

International House magazine



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

—
International
House

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We acknowledge the tradition of custodianship and law of the Country on which the University of Sydney campuses stand. We pay our respects to those who have cared and continue to care for Country.

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Cover: Dr Walter Westman holding a koala in Queensland, c. 1972. Image supplied.
Inside covers: IH residents Idhika Sahi and Advaita Nair performing at I-Night 2019.
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Indonesian dancer at the
Australian-Indonesian Association
Festival, October 1972.
Photo: International House archives.

From the chair of council and director

This year has come and almost gone in a whirlwind, but has brought with it much inspiration, transformation and excitement about the future.

We are continuously amazed by IH residents, not just because they are academically focused and socially engaged, but because we get to experience the transformation of these young scholars from their larvae cocoons into beautiful butterflies! We witness this transformation through the activities of IHMA, through their engagement in the daily business of eating meals together or collecting endless streams of parcels from the front desk, and through their inspirational performances at I-Night. We can honestly say that our future is in good hands with current IH residents and alumni.

Since our last report for this magazine, the IH Council has been working overtime to obtain a decision from the University on the future of IH. In May 2019, the Council established a Steering Group (SG) to oversee the development of a proposal for the future directions of IH, inviting all key stakeholders to participate in this group including senior executives from the University, IH Council, Rotary,

IH staff, IHMA and SUIHAA. The SG developed its terms of reference, held several meetings and tours of student accommodation facilities on campus, and gathered relevant information through documents, discussions and presentations.

The Council has put forward a vision for the future of IH and a proposal for private sector financing for the redevelopment of the City Road site, including the IH facility. This proposal is now under consideration by a Project Control Group (PCG) and further discussions will continue to focus on the funding of a new building and an IH model that is financially sustainable for the future. Further work is also in progress on the temporary decant and relocation of IH residents until a permanent building is available. A final report with recommendations from the SG will be presented to the University Executive for approval. This process has and will continue to take time to progress and is unlikely to conclude until mid-2020. We recognise that there are challenges ahead, however we are ever hopeful of a positive outcome. We will keep you informed of our progress.

We would like to thank every member of the IH community for their ongoing support and commitment to our mission, and we look forward to great things for IH in the new year.

Yours,



Professor Emerita Margaret Harris
Chair, International House Council



Jessica Carroll
Director, International House

News in brief



IHWW gains recognition for championing diversity at the PIEoneer Awards night in London on 19 September. L-R: Ken Dytor (Chair of ISH Board of Governors), Shami Nathoo (Finance Director, ISH), Sharon Bolton (Dean of Student Life, ISH), Ian Barry (Governor, ISH), Felix Graf, (Member Governor and PhD student, Goodenough College).

IHWW wins international education award

Congratulations to our colleagues at International Houses Worldwide (IHWW) for taking out a PIEoneer Award for championing diversity through the IHWW Scholarship Program!

Together, the 17 members of IHWW accommodate approximately 9,500 residents annually from more than 125 countries. The member houses provide more than 800 scholarships each year, which support their academic, economic and geographic diversity and whose value is in excess of £18 million. International House at the University of Sydney is one of the 17 members of IHWW.

Staff movements

As 2019 draws to a close, we say an Aussie “see ya later” to several long-standing staff members:

Les Noffke (Operations Manager and after-hours Facilities Manager) has taken long-service leave from September 2019 to April 2020 and will be travelling the country. In his place, IH welcomes Ian Robert – formerly head of various colleges in the ACT, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Katy Cuthbert (Deputy Director) goes on maternity leave in March 2020 for her third baby, and will be returning to the house early in 2021.

Dr Bradley Kunda (Assistant Director & Residential Life Officer) will be taking a leave of absence in 2020 to spend a year in Berlin, pursuing, together with his wife, opportunities in the German opera industry.

The IH community wishes Les, Katy and Bradley all the best for their forthcoming adventures.

Order of Australia honours for IH fellows

IH is proud to congratulate two of its fellows, Dr Keith Suter AM (PhD '77 MA '90 PhD (Research) '14) and the honourable Dennis Cowdroy AO QC (LLB '67) for their recent recognition in the 2019 Queen’s Birthday honours.

New fellows for International House

At its annual fellows' lunch on 1 December, IH inducted two outstanding alumnae as fellows of the house.

Business leader Denise North (IH 1980-81) has held board appointments, led companies as chief executive, and been a strategic consultant and analyst across multiple sectors and industries. She served on the IH Council for ten years, including eight as chairman.

Artist Lyn Woodger Grant (IH 1971-72) is a former artist/teacher at the National Art School and has been awarded over thirty awards in both abstract and representational art in the diverse areas of drawing, painting and sculpture. She has exhibited numerous times at International House, and in recent years has contributed significantly to the house's growing art collection.

Both Denise and Lyn continue to maintain strong connections with the residential and alumni community of IH. We congratulate them on their fellowship appointments.



Denise North. Photo supplied.



Lyn Woodger Grant.

Passing the light of international understanding – one conference at a time

IH staff members Dr Bradley Kunda and Katy Cuthbert recently presented the findings of their joint research project at the University Colleges Australia conference in Sydney. This followed an earlier presentation in May at the StarRez Asia-Pacific Student Accommodation Conference in Melbourne. Their paper, “The proof is in the pudding: evaluating the learning and development outcomes of residence life programs – a case study” was co-authored with the Academic Leader of the National Centre for Cultural Competence, Dr Jack Frawley, and highlighted gains in intercultural learning experienced by residents of IH as they share in the daily ritual of communal dining – something to which alumni readers will doubtless relate!



Intramural sports

Facing some stiff competition from several significantly larger accommodation halls has made for a challenging semester of intramural sport. Nevertheless, the spirited IH men's team managed to take out first place in the intramural badminton competition, with the women's team coming in at second. Overall, International House placed second in the men's Thomas Whalan Cup and third in the women's Liane Tooth Cup.

Ari Chinniah of the men's team helped take out the prize at the intramural badminton event in May.



