SLAM is the quarterly electronic magazine of the School of Letters, Art & Media 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
- Welcome to new staff
- Department news and events
A warm welcome to the winter edition of SLAMmag, the School’s electronic newsletter for staff, students and alumni. SLAMmag reports on events and publications that have occurred in the last quarter, celebrating our research and teaching achievements and paying tribute to incoming or departing staff.

In this issue, Paul Dwyer (Theatre and Performance Studies) writes about his involvement in the Palm Island, Belvoir St and London productions of the Ilbijerri Theatre Company’s ‘Beautiful One Day’. Look out for other feature articles on SLAM contributions to the recent University Open Day, the life of a postgraduate Teaching Fellow, and mentoring in MECO, as well as regular updates from the Chairs of our different departments.

Happy reading!
More than 25,000 prospective students turned up to check out courses on offer at Sydney University and it felt like most of them came through MacLaurin Hall where SLAM had its information hub.

Staff from all our disciplines were there to help students navigate their way through the huge range of options available at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

In addition to the individual consultations, SLAM also gave two group talks: Chair of Department of Media and Communications, Dr Fiona Giles, spoke to 500 prospective students in the Wallace Theatre on the Bachelor of Arts (Media and Communications), and a much more intimate talk was held in the wonderful Schaeffer Library on Art on Campus. The Schaeffer Library talk centred on Aboriginal bark painting and was given by the Art History Department’s newest staff member and indigenous art specialist, Stephen Gilchrist, and seventeenth-century European visual culture lecturer Mark de Vitis.

Information on all SLAM courses is available in our new 2016 student guides. See links at the end of this article.
University Open Day
School of Letters, Art and Media 2016 Study Option
Guides:

Art History, Film Studies, Art Curating, Museum and Heritage studies

English, Australian Literature, and Creative Writing

Media and Communications, Digital Cultures, Publishing, Media Practice, Health Communication, and Strategic Public Relations

Theatre and Performance Studies

Religion Studies

Linguistics

Celtic Studies

Writing

Schaeffer Library Art on Campus talk.
Image courtesy Lucy Baird
news

SLAM new faces

Karina Aveyard
I am a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the department of Media and Communications, working on project focused on film viewing practices in the digital & multi-platform media age. Before coming to Sydney I was working as a lecturer at the University of East Anglia, Norwich UK. Outside research I’m enjoying living in Australia again, especially the sunshine and wonderful multi-cultural food.

Bunty Avieson
My PhD investigated the emerging media landscape of the new democracy of Bhutan, a small kingdom of about 730,000 people in the Himalayas. While I continue to research its development, I’m also interested in literary journalism, both as a researcher and practitioner. I love Twitter, chess and slowly walking the Bay Run.

Susan Potter
Before coming to Sydney, I taught in Media and Communications at the University of New England, and prior to that I held a postdoc at the University of Auckland. I’m teaching in the Film Studies Program in one of my areas of specialisation, silent cinema, but I’m also interested in contemporary film and the representation of sexuality. Outside of work, I’m often walking my whippet, Piper, looking out for the many film retrospectives on offer, and cycling around the Centennial Park loop and beyond.

Beth Yahp
I’m a writer and teacher of fiction and non-fiction, with a particular interest in the novel and memoir forms, and their somewhat porous interface. My most recent research has been on activism and politics in Malaysia, and I am currently developing a project on mapping narratives of migration and change. I currently spend way too much time watching K-dramas and searching for the perfect laksa… but are these hobbies?
I'm delighted to report that we trialled our first special session for an Open Day dedicated to art on campus and why and how we study art – Department colleagues Stephen Gilchrist, Donna Brett and Mark De Vitis hosted the event in the Schaeffer library during the information day on 29 August. We’re hoping to use this event as a template for some further ‘art history taster’ events in the coming year, aimed at introducing our subject to school age students and those that are unfamiliar with the discipline.

