

SITES OF ACTIVITY

ACUADS 08/09 RESEARCH



Australian Council of University  
Art and Design Schools

ON THE EDGE



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## INTRODUCTION

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From the sculptural transformation of scrap metal to the use of nanotechnology in a multi-media installation that interrogates humanism; from online learning about the art of the ancient Greeks to a partnership between a big city art school and a group of indigenous printmakers living in a remote community, this report demonstrates the diversity of research being undertaken within Australian university art and design schools.

Produced under the auspices of the Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools, the first report (07/08) was published in conjunction with the 2007 ACUADS annual conference hosted in Sydney by the College of Fine Arts (CoFA), University of New South Wales.

This (08/09), the second report, is published in conjunction with the Council's 2008 conference, hosted in Adelaide by the South Australian School of Art at the University of South Australia.

The series of reports as a whole is intended to showcase the range, depth and vitality of research occurring within ACUADS member schools – as well as to indicate the kinds of imperatives driving its development, and the scope and nature of some of the changes occurring. As such it already offers some preliminary indications.

The 07/08 report focussed on a number of what might be called 'flagship' projects (for example, the iCinema collaborative project at COFA, funded with assistance from the Australian Research Council). By contrast, the current report represents, alongside such collaborative projects, a number of smaller, individual creative projects; including some that might be described as 'traditional' in being predominantly concerned with the making of sculpture, paintings or prints for exhibition. This is the kind of 'creative research' that was once taken for granted and is still seen as crucial for the effective training of emerging art and design professional practitioners. Perhaps the fact it can no longer be taken for granted is something of an indicator itself.

Be this as it may, it seems individual, creative, 'practice-led', research projects continue to flourish within the academy alongside the kinds of approaches to research that are characteristic of academic disciplines themselves. On one side, is the artist, committed to maintaining and sustaining a necessarily individualist creative enterprise ('Arrivals and Departures'; 'Steam'); on the other is the research team or 'cluster', embedded within institutions increasingly responsive to social (not to say governmental) imperatives. This shift has clearly been responsible for some interesting initiatives, such as the 'Creative Exchange in the Tropical Environment' – a series of projects aligned with a university-led mission to enhance life in a tropical environment.

But the days of simple valorisation of the techniques and traditions associated with a (largely) European canon of expressive art are long gone; though this is not to say the incorporation of hitherto independent art and design schools within academia has been seamlessly accomplished. At the very least, these first reports suggest a highly vital organism capable of finding innovative ways of adapting to its host environment. In particular, we have learned the language of and the necessity for research methodologies capable of delivering both distinctively qualitative outcomes ('art', 'design', 'culture') and a measure of evidence – for example for development of new approaches to teaching and learning.

This has been a long and sometimes arduous journey, but the very difficulty of working at the 'edge' of the academy has led to the evolution of the kinds of responsive, creative and innovative research practices and methodologies evident in this report. Seen in this light, we are heartened by the recent statement from the Australian Federal Government Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator the Honourable Kim Carr, as a most welcome vote of confidence.

