

**FRAN  
FEST**

**FRAN FEST (Feminist Renewal Art Network)  
Symposium: Feminism, Art and Activism: 40 years**

**Saturday 16 September: Feminism, Art Practices and Histories  
Sunday 17 September: Gender and the Museum**

Radford Auditorium (AGSA)

Convenors

Jude Adams

Professor Catherine Speck

A/Professor Alison Inglis

Mia Van den Bos

**In partnership with the Art Gallery of South Australia, the Australian Institute  
of Art History, and the Fay Gale Centre for Research on Gender, University of  
Adelaide**

**Sponsors: Adelaide City Council and Arts SA**



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Research on Gender



## **Saturday 16 September: Feminism, Art Practices and Histories Program**

**10.00- 10.10:** Introduction to FRAN FEST and remembering *The Women's Show (1977)*: Jude Adams

**10.10-11.10am:** Keynote Presentation: Catriona Moore and Jacqueline Millner: Femofuturism

**Coffee – 11.10-11.30pm**

**11.30-1.00pm: Caring for Past and Present Art**

Anne Marsh: Doing Feminism

Petra Mosmann: Archive, Art and History: a feminist archival method

Louise Mayhew: My Story working on Her Story

Juliette Peers: "Poor but honest versus "rich and 'successful"

**Lunch 1.00-2.00pm**

**2.00-3.30: Contemporary Art and New Perspectives: Two Parallel Sessions**

**Session 1: Radford Auditorium**

Courtney Pedersen: 'Look at Me': feminism, contemporary art and the ecologies of attention

Leigh Robb: The sisterhood: lateral strategies in feminist curating

Rachel Haynes: Performing the Archive

Paula van Beek: Selfie Feminism: contemporary identity art practices and the complication of #visibility

**Session 2: Function Room**

Georgia Banks: It Didn't Start with You: the wound, the archive and re-enactment

Su Yang: Reframing with Feminism: the female image in contemporary Chinese art

Zoe Freney: Art and the Movements of Motherhood

Jasmine Symons: Why have there been no great mother artists?

**3.30 - 4.00 Coffee**

**4.00 - 5.00: Two Parallel Sessions**

**Session 1: Women, Careers and Equality (Radford Auditorium)**

Elvis Richardson: Is someone else enjoying your career?

Natalie Thomas: nattysolo (one woman, one camera, no film)

Brigid Noone: Working between collective and individual art practice

**Session 2: Intersectional feminism in the South Australian arts (Function Room)**

Aida Azin, Haneen Martin, Melissa McGrath, Amanda Radomi and Jonno Revanche. Organised by Mia van den Bos

**5.00 - 5.30 Drinks at the Migration Museum – courtesy of Coriole Wines**

**5.30 - 6.30 Performance at the Migration Museum:** The feminist labour of re-membering at the Destitute Asylum: Corinne Ball, Mandy Paul and Nikki Sullivan

## **Sunday 17 September: Gender and the Museum Program**

### **10.00 - 10.10: Introduction to Gender and the Museum: Catherine Speck**

#### **10.10-11.10am: Art World Activists**

Rebecca Coates: COUNTESS and the regions: Shepparton Art Museum (SAM) as case-study

Gary Dufour: Growing a Gift: The Cruthers Art Foundation

Tracey Whiting: People are a Cultural Institution's most Valuable Asset

Angela Bailey: Art and Activism in the Archive

#### **Coffee – 11.10-11.30pm**

### **11.30-11.40: Introduction to Gender and Museum Professionals: Alison Inglis**

#### **11.40-1.00pm: Museum Professionals**

Nici Cumpston – Tarnanthi - an artist led approach to curating and working with dynamic women artists from the SA Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands

Lara Nicholls: Australian Women Abstractionists

Jo Holder: The Cross Art Projects as seen through the lens of gender

Elizabeth Pearce: Feminism and Uncertainty

#### **Lunch 1.00-2.00pm**

### **2.00-3.30: Gender and the Museum: Two Parallel Sessions**

#### **Session 1: Radford Auditorium: Feminism in action in the museum**

Joanna Mendelssohn: Joan Kerr: the making of a feminist art historian

Mandy Paul: 'Good timing: feminism in the (history) museum'

Maree Clark and Fran Edmonds: Aboriginal women as artists and 'culture-makers' in southeast Australia

Susan Sheridan: Portraits of the modernist woman artist in some Australian novels

#### **Session 2: Function Room: Feminist gaze on curating and collections**

Ros Prosser: Vonni Diva Showgirl: Costumes and Stories

Mandy Treagus: From Koloa Fakatonga to Fine Art: Robin White and RuhuFifita's Tapa Collaborations

Sue Kneebone: A Feminist Guide to Pipe Smoking

Celia Dottore: Affirmative objects: exhibiting Indigenous women's craft

#### **3.30-4pm coffee**

### **4.00- 4.30pm: Gender, the Museum and Interventions**

Radford auditorium: VNX Matrix

Function Room: Angela Hesson: Murmur: An installation by Rosslynd Piggott at The Johnston Collection

Donor's Lounge: Kate Warren: Bringing Women into the Museum: *The Australian Women's Weekly* Art Prize, 1955–1959

### **4.30-5.00pm: Radford Auditorium: Plenary session**

## Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Saturday 16 September

### 10.10-11.10am: Keynote Presentation: Jacqueline Millner and Catriona Moore: Femofuturism

From afar, feminist cultural politics sometimes looks like a patchwork of spot-fires. With the fragmentation of Women's Liberation as a cohesive, organised movement, feminism today as an evolving, multifaceted project nonetheless inspires all manner of art-related knowledge, creating a community of thinkers and makers. For some time now, much of our ideas about gender and sexual differences has taken its lead from forceful artworks generated in increasingly radical yet beleaguered art schools, through opportunist art exhibitions, and discussed during 'off-campus' pedagogic events and through online engagements. These seemingly diffused spaces of analysis, affect and action nonetheless braid together strands of academic, art and activist practice through the speculative forms of associative thinking that were first facilitated in the poetic laboratories of 1970s-style studio and street politics.

Our paper looks to these associative spaces from which we continue to theorise the phenomenological import of embodied gender difference: for when the body is foregrounded, as in much contemporary performance, sculptural installation and video work, so is gendered and sexualised difference. This synergy between art history, theory and practical investigation remains one of feminism's important and hard-won lessons, and continues to be exercised in a reflexive to-and-fro that gives weight to our long-standing claims that feminism can never be considered as an art movement; as just another postmodern 'ism'. In the spirit of this associative and reflexive politics, we think it's time to reflect on some currently popular 'isms' of feminism's own making.

**Dr Jacqueline Millner** is Associate Professor of Visual Arts at La Trobe University, Australia, having previously been Associate Professor of Art History and Theory at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney. She has published widely on contemporary Australian and international art in key anthologies, journals and catalogues of national and international institutions. Her books include *Conceptual Beauty: Perspectives on Australian Contemporary Art* (2010, Sydney: Artspace), *Australian Artists in the Contemporary Museum* (with Jennifer Barrett, London: Ashgate, 2014) and *Fashionable Art* (with Adam Geczy, London: Bloomsbury, 2015). She co-convenes the research cluster Contemporary Art and Feminism at the University of Sydney and is currently writing a book on Contemporary Art and Feminism with Catriona Moore.