An ambitious Power Institute event is currently underway. The first of our two early-career seminars under the “Ambitious Alignments” project, funded by the Getty Foundation, is taking place in Bandung, Indonesia, from 30 August to 4 September. This brings a very talented group of researchers into close and intense dialogue as they discuss a series of ongoing research projects into the emergence of art and modernity in twentieth-century Southeast Asia. We are delighted to be engaged in such thorough and meaningful collaborations in the region, and proud that our workshops in Bandung are led by prominent Southeast Asian scholars.

Meanwhile, we’re celebrating the publication of yet another new book by a Departmental colleague, Roger Benjamin's Kandinsky and Klee in Tunisia (2015, University of California Press), which we’ll be launching on 8 September and is the fourth major monograph by a Department member to emerge in the last year.

We congratulate our colleague Jennifer Barrett on her election as chair of the Board of Museums New South Wales, an honour that testifies to her long and deep intellectual and practical engagement with the Museum sector in New South Wales. We also congratulate Mary Roberts on her selection as the Robert Sterling Clark Visiting Professor of Art History at Williams College, Massachusetts, though of course, we'll certainly miss her on campus this year.
The Celtic Studies programme continues to focus on providing teaching in Celtic literature, history, and language. The Celtic Studies Foundation will be making a renewed emphasis on member activities in coming months. Recent generous gifts from benefactors support our continuing provision of teaching in modern and medieval Celtic languages. The 2016 anniversary of the Celtic Studies Foundation will be an opportunity to make contact with our many alumni and past supporters. The continuing support of all our friends is vital to our operations.

At the recent International Congress of Celtic Studies, Australian representation was of a scale to invite frequent comment. Programme lecturers Jonathan Wooding and Pamela O'Neill were among the presenters, joined by Jay Johnston (Religious Studies), our recently-retired colleague Anders Ahlqvist - and former Sydney colleagues Helen Fulton (Bristol) and Geraint Evans (Swansea).

Also presenting were current student Sam Leggatt and former students Kristen Erskine and Bridgette Slavin. The presentations by Jay Johnston and Jonathan Wooding were part of a panel on eastern influences in the Celtic lands, organised by Jacqueline Borsje (University of Amsterdam). This is presently a field of renewed interest in Celtic Studies (as those who attended Michelle Brown's Medieval and Early Modern Centre lecture in June will certainly have noted!).

Planning continues for the triennial Celtic Studies conference, 27-30 September 2016, which will include celebrations to mark the 30th anniversary of the Celtic Studies Foundation at Sydney.
Sharon Olds Event

In July the English Department hosted the Pulitzer Prize winning poet Sharon Olds at a special event in the John Woolley Building. Olds was in Australia to take part in the Mildura Writers Festival. Judith Beveridge organised what by any measure was a major success, Olds enthralling a packed lecture theatre with readings from her highly-praised work and her lively interaction with the audience.

Literary Scholarship Award

Robert Dixon received the Walter McRae Russell Award at the Association for the Study of Australian Literature (ASAL) conference in July, presented every two years for the best book of Australian literary scholarship, for his study Alex Miller: The Ruin of Time. This was the inaugural title in the Sydney University Press Studies in Australian Literature Series. Alex Miller is the author of eleven novels, books that while immediately accessible to the general reading public are manifestly works of high literary seriousness—substantial, technically masterful and assured, intricately interconnected, and of great imaginative, intellectual and ethical weight.
PhD Graduates


All these students deserve praise for the combination of high intelligence, endurance and original thinking that goes into any completed PhD thesis.

While each has her or his own inspiring narrative, for brevity’s sake we asked Dr Mark Sutton, scholar and comedian, and one of those featured last year in a Sydney Morning Herald article on fanatical Bob Dylan fans, to explain the perhaps unconsidered relationship between postgraduate work and comedy. ‘The biggest similarity between doing my PhD and working in comedy at the ABC is that both give you the chance to wear silly costumes. It was a great moment when, within hours of attending my graduation ceremony in full academic get-up, I was at work dressed in an outfit made of fruit doing the world’s worst Carmen Miranda impression for The Checkout. On the other hand though, the skills developed during my PhD have been invaluable to my work on the ABC, both in television and radio. The depth of research required, the commitment to a huge undertaking and the constant need for abstract thought are among the things that (I hope) make me good at my job.’