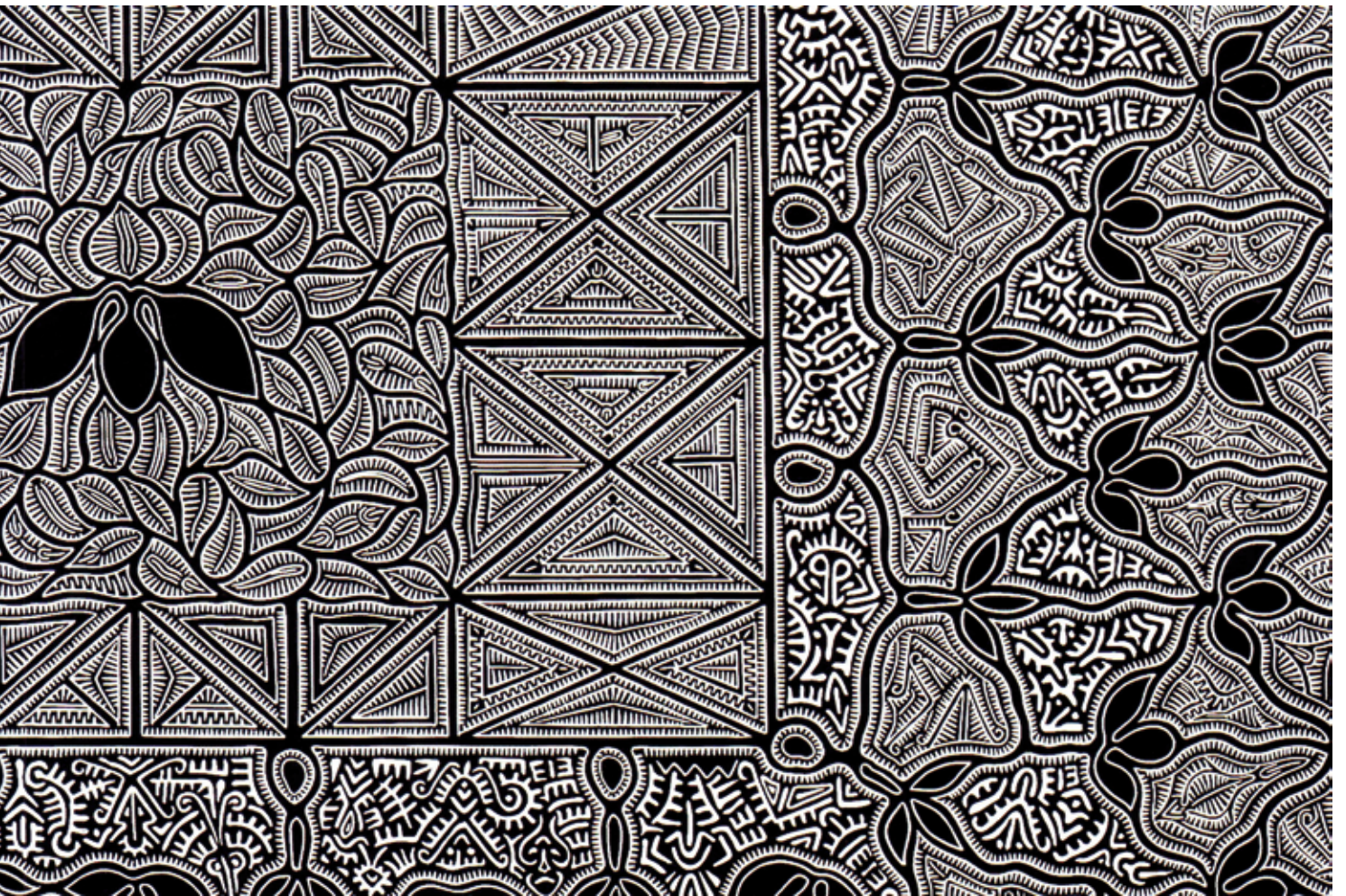
According to Minister Carr, given the humanities make such a significant contribution to enriching the lives of individuals and communities, 'no further payback is needed'.

Music to the ears.

Dr John Barbour  
Research Higher Degrees Coordinator  
South Australian School of Art  
University of South Australia

## Creative Exchange in the Tropical Environment

[www.jcu.edu.au/soca/](http://www.jcu.edu.au/soca/)



This report relates key agenda items and research themes associated with a new research grouping within the recently formed School of Creative Arts at James Cook University. Associated with the University's research focus on enhancement of life in the tropics, four research projects are reported that illustrate a diversity of research activities occurring within the group and which reflect its key research focus and themes.

Campbell (front) using the PLAY+SPACE System  
in performance with David Salisbury

The "Billy Missi Urapan Kai Buzi Project" (detail) curated and  
researched by Russell Millledge

### Creative exchange in the tropics

At the forefront of moves by James Cook University to prioritise research into the enhancement of life in the tropics, the School of Creative Arts has developed a research group focussed on five main themes: new media arts practice, pedagogy and theory; Indigenous arts research; and community engagement in the tropical environment.

The school has also recently introduced undergraduate programs focussed on collaboration within and across contemporary arts practices, and has relocated to new purpose-built facilities suited to the support of both teaching and research in new media.

The group consists of thirteen teaching and research staff, with members undertaking projects typically concerned with two or more of the broad research themes above. The group's main aim is to pursue initiatives through which research conducted within the tropical environment will have positive impact on the region (as well as nationally and internationally).

The following projects illustrate some of the group's current and recent research activities.

#### Sweet Crush audio visual project

Sweet Crush is the result of collaboration between photographer Clive Hutchison and composer Dr David Salisbury. This work spans areas of new media arts practice and community engagement in the tropical environment through development of an audio-visual work based on images and sound recorded within a North Queensland sugar cane mill. The project, conducted over the period of a cane season, explores a range of agricultural and industrial features of the growing and processing of sugar cane. Extensive fieldwork, including interviews with management and mill staff, together with on-location sound sampling, resulted in a body of works subsequently edited into a 12 minute DVD. This foci integrates digital imagery and a full audio composition. It explores and records the physical environment of the cane fields, the mill environs and machinery, and the freighting of the crop on small cane trains (all evocatively lit in a manner reminiscent of Fritz Laing's *Metropolis*), and the mill workers and community. Exhibited at Umbrella Studios and on location at the South Johnston Mill, this work has received significant acknowledgement for its contribution to the building of local community identity.

#### PLaY+SPaCE music technology system

Research in the area of new media arts practice has resulted in Dr Steven Campbell's development of the PLaY+SPaCE proprietary music technology system, in collaboration with the University's Electrical Engineering Department. Using ultrasonic sensing, the system transforms an empty room or space into a musical instrument that can be played simply by moving within the space. As a non-tactile system, PLaY+SPaCE has resulted in varied application of the system within a number of creative works, including music performance, dance, and installations – as well as for disability access workshops.

