

Otago

ART HISTORY & THEORY NEWSLETTER
2009



NEWS

Art History and Theory was reviewed as part of the Department of History in 2008. The review commended our achievements, both in teaching and research. It also recommended the change of name from the Department of History to that of the Department of History and Art History (Te Tari Kōrero Nehe me te Mahi Toi Onamata), which has now been implemented. This was unanimously supported as it enhances the visibility of our programme. While we will willingly share our name with all colleagues, the Art History and Theory programme will continue and we intend to maintain our distinct academic traditions. At the same time, especially where there are shared interests of research, a friendly and indeed closer interface with History will also continue, as recommended in the review.

Other aspects of the report strongly advocated the maintenance and enhancement of audio-visual facilities, not least university-provided hardware. These we warmly endorse. The majority of our slides used for teaching purposes have now been scanned. This, together with ARTstor and legitimate use of the Internet provides us with a good basis for teaching and learning. Last year, together with our History colleagues, we underwent a physical transformation and heating upgrade. So far most people seem to be happy most of the time with their new, enhanced lifestyle!

Mark Stocker had a busy 2008. In February, he delivered a paper on the Sir George Grey statue at the College Art Association conference in Dallas. In June he delivered the annual Duldig lecture on Sculpture at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. In October he spent two hectic weeks on a Humanities Research Grant assisted trip to Europe. During this time he mined the archives of Kedleston Hall, the famous and beautiful Robert Adam-designed country house, to find out whatever he could about Bertram Mackennal's double-effigy monument to Lord and

Lady Curzon located in the church next door. This paper is currently under consideration for publication, while a separate article on the monument will be published by *The Burlington Magazine* in its dedicated sculpture issue this November. As well, Mark spent several hours interviewing the New Zealand born and trained medallist and sculptor, Marian Fountain, who has a studio in Paris. He is publishing two articles on her work, one for the British Museum edited *The Medal* and the other for *Art New Zealand*. Mark has been invited to give a plenary paper at the Numismatic Association of Australia's biennial conference at Macquarie University in November. His subject will be the New Zealand coinage designs of 1935-9 –including the ultra rare and valuable 'Waitangi' crown. Te Papa published five of his short essays in the massive volume *The Art of Te Papa*; he also assisted with its editing. His editorship of the *Journal of New Zealand Art History* runs to its eighth volume (30) this year.

Erika Wolf was on Research and Study Leave for the second half of 2008, during which time she took part in residencies at the New York Public Library and the Woodrow Wilson Institute Center for Scholars (Washington D.C.). She also delivered papers at academic conferences at Cambridge, the Freie Universität (Berlin), and Russian Ethnographic Museum (Saint Petersburg). In 2006, Erika published the book *Ilf and Petrov's American Road Trip: The 1935 Travelogue of Two Soviet Writers* (Princeton Architectural Press), a reconstruction of an historic Soviet photo series written by a pair of famous Soviet satirical writers. This book was the result of research conducted during her recent Fulbright Fellowship to Russia. Earlier this year, Erika's essay on Rodchenko's photographs of a Soviet forced labour camp was included in *Picturing Russia: Essays on Visual Evidence* (Yale University Press). The latest issue of the flagship photographic magazine *Aperture* will feature her article "The Author as Photographer: Soviet Writers and the Camera."

Warren Feeney completed his PhD ('The Canterbury Society of Arts 1880-1996: Conformity and Dissension Re-Visited') last year. This thesis analysed why the CSA was the predominant art society in twentieth century New Zealand, making an essential contribution to New Zealand's cultural history. Canterbury University Press has indicated its interest in publishing an edited version of the thesis as a book.

Also completed were MAs by Hannah Burgess ('The Mirror of Art: A Kantian Theory of Art Criticism'), Jessica Tasman-Jones ('Kuki Shuzo & the Aesthetics of IKI') and Ralph Body ('Alfred Henry O'Keeffe in Retrospect: Paint and Personality').

Four new PhD students were enrolled in 2008, two of them (Hannah Burgess and Joanne Campbell) with senior scholarships, while Bernard Hamlin, Chanelle Carrick and Erin Dreiser all received MA scholarships.

Two of our postgraduate students, Ralph Body and Hannah Burgess, together with Mark Stocker, delivered papers at 'The Victorian Sensorium', the Australasian Victorian Studies Association Conference, held at the Otago Museum in February 2009.

During the semester break in 2008 a group of eight art history and theory students spent a week exploring the latest Biennale of Sydney. Curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, 'Revolutions: Forms That Turn' was a unique and fascinating exhibition of both recent contemporary works and those of artists, such as Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Beuys, who could be considered revolutionary, those who have challenged and expanded past

artistic boundaries. The Biennale provided the students with the opportunity to engage with the international art scene and to experience firsthand the nature of large-scale festivals. They attended several events, including artist's talks and a public lecture by the curator. The department plans to organise a similar trip for students in 2010.

Some of our graduates are achieving great things: Tessa Yee won a postgraduate scholarship to study an MA in Curatorship at the University of Melbourne, while Genevieve Silvester won a very lucrative scholarship to study Art Conservation at the Courtauld Institute, University of London and is currently appearing on TV commercials for her Young Achievers Award sponsors, AMP. Aaron Kreisler (Dunedin Public Art Gallery) and Natasha Beckman (Manager, Auckland Festival) worked together with Peter Stupples on a project called FNO, which was part of the Auckland Festival 2009 Visual Arts Programme.