**Dr Catriona Moore** has researched and published extensively on modern and contemporary art and feminism over the past four decades, with particular focus on the Australian context. She is an active member of the 'Contemporary Art and Feminism' research group, and teaches in the Department of Art History at the University of Sydney.

### 11.30-1.00pm: Caring for Past and Present Art

#### Anne Marsh: Doing Feminism

The resurgence of a process-orientated methodology has its roots in the small activist and consciousness raising groups of the early women's liberation movement. After decades of representational art about women, the body, sexuality and the performative some artists are turning to relational and participatory ways of making art. Although this art has been shown on the Biennale circuit (and been neo-liberalised), little attention has been given to its roots in earlier experimental art or the intersection with activist and feminist models. Anne will discuss a practice of doing feminism in and through art by looking at works by contemporary Australian artists, some are associated with her project *Doing Feminism / Sharing the World*, 2017/18. [www.wafa.net.au](http://www.wafa.net.au)

## Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Saturday 16 September cont.

**Professor Anne Marsh** is Professorial Fellow at the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne. Her books include: *The Culture of Photography in Public Space* (Intellect, 2015, ed. with Melissa Miles and Daniel Palmer), *Performance Ritual Document* (Macmillan, 2014), *LOOK: Contemporary Australian Photography, since 1980* (Macmillan, 2010), *Pat Brassington: This is Not a Photograph* (Quintus/University of Tasmania, 2006), *The Darkroom: Photography and the Theatre of Desire* (Macmillan, 2003) and *Body and Self: Performance Art in Australian, 1969-1992* (Oxford University Press, 1993, Kindle edition 2015). Anne has published widely in journals and magazines, and has been Melbourne contributing editor for *Eyeline Contemporary Visual Arts* since 1997. In 2015 she curated *Performance Presence/Video Time* at the Australian Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide. She has received generous support for her research from the Australian Research Council most recently for *Women, Feminism and Art in Australia since 1970* (ARC Discovery Project 2016-2018).

### **Petra Mosmann: Archive, Art and History: a feminist archival method?**

Recently, working with feminist archives has emerged as a method to address inter-generational conflict (Eichhorn, 2013). Rather than imagining the archive as hostile territory that must be breached or as a site for critical engagement with the past, the Archive or archives are often framed as an inter-generational contemporary activist/art medium. FRAN FEST, for example, appears to experiment with the feminist archive on these terms, treating the archive as an approach and as a site that orients us towards the present and future rather than H/history. My approach, to an extent, considers the feminist archive on these terms. However, I am (mostly) a historian, and in History, imagining the archive as present/future oriented constitutes a minor disciplinary transgression. Historians primarily treat archives as routine sites that orient us towards the past, to the particular moment a 'source' is created or inscribed, and this temporality is usually applied regardless of the donor/archivist's intentions or the politics of using archives. This paper briefly presents my method and case studies for critical discussion, and is structured around Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's (2002) metaphor of the book as exhibition.

**Petra Mosmann** is a PhD candidate in History and Women's Studies at Flinders University. Her current research critically engages with post-archival turn archive studies, and argues that historians should (re)turn to archival studies to reconsider the discipline's relationship with the A/archive(s). Her research focuses broadly on Australian 'second wave feminism' and specifically discusses the 'Double Our Numbers' banner from the Pine Gap Women's Peace Camp, badge collections held by the Adelaide Women's Liberation Movement Archive, Germaine Greer's coat, Faith Bandler's gloves, Bon Hull's papers and various screen printed posters dating from the 1970s and 1980s. Mosmann majored in History and Gender Studies, with first class honours, at the University of Tasmania. She studied Art History at the University of Adelaide and has an ongoing (if sometimes unfocused) interest in textiles, feminist art and curatorial practice. She hopes to submit her thesis soon.

### **Dr Louise R Mayhew: My Story working on Her Story**

Frances Phoenix (1950–2017) was a significant figure in Australia's feminist and lesbian art histories. She participated in both Sydney and Adelaide Women's Art Movements; contributed needlework, and opposition, to Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*; and spearheaded multiple collective and community art initiatives. Despite her contributions, Phoenix is not listed in Wikipedia and her entry in the DAAO (Design & Art Australia Online) is only two sentences long. In contrast to this, unforgivably, brief, biography, Phoenix diligently documented, archived and shared records of her own life. In *My Story/Herstory: Working on Judy Chicago's Dinner Party*, Phoenix captured the heart-wrenching fall-out of working for Chicago. At the State Library of South Australia, boxes of personal documentation traverse Phoenix' clippings and note-taking in areas as diverse as Surrealist women, Rococo art, housing collectives and adult education. More recently, at the 15th Australia's Homosexual Histories Conference, Phoenix shared over 30 years of lesbian artworks from her practice. In this paper, I recognize Phoenix' documentation as a feminist act of care. My paper

## Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Saturday 16 September cont.

responds, in a reciprocal act, by sharing Phoenix' story: interweaving her biography, practice and records with my own experiences, as a younger researcher, of interacting with Phoenix the person, artist, oral historian and documentarian.

**Dr Louise R Mayhew** is an Australian Feminist Art Historian and Foundation Theory Convenor at Queensland College of Art, Griffith University. Her doctoral thesis is the first history of women's art collectives and collaboration in Australia, 1970-2010. She is currently researching Queensland Modernism.

### **Juliette Peers: Poor but honest versus "rich and 'successful'"<sup>1</sup> Erica McGilchrist's biography and archive as witness to institutional failure around feminist and public memory.**

Recovering lost women artists was an important aspect of second wave feminist art histories, bringing to notice many 'forgotten' women artists. But has this strategy been equally successful in challenging 'high art' institutional values? This paper will address (some of) the achievements of feminist art history in the past 40 years and consider how 'the mechanics of remembering' inform the stories that get told. Do issues of erasure and gender marginalisation remain or have they taken a different form? The life, work and remarkable archives of Erica McGilchrist 1926-2014, who exhibited in *The Women's Show* (Adelaide, 1977) – as a highpoint of her acceptance as a contemporary artist – will be a case study. McGilchrist on paper had everything that should lead to a significant place in both curatorial and academic memory: talent, a commitment to the avantgarde, a practice centred upon abstraction and non-representational art, strong left wing views, dislike of conservatism, advocacy for refugees, Indigenous Australians and marginal communities, a highly unconventional and free-thinking approach to personal relationships, but in reality apart from a decade and a half productive dialogue with Heide Museum of Modern Art, at her death she had minimal presence amongst contemporary art professionals both makers and theorists. Her papers are not only "revenge by archive" but also offer a far more nuanced yet radical vision of 1970s second wave feminism, than academic practice, post-colonial memes and Generation Y's constructs allows for. McGilchrist in turn had a scepticism of institutions and universities, which she openly described as inherently elitist. Thus she spent many years with the Women's Art Register and the Women's Art Forum, Melbourne, which she substantially steered in the direction of openness, pluralism and indifference to either coolness or status, whilst addressing the issues facing creative women.