WHERE IS AFGHANISTAN

- Afghanistan is a landlocked country located in South and Central Asia (between) in southern the Indian Ocean and north of the Bay of Bengal. It is bordered by Pakistan to the west, China to the north, India to the east, and Iran to the south.
- Afghanistan is a landlocked country in South and Central Asia, between the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal.
- Major cities: Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Jalalabad, Herat, Kandahar, Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, Kabul, Herat, Kandahar.
- Major rivers: Helmand, Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, Kabul, Herat, Kandahar.

Sayed Rahmatullah Hussainzada speaks to students at Muswellbrook High School. Photo by Memphis Bourne Blue.

Davis Projects for Peace

Beyond her demanding course load that includes Arabic and French studies, Memphis Bourne Blue has spent countless hours giving school students a different view of the refugee experience in Australia.

How did you come up with the idea for your project?

The idea for 'A Different View' came from my passion to provide people with opportunities to hear an individual of refugee background's story. Having heard and seen in the media many stereotyped or prejudiced remarks about refugees, I wanted to provide accurate, firsthand accounts that audiences could connect with.

Why do you think this issue exists?

The issue of prejudice and misconceptions in Australia around refugees exists due to a lack of knowledge. The way in which refugees are spoken about in Australian media and politics fosters this situation, with repetition, exaggeration and the use of stereotypes to achieve political ends.

Why did you choose to run your project in schools?

High schools provide a randomly selected audience, where students attend due to their teachers' choice rather than their own. This meant that, unlike many refugee-focused events (which tend to attract only people already interested in the topic), the talks in high schools could include a greater cross-section of opinions. Additionally, I was able to tie these talks into relevant aspects of the high school curriculum.

I also ran talks for community groups, which made 'A Different View' accessible to a more diverse age group with a greater cross-section of opinions. Most of the community groups I interacted with were in rural areas of the Hunter region (NSW), which allowed 'A Different View' to gain access to a demographic typically less exposed to authentic representations of refugee issues.

Did you feel at any point that the project was not going to work?

Absolutely. Early in the project, I had many difficulties attempting to coordinate the speakers and the schools, trying to find dates that overlapped and would work for each entity. Throughout the project I felt there were peaks and lulls, where at its busiest I faced high demand from schools for speakers, and at other times I struggled to find a school or an available speaker. Logistically, there were also issues of getting the catering (and myself!) to the venue, while also managing work and university commitments.

How do you define peace?

I define peace as the notion that we can all work together. Peace for me is founded on the belief that we may all look, speak and think differently, but ultimately we all feel the same. This is a uniting quality that should take us forward into the future.



IH resident Memphis Bourne Blue. Image supplied.

How does your project contribute to peace?

'A Different View' has contributed to peace through its introduction of audiences to a group of people they may have otherwise never encountered. By bringing speakers from refugee backgrounds into high schools, students were able to understand firsthand the situations from which refugees are forced to flee their homes. These students heard about the difficulties in finding safety, and how hard it is to adjust to life in a different country. Through this process, students were able to develop greater sympathy for those seeking asylum, and have now been equipped with the tools to unpack sensationalist news headlines or prejudiced rhetoric. Additionally, the message promoted by 'A Different View' has ripple effects through the school community, as students bring it up with their friends during conversation.

So far, 'A Different View' has held over 20 talks in both high schools and community groups, and its speakers have addressed over 1500 individuals across Newcastle, Sydney and the Hunter region in NSW. The project will continue in the long-term with further talks, plus an enhanced online presence through social media and a dedicated website.

Has your project changed the way you think about the world? How has it changed you?

My project has changed the way I view public awareness on the subject of refugees. Prior to receiving this grant, I was unsure about whether there would be demand for this kind of program; for me, knowledge about refugees is fairly normal. Through interactions with teachers and students following the talks, however, I realised that this kind of program is in fact necessary, and that people appreciated the insights it gave them.

Additionally, my project has changed the way I think about professional collaborations and business transactions. Having been entrusted with such a significant portion of money, I had to learn how to handle it responsibly. I think I now also better understand the difficulties faced by those who work for themselves, especially in terms of time and resource management.

'A Different View' gave over 1500 students and community members opportunities to hear firsthand experiences of refugees in Australia. By participating in the Davis Projects for Peace, I learnt valuable lessons and was able to create something that I am passionate about. I look forward to continuing this project into the future.

“Peace for me is founded on the belief that we may all look, speak and think differently, but ultimately we all feel the same. This is a uniting quality that should take us forward into the future.”



Maryam Popal Zahid, Mehmet Celepci and Mohammed Junaid address residents at International House. Photo by Shane Blue.



Students could sample authentic Afghan, Pakistani and Indian cuisine as part of their experience attending 'A Different View' events. Pictured are gosh-e fil and khajoor. Photo by Shane Blue.

About Davis Projects for Peace

Inspired by the late philanthropist and internationalist Kathryn W. Davis, the Davis Projects for Peace grants scheme provides US\$1m each year to colleges and universities in the Davis United World College Scholars Program, for students to design and implement grassroots projects that promote peace. International House, as part of the association of International Houses Worldwide, participates each year in this initiative.

Visit www.davisprojectsforpeace.org to learn more.