Recent Publications


Department Honorary Associate Helen Young (Ed.): *The Middle Ages in Popular Culture: Medievalism and Genre* (2015, Cambria Press).

City 2 Surf Survivor

Peter Marks managed to finish this year’s City 2 Surf fun run. Running for the Cathy Freeman Foundation, he managed to complete the 14 kilometres in just over 75 minutes. The highlight of the day for Peter was meeting Cathy Freeman.

Congratulations to Tarrin Wills and family on the birth of baby Agnes, on 9 June.
On 21 and 22 August in the Holme Building, Gwen Hyslop and Karma Tshering from the Department of Linguistics hosted the Second Meeting of the Consortium for the Study of Eastern Himalayan Ethnolinguistic Prehistory, with contributions from visiting scholars Mark Post (UNE), Yankee Modi (UNE), Stephen Morey (La Trobe), George van Driem (Bern), Roger Blench (Cambridge) and Kwang-Ju Cho (ANU). The meeting, funded by Gwen’s ARC Discovery Grant “Reconstructing Eastern Himalayan Histories: Languages, Plants, and People”, explored current directions in research on the languages and prehistory of the Eastern Himalayas.

On 23 August in Hanoi, Jim Martin gave a plenary address at the biennial international conference of the Institute of Linguistics of the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences: “The Linguistics of Vietnam: 30 years of renovation and development”. Jim’s plenary was on the history of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The conference, attended by 600 linguists and educators, including 45 international presentations, was preceded by a pre-conference institute on SFL in education. Jim Martin gave two presentations (dealing with the development of ‘Sydney School’ genre-based literacy programs and with recent work on knowledge structure). This was preceded by a conference on forensic linguistics, hosted by the Linguistics Department of the Graduate Academy of Social Sciences, at which Jim presented an overview of the research on restorative justice (NSW Youth Justice Conferencing) undertaken with his colleagues Paul Dwyer (Department of Theatre & Performance Studies) and Michele Zappavigna (UNSW).

The “Mian and Kilivila Collection” - an online resource by Sebastian Fedden with colleagues at the University of Surrey - is now available online (S. Fedden, T. Feist, M. Baerman, D. Brown, G. Corbett and G. Senft. (2015) Mian and Kilivila Collection, University of Surrey).

Nick Enfield’s book ‘The Languages of Mainland Southeast Asia: The State of the Art’, co-edited with Bernard Comrie, has been published (2015, Mouton de Gruyter).

The Department of Media and Communications (MECO) is delighted to welcome our new lecturer in News Journalism, Dr Bunty Avieson, who commenced with us in July 2015. Bunty worked in news and feature writing, and edited the Woman’s Day in the 1990s, before completing her doctoral studies on ‘The Voice of the Dragon: The emerging media in the fledgling democracy of Bhutan’. Her PhD was awarded the Macquarie University Vice Chancellor’s Commendation and led to her most recent book publication, The Dragon’s Voice (UQP, 2015).

Following a request from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education, Professor Pip Pattison, MECO successfully pitched a teaching project to Coursera, the premier global provider of Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCS, and is now developing a series of four modules on Social Media Marketing for Social Good. Dr Jonathon Hutchinson, who teaches Online Media, and Social Media Communications, and Nicholas Goodwin, who teaches Social Marketing, are teaming up to produce modules in social media communications skills specifically for professionals working in social and behavior change programs. This is not only a great fit between curriculum and the online delivery that MOOCS depend on but also aligns with a key goal of Coursera to expand higher education opportunities globally to those who might not otherwise have access. The benefits will extend to MECO coursework offerings as we learn more about intensive online teaching methods and help to raise our profile internationally. The current pilot program is funded through the office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education, and the first module is expected to be offered later this year.