**Dr Juliette Peers** is senior lecturer in Architecture and Design (Design and the Social Context) at RMIT. Juliette's interests span both classical art history (covering design and applied art as well) and contemporary art/design. Widely published as a classical art historian in Australia, as well as British and North American publications including Pre-Raphaelite Sculpture, British National Dictionary of Biography, Encyclopaedia of Girlhood, Berg Encyclopaedia of Fashion and the Dictionary of Women Artists, also published many essays relating to contemporary art and feminist studies in Australia, and worked on many curatorial projects including at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Queensland Art Gallery and supervised postgraduate practitioner research. Specialist areas of interest include women's history, fashion, dolls, women artists, nineteenth century sculpture. She is a co-author of a monograph on Erica MCGilchrist, in press, (Heide) and an essay on Bernard Smith's fraught and complex relationship to feminist art (Monash University Press), as well as currently undertaking a large scale documentation project for the Cruthers Foundation.

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1 From a comment by McGilchrist "I prefer to be honest than to pretend to be rich and 'successful'"

## Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Saturday 16 September cont.

### 2.00-3.30: Contemporary Art and New Perspectives: Two Parallel Sessions

#### Session 1: Radford Auditorium

##### **Courtney Pedersen: 'Look at Me': feminism, contemporary art and the ecologies of attention**

While there is a great deal of discussion regarding the economy of attention that shapes our contemporary interactions with the world around us, Yves Citton argues that we should consider an ecology of attention, that is to broaden our understanding of how different forms impact on where we direct our attention and how. Both art and feminism have been deeply invested in the battle for attention and affect. Drawing on my experience as an artist and educator, this presentation considers how feminism, contemporary art and attention ecologies can triangulate, and how this impacts on the lives and practices of contemporary artists.

**Courtney Pedersen** is a Brisbane based artist and academic. She is a Senior Lecturer in Visual Arts and Academic Program Director for the School of Creative Practice, at Queensland University of Technology. Her research interests include practice-led research in the visual arts, feminist art practice and related methodologies, feminist pedagogy, and collaborative creative practices.

##### **Leigh Robb: The sisterhood: lateral strategies in feminist curating**

This paper will reflect on contemporary art and gender in the context of curating in a local and global context. Using exhibition case studies, the paper seeks to address how lateral approaches employed by curators, including collaboration and partnering, can contribute to the reappraisal and positioning of women and feminist practices in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Leigh Robb** is the inaugural Curator of Contemporary Art, AGSA and has extensive knowledge of both Australian and international contemporary art. During her six year tenure as Curator at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA) she curated over 30 exhibitions. Prior to this she held positions at the Thomas Dane Gallery, London and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice.

##### **Rachel Haynes: Performing the Archive**

Contemporary art practice has benefited significantly from the work of feminist art historians to reinsert women artists and address the exclusionary process that takes place within the canon and art's institutions, while also critiquing the process of legitimisation which these patriarchal structures perform. In 1979 Adrienne Rich argued the necessity of revisionist strategies to achieve feminist aims.<sup>(1)</sup> This strategy of revision is still of core relevance in a contemporary context, albeit one that opens up "new critical directions" for feminisms' own histories and archives. This practitioner reflection discusses feminist methodologies as utilised within visual art practice through a consideration of the archival impulse, drawing installation and the form of the lecture performance. 'Performing the archive' in this way offers the potential to re-interpret the significance of feminist material practices, past and present, and emphasises the subjective and affective register of this response. The work becomes a score that can be re-performed in different institutional contexts and foregrounds the activist feminist voice through quotation, citation and reiteration. As Griselda Pollock aptly asserts in relation to the Virtual Feminist Museum, the purpose is "...a rereading which is also a remembering...reassembling as an act – for a feminist future."<sup>(2)</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rich, Adrienne (1979) 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision' in *Lies, Secrets and Silence*. New York, Norton, 35.

<sup>2</sup> Pollock, Griselda (2007) *Encounters in the virtual feminist museum: time, space and the archive*. London, Routledge, 14.

**Rachael Haynes** is a Lecturer in Visual Arts at QUT. Haynes completed their PhD, an exploration of the ethics of exhibition practice, with the support of an Australian Postgraduate Award in 2009. Current research investigates feminist ethics, exhibition practice, language and voice. Rachael is a founding member of the feminist art collective LEVEL and the Director of Boxcopy Contemporary Art Space.

## Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Saturday 16 September cont.

### **Paula van Beek: Selfie Feminism: contemporary identity art practices and the complication of #visibility**

The steady increase of feminist Facebook pages, memes, and hashtag activism signals that social media is playing a key role in the rise of a fourth-wave feminism. Many young female artists are co-opting the codes of social media creating what is known as 'selfie feminism'. In my research I am opening up a dialogue between and alongside social media, feminism and contemporary art practices. In this presentation I will focus on a number of emerging artists who all use female identity as subject matter to discuss the complications of visibility in today's hyper-connected media environment. 'Selfie feminism' claims that posting your own image online is an act of self empowerment and that creating gender equality can be achieved through online visibility. However, there are a range of other artists who are seeking to complicate the simplicity of this argument - presenting a feminist agenda that is concerned with intersectionality, questioning the neoliberal celebration of the individual and contesting the power structures of online spaces. In their artworks they play with notions of intimacy vs. public selves and critique the relationship between being content creator and content consumer in this age of identity as data. A new generation of female artists are giving feminism a lot of screen time yet I will contextualise their work within a lineage of feminist artists to assert that the personal is still political.

**Paula van Beek** is an artist and educator based in Melbourne, Australia. Within an expanded performance practice her work investigates the performance of identity in public/private spaces with a focus on feminine experiences. Paula has a Bachelor of Arts from Victoria University, Wellington, NZ (1998), and a Graduate Diploma in Animateuring from VCA, Melbourne (2006) where she now teaching into the performing arts program. As a current research candidate at RMIT School of Art her project examines self-surveillance and the social media obsession with the selfie. Paula is a founding member of *Triple F*, a feminist art collective consisting of women from diverse cultural backgrounds and art practices. She recently chaired the panel discussion *Identity Intersection: Women, Art and Cultural Perspectives* at Counihan Gallery. Paula is passionate about expressing the complexity of creating meaningful representations of self in this data driven digital age.

### **Session 2: Function Room**

#### **Georgia Banks: It Didn't Start with You: the wound, the archive and re-enactment**

I am proposing to present my own practice led research, which develops new pedagogies of reperformance, through the lens of the wound, as well as the potential for reenactment to be used as a radically feminist act; one of transformation and reclamation. Over the past four years I have engaged with reenactment and the document, through the lens of seminal performance artworks from the 1960's and 1970's. During this time I have extended and adapted Jacques Derrida's theory of the archive of the body proper, exploring the ways in which reperformance encompasses them, introducing the idea that within performance artworks the wound operates as a document, and therefore as a viable entry point into the archive of a work. More recently I have become aware of the potential or reenactment to be used as a radically feminist tool; the potential for reperformance to enter and subvert a pre-existing dialogue surrounding the work of a male artist, and hijack it – creating a conversation surrounding gender and female subjectivity where there wasn't one before.

**Georgia Banks** is a Melbourne based artist with a first class MFA from Victoria College of the Arts, working primarily with video, live performance, and the photographic. Her work is predominantly concerned with the concept of malleability and tensility within the relationship between performance art, the document, and reenactment. Banks uses reenactment as a means to explore female subjectivity, entering and often subverting a pre-existing dialogue surrounding gender. Banks' work has recently been exhibited at Seventh, FELTspace, and Kings Artist Run, with upcoming exhibitions at Testing Grounds and Sister Gallery.

## Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Saturday 16 September cont.