In my room

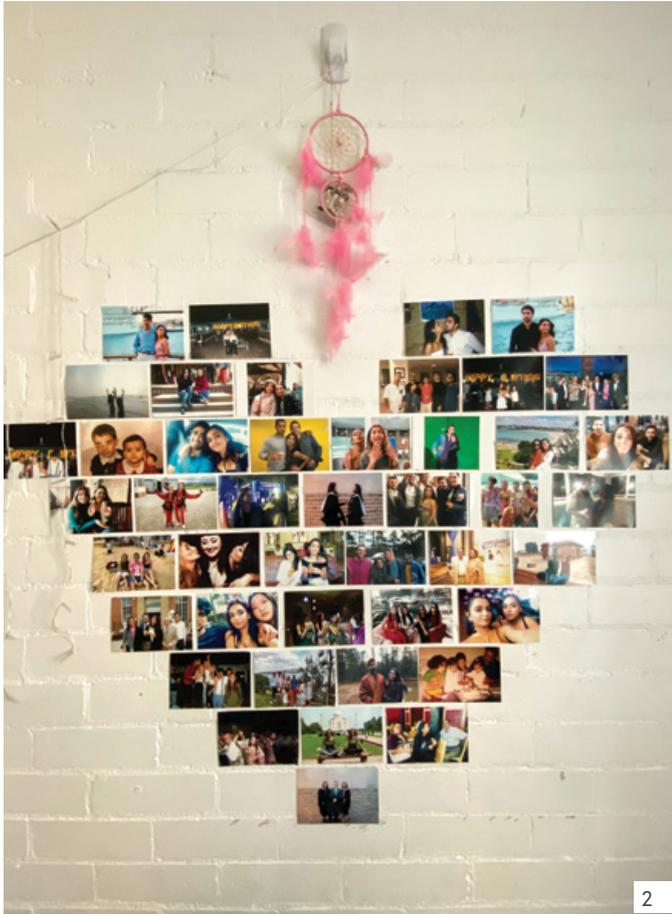
Precious gifts and photos from friends around the world are some of the prized possessions in Master of Commerce student Aashna Sethi's room.

Photography by Matthew Smith



1 African hand-painted artwork

I bought this at the SUIHAA charity night this year. I loved it from the moment I saw it. My mum was born in Nairobi, Kenya and she has similar artworks in our house, so it reminds me of home. I also think the colours are very bright and vibrant and it contrasts well against the white wall of my room. I feel happy every time I look at it.



2

2 Heart photo wall

I moved to England from Delhi when I was 17, and since then I have tried to capture as many moments as possible. These photos represent my memories over the years with friends and family from Sydney, Delhi and Leeds. It took me three days to create the heart shape, but I was very persistent because it meant a lot to me, especially being away from some of my friends. Directly above the heart is a dreamcatcher, which my best friend from England, Minal, gave me as a good luck charm when I moved to Sydney. It reminds me to pursue my dreams.



3

3 Tibetan prayer flag

This was a gift from one of my best friends and fellow resident Udai Rathore. He told me to make sure the flag catches the wind because the wind is meant to bring good fortune and positive vibes, so I placed it next to my window. The chant on the flags says "Om, Ma, Ni, Padma, Hum" and the flags together symbolise balance. Blue represents the sky, white represents the air, red symbolises fire, green stands for water, and yellow symbolises the earth.



4

4 Birthday scrapbook

This is one of the most special birthday gifts I've ever received. It is very sentimental because it has messages from all my friends in the house while reminding me of my IH friends currently on exchange. This gift always puts a smile on my face.



Can science solve unsustainable fashion?

Photography by Daniel Kukec

Vogue's sustainability editor was at International House in September to give the annual Walter Westman lecture. Clare Press began discussing the fashion industry's environmental impacts by quoting not illustrious scholars from the science world, but two literary greats.

Left: A crowd of residents, alumni and students from around the University gather to learn about sustainable fashion at International House.

“Fashion continues to conjure images of frivolity in the collective imagination. It's easily dismissed as purely concerned with surface,” she said. “What comes to mind when you think of it? Perhaps it's that Oscar Wilde quote: ‘Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months.’ I personally prefer Virginia Woolf's take: ‘Vain trifles as they seem, clothes have, they say, more important offices than to merely keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world's view of us.’ But to Woolf I would add, clothes also change the physical world, and mostly not for the better.”

Press argued that while science played a role in the evolution of the fashion industry's current unsustainable model, it is also key to potential solutions.

“I'll be unpacking my industry's negative impacts on the planet. I'll be arguing that science helped get us into this predicament, and ask what it can do to help get us out of it. But first I'd like to ask you a question,” she said. “Who here thinks this has got nothing to do with them? Who here thinks, ‘fashion's not my thing. I'm not part of that problem. My interests lie elsewhere...’? Raise your hand if you're a nudist.” Silence. “Come on!”

No hands were raised.

“Maybe you're a secret nudist?” Press joked. “Maybe at the weekend? Well, I think we can agree that no one in this room right now is naked. Thank you for that! But if you buy any new clothes at all, whether from Kmart, Zara or Gucci, you are part of the fashion supply chain.”

She noted that when referring to some of the more alarming statistics around fashion waste - that, for example, the equivalent of 1 garbage truckload of textiles enters landfill or is incinerated every second: “I'm including it all, from socks and jocks and swimsuits, to school uniforms and men's workwear. I'm also talking about textiles more broadly - it might not even be clothes. The conversation extends to sheets, napkins and curtains.”

Press acknowledged the global fashion industry's value, not least as a significant employer. “It is also,” she added, “a cultural mirror and influencer, and it can be an absolute joy. But when it comes to the environment, it can be horribly wasteful and polluting.” Put simply: we have too many clothes.

Between 2000 and 2015 global clothing production approximately

doubled. In 15 years, it grew from 50 billion to more than 100 billion garments per annum. Meanwhile, clothing utilisation (the amount of wear we get out of our clothes) has decreased by a global average of 36%. Each year, Australians consume 27kg of textiles and clothing per capita, and discard 23kg. We are among the highest consumers of textiles and clothing in the world. “Essentially, we are buying clothes to throw away,” said Press.

According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, an estimated USD \$500 billion value is lost each year due to clothing that’s barely worn and rarely recycled. “We don’t have the systems in place to deal with all this fashion waste,” said Press, pointing out that kerbside textile collection was unlikely to be introduced any time soon.

“In 2015, less than 1% of used clothing was recycled into new clothing. And when I say that, I’m talking mostly about material-to-material recycling – which turns used clothes into new yarn on an industrial level. Less than 1%. It’s a disaster. So, what is being done to fix it?”

She cited the recent G7 Summit that took place in Biarritz in August as cause for hope. There, French President Emmanuel Macron and Kering’s CEO François-Henri Pinault announced a ‘fashion pact’, designed to bring some of the biggest players together to tackle the issues.

In February, however, a damning report from the UK’s Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) of the House of Commons zeroed in on the fashion waste issue in particular. It made 18 recommendations, including the

introduction of a 1p tax per garment sold (with the cost borne by producers, not shoppers) to fund better recycling programs. The British government rejected the recommendations.