MECO is pleased to present a training program to a delegation of 25 executives from Radio Beijing Corporation, on Exploring Australian Approaches to Radio. The two-week program was formally opened by Professor Duncan Ivison, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Professor Barbara Caine, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in the department on Tuesday 25 August.

The program includes lectures and panel discussions presented by Australian industry representatives, including high profile media personalities such as Angela Catterns from 2UE, and Byron Cooke from Southern Cross Austereo. The program encompasses information about public broadcasting and community radio in addition to commercial music radio, and provides an overview of the Australian radio industry including demographics, ratings mechanisms and digital innovations.

This is a first for MECO in developing a not-for-credit course for industry executives, and we look forward to building on this experience to further our industry engagements. In addition to the rewards of sharing expertise and knowledge, we foresee internship opportunities for our students, closer relationships with industry professionals, and potential for collaborative research projects both here and internationally.

MECO would like to thank Nila Liu from SBS Radio (who is also a BA MECO alumna) and our two program coordinators, Dominic Santangelo and Chloe Collins, for making this initiative possible.
Dr Alana Mann, Benedetta Brevini and Mitchell Hobbs have all won Faculty Research Support Scheme Grants in July, making our Department 100% successful in our staff bids this round.

Alana is researching ‘What’s so fair about fair food? Interrogating discourses of ‘fairness’ in the Australian fair food movement’. Challenging the dominant narrative of ‘free trade’, the research addresses problems that many Australians face by living with food insecurity, daily. Her grant will enable her to visit community supported food initiatives around Australia, using a mixed methods approach to gather data.

Benedetta is researching Social Media and Climate Change in China and the US. This is the first comparative international study to investigate construction of climate change debates in these two leading G20 countries. Bene’s research will focus on two elite newspapers in each country (New York Times, Washington Post, People’s Daily and China Daily) and compare the coverage on climate change to discourse in social media platforms, Twitter in the US and Weibo in China.

Mitchell will be exploring the traditionally antipathetic relationship between PR professionals and journalists in their quest to shape the news. Focusing on the workplace culture of large PR firms and the ethics of their practice, this study is timely given the rapid growth in the PR industry and the changing media industry landscape particularly as news journalism experiences increasing economic challenges.

Additionally, Dr Joyce Nip is to be congratulated for her role in winning the collaborative research grant of US$60,000 from the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation. Joyce will be using the funds to continue her work on social media and news in China.

M ECO’s cross-institutional collaborative research portfolio grew in August, with ARC-DP funding secured for Dr Penny O’Donnell’s New Beats project, a five-year investigation of job loss in Australian journalism involving four universities (Canberra, La Trobe, Swinburne and Sydney) in partnership with three leading Australian cultural institutions (ABC, NLA and MEAA). Penny’s research tracks the professional journeys of journalists who were laid off during the restructure of the journalism industry in recent years.

Congratulations to 6 of our MECO students who have been selected to receive a Journalist Scholarship Program for the Learning Korea Scheme, which entails a week in Korea to learn about the Korean media industry and its public institutions. This is truly a wonderful result!

Adriana Hernandez is also to be congratulated for her selection process involving 25 applications, a shortlist of 12 and 6 successful placements out of 8 students who are chosen overall within Australia.

The students are Sophie Gallager, Caitlin Gauci, Christina Guo, Alexandra Banks, Rachael Buckland and Bianca Cheung.

Researching the aftermath of Sharri Markson’s article

Following the media controversy in October last year, when the Media Editor of The Australian newspaper, Sharri Markson, published 'Uni degrees in indoctrination', Drs Penny O'Donnell and Jonathon Hutchinson conducted research into student responses to the claims on social media.