### **Su Yang: Reframing with Feminism: the female image in contemporary Chinese art**

This research aims to investigate into the representation of women in contemporary Chinese art from 1990s up to the present with feminism methodology, specifically focusing on the way women shape their images (both through make up, the representations on social media and, more radically cosmetic surgery) to conform the male desire of female beauty and the visual pleasure. These re-presentations of femininity are shaped by the global consumerism, Chinese styled conceptions of feminism ('feminine-ism'), as well as the patriarchal ideologies in Western culture and Chinese Confucianism. This study examines how the language around feminism in China, through its conception as 'feminine-ism' affects women's perceptions of their representation. This in-depth study complements my own paintings, drawings, photographs and videos about but beyond unnecessary harmful non-therapeutic cosmetic surgery amongst Chinese women to question the shifting socialized idea of female beauty and to thwart the representation of women by male gaze.

In the context of rapid and complex social change under "Open Door Policy" and globalization in 1990s, Chinese Neoclassicism has been influenced by the genres of Western painting –the nude that reflects the Western patriarchal ideologies and also influenced by traditional Chinese ideas of femininity in Chinese Confucianism in that one of principles is to make women tractable and obedient. Presenting femininity is also promoted by Chinese styled feminism – "nüxingzhuyiyishu" [feminine-ism art] that is the new Chinese translation of feminism adopted in 1990s. However around 2014, as the struggle for gender equality for transforming China, the younger generation of Chinese feminist artists starts pushing to reframe the female body.

**Su Yang**, PhD Candidate, Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne

### **Zoe Freney: Art and the Movements of Motherhood**

This paper presents findings of my current PhD research, seeking new perspectives on representing motherhood and maintaining art making practices. The project explores and challenges the narrow models of motherhood that are created and reinforced by capitalist, patriarchal society, and inserts instead representations of my lived experience of motherhood. This work continues a feminist dialogue into alternative habits of maintenance and mothering through the creation of images of dissident motherhood. This paper will suggest how societal expectations of mothers and their creative practices can be upset, using strategies of somaesthetics, maternal subjectivity and embodied experience, and how these subversions can be used to re-present mothers in works of art. In the year of my birth Iris Marion Young described how girls' bodies are inscribed with levels of inhibition. I will reflect on the lasting effects of this habituated hesitancy and the consequent limitation of the power of women and mothers. But if child bearing and birth can be moments in which these imposed restrictions are ruptured, mother power could potentially be experienced as an extension of the body to its full, volatile capacity. I will also draw upon Richard Shusterman's theories of somaesthetics, wherein the body is trained as a tool through which we perceive and act in the world, to argue the importance of maternal subjectivity and the body in disputing current oppressive models of motherhood. It is through the body we perceive the world, and through the body that we act as artists.

**Zoe Freney** is an artist, writer and educator based in Adelaide, South Australia. She is a PhD candidate at the University of Tasmania, investigating contemporary representations of motherhood. Zoe lectures in Art History and Theory at the Adelaide Central School of Art and is a member of Switchboard artist studios.

### **Jasmine Symons: Why have there been no great MOTHER artists?**

Why have there been no great *Mother* artists? Adelaide's Lovely Motherhood Show (LMF) opened at EAF (Experimental Art Foundation) in 1981. Later travelling to venues in outer Adelaide and regional South Australia, LMF was coordinated by Jude Adams and featured other pioneering feminist artist/activists including Ann Newmarch and Helen Sherriff. The show specifically focused on the lived experience of the

## Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Saturday 16 September cont.

mother-artist, as an ambivalent, challenging and challenged subject in her own right. Many decades on, the LMF remains a rare example of contemporary visual art practice focused specifically on the mother – as her uncensored self, and from her own perspective. The study of why maternity has been so continuously marginalised as a theme (as well as ignored as the impetus for the production of visual culture) has become the core interest of scholars like Griselda Pollock, Bracha Ettinger, Julia Kristeva and Lisa Baraitser. Explanations rooted in psychoanalytic theory reveal how the cultural suppression of authentic maternal life is ultimately complex, layered, tangled, and tied to the foundations of human existence. A simplified explanation might be found in the word – 'weird'. Does the problem of maternal censorship lie in the fact that very little can be claimed as universal to the experience of being a mum - except that family life and the maternal role within it are about a continuous 'becoming'. Can the transitioning spaces of maternal life actually be described and acknowledged? Are mother/artists finally gaining traction?

**Jasmine Symons** uses the term 'beautiful pain' to describe the experience of being a mum. It's a feeling better described in paint than words like many other complex themes that belong to maternal relationships. Her work responds to the ever-changing circumstances of family life, acting as a vehicle for questioning and making sense. A recently complete PhD painting project titled 'Ambiguity Makes Sense' explored maternal themes which continue to lack language and cultural production. The research investigated how the substance and action of creative practice (painting in particular) can give a physical or bodily dimension to language which is especially significant to the description of maternal life. Jasmine will return to full-time (school hours) painting at the end of 2017 after a fantastically messy year of renovating her family home, as well as part-time tutoring at UniSA.

### 4.00 - 5.00 Women, Careers and Equality

#### **Elvis Richardson: Is someone else enjoying your career?**

Elvis Richardson founded the Countess blog in 2008 to collect and publish data on gender representation in the Australian visual arts revealing how the art-worlds merit based system was fundamentally flawed. Elvis tracks the milestones of her own art career which began in classrooms filled with women at a time when art schools were being professionalised and merging into the university system. She graduated into an art-world busy segmenting artists into emerging, mid-career and established categories and in doing so building the expectations of an implied career path. While we know through experience and folklore that art is a jackpot economy where prosperous success is enjoyed by a relative few, what the Countess data has established is that gender bias is an ongoing issue in the art-world today where recognition for women artists is still not afforded generously or often, and the authentic alternative systems women produce are overlooked and marginalised.

**Elvis Richardson** (b1965 Sydney, lives and works in Melbourne) is an interdisciplinary artist whose conceptual practice explores identity and recognition through a collection based methodology. Richardson's raw materials are 'found' and obsolete personal and mass-produced objects and images and she uses them to reconstruct stories of ambition and abandonment, public recognition and private nostalgia.

[www.elvisrichardson.com](http://www.elvisrichardson.com). Her work has been exhibited in Australian contemporary art spaces, museums and commercial galleries and she has been the director of a number of artist run initiatives including First Draft (96/97), and DEATH BE KIND (2010/12) and currently True Estate [www.true-estate.gallery](http://www.true-estate.gallery). Elvis Richardson is the founding editor of **Countess** publishing data on gender representation in the Australian visual arts sector. [www.countess.report](http://www.countess.report)

## Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Saturday 16 September cont.

### **Natalie Thomas: nattysolo (one woman, one camera, no film)**

For the panel talk I will consider strategies for building and maintaining an art career as a female artist facing systemic under-representation. How can artists further develop a positive relationship with creativity when it's difficult to get in an art show? I will describe the opportunities artists might develop outside the gallery system, the need to improvise and work when funding and sales refuse to materialise and what the advantages of true independence are.