“Change is not happening fast enough,” said Press. “The situation is dire...If current consumption levels continue, the global fashion industry could account for one quarter of the world’s carbon budget.”

Press said the fact that most (around 70%) of our clothes are made from polyester doesn’t help; the material is non-biodegradable and derived from petroleum. It is also a major contributor to microplastic pollution. “Every time you wash your synthetic clothes,” said Press, “thousands of tiny plastic fibres wash down the drain.”

"If you buy any new clothes at all, whether from Kmart, Zara or Gucci, you are part of the fashion supply chain."

Before the Industrial Revolution, an abundance of fine clothes in extravagant materials was the preserve of those at the very top of the social tree. Marie Antoinette, for example, had 18 new pairs of kid gloves delivered every day in a basket topped with two yards of silk taffeta. Excess is not new. Access to it, however, is new, said Press.

Factories allowed the cheap production of clothes to happen at scale. Engineers invented weaving and spinning machines. But silk was still expensive. Could scientists not develop a more affordable silk that ordinary folk could enjoy? They could.

Press told the story of Hilaire Bernigaud, Comte de Chardonnet, who discovered his alternative silk by accident. Apparently, he knocked over a bottle of nitrocellulose in a photography darkroom. “Being lazy, he didn’t clear it up. He ducked out, and when he came back it had congealed, the evaporated liquid leaving behind a sticky residue of long thin fibres,” explained Press. ‘Chardonnet silk’ debuted at the Paris Exposition in 1889. Two years later, he opened the first commercial artificial silk factory in France - but it wasn’t to be. Early viscose was a highly flammable material, and Chardonnet’s factory burned down.

Said Press: “It was not until the 1920s that others figured out how to produce viscose in industrial quantities under safer conditions. I say safer because the chemicals and solvents used remained highly toxic, and OH&S wasn’t always the foreman’s highest concern. I don’t have the time and space to go into the story of the invention of nylon here, but its development changed the face of fashion forever. Synthetic fibres continue to dominate today.

“Remember those 100 billion garments?” said Press. New generation materials and artificial intelligence (AI) might provide the solutions. “Scientists and fashion designers are beginning to work together in new ways on more sustainable materials, and on



Left: Clare Press delivers the 2019 Walter Westman lecture at International House.

Below: Students take exacting notes using their smartphones.



harnessing the power of big data to get us out of some of the wicked holes we find ourselves in.”

She pointed to the Californian biotech company Bolt Threads and its Spidersilk yarn, which mimics the proteins used in spiderwebs to generate a strong, biodegradable artificial silk made from yeast, sugars and water. They’re also producing a vegan leather alternative from mycelium.

“Eco fibre innovation is important,” says Press. “If we increase material-to-material recycling as well, we might begin to kick our landfill habit. But if we’re not careful, we could be employing all these exciting new technologies but still be overproducing and underusing clothes.”

AI to the rescue? Big data could allow brands to design out waste by offering mass customisation - made-to-order

on demand. “I think that’s a thrilling idea, and we’re already starting to see the beginnings of it,” said Press. “But I’m not going to end on that because it’s not half as much fun as this: What if we dressed, not our physical selves, but our avatars?”

“Any gamers in the room?” she asked. “Gamers already live in a virtual world. Perhaps we all do, when you consider how much time we spend online. I suspect the ‘golden age’ of this stuff is going to come when the Internet of Things reaches the point at which we are all hyper-connected without having to click on a physical device. And yet, fashion designers are already stepping into the digital realm.

“Scandinavian fashion brand Carlings launched a purely digital collection last year. It was ground breaking for its accessibility as well as its form. A high-fashion garment off the runway might cost you a few hundred dollars, maybe even a few thousand. These

pieces started at \$11. Not that you could touch them. After purchasing an outfit, customers were invited to upload a picture of themselves for the Carlings’ design team to ‘fit’ the garments perfectly to their virtual self. Fantastic for Instagram. And fantastic for the environment! For this was a collection completely without negative environmental impacts. The garments required no wool, no silk, no polyester, no leather - no physical materials at all. We might call them zero impact, but for the power taken to keep the servers going. And the number of social media likes. Would you wear a Carlings look? You tell me.”

Clare Press presents the Wardrobe Crisis podcast on sustainable fashion.

Watch Clare’s lecture in full on our YouTube channel. Head to <http://bit.ly/westman2019>. Learn more about Walter Westman on the next page.

Walter Westman: A brother's recollections

By Robert S. Westman

The annual Walter Westman lecture is an ongoing tribute to the ideals of a pathfinding scientist and IH alumnus. Robert Westman reflects on his brother Walter's upbringing and personal life, revealing some of the diverse influences that stimulated his intellectual and ethical outlook on the world.

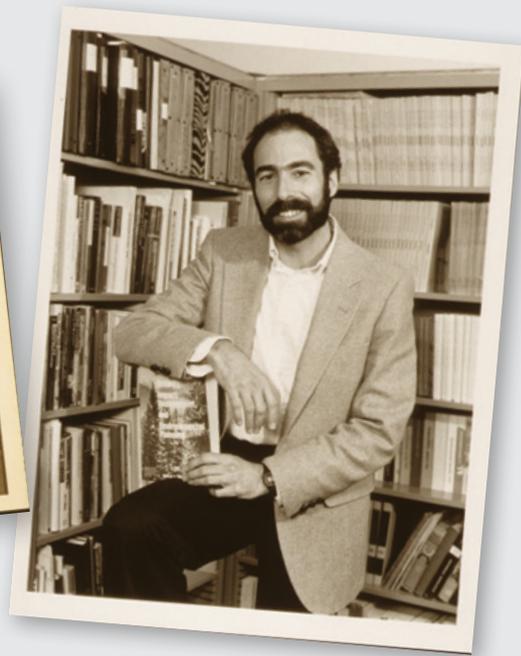


Hiking was a natural fit for Walter, who loved plants and the natural world. Image supplied.