The programme's graduates continue to move into academic teaching careers. MA graduate Jo Campbell taught a summer school for the programme on New Zealand contemporary art in 2008, before beginning her PhD, and PhD graduate Natalie Smith took up the role in 2009, teaching a paper entitled 'Art and Fashion: 1900 to the Present'.

Peter Stupples has also recently curated an art exhibition hosted in the University of Otago School of Law entitled 'Art in Law'.



PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY CHANELLE CARRICK

DR DAVID BELL

After many years of academic and career interests straddling both the University of Otago and the Dunedin College of Education, following the merger of the two organisations in January 2007, Dr David Bell was able to find a home in both. He is continuing in his role as Subject Leader in Art Education and Associate Coordinator of Postgraduate Programmes at the newly renamed University of Otago College of Education, and also teaching papers in the Art History and Theory programme where he had recently completed his PhD.

With a fine arts degree from Otago Polytechnic, a teaching degree from Christchurch College of Education, and most of a history degree from Otago and Canterbury Universities, David's connection with Art History and Theory dates back to the early 1990s, when he was Teaching Fellow in the newly formed programme. After completing his history degree in 1996, he began studying Art History and Theory, completing a postgraduate diploma in 1999.

By now he was working at the Dunedin College of Education as Head of Department of Art Education, which trains students for teaching in art and art history from early childhood education, all the way up to secondary teaching. His career was strongly linked to his study – his fourth year catalogue project related to an exhibition of the impact the College of Education had on art in New Zealand. He notes that New Zealand's body of art has been significantly influenced by art education at the College - Ralph Hotere only one of many significant artists who might have been lost to the art world had he chosen teaching after graduating from the College in 1952.

His fourth year dissertation was published as *Chushingura and the Floating World: The Representation of Kanadehon Chushingura in Ukiyo-e Prints* in 2001, an impressive result for a piece of undergraduate research.

He immediately enrolled in doctoral study, focusing further on ukiyo-e. These 'floating world' artworks, either woodblock prints or paintings, were produced between the 17th and 19th centuries, and were particularly popular around Edo (Tokyo). His research tried to provide explanations of the circumstances that contributed to the art process – the medium, pictorial function, and the temperament and sensibilities of the artist – and which led to the distinctive pictorial character of the art object. It has also seen publication as a monograph, *Ukiyo-e Explained*.

When the Dunedin College of Education was merged into the University of Otago, an opportunity to create a teaching relationship was made. David's first offering



Suzuki Harunobu (1725 – 70?), Autumn Breeze, Aki no kaze chuban nishiki-e woodblock print, late 1760s
Private collection, Dunedin

was a split 300-400 level paper on ukiyo-e. Then in 2008 he taught a 200-level survey course on Japanese art. It's an experience that both he and the students have been enjoying. 'It's a wonderful opportunity to develop my own interest in both the historical patterns and theoretical frameworks of Japanese art at a level that I wouldn't be able to via teaching elsewhere.'

His research has also not been idle. In 2007 *Hokusai's Project: The Articulation of Pictorial Space* was published. Currently he is working on a series of prints by Utagawa Kunisada which showed actors in the roles of the famous 47 Ronin. He notes that Dunedin is well-resourced for the study of ukiyo-e art. A significant collection – particularly in quality – is available at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, through the donation of significant art collectors who traveled internationally early in the twentieth century and brought the art back to New Zealand. He recently curated an exhibition 'The Face of Iki', which looked at the distinctive sensibility of the brothel quarters.

In 2009 he has again taught his 300/400 level offering on Ukiyo-e, adding a welcome diversity to the programme's curriculum.

ALUMNI PROFILE: RUTH HARVEY

Ruth Harvey (BA Hons 1998, MA 2005) has found her niche as Curator of Pictorial Collections at Puke Ariki (a combined museum, library, and visitors centre) in New Plymouth. Her job includes responsibility for the fine arts collection, which consists of nearly half a million items, mostly photographs. Collection management, cataloguing, exhibition planning, digital assets, and an image delivery service fill her day.

It's a job she feels well prepared for, in part because of her studies at Otago. Studying for her honours degree at the University of Otago was an easy choice, as she grew up in Dunedin. The excellent reputations of the arts degree at the University meant that staying in Dunedin was not a sacrifice. After completing her undergraduate degree in Art History and Theory, she travelled, notably two years in Melbourne working at the Centre for Contemporary Photography. This inspired a previously unrealised interest in the medium. The arrival of Dr Erika Wolf at Otago, with her research expertise in photography led to a return to Otago to undertake postgraduate research.

Ruth's research explored photographic theory in the three-dimensional light installations of Bill Culbert. Culbert's art is often presented as photographs of installations, rather than

installations themselves, so the thesis argued that photography informs much of his work, an angle which has been largely ignored in writing on his artwork.

Following graduation she took up a short-term contract at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery working on the Julia Morison 'a loop around a loop' exhibition, and then a year at Milford Galleries, a private art gallery in Dunedin. She also freelanced as a researcher for the Christchurch Art Gallery on its major Bill Hammond exhibition, 'Jingle Jangle Morning' and wrote several articles for *Art New Zealand*, *Architecture New Zealand* and *The Journal of New Zealand Art History*.

Now at Puke Ariki, she enjoys works with old daguerreotypes and ambrotypes (nineteenth century methods of photography): "They have such a fabulous sense of 'object-ness' about them, which contemporary photographs often lack". In particular she notes the 1850s daguerreotype of Caroline and Sarah Barrett, which is one of the earliest known photographs of Maori in New Zealand. Since she is relatively new in the position, she finds that she is still discovering gems throughout the collection, making her job often a voyage of discovery through art objects.



PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY RUTH HARVEY