**Natalie Thomas** is an artist based in Melbourne. She maintains a diverse and independent art practice that considers story telling as the basis for cultural memory. Much of her work critiques how the mass media is used to perpetuate the patriarchal status quo *nattysolo (one woman, one camera, no film)* is a feminist endurance performance project, with an online outcome. The research project uses the form of the social page, where gossip, innuendo and humour mask scathing cultural criticism. The project is widely read. Words are used in their spoken and printed delivery to build, maintain and to dismantle reputations and change our ways of thinking and seeing <http://nattysolo.com>. Thomas achieved significant national attention as Nat of nat&ali (1999-2005). Recent projects include 'The Sex Tree' 2017 exhibited in Gertrude Contemporaries final show prior to their move and 'The Financial Report' at Artspace, 2013. She won the Darebin Art Prize 2013, with small sculpture *Puppy3* and the Bowness Prize for Photography, 2008. Her work is in the collections of Artbank, City of Melbourne and Melbourne University.

### **Brigid Noone: Working between collective and individual art practice**

Consistent with feminist approaches to research, it has been important for me to consciously place myself in this research from its inception. This preface begins that process by locating some of my personal experiences in the wider context as an individual visual artist and as an independent curator who co-directs the Artist Run Initiative Fontanelle. This research is undertaken through my own individual artefact production combined with a collaborative expanded painting practice. It will actively look at how concerns and modes of individual painting practice are shifted by working within an expanded field of painting that includes working collectively and individually, and what impact this has. The primary focus of my artwork incorporates themes such as vulnerability, love and home, and with the addition of working with others can incorporate broader political themes. This aspect of research involves the practical implications of an expanded practice that will be identified as my research progresses. The secondary focus of the research will utilise a methodological approach that tests out different modes of practice, through negotiation, conversation and experimentation. By testing a series of propositions that combine collaboration through a negotiated relationship based process a new method denotes a new form of individual and collectively informed artwork.

**Brigid Noone** is currently the co-director of Fontanelle Gallery & Studios (Adelaide, Australia). Her professional practice is broad, encompassing painting and installation as well as teaching and curatorial work. She has co-founded several cultural spaces and initiatives in Adelaide: The Institute Studio (2003), FELTspace (2008), Renew Adelaide (2010), and Fontanelle Gallery and Studios (2012), that she co-directs with Ben Leslie. She was awarded the Ruth Tuck Scholarship for Visual Arts in 2001 and moved to Rotterdam, Netherlands, to undertake a residency at StichtingKunst& Complex, returning to Rotterdam again in 2005. Noone lectured at the University of South Australia in 2007 and is currently a lecturer at Adelaide Central School of Art undertaking a PhD at SCA, University of Sydney. While Brigid is dedicated to pushing the boundaries of independent and collective practice she is committed to the development of a diverse and independent artist run sector in South Australia.

## Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Saturday 16 September cont.

### 4.00 - 5.00 Discussion panel on intersectional feminism in the South Australian arts

**Aida Azin** is an Adelaide-based painter with a Filipino-Iranian background. In 2016 she was awarded funding from Carclew Youth Arts to engage in a cultural exchange project in Manila, the Philippines. Her practice is informed by the need for decolonial strategies in art-making, the importance of self-representation for people of colour, and engaging with cultural heritage. Aida's artworks have been featured in several commercial and artist-run galleries in Adelaide and abroad. Aida is a graduate of the Bachelor of Visual Arts and Design degree at the Adelaide College of the Arts (2015). She is currently undertaking her Honours in the Bachelor of Art and Design program at the University of South Australia and is set to graduate by the end of 2017.

**Melissa McGrath** is a curator, writer, collaborator and educator from Western Australia currently based in Adelaide. Her practice explores the development and dissemination of understandings, with a focus on printed matter, exhibition-making and public dialogue as vehicles for collection, learning, political and social agency.

**Haneen Martin** is a Malaysian-Australian artist, maker and curator. She is the Visual Arts Editor for YEWTH Magazine, a postgraduate student in Art History, and founder of social enterprise Zombie Queen Art & Consulting, a business to help emerging artists. Haneen has exhibited in both Adelaide and Melbourne, and works alongside artists in Indonesia with the intention of demystifying the cultural gap with our closest neighbours. Her arts practice focusses on the act of making and storytelling, often specific to migrant backgrounds and the sensation of the other.

**Amanda Radomi** was named the inaugural winner of the Don Dunstan emerging artist award at the 2013 Our Mob exhibition at the Adelaide Festival theatre. Amanda followed up on this award by presenting a solo exhibition, 'She's got roots' at the Festival theatre in 2014. Amanda has participated in many group exhibitions since 2013. In 2015 she exhibited at Tandanya with Henry Jock Walker and at Fontanelle with Blak Douglas for the Tarnanthi Festival.

**Jonno Revanche** is a cultural critic, essayist, photojournalist and multidisciplinary artist currently based between Sydney and Adelaide. Their writing has been published in the Guardian, Krass Journal, Cordite Poetry Journal, ABC and Teen Vogue.

### 5.30 -6.30pm: Performance, Migration Museum: The Feminist Labour of Re-membering at the Destitute Asylum

Who remembers the babies born at Adelaide's Destitute Asylum? Who remembers their mothers, and the physical, spiritual and emotional labour they performed? At this participatory event, the names of 1678 babies will be recited at the Migration Museum, in a feminist act of re-membering the past. In 1878 a purpose-built Lying-in Home was built at the Destitute Asylum, and between 1880 and 1909, 1678 babies were born there, 116 of whom were stillborn. The Migration Museum site includes the former Lying-in Home building. Explore our exhibition about the Destitute Asylum, and stay for a discussion of the history of our site.

**Corinne Ball, Mandy Paul and Nikki Sullivan** worked together researching the history of the Migration Museum site, including the Lying-in Home of the Destitute Asylum. We were moved by the untold stories of the women who laboured here, and are proud of the resulting, award-winning, exhibition. Corinne, Mandy & Nikki work at the Migration Museum.

## Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Sunday 17 September

### 10.10-11.10am: Art World Activists

#### **Rebecca Coates: COUNTESS and the regions: Shepparton Art Museum (SAM) as case-study**

2016 was a significant year: Elvis Richardson published *The Countess Report*, which provided data on gender representation in Australian contemporary visual arts since 2008; and Shepparton Art Museum (SAM) celebrated 80 years of its Collection. Located in central Victoria, SAM is recognized for its unique Collection focus on ceramics, and the role that it plays in a specifically local context, while engaging with global contemporary ideas. Regional galleries and museums are playing an increasingly important role within the wider arts and cultural sector. Data from this group formed an important part of Richardson's analysis as the largest category of data gathered. This paper examines the role that gender has and continues to play at SAM, in informing the continued development of the Collection, and an exciting and dynamic exhibition program presented in a regional context.

**Rebecca Coates** is a contemporary curator, writer, lecturer and Director of SAM, Shepparton Art Museum, which is located in regional Victoria, and is currently developing an exciting new \$34.5M stand-alone contemporary museum. Rebecca has curated over forty exhibitions. Recent exhibitions include *FRESHWATER* (2017), *NELL* (2016), *80 Years of the SAM Collection* (2015), *Chen Qiulin, One Hundred Names* (2015), in collaboration with 4A, Sydney. She has worked extensively as a curator in Australia and overseas, at institutions including the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne International Arts Festival (MIAF), and Museum of Modern Art Oxford (MOMA Oxford). She was awarded a PhD in 2015 by the University of Melbourne for her thesis that examined the role of private foundations and the contemporary art world. She is an Honorary Fellow at the University of Melbourne in the School of Culture and Communication.