Walter Emil Westman was born on November 5, 1945. As Walt's older brother by four years, I share some personal family recollections that I hope will provide a more intimate sense of who he was, and how he came to leave a unique mark on International House during his brief studies at Macquarie University from 1966-67.

These reflections may also help to illuminate what is better known about his public persona – his international reputation in plant ecology, and his founding of an organization in 1980 to recognize and support gay and lesbian scientists in the fight against homophobia.

Learning was highly valued by both our parents, but in ways that reflected their quite different life possibilities. Our mother, born Claire Berkowitz, graduated from New York University in 1934. This was early during the financially difficult years of the great depression, when many American universities still maintained admissions quotas for Jews. Neither of her parents had gone to college. Her father emigrated to the United States around 1905 from a small town in Hungary. Claire possessed genuine



literary talent that, in today's more liberated era for women, might have seen her become a writer or even a journalist. She enjoyed classical music and played the piano with some ability. She was also a highly skilled typist (140 words per minute), worked in business offices in New York City and in later years taught typing in our high school. She frequently discussed Walt's writing assignments with him and undoubtedly helped him develop his own style. At our mother's instigation, Walt kept a diary from the age of nine, and he sustained this practice throughout his life, often as a tool for self-reflection. Reading his daily entries, interesting and sometimes painful as it has been, has momentarily brought him back to life for me.

Our father was a man of considerable native intelligence but with little formal education. He arrived in the United States in 1922, two years before Congress passed the Immigration Act that sharply lowered the number of people admitted to the country from Asia, southern and eastern Europe and Russia. He spent his working life in the textile industry, mostly as a manufacturer of women's

gloves, later as a leather salesman. He sometimes joked, ruefully, that he had graduated from the 'school of hard knocks'. Under more favourable circumstances he might have enjoyed some kind of professional career, but his own childhood was scarred by very serious deprivations and losses.

Born Joseph Wiesemann (1901), our father lost both his parents before the age of ten. He had no memory of his mother, who died when he was about two. His father disappeared on a journey in the Carpathian Mountains somewhere between the Austro-Hungarian province of Galicia and Slovakia in east-central Europe. Our father spoke Czech and, when he arrived in New York City in 1922, immigration officials listed his birthplace as Prague, Czechoslovakia (although Czechoslovakia did not exist as a national entity before 1918).

When we were young, he told us stories of growing up in a small town south of Prague called Krásná Hora. These memories of his life in the village left a deep impression. One of the stories he told was of his friendship with a young man named Emil Hecht who, in the year or so before the 1917 Russian revolution,

proclaimed his enthusiasm for Lenin and communism. The relationship with Emil left a deep, life-long impression on our orphaned father, for whom Marx and Engels were virtually sanctified figures. Walt's middle name was given in memory of Emil, who had been gassed by the Nazis three years before Walt's birth.

Our father also remembered listening outside the window of a house on Friday nights as the mayor and three other residents played musical quartets, an experience that inspired him to learn the violin and later to encourage Walt to take up the instrument. I well remember, however, Walt's dislike of the admonitions (and occasional blows) that accompanied our father's autodidactic pedagogical technique: "No! Hold the bow straight! No, not that way! You have to practice more!" Notwithstanding this heavy-handed approach, Walt persisted and became quite accomplished. It was characteristic of him that, even under criticism, he could maintain some distance while observing his own feelings. In 1966, he took his violin with him to International House and on a later trip to the Fiji

Islands. Upon his death he had left it to be sold by a music shop in Berkeley. With the proceeds of the sale, his nephew Aaron acquired a viola and has since become a professional classical musician.

Returning to the U.S. from Australia in August 1967, Walt stopped in Prague and made contact with a family that our father had frequently mentioned. Walt then somehow made his way to Krásná Hora. He found a very little town built around a square and, thanks to its size, had no trouble finding someone to direct him to the tiny house where our father had once lived, on the second floor just above the local post office. There he met a woman (Fanča Porges) who remembered our father well – indeed, her parents had taken him into their family sometime around 1914 after his grandfather brought him to the town and left him there, never to return. This was the first time that we learned that our father had not been born in Czechoslovakia. In fact, he had been born in a Jewish shtetl in Galicia (Delyatyn/Oslav Bily), in the foothills of the Carpathians. When we asked him about it later, he had no memory of the language of his childhood. Walt's sleuthing had uncovered some key facts, previously unknown to us, all of which he wrote down in his diary – much as he kept careful notes of his botanical expeditions. And he related his discoveries to me quite soon afterward in London, where I had

just arrived to work on my doctorate in the history of science.

Walt's and my educational opportunities were incomparably better than those of our parents. In the 1960s, we were fortunate beneficiaries of the opening-up of universities to previously excluded social groups. The main challenge we faced prior to university was that, as our father's business declined, we were required to move frequently and were thus forced to leave behind old friends, making new ones in different neighbourhoods and changing schools often.

In late 1949 we moved to Puerto Rico, where our father had opened a glove-making factory. It was there that our last name was changed to Westman, with the intention of offering some protection against the antisemitism that our parents had experienced in their own lives. Between 1952 and 1955, Walt attended the Commonwealth School, a newly founded private school in Puerto Rico that offered instruction in English. His teachers could not say enough good things about him, and his grades were consistently at the top of his class – a pattern that would continue throughout his subsequent education. Furthermore, living on a lush tropical island stimulated his early interest in plants (I just preferred to eat them). In the fourth grade, I recall that he conducted a science project that involved hydroponics – growing plants in

highly oxygenated water. I believe this was the beginning of his interest in botany. By 1955, however, the glove factory venture collapsed and we returned to the U.S. For the rest of the decade, the family was downwardly mobile.

In 1962, the year that Walt applied to college, he was at the top of his high school class in New Rochelle, New York. Our parents were broke and their marriage was on the rocks. Swarthmore College was the premier liberal arts college in the country and, thanks to his stellar academic record, Walt was able to win enough scholarship support to escape the family's sinking ship. By the time he graduated in 1966 and left for Macquarie University, Australia represented for him a kind of liberation. It was 'far away' in more than one sense. It was a chance to learn about himself beyond the classroom, where he had long been successful. He had found a new forum in which to meet friends, and to freely explore his own inner world as well as a different part of the natural world. In Australia, he also began to forge his political identity as an environmentalist and to wrestle with new questions including, most urgently, whether to stay in Australia or to return and face the military draft and a war in which he did not believe.

