, and Stanford Introductory Seminars. While at Stanford, Alyssa co-authored text books on reading, writing and researching arguments (including *Envision in depth; Envision: Persuasive Writing in a Visual World*, and *Instructors Manual to Envision*), and published broadly on topics such as cross-cultural rhetoric, composition, global learning, and communication. See issue 03 of SLAMmag for more on Alyssa.

Lucinda Holdforth joined the Writing Hub’s teaching team in June 2016, closely following her extensive participation in the Sydney Writers Festival.


In June Dr Frances Di Lauro presented a paper at the 2016 International Education Conference in Giudecca, Italy. Her paper “This is not a MOOC: transitioning to fully online courses that retain individuated interaction in e-Tutorials” was very well received and will be published in an upcoming edition of *Computers & Composition Online*.

Dr Omid Tofighian, Lecturer in Rhetoric and Composition at the Writing Hub, is actively involved in community arts and cultural projects and regularly works with asylum seekers, refugees and young people from Western Sydney.

In June Omid facilitated *Pop Culture, Migration and Revolution: Transnational Responses to Injustice*, which formed part of the 2016 VIVID IDEAS Festival and was presented by Powerhouse Youth Theatre (PYT), Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP) and the University of Sydney’s Religion, State & Society Network.

In July he organised a mini-conference, *Hip Hop: Remixing the Curriculum*, sponsored by the Religion, State & Society Research Network and hosted by the Writing Hub. There he moderated a panel discussion between researchers and hip hop artists. One of the panelists, Dr Frederick Gooding Jr (Northern Arizona University) – an historian, commentator on #BlackLivesMatter, and researcher into African American history, critical race theory and popular culture – presented the keynote address, “The Genius of Hip Hop”.

In August Omid spoke about examples of art produced by people impacted by Australia’s border control and immigration regime and marginalised on different levels in Australian society in a talk entitled “Epistemic Justice and Racialised Displacement”. The films, artworks, poetry and accounts he discussed offer unique insight into the lived-experience and lived-endurance of people subjected to racialised government policies, intersectional discrimination and systemic exclusion.
Also in July, Doctor of Creative Arts candidate, Antoni Lee, presented the first talk in the Writing Hub's research seminar series. Antoni currently lectures on the Writing Hub’s postgraduate units, Professional Editing and Professional Writing.

Antoni’s presentation focused on his exegesis, in which he traces and explores connections and relationships between ancient Judeo-Christian apocalypse and modern religious and secular expressions. His particular interests take in the philosophies and metaphysics of supernaturalism and apocalypse and this work will be a companion and source for Antoni’s related body of fictional work.

Antoni’s creative writing won Macquarie University’s Fred Rush Convocation Prize for Australian Literature and Creative Writing in 2010, and in 2015 Mirvac-AMP commissioned him to write a body of short fictions relating to an historically significant Sydney location spanning the late eighteenth to early twentieth centuries.

In August 2016, Mirvac made publicly available the stories written by Antoni. The stories form part of joint owners Mirvac and AMP’s artistic and heritage commitment in developing the historically significant 200 George Street, Sydney site. The resulting narratives reference in-situ excavated artefacts, real people and actual events touching the site in some way. Events featured include the Castle Hill and Rum Rebellions, gambling and opium dens, anti-Chinese rioting, fire and building collapses and two royal commissions.

David Chan, Senior Development Manager at Mirvac, said:

“We wanted to find a way to showcase the findings and to create context around the artefacts. Antoni’s stories show how they may have been used and provided the perfect medium to bring them to life.”

The artefacts have been displayed in glass cases at 200 George Street and the stories are publicly accessible by QR codes embedded in outdoor display cases at 200 George Street and online here.

Recent publications

The following departments and programs are located in the School of Literature, Art and Media:

- Art History
- Celtic Studies
- English
- Linguistics
- Media and Communications
- Medieval and Early Modern Studies
- Museum Studies
- Studies in Religion
- Theatre and Performance Studies
- The Writing Hub