#### **Gary Dufour: Growing a Gift: The Cruthers Art Foundation**

The Cruthers family began purchasing art in the 1970s, when the interest in the rediscovery of art by women, an unknown multitude of unsung talent, was renewing art histories across the globe. Now forty-three years on the Cruthers Collection of Women's Art has been gifted to the University of Western Australia, Cruthers Art Foundation partnerships support research and soon *SHEILA: A Foundation for Women in Visual Art* will be established. Its role to help ensure that female artists working today and in the future are treated equally, achieve their potential, and together with past generations of women artists are recognised and celebrated. *Growing a Gift* will look at how the aspirations of a family are contributing to art history and through philanthropy encouraging a rethinking of Australian art.

**Gary Dufour** is Adjunct Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Western Australia, a director of the Cruthers Art Foundation and a member of the Cruthers Collection of Women's Art Advisory Committee and the Cultural Collections Board at the University of Western Australia.

#### **Tracey Whiting: People are a Cultural Institution's most Valuable Asset**

Tracey Whiting will discuss her approach to donating towards institutional acquisitions and collecting the work of contemporary artists.

**Tracey Whiting** is Chair of the Art Gallery of South Australia Board, a donor and collector and former convenor of the Contemporary Collectors.

## **Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Sunday 17 September cont.**

### **Angela Bailey: Art and Activism in the Archive**

This talk will focus on the way in which contemporary collaboration with artists and community affirms the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archive as a living vital entity of visibility and identity for the future. It will also investigate how cultural engagement with an archive can transform a collection and activate new interpretations for broader and more meaningful accessibility.

**Angela Bailey** is a photographer and curator who has worked on a range of creative community cultural projects with a particular emphasis on working with collections and their interpretation - both within larger cultural institutions and smaller archives and community collections. She has a long history of art and activism having worked on safe sex campaigns in Queensland, in Melbourne with the Guerilla Girls and with the New York based 'Visual AIDS organisation. She has a Postgraduate Degree in Fine Art from VCA and a Masters in Curatorship from University of Melbourne. She is currently President of the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives.

### **11.30-11.40: Introduction to Gender and Museum Professionals: Alison Inglis**

#### **11.40-1.00pm: Museum Professionals**

### **Nici Cumpston – Tarnanthi - an artist led approach to curating and working with dynamic women artists from the SA Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands**

NiciCumpston, Artistic Director of TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art will discuss the work of women artists from the South Australian Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands who are exhibiting in TARNANTHI opening in mid October at the Art Gallery of South Australia. She will discuss key projects and how they have developed in an artist-led approach to curating.

**Nici Cumpston** is Artistic Director of Tarnanthi: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the Art Gallery of South Australia, curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, a member of the Barkindji people and a practising artist.

### **Lara Nicholls: Australian Women Abstractionists**

'It was (Clement) Meadmore's women friends who invited me to join the Feminist movement in New York City soon after I arrived in 1969. The discrimination by art dealers against taking on women was palpable. ... It is disturbing to realize that to this day equal pay has never been achieved, but the art world paid attention and many women artists gradually got a fair showing:' Virginia Cuppaidge, 2017

In 2015, I determined to develop an exhibition about Australia's women abstractionists - whose story was the one worth telling - and this resulted in the arrival of *Abstraction: celebrating Australian Women Abstract Artists*, which has been on tour around Australia since February 2017. It is an exhibition covering almost 100 years of work in this area, an exhibition which ultimately illustrates and documents Dorrit Black's wonderful statement in 1932 – 'Realistic painting has proved to be a blind alley...Now we have started on the new track, and already find it rich in new discoveries' – discoveries that women abstract artists are still making today. This paper charts the genesis of the exhibition, the difficulties in sourcing documentation for the works, many of which were acquired at the time they were first created and exhibited, and the ultimate difficulty in publishing the fruits of the research.

## **Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Sunday 17 September cont.**

**Lara Nicholls** is the Assistant Curator of Australian Painting and Sculpture at the National Gallery of Australia and the Curator of *Abstraction: Celebrating Australian Women Abstract Artists*. Lara has completed research on a range of women artists (including obscure 19<sup>th</sup> century painters) and is currently writing on Australian women abstract artists for a forthcoming book by Professor Anne Marsh about Women, Feminism and Art in Australia since 1970. Lara has a Masters of Arts (Art History) from the University of Melbourne where she was also the curator and fine arts tutor at Trinity College from 1995 – 1997, during which time she wrote the catalogue to that collection, *In a New Light* (2000). Currently, Lara is also the Curator of the Lorne Sculpture Biennale 2018. She recently established the Women Sculptors Initiative through the Australian Cultural Fund.

### **Jo Holder: The Cross Art Projects as seen through the lens of gender**

This session will focus on a not-for-profit curatorial initiative Jo Holder founded in September 2003 and run by a small group of independent curators. It operates in Kings Cross as The Cross Art Projects, and foregrounds contemporary work that reflects the multiple relationships between art and life, art and the public sphere and explores the boundaries of this context with a focus, in some, on gender. The Cross Art Projects presents curated exhibitions and work by artists who create critical projects that question and/or reflect our present circumstances and whose work has a rigorous conceptual foundation.

**Jo Holder** is a curator and writer who works with contemporary artists, scholars and activists both inside and outside gallery contexts, in communities and in public spaces. She is director of The Cross Art Projects in Sydney. She is co-convenor of the independent research cluster Contemporary Art and Feminism (with Jacqueline Millner and Catriona Moore) and produced the year-long *Future Feminist Archive* (2015–16). She was director of SH Ervin Gallery, National Trust, Sydney (1997–1999), co-director, Mori Gallery, Sydney (1984–92) and is a former *Australian Financial Review* art critic. She was co-editor with Joan Kerr of *Past Present An Anthology on the National Women's Art Project* (1997) and *Joan Kerr, A Singular Voice: Essays on Australian Architecture* (ed., Candice Bruce, Dinah Dysart and Jo Holder, 2009). For the twentieth anniversary of International Women's Year, she coordinated the *National Women's Art Exhibition* comprising simultaneous exhibitions in over 150 galleries, museums and libraries (1995).

### **Elizabeth Pearce: Feminism and Uncertainty**

MONA's core objective is to advance a view of reality informed by the principles of gradualism, self-criticism, and uncertainty. This is a kind of advocacy, but with a difference: we are promulgating doubt instead of surety. Where does feminism fit into this?

**Elizabeth Pearce** has a background in English literature (with a focus on feminism and postcolonial studies) and has been working as a writer and researcher for Mona for the past nine years. She produces content for the O (the handheld device that replaces wall texts in the museum) and for Mona's many print and online publications.

## **2.00-3.30: Gender and the Museum: Two Parallel Sessions**

### **Session 1: Radford Auditorium: Feminism in action in the museum**

#### **Joanna Mendelssohn: Joan Kerr: the making of a feminist art historian**

When Joan Kerr was diagnosed with terminal cancer in the year before her death her friends were determined that her intellectual legacy should continue. The reason for this was not just friendship, or a determination that a great feminist scholar should survive the strange machismo of Australian art historiography. Rather it was a recognition that Kerr's inclusive approach is the most rewarding

## **Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Sunday 17 September cont.**

way so far discovered in mapping Australian art and its objects. By challenging the traditional hierarchies of media and association that privileged both oil painting and networks of mateship, Kerr revealed a rich tapestry of women's art in a variety of media. This paper will examine some of the factors that shaped the way Joan Kerr approached the writing of Australian art histories.