June 22, 1967: "I have been thinking all day today, since last night about whether I should become an Australian citizen or return to the U.S.

“Australia represented for him a kind of liberation. It was ‘far away’ in more than one sense. It was a chance to learn about himself beyond the classroom.”

By staying in Australia, I would neatly evade any worry about the draft. But I do want to go to Cornell. Finally, I decided to take the risk of returning to the U.S., gambling on the idea that I will be allowed to complete my Ph.D. and that I will get [classified] either 1-0, or will appeal till I'm past 26, or will join the Peace Corps, or emigrate, renouncing citizenship. I should be able to do any of those things in an emergency anyway."

June 25, 1967: "Saw 'A Man for All Seasons.' True, it was not subtle in its point. But the point was good. That what you think is right for you, [you] should do. Of course, in my case, it is difficult for me to know what is right. But I promise myself that I won't say I didn't think about it. I've tried to think of the right answer."

July 1, 1967: "Another possibility: My social standards and thought say 'Go back. Work hard. Do good for society.'"

And, he did.

Robert S. Westman is Professor Emeritus in the Department of History at the University of California, San Diego.



The annual Walter Westman lecture, generously initiated by Roger Wescombe - one of Walt's treasured friends from International House - is an ongoing tribute that keeps alive Walt's spirit and ideals.

Head to our website to read more stories about Walter Westman, and to stream previous lectures online: <https://sydney.edu.au/international-house/alumni-and-community/community-events.html>

Alumni profile: **Sakhile Matlhare** and **Daniel Hagemeyer (IH 2011-12)**



Owners of the Frankfurt-based art space Sakhile&Me, these former IH Maze building residents live and breathe a life across cultures.

Far left: Daniel Hagemeyer.
Left: Sakhile Matlhare.
Photos by Vincent Yung.

What drew you both to International House, and what were you studying here?

My partner (Daniel Hagemeyer) and I were initially drawn to International House because we both had experience attending schools in countries other than our home countries. We wanted our experience in Sydney to include meeting other international students in the city. As graduate students, we had our own apartment at IH while still being able to participate in house events and share in the community. This was a great way to start life in a new city.

How did you both meet, and what effect has your experience of the house had on your lives?

We met in 2008 at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York. It was our experience there as international students that led us to apply to the University of Sydney, making the intentional decision to live at International House.

I grew up in Gaborone, Botswana and Daniel grew up in Frankfurt, Germany. Living at IH meant that, not only were we immersed in the city, but we were also getting to know other students who grew up, studied and worked in different countries including Namibia, South Africa, Singapore, Malaysia, the U.K. and of course Australia.

Together you run Sakhile&Me, an international contemporary art exhibition space in Frankfurt, Germany. What motivated you to start this gallery, and what does a typical day look like for you as gallery owners?

Sakhile&Me is a space that comes from doctoral research I did while I was at Northwestern University in Evanston/Chicago, following our time in Sydney. The research looked at the working relationships between artists and other cultural producers (art historians, curators, collectors and other art enthusiasts) and highlighted that much of the labour that artists do remains unseen, unacknowledged or uncompensated. The idea behind Sakhile&Me is to use an exploratory approach to share a glimpse into these lesser known aspects of artistic



Above: Located in Frankfurt, Germany, the gallery is a space for exhibition and research that brings together established and emerging contemporary artists, curators, critics and researchers.

Right: Sakhile and Daniel feature an international collection of art with a specific focus on Africa and her diasporas.



work, and what it can take to sustain creative practice over time. Learning from museums and cultural centres, our program aims to incorporate education and research into the programming and operation of the gallery.

As we work with artists based mostly outside of Germany, much of our daily work involves communicating and coordinating with them. This, combined with the different projects we develop, leaves little room for an 'average' day per se.

What gets you out of bed each morning?

Getting to work with people whose work we love, and with whom we share a respectful and warm working relationship, is a delight. It is an unmatched joy to collaborate with people who trust us with their work, and who appreciate our creativity and suggestions as we present their work to different audiences, both within the gallery in Frankfurt and at art fairs in and outside of Germany. It is one thing to love the work that you do, and it is another thing to love the people you work with – having both is a blessing we can't afford to take for granted. It really does encourage us to champion their work and to stay accountable in our contributions as their gallerists.

Do you have any particularly fond memories from your time at IH?

Yes, we both remember a handful of friends we made during our time at IH, as we would participate in some of the events that were often organized by and for residents. We fondly remember the social gatherings that centred around learning, such as the IH 'TEDx-style' presentations, and the days where we cooked meals from our respective countries, giving everyone a summary of the ingredients and how the meals were prepared. I think we both learned some invaluable skills during those bonding sessions, like how fun it can be to create innovative biotech solutions, or how to drink milk through a half-eaten Tim-Tam!

A beacon of hope for children in Bo

Written by Gwen Ng (IH 1968-70), Bo Children's Hospital Foundation

The Bo Children's Hospital (BCH) in Sierra Leone is now in its eighth year of operation and has treated more than 26,000 children since opening in June 2012.

The hospital is making a major contribution to the improvement of children's health in Bo and surrounding districts.

Although it is a long road to the goal of giving children in Sierra Leone the kind of health care children enjoy in developed countries, encouraging progress is already being made. The Save the Children Fund recently reported that, since 2000, there has been a significant drop worldwide in the under-five child death rate, with Sierra Leone recording the biggest improvement. We feel encouraged to think that the work at the Bo Children's Hospital has contributed to Sierra Leone's notable improvement in paediatric health outcomes.

Bo Children's Hospital now has a day surgery operating theatre, enabling minor surgery to be performed on-site and providing facilities for visiting doctors to perform much-needed operations. UK-based Sierra Leonian surgeon Dr David Sellu has

recently visited BCH and has already performed minor surgical procedures, showing great interest in more regular involvement.