Using social network analysis, O'Donnell and Hutchinson tracked three days of Twitter conversations of students who felt accused of being ‘indoctrinated’. The results were published as ‘Pushback journalism: Twitter, user engagement and journalism student’s responses to the Australian', Australian Journalism Review, 37(1), 105-120.
Mentoring in MECO

Words by Dr Fiona Martin

“The lightning-spark of Thought generated, or say rather heaven kindled, in the solitary mind, awakens its express likeness in another mind, in a thousand other minds, and all blaze up together in combined fire”

(Thomas Carlyle, 1831)

Research mentoring has taken on a collegial warmth and effect in the Department of Media and Communications over the last year, with regular get-togethers providing us opportunities to discuss new research, share writing and publishing experiences, and workshop publications.

Now nearly a year old, the monthly Technology and Culture Reading Group run by Grant Bollmer brings together graduate students and academic staff to review new and canonical works in media theory. Based on a successful gathering at the University of Melbourne, the group examines difficult and cutting-edge analyses of media culture, and assists the professional development of graduate students through open conceptual debate. Past topics have included media materiality, software, algorithms, and ‘object-oriented ontology’, while meetings this semester will examine the seminars of Michel Foucault and ‘German media theory’.

Also meeting on a roughly monthly basis, the MECO book club organised by Gerard Goggin helps staff members workshop and advance their book proposals, as well as getting feedback on book drafts. Members share book production tips, editor contacts and war stories, and help each other negotiate the rapidly shifting territory of publishing. Beyond the aim of lifting publication numbers with desired outlets, the club seeks to improve production outcomes and reach of our resulting books.

Postgraduate students have also carved out their own space for social creativity by running Shut Up and Write writing and collaboration sessions. MECO’s Shut up and Write group met throughout semester one to support both thesis writing and early stage conference paper and journal writing activities. As organiser, Kyle Moore has noted the sessions also helped to develop a social support network within the department’s graduate student cohort.

The beauty of all these events is not that they replace traditional one-on-one research mentoring, but rather that that they afford us a relaxed environment in which to share ideas about research development. Over time they also provide rare drop in moments to catch up on each other’s achievements and hatch plans.
From 23-29 August 2015 the International Association for the History of Religion (IAHR) held its quinquennial congress in the picturesque town of Erfurt, in Thuringia. The IAHR is the peak body for scholars engaged with the academic (or as Europeans say, ‘scientific’) study of religion, that is, non-theological scholarship that addresses the broad fields of religion, spirituality and esotericism. The 2015 congress featured more than 1,400 academic papers, and the Department of Studies in Religion was prominently involved in its success. Carole Cusack had served on the Academic Program Committee since the previous congress in Toronto in 2010, and Jay Johnston organised the Aesthetics of Religion Network (AESToR NET) workshop that preceded the congress proper, titled “The Sensory Sacred: Aesthetics as a Connective Concept for the Study of Religion”.

Jay Johnston also presented two papers: “Sense and Spirit: Matter, Gender and Perception in the Study of Religion” and “Stone-Agency: Sense, Sight, and Magical Efficacy” and Carole Cusack presented a paper: “Intentional Communities in the Gurdjieff Teaching”.

The Department runs a regular research seminar for staff (everyone invited!) and graduate students. The following papers have been presented recently:

26 May, Alma Studholme, PhD candidate in Studies in Religion, “Belief and Behaviour in the Context of the Brain-Body Environment System”.

4 August, Dr Christopher Hartney, Studies in Religion, “Brandzac Day: Consumerism, Materiality, the State Cult, and the Hierophanic Shift”.


At the next seminar to be held in the department, Studies in Religion is delighted to welcome Professor Patricia Plummer, SLAM Visiting Research Fellow in 2015:

1 September, Professor Patricia Plummer, Professor of Postcolonial Studies at the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany. “From Birmingham to Balmoral Beach: Louisa Haynes Le Freimann (1863-1956), Artist and Theosophist”.