**Joanna Mendelssohn** began her career as curatorial assistant at the Art Gallery of New South Wales before becoming a writer and later an academic at what is now UNSW: Art & Design. As well as teaching Australian art history for many years she was also Program Director for the Master of Art Administration. She as well as being an award winning art critic she is the author of books on Sydney Long, Lionel Lindsay and the Lindsay family and has curated exhibitions on Sydney Long, and Richard & Pat Larter.

She was the instigator of the project that became *Design and Art of Australia Online* and is currently editor in chief. Along with Catherine Speck, Catherine De Lorenzo and Alison Inglis she has written a major study on the history of *Australian art exhibitions* which will be published by Thames and Hudson later this year.

Mendelssohn first met Joan Kerr in 1969 at the University of Sydney when she borrowed Kerr's (excellent) Fine Arts lecture notes.

### **Mandy Paul: 'Good timing: feminism in the (history) museum'**

Some of the women marching on the streets in the 1970s marched right into museums – and transformed them. This paper will trace the relationship between the rise of social history in museums and the impact of feminism on museums and Australian public culture, arguing that that feminism, and feminists, played a critical part in the development of social history curatorship. It will examine the period between 1975 (UN International Women's Year, the year the first feminist Australian history was published, and the year of the Pigott Report on museums and national collections) and the opening of the National Museum of Australia in 2001 – a period of intense debate about questions of gender and representation in history museums and one of activism, optimism and change.

**Mandy Paul** is Director of the Migration Museum. She has postgraduate qualifications in history and museum studies, and has worked in museums and as a consultant historian in Australia and the United Kingdom. She has published widely on aspects of Australian social and cultural history from the development of international exhibitions to the internment of German South Australians, and the intersection of history and law in native title practice.

### **Maree Clarke and Fran Edmonds: Aboriginal women as artists and 'culture-makers' in southeast Australia**

In this presentation, MuttiMutti, Yorta Yorta, Boonwurrung artist/curator Maree Clarke and anthropologist/historian Fran Edmonds will discuss the interventions Aboriginal women from southeast Australia are making in the contemporary art and museums world. Taking Maree's work as a starting point, we will discuss the role of women in revivifying cultural understandings through research and new interpretations of historical material, alongside collaborative, cross-cultural methods to situate Aboriginal matriarchal knowledge as significant in determining contemporary Aboriginal ways of 'knowing, being and doing things'. This process, which recognises the interconnection of everything, responds to Maree's and other Aboriginal women artists' endeavours in the southeast to contest lingering colonial attitudes regarding authentic Aboriginality, where dark skin and 'remoteness' continue to be associated broadly with 'real' Aboriginal people. Maree has

## Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Sunday 17 September cont.

established an art practice that is inherently community-based and intergenerational. From her kangaroo teeth necklaces, to recent photographic/lenticular prints of her memories growing up on the Murray River, her work is grounded in Aboriginal feminist approaches to culture-making. Here, knowledge is passed on through the creation of artworks, in curating spaces of belonging and in providing opportunities for reconnecting with cultural practices to support an ongoing Aboriginal presence in the southeast.

**Maree Clarke:** MuttiMutti, Yorta Yorta, Boonwurrung independent artist and curator. Maree is also currently employed as a curator at Wyndham Gallery, Wyndham Council, Melbourne.

**Fran Edmonds:** Research Fellow, Research Unit in Public Cultures, School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne

### **Susan Sheridan: *Portraits of the modernist woman artist in some Australian novels***

Virginia Woolf's Lily Briscoe (*To the Lighthouse*) is perhaps the most famous portrayal of a woman painter in modernist fiction, as she battles to express her vision of the beloved Mrs Ramsay while male voices in her head keep repeating 'women can't paint, women can't write'. A more optimistic portrayal of women artists in that period can be found in *Among the Reeds* (1933) by 'Jane Laker' (Alice Muskett, who was herself a painter). It is set in Sydney Bohemian artistic circles in the years before the Great War began, and quotes Woolf on the woman writer/artist's need for 'a room of one's own'.

I would like to discuss the portrayal of women artists and the art scene in Laker's novel, and to make brief reference to a couple of recent Australian novels that revisit the lives of women painters of this earlier period – Gail Jones' *Black Mirror* (2002) with its double narrative of an imaginary surrealist painter and her biographer, and Kristell Thornell's fictional portrait of Clarice Beckett in *Night Street* (2010).

**Susan Sheridan** is Professor Emerita in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at Flinders University, and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. She is currently a member of the Miles Franklin Literary Award judges' panel. Her latest book is *The Fiction of Thea Astley* (Cambria NY 2016); earlier books include *Christina Stead* (1988), *Along the Faultlines: Sex, Race and Nation in Australian Women's Writing 1880s to 1930s* (1995), *Who Was That Woman? The Australian Women's Weekly in the Postwar Years* (2002) and *Nine Lives: Postwar women writers making their mark* (2011). She was foundation Reviews Editor of *Australian Feminist Studies* (1985-2005).

## Parallel Session 2: Function Room: Feminist gaze on curating and collections

### **Ros Prosser: Vonni Diva Showgirl: Costumes and Stories**

This paper will reflect on the process of curating the pop-up exhibition **Showgirl: The Costumes of An Iconic Adelaide Diva. Held at** Adelaide's Migration Museum during the SA History Festival in 2016 the exhibition featured the costumes of well-known Adelaide showgirl and performer Vonni, whose long history of performance includes Sydney Les Girls in the 1970s and 1980s and hosting drag shows across Adelaide over the past 20 years. With many of the costumes featured in the exhibition designed and produced by Adelaide based seamstress Jullianne Deen over a 30-year period, the exhibition enabled discussion about the process of design and collaboration that highlighted the specific cultural and social conditions underpinning experiences of showgirl and drag performance.

## Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Sunday 17 September cont.

**Dr Rosslyn Prosser** is Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Adelaide. Her publications are in the areas of life-writing, gender and sexuality studies and creative non-fiction.

### **Mandy Treagus: From *Koloa Fakatonga* to Fine Art: Robin White and RuhuFifita's Tapa Collaborations**

The role of tapa cloth (*gnatu*) in everyday Tongan life is still regarded as an essential one; tapa is used for many formal and informal occasions, but most notably in customs surrounding life transitions, especially funerals (*putu*). The sound of tapa beaters (*ike*) is still dominant in many Tongan villages, especially those on outer islands, as many women undertake tapa making as their daily occupation. Well-known New Zealand painter Robin White has collaborated with Tongan artist RuhaFifita in a series of tapa projects over the past four years. They have engaged the women's tapa-making group from Havelu, Tonga, producing large pieces that have featured in galleries in New Zealand and Australia over the past three years. Moving this women's craft from the exchange systems of Tongan life into the arena of gallery and art market not only changes the ways in which it is viewed; it also raises the question of ownership. Who owns the knowledge, craft and designs of *gnatu*? Can it be traded as an art object without detracting from its place in Tongan life? Does its display in gallery spaces highlight its aesthetic value in ways which are not possible in its original setting? This paper will address these issues as they play out in the work *Ko e HalaHangatonu: The Straight Path* and *Seen Along The Avenue* (2015–16).