The hospital continues to run a vaccination program, a malnutrition clinic and training for nurses. More than 50 children receive vaccinations at the hospital each week. Nurses travel to more remote villages on motor bikes to administer vaccinations. The malnutrition clinic is part of the general education program for parents and carers, and involves nutrition and healthcare education while monitoring the growth and development of the children.

The Faculty of Health Sciences of Njala University in Bo sends their trainee nurses and paramedics to BCH to gain clinical experience. And recently an ETAT+ (Emergency Triage Assessment Treatment plus) team made a familiarisation visit to BCH to conduct a workshop for the nursing staff in managing paediatric emergencies. ETAT+ is the latest WHO approach to assessing a sick and collapsed child at triage, during consultation and on the wards.

The Bo Children's Hospital Foundation is a non-profit organisation and is run entirely by volunteers; every dollar donated goes directly to the hospital. The local community in Bo, with the help of overseas donors, runs this hospital to improve the healthcare of their children now and into the future. It is a testament both to a community wanting to build a better future, and to the generosity of humanity across international borders.

The brainchild of IH Alumni Award for Achievement winner Dr Nuli Lemoh (IH 1968), the Bo Children's Hospital was established with funds raised by SUIHAA and Rotary Clubs in Australia, and continues to receive donations via resident-and alumni-led initiatives such as the annual IHMA charity night. To learn more about the hospital, visit

www.bochildrenshospital.org.au.



The Bo Children's Hospital in Sierra Leone.
Image supplied.

Semester 2 events

IH residents enjoy many opportunities to celebrate, collaborate, and create memorable moments together. This issue's photoboard provides a brief snapshot of a colourful semester.





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- 1 Set against the backdrop of the city skyline and harbour bridge, residents chose Luna Park to celebrate the year's end at the annual IHMA ball. Photo by SMARS Photography.
- 2 Siddharth Mehra and Senal Munasinghe host I-Night 2019.
- 3 The I-Night technical crew pours significant time and energy into staging I-Night. Their sense of achievement at the end is justifiably palpable.
- 4 Few events manage to bring almost the entire IH community together like I-Night. This year's "greatest show" themed event was a colourful and energetic spectacle, and a terrific testament to the collaborative and theatrical prowess of IH residents.
- 5 IH men put up a solid fight in the intramural volleyball competition. Photo by Musau Kilonzo.
- 6 A dramatic moment in the women's final of the intramural futsal competition. Photo by Musau Kilonzo.
- 7 The rooftop welcome party marked the start of Semester 2. Photo by Musau Kilonzo.
- 8 Xmas in July is now an annual lunch event for residents, and a novel way to kick-off Semester 2. Featuring IH elf Xinya (Lydia) Liu and Asif Md. Hasibish Shahidi as santa. Photo by Matthew Smith.

Message from the SUIHAA president

Written by Dr Rosamond Madden AM

One of the pleasures of my role as SUIHAA president is the opportunity to connect frequently with alumni from around the world. The links between SUIHAA and IH have been particularly strong since we celebrated the house's 50th anniversary in 2017. Over the past few years, we have been determined in our advocacy for IH and its future, particularly the importance of maintaining the house's vision and distinctive residence life program.

Many alumni have wider international networks as well, for work and other purposes. These networks are made more immediate and effective with the various technologies we can now use for communication. Put these two observations together – the strength of IH connections and new communication methods at our disposal – and it becomes obvious that it is time for the SUIHAA Committee to become more international in 'real time'. To this end, we issue the following invitation:

We would like to invite alumni from outside Australia to nominate now for the 2019-20 committee. There are perhaps two vacancies to fill following the 22 September AGM (the first time we invited nominations from overseas residents). We plan to run future committee meetings via Zoom to enable your participation. It

is envisaged that this will particularly suit alumni in the Asia-Pacific region, where time differences are smaller. Various contributions to the work of the committee (for example, newsletter content) can be made via email.

Annual general meeting

At SUIHAA's recent annual general meeting we celebrated a busy year of events and advocacy, as reported in SUIHAA newsletters and in the last two issues of *International House magazine*. In my president's report to members, I thanked other members of the SUIHAA Executive and Committee, as well as Jessica Carroll, Dr Bradley Kunda, IH staff and the IHMA Executive. We are very appreciative of Jessica's tireless efforts and wonderful work. Outgoing committee members were sincerely thanked: Dr Dominick Ng, Gwen Ng, Dr Richard Ng, and Lyn Woodger Grant. Dom and Lyn have agreed to continue serving as 'advisers' to the committee.

2019 SUIHAA Committee

- Dr Rosamond Madden AM, President (IH 1968-1970)
- Dr James Kane, Secretary (IH 2007-09)
- Brittany Ridley, Treasurer (IH 2013-16)

(While James and I are continuing in our roles for the time being, James will be starting a new job in Adelaide in 2020 and will transition out of his role. He will then remain on the committee as a general member).

The general committee members for 2019 are:

- Karam Ali (IH 2016-17)
- Dr Harry Bergsteiner (IH 1967-1970)
- Nicole Dunn (IH 2015-17)
- Moe Hassan (IH 2014-18)
- Julia Krattli (IH 1999-2001)
- Joshua Lee (IH 2007-2011)
- Paul Reisner (IH 1983-86, 1993)
- Karen Rowe-Nurse (IH 1980-81)

Ex-officio members from IH and IHMA will also continue to be part of the committee.

Music of the world concert

Also held on 22 September was the excellent *Music of The World* concert. Highlights are too many to list, but the array of music and the wonderful multicultural collaborations were a joy to see and hear. Residents and alumni were among the composers and performers as well as others, including soprano Rebecca MacCallion and the Sydney University Graduate Choir. Chris Bowen conducted a new performance of his composition

There are three things that will endure in this world – a lovely work commissioned by SUIHAA for the 50th anniversary of IH. The concert was devised by Dr Bradley Kunda, to whom we are extremely grateful. SUIHAA funded the event, including musicians’ costs and catering (an afternoon tea following the concert).