St Mary’s Cathedral (left) and St Severus’ Church (right) on Domberg hill, Erfurt. Image: Michael Sander. Reproduced from Wikimedia Commons.
My Year as a Teaching Fellow: Some Reflections

Words by Venetia Robertson, PhD Candidate, Studies in Religion

Now well into the second semester of my 2015 Teaching Fellowship in the Department of Studies in Religion, I can finally catch a breath and reflect on what this year has been like. I had some reluctance in applying for a TF - I know they involve a lot of work, and as I rapidly roll towards the end of my PhD candidature, I wasn’t sure taking on a hefty workload would be the wisest of choices. Luckily, I have that syndrome that so many academics do where I say ‘yes’ to any and all opportunities, regardless of how full my calendar is, and so, with the clincher being my very own office for the year, I applied and was granted this fellowship. The workload has been as intense as the office has been great, but most importantly this has enabled me to participate in staff and teaching life more than ever before.

The TF is a bit like an academic sampler: you get to do a little bit of everything. I designed curricula, wrote lectures, ran tutorials, marked assessments, attended staff meetings, handled stalls at Information Day, while continuing to research, publish, and occasionally writing my own work. All of this is great experience and, perhaps more importantly, exposure to inner-workings of the Uni machine. As someone with a passion for the humanities and a penchant for pedagogy, I’m fascinated by the bureaucratic, political, and financial systems that make this institution go (or, sometimes, stand still). Gaining insight into what does and does not work on a University-wide scale will inevitably affect the way that I teach and market my subject area.

By far the biggest learning curve I have faced, however, was the construction of a core unit for the newly minted degree pathway for World Religions. In coordination with my supervisor, Associate Professor Jay Johnston, I developed a course on the problematic history of the ‘world religion paradigm’, something I felt Studies in Religion was in a unique position to tackle. Having been run only once before WREL 2001: World Religions in Context had just a briefly outlined trajectory. It was a truly validating show of confidence in my ability for my department to give me such creative and intellectual control, with then-head of department Professor Iain Gardner saying to me: “just have fun with it”. So, I decided to approach the world religion paradigm by systematically deconstructing it - breaking it into pieces for the students to analyse and then see if they could build a better model from the shards. On the UoS feedback forms, many positively commented on this tactic, and I would say that fun was definitely had.

Despite all the weekends spent perfecting PowerPoints, nights spent rehearsing lectures, sneaky naps taken under the desk (one office-perk I don’t want to give up), and those unavoidable moments of panic where you convince yourself that you’re an imposter who knows nothing, and how could anyone leave you in charge of a class, I would recommend a Teaching Fellowship to interested parties, and would do it again in a heartbeat. Academia is a tough slog, and I’ve only dipped in my toe, but this is what I’ve spent a decade at this University preparing for, and now if I can just manage to wrap up that old thesis thing, I’ll be convinced that I’m cut out for more of the same.
In late June, the Department of Theatre & Performance Studies hosted the Australasian Drama & Performance Studies Association (ADSA) conference. The event, entitled ‘Revisiting The Player’s Passion: the Science(s) of Acting in 2015’, celebrated the 30th anniversary of The Player’s Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting, a book by Professor Joseph Roach (1985). This was a landmark contribution to the field of theatre and performance studies and Professor Roach, from Yale, contributed a keynote address for the conference called: “What Can a Body Do?” Our other key note, Professor Evelyn Tribble from the University of Otago, New Zealand, presented “‘There’s no Mentality to It’: Thinking and the Arts of Acting”. The Rex Cramphorn Studio, the Department’s AV Room and the surrounding environs on Level 1 John Woolley kept the 100+ conference delegates in close proximity, adding to the collegial atmosphere of the event. Conference organisers from the Department – Ian Maxwell, Richard Manner and Glen McGillivray – are to be congratulated on the calibre of the conference and we thank them for all their hard work.