**Mandy Treagus** is Associate Professor in English and Creative Writing at the University of Adelaide, where she teaches nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature, culture, and visual studies. Her book, *Empire Girls: The Colonial Heroine Comes of Age*, examines narratives of development in colonial settings, while the collection *Changing the Victorian Subject* broadens the field of Victorian studies to include fuller consideration of the colonial world. She has also published widely on Pacific literature, history and visual culture. She is currently working on a book on short fiction set in the Pacific.

### **Sue Kneebone: A Feminist Guide to Pipe Smoking**

For this presentation I will look at how the eclectic and intriguing Buring pipe collection in the South Australian Migration Museum reveals gendered behaviour and social attitudes going back to the nineteenth century when smoking was regarded as the exclusive domain of men. I will peer through the historical haze of smoking to see how, in the highly structured gender roles of the Victorian era, coeval with the time of British colonisation of South Australia these curious pipes may reveal performative behaviours of masculinity and female preclusion. Many of the carved and painted pipes in the collection depict women and members of other social groups expected to be excluded from the male act of pipe smoking. Many also show residual evidence of use, which reminds us of how the masculine culture of pipe smoking tends to linger in the air, permeating the atmosphere and tainting the social fabric, long after the smoker has left the room. The reflexive act of exhibiting objects with their embodied evidence of past use, along with archival and interdisciplinary research, can help expose the broader complexities of our social histories. Through this exploration I will also discuss how artists and curators can activate a dialogue with the past through museum collections and objects as a way to reveal and reckon with past social values that may still cloud the air.

**Dr Sue Kneebone** is a visual artist, educator and writer whose research and studio practice explores the social and environmental legacy of colonial settler culture. Sue has a PhD from the University of South Australia, and a Masters in Fine Art from Victorian College of the Arts. She has exhibited widely both in Australia and overseas and is the recipient of several major awards and grants. Her work is in the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia, and in numerous private collections.

## Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Sunday 17 September cont.

### **Celia Dottore: Affirmative objects: exhibiting Indigenous women's craft**

Women artists are major contributors to the field of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. However, their work has historically been under represented within the annals of art history, in permanent collections and curatorial practice. As a large proportion of this work falls within a Western definition of craft, namely weaving, textiles, ceramics and jewellery, it has long struggled for recognition on a number of fronts due to prevailing colonial narratives, gender inequality and the art versus craft debate. Issues such as these have been challenged by rising feminist perspectives in the arts and cultural sector, demonstrated in the many exhibitions since the 1990s that celebrate the broad and diverse achievements of Indigenous women artists. This paper will discuss a number of key projects presented over the last two and a half decades that have asserted the representation of Indigenous craft within contemporary Australian art. It will also investigate how such projects have assisted the production of art, provided opportunities for research and cultural development and helped redress the status of women's work more generally.

**Celia Dottore** has been employed by Flinders University Art Museum since 2008 and within her role as Exhibitions Manager she has worked in the development and presentation of diverse exhibitions and public programs. Drawing on the Art Museum collections, she has curated *Mother Nature is a Lesbian: Political Printmaking in South Australia 1970s–1980s*, Flinders University City Gallery (2014) and *Ernabella in Print*, Gallery M, Marion Cultural Centre (2013). In 2017 she co-curated *Island to Inland: contemporary art from Kangaroo Island*, Flinders University City Gallery and completed a Master of Arts (Studies in Art History), University of Adelaide. Prior to this she was awarded a Graduate Diploma in Art History, University of Adelaide (2007) and a Bachelor of Visual Art and Applied Design, Adelaide College of the Arts (2004).

### **4.00- 4.30pm: Gender, the Museum and Interventions**

#### **Angela Hesson: Murmur: An installation by Rosslynd Piggott at The Johnston Collection**

A murmur is by definition an elusive thing, existing in the periphery. Like a shadow or an imprint, the more one attempts to grasp it, the more ephemeral it becomes, its power residing in the realm of suggestion or evocation rather than that of the literal or figurative. When artist Rosslynd Piggott turned her attentions to Fairhall, the 1860 townhouse once inhabited by Melbourne antiques dealer William Johnston, and today housing his collection of furniture and objets d'art, it was this sense of the unknowable that most intrigued her. As she researched Johnston and his collection—examining the photograph albums, the folios of letters and postcards, as well as the collection itself—it was the ellipses, the pauses, the unspoken traces that seemed to harbour the most profound insights into Johnston's life. The largely fictitious nature of the house museum is a notion that preoccupied Piggott from the outset. In this curiously hybrid space, the needs of history must be balanced against those of aesthetics, and the desires of visitors against those of museum professionals. While her arrangement differed from that present during Johnston's lifetime, a sense of the house's shifting histories and the lives lived within it was captured. Particular attention was devoted to Johnston's relationship with Ahmed Moussa, his assistant/companion with whom he passed more than 20 years of his life, as well as to his friendships with other prominent male collectors and designers. With Piggott's characteristic delicacy, *Murmur* considered the ever-present themes of private affection and public propriety, and the subtle interactions of feelings, memories, places and things.

**Dr Angela Hesson** is Curator, Australian Art at the National Gallery of Victoria. Recently, she curated the exhibition *Love: Art of Emotion 1400-1800* as part of a curatorial/research fellow with the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions. She has previously worked as a lecturer in Art History and Literature at The University of Melbourne, and as a curator at The Johnston Collection.

## Abstracts and Speakers' biographies: Sunday 17 September cont.

### **Warren: Bringing Women into the Museum: *The Australian Women's Weekly* Art Prize, 1955–1959**

In an article published on 6 April 1955, *The Australian Women's Weekly* announced it was establishing a competitive portraiture prize, “the richest art prize in the Commonwealth and one of the biggest portrait prizes in the world”. This prize has been largely forgotten from Australian art history – likely because it was relatively short-lived, ceasing unexpectedly in 1959. My paper will provide a history of this prize, considering it as a fascinating historical precursor to contemporary gendered relations between women artists and museum institutions. *The Weekly's* art prize was not open exclusively to women – in fact the artworks chosen for exhibition and for awards were dominated by male artists. It was judged by the (all-male) directors of the state art galleries, which hosted its national exhibition tour. As an early case study, more than a decade before the rise of second-wave feminism in Australia, *The Weekly's* art prize crystallised many of the challenges faced by women artists when working within museums and established institutional systems dominated by implicit (and explicit) gender biases. In spite of this, the prize nonetheless encouraged and opened a new and unique space for women artists (both professional and amateur) to exhibit within those institutions. Award-winning artists, such as Judy Cassab, benefitted from not only the relatively generous prize money, but by having their works enter into state collections. Not only were the exhibitions popular and well attended, as a widely popular magazine *The Weekly* was also in the position to offer national exposure outside of institutional confines, which it did by reproducing portrait finalists in colour on its pages. However all of this was unfortunately short-lived. Perhaps a lost opportunity, this historic example offers lessons about the importance and challenges of offering continued, strategic support for women artists in institutional contexts, as well as the complex relations between state institutions and private patrons and benefactors of the arts.

**Dr Kate Warren** received her PhD in Art History from Monash University in 2016. She was previously Assistant Curator at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne. She writes regularly about art and cinema, including in publications such as *History of Photography*, *Discipline*, *Persona Studies*, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art and Metro*, and she is an editor of the online film journal [Peephole \(peepholejournal.tv\)](http://peepholejournal.tv).