SUIHAA advocacy

SUIHAA advocacy has been chiefly via the new Steering Group as well as the IH Council, both of which I am a member as president of SUIHAA. Our document ‘Alumni ideas on IH future’, prepared for the Steering Group, was presented at its first meeting and was also published in SUIHAA’s alumni newsletter in August. It was prepared on the basis of: SUIHAA strategic work, meetings and consultation since early 2017; correspondence with alumni; letters from alumni to the Vice-Chancellor; and a special meeting in June, where participants focussed on three key components they wished to see in a future IH. We have worked to incorporate the University’s expectations and have described how an ‘international village’ could be accommodated on the current site, comprising an expanded hall of residence, the existing rotunda as a space for meetings and concerts, and including a new multi-purpose university building and plaza for cafes and shops with an international ‘flavour’.

Do you have news to share?
Please write to suihaa@sydney.edu.au so we can include your notice in our next issue.



James Kane and Stephanie Wong on their wedding day in Berrima, NSW. Image supplied.

Notices

Weddings

James Kane (IH 2007-09) and Stephanie Wong (IH 2007-09)

Married Sunday 18 August 2019 at Bendooley Estate, Berrima (near Bowral).

James writes: “We had a great turnout of old friends from IH, including: Josh Lee, Meenal Mahtani, Deni Correa, Gagandeep Kaur, Andrew Hilliar, Sam Ferraro, Samantha Yari, Philippa Perry, Dominick Ng, Shalini Fernando, Suranjan Perera, Sarah McLain, David Potter, Jess Edington, and Ji-hyun Kim. It was about as perfect a day as we could have hoped for and we felt very lucky to be able to celebrate with so many good friends from around the world.”



A strong turnout of IH friends at James’ and Stephanie’s wedding. Image supplied.



Wedding party for Akbar Saleem and Stephany Berrio Perez. Image supplied.

Akbar Saleem (IH 2017) and Stephany Berrio Perez (IH 2017)

Married at Graffiti Lounge, Art House Hotel on 24 September 2019. IH guests included Arturo Blanco (IH 2017, pictured).

Vale

Renate Ursula Messerle (6 November 1932 – 6 September 2019; IH Fellow 1991)

Renate Ursula Messerle was a member of the IH Women's Committee from 1967-1990, during which time she served as honorary treasurer for about 10 years. She was active in inviting new residents to her home, and greatly enjoyed treating a bus load of new students to a barbeque and a swim. Renate had spent time living abroad and it was important to her to make students feel welcome.

Renate also served the University more broadly, including 30 years as a member of the Chancellor's Committee (1984-2014) as well as membership of the University's Women's Group until 2017. The University was an important part of her life. She was married to Hugo Messerle, who was professor and head of the Department of Electrical Engineering for almost 20 years.

Renate's strong belief in the importance of education underpinned her involvement with International House. She dedicated much time and



Renate Messerle. Image supplied.

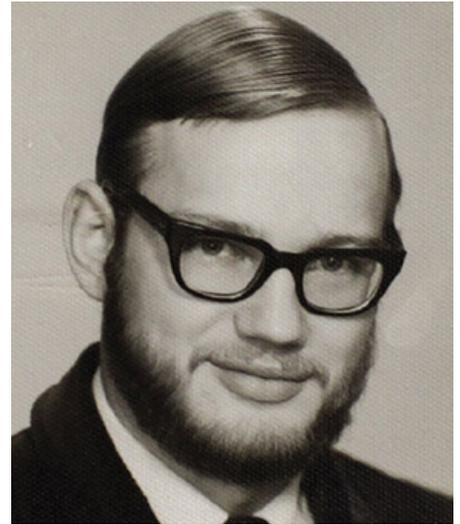
energy to the University and valued the colleagues she worked with. Both her daughters, Barbara and Karin, graduated from the University. She will be greatly missed by her family and friends.

Written by Karin and Barbara Messerle

John William Powles (15 October 1943 – 15 September 2018; IH 1967)

John William Powles was an internationally regarded academic and a devoted public health educator. Born in 1943, John grew up in rural Australia, in the Riverina region of New South Wales (NSW), where his father had numerous business interests and his mother worked as a nurse. After briefly considering a career in the seminary, John studied medicine at the University of Sydney.

Even as a young student, his calling to work on social issues was evident. At the University John was a keen advocate for social justice. He founded the Sydney University Humanist Society, which was involved in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. In 1965 he was the vice president of the group Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA), led by Charlie Perkins, the first Aboriginal student to graduate from the University. The group organised the 'SAFA bus tour,' also known as the 'freedom ride,' around regional New South Wales, modelled on civil rights actions in the US. The freedom riders drew national and international media attention to the issue of racial segregation in Australia, helping to prompt public debate on racism that led eventually to the 1967 referendum and the transfer of Aboriginal affairs from state to federal government. In 1966 John's interest in global cultures took him on a study tour to China during the cultural revolution.



John Powles. Image: International House archives.

John lived at International House in its first year of operation (1967) and graduated from Sydney University the following year. Throughout his career, he held academic positions at the University of Sussex, Monash University, and the University of Cambridge.

People often described John as a 'big thinker' and someone who had an exceptional capacity to see the 'big picture.' John's research interests were broad and his analysis deep and rigorous. With John's death, public health lost not only a great intellectual contributor but also a passionate and kind educator.

John stayed active and enjoyed life in retirement. He had a heart attack as he was swimming. Only three days before his death, he submitted his last contribution to the *Oxford Textbook of Global Public Health*. He leaves his wife, Adela; daughter, Rebecca; and granddaughter, Sylvia.

Adapted from an obituary originally published in *BMJ* 2019; 366: 14681. Written by Hebe Naomi Gouda, Adela Sanz, Rebecca Powles and Carol Brayne.



Support our community

International House welcomes donations to support our mission of international understanding and friendship.

By supporting International House's scholarships and bursaries, you will help ensure that the life-long friendships and deep cultural understanding that comes from living at the house continues to thrive in the hearts and minds of the next generation of residents.

sydney.edu.au/donate-ih



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