In August, Theatre and Performance Studies students observed a three day playwriting development workshop as part of their PRFM3611 Dramaturgy course – run by Dr Laura Ginters. The play, Remembering Pirates by Sydney University graduate Christopher Harley, is a contemporary take on the Peter Pan story. It will be directed by Iain Sinclair, whose recent outstanding production of John Steinbeck’s Of Mice and Men was part of the 2015 Reginald Season at the Seymour Centre. The workshop was part of an ongoing collaborative partnership between the Department and PlayWriting Australia, the national script development organisation. Last year we jointly supported the development of Angus Cerini’s play, The Bleeding Tree, which went on to receive the Griffin Playwriting Award and is currently enjoying a sell-out season at Griffin Theatre Company. In 2013 the Griffin Award-winning play Jump for Jordan (by Donna Abela) also benefitted from a development workshop here at the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies before a successful season for Griffin Theatre Company.

Congratulations also go to Rosie Findlay, a former PhD student, recipient of a FASS Teaching Fellowship (2014) and regular tutor and lecturer with the department. Rosie landed herself a job in the UK, starting in September. She is now Lecturer in Cultural and Historical Studies at the London College of Fashion.
Dancer, choreographer and visual artist Victoria Hunt, has just finished a development phase on her new work TANGIwai in the Department’s Rex Cramphorn Studio. Students from PRFM3961 Rehearsal Studies and PRFM3962 Inside Rehearsal watched this development across 2 of the 4 weeks Victoria and her collaborators were in the studio. Collaborators on this project included: Boris Bagattini (video, installation & light), Fausto Brusamolino (light & installation), James Brown (sound composition), cultural advisors Aroha Yates-Smith, Paul Tapsell (Te Arawa), Richard Green (Darug nation), Kristina Chan (dancer) and Justine Shih Pearson (designer and former PhD student with the department).

Victoria is an Australian born artist with tribal affiliations to Te Arawa, Rongowhaakata, Kahungunu Maori, England and Ireland.

Her core movement practice is Body Weather, a Japanese form developed by Min Tanaka out of his early association with Butoh. Victoria worked for many years with the Department’s long time collaborator and Artistic Honorary Associate Tess de Quincey. De Quincey brought Body Weather to Australia in the 1990s and is a celebrated performer and creator.

Victoria Hunt now combines this dance practice/movement research with influences from her Pacific cultural heritage. Victoria’s first solo work Copper Promises: Hinemihi Haka premiered at Carriageworks in Sydney, moved to The Place in London (2013), and this September will be shown in Canada.

Our blog has regular details of the artists taking part in our Artist in Residence programme.
This year I have busily been switching between performing in lecture theatres and treading the boards in Beautiful One Day, a co-production by Belvoir St Theatre (Sydney) and Ilbijerri Theatre Company (Melbourne). Beautiful One Day is a work of documentary theatre celebrating the “irrepressible life and times” of Palm Island, home to one of Australia’s largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Prompted by a shared sense of outrage over the death in police custody of Mulrunji Doomadgee in November 2004, Ilbijerri, Belvoir and members of the Palm Island community have created a performance that sets this tragic event against the full sweep of the island’s history. Interweaving personal stories of the performers, interviews with locals, court transcripts, and re-enactments, the show highlights the joyously subversive tactics by which Palm Islanders have responded to White Australia’s persistent attempts to control the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The show premiered at Belvoir St Theatre in November 2012 and then had a short Melbourne season (in a heavily reworked version) in 2013. In April 2015, we toured regional Victoria. In June, we were invited to Origins: Festival of First Nations, performing at the Southbank Centre, London. In late September, we are appearing at the Brisbane Festival. Between times, however, we are working hard to get the show up to Palm Island where the Artistic Director of Ilbijerri, Rachael Maza, and I began the dramaturgical research and community engagement for this project back in early 2011. It’s been a long journey and, in the current arts funding climate, not always an easy thing to finance. Colleagues can make a small contribution to the costs of getting the show up to Palm via Ilbijerri’s “Pozible” campaign.

And for any colleagues who might be in Brisbane in late September, I’ll leave you with the link to a video trailer and some quotes from the critics to whet your appetite:

“Anger, humour and hope are finely balanced in this warm and illuminating evening of theatre. Of the many and varied stage experiences seen this year, this stands out as one of the essential.” (Sydney Morning Herald)

“The cast weaves reportage, interviews, transcripts and documents with sound and video to create a vivid, poignant, political and often unexpectedly funny work of theatre that demands our full attention, deserves it and rewards it.” (Sun-Herald)

In July, I set off to Washington, DC to take up a short-term fellowship with the Folger Shakespeare Library.

My project, “Communities of Sentiment: Actors, Audiences, Emotions in the Eighteenth-Century English Theatre” takes an ethnographic approach to reading eighteenth-century accounts of acting practices. By reading across a range of archival sources, in order to identify discursive regularities in this material, I am seeking to establish what eighteenth-century audiences valued and what they dismissed in their actors. Rather than seeing eighteenth-century performances as proto-naturalistic, the study takes seriously the formal and informal critical responses which, while often extolling performances as being ‘true to life’, nonetheless, still positioned them within an aesthetic frame.

This project was developed through the FASS Research Incubator which I completed in 2013. My initial visit to the Folger in 2014 was supported by the Research Incubator funding and by the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions (CHE), and it allowed me to “scope” the collection.
The Writing Hub

Words by Associate Professor Susan Thomas | Director

The Writing Hub is pleased to welcome Dr Zoe Alderton to its academic staff this semester to coordinate and teach the Introduction to Thesis Writing course, normally administered by Dr Bronwen Dyson, currently on SSP. Zoe brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this role, being a recent doctoral graduate and having taught across the range of Writing Hub UoS. Zoe is also taking the lead on a professional consultancy project with Second Road Consulting Firm.

We are also pleased to welcome back Ms Karen Polyak, who has accepted a continuing role as Writing Hub administration officer. Karen had served previously in part-time and AoN roles, and had been sorely missed after the completion of her last casual contract. Her primary duties include assisting with the Student Writing Fellows program, Finance, and the Writing Hub’s consultancy portfolio.

Dr Frances Di Lauro and Associate Professor Susan Thomas have been awarded an HDR+ Staff Grant in the amount of $10,000 for their project “Promoting the Professional Self”, an online resource for assisting HDR students in preparing cover letters, CVs, grant applications, and other professional documents, as well as preparing for interviews. These grants were designed to assist faculties in the development of faculty-led, online resources, to support successful HDR candidature and academic enrichment. See the full list of HDR+ Staff Grant projects here.

Drs Frances Di Lauro and Janice Hinckfuss have received formal commendations from the Dean for their outstanding Semester One USE results in WRIT1001 and WRIT1000, respectively. Their commitment to students and their effective design and management of large, first-year UoS were recognised specifically.

Dr Louise Katz is running her successful Studymates program again this semester, which connects domestic students learning a language with native speakers of that language in the mostly international cohort of FASS7001 and FASS7002, which she coordinates.

Having run this program since 2010, Louise has found that international students’ English language ability improves markedly when they are encouraged to speak more English. Additionally, international students often deal with a sense of isolation that can inhibit their learning, as well as compromise their social wellbeing. The Studymates program helps bridge this gap by providing these students with someone to work with and talk to in a comfortable context. It differs from other forms of support, since the benefits are mutual, with each party actively helping the other. This semester, Louise has matched several Chinese students, one Japanese student, and one Indonesian student with domestic peers who are learning these languages. If you have students whom you feel could benefit from this program, Louise would love to hear from you.

The Writing Hub drop-in service resumed in Week Four and is available from 9 to 5, Monday through Thursday, for FASS UG students and anyone enrolled in a WRIT UoS. Our friendly Student Writing Fellows offer advice on brainstorming, constructing a convincing argument, revising, and interpreting feedback. We will be expanding this program later in the semester, in collaboration with The Quarter, to include drop-ins for PG students.

The following departments and programs are located in the School of Letters, 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

More Information

If you would like more information about the School of Letters, Art and Media or to make an editorial enquiry please contact:
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