Collaborative works developed for live music performances using the system include *Gabriella Takes a Bath* (2005), with Dr David Salisbury on live/processed flute (pictured) and *Sensience* (2006), with German saxophonist Ulrich Krieger. Others include a work for North Queensland's professional dance company Dance North, *Opposites Attract* (2004) – for seven dancers; and a piece for Cairns-based group Bone Map, titled 'Body Blow' (2008), for a solo dancer.

Works undertaken using the PLaY+SPaCE system also focus on the theme of community engagement in the tropical environment. Examples include a *H2O*, a collaborative installation featuring Brisbane poet Jayne Fenton-Keane (2005) and exploring marine themes; *Flow*, an installation developed for Townsville's annual River Festival (2002); and *Come Home*, an exhibition of artworks arising from a workshop conducted by artists with children from three local primary schools (2007).



#### The Pool is a model for the learning and teaching of digital design

In the area of new media arts pedagogy, doctoral candidate Ms Katja Fleischmann is developing and implementing a new cross-disciplinary learning and teaching model in collaboration with the University's School of Information Technology. The model aims to manage the increasing complexities of digital design technology through the 'pooling' of expertise from industry figures and from academics within the university's design and IT departments. In response, students are formed into 'learning pools' to utilise this teaching expertise and to draw on each other's skills and knowledge to solve problems and realise projects in ways consistent with team-based industry practice.

#### Advancing opportunities for Torres Strait Islander Artists

Understanding the position of Indigenous art practice within an Australian context is the focus of Dr Stephen Naylor's research. His doctoral work on mapping Australian contemporary art presence in the Venice Biennale has established a strong correlation with the rise of Indigenous art in Australia. Since moving to James Cook University in 2005 Dr Naylor has focussed on researching the significant practices of Indigenous artists from the northern region of Australia, particularly the Torres Strait Islands. Together with colleague Dr Julie Gough, Dr Naylor recently presented a collaborative paper entitled, 'Circuit breaking? Indigenous Australian art and critical discourse', at the 32nd International conference in the History of Art. In this paper, the authors argued that: '...despite the obvious acclaim and renown for Indigenous works there is an increasingly marked absence of critical engagement with Indigenous Australian art; the gap intensifying with the acceleration of art being produced nationally, from remote and urban locales'.

Professor Ryan Daniel  
 Dr Steven Campbell  
 Dr Stephen Naylor  
 Dr David Salisbury  
 Mr Clive Hutchison  
 Ms Katja Fleischmann  
 Mr Russell Milledge

## AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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**Canberra Institute of Technology**  
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**School of Art**  
**The Australian National University**  
 Canberra ACT 0200  
[www.anu.edu.au/ITA/CSA/](http://www.anu.edu.au/ITA/CSA/)

**Faculty of Design and Creative Practice**  
**University of Canberra**  
 Canberra ACT 2601  
[www.dcp-canberra.com/](http://www.dcp-canberra.com/)

## NEW SOUTH WALES

**Visual Arts & Design**  
**Australian Catholic University**  
 Locked Bag 2002 Strathfield NSW 2135  
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**Billy Blue School of Graphic Arts**  
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[www.billyblue.com.au](http://www.billyblue.com.au)

**School of Visual and Performing Arts**  
**Charles Sturt University**  
 Locked Bag 588  
 Wagga Wagga NSW 2678  
[www.csu.edu.au/faculty/arts/vpa/](http://www.csu.edu.au/faculty/arts/vpa/)

**National Art School**  
 156 Forbes Street Darlinghurst NSW 2010  
[www.nas.edu.au/](http://www.nas.edu.au/)

**Raffles College of Design and Commerce**  
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 North Sydney NSW 2060  
[www.raffles.edu.au/](http://www.raffles.edu.au/)

**School of Arts**  
**Southern Cross University**  
 PO Box 157 Lismore NSW 2480  
[www.scu.edu.au/schools/arts/](http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/arts/)

**School of Drama, Fine Art and Music**  
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 University Drive Callaghan NSW 2308  
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**College of Fine Arts**  
**The University of New South Wales**  
 PO Box 259 Paddington NSW 2021  
[www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/](http://www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/)

**Sydney College of the Arts**  
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[www.usyd.edu.au/sca/](http://www.usyd.edu.au/sca/)

**Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building,**  
**University of Technology**  
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[www.dab.uts.edu.au/](http://www.dab.uts.edu.au/)

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**University of Western Sydney**  
 Locked Bag 1797 BLD BD WRS  
 Penrith South DC NSW 1797  
[www.uws.edu.au/communication\\_arts/sca](http://www.uws.edu.au/communication_arts/sca)

**Faculty of Creative Arts**  
**University of Wollongong**  
 Wollongong NSW 2522  
[www.uow.edu.au/crearts/sad/](http://www.uow.edu.au/crearts/sad/)

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

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 Ellen Gowan Drive Darwin NT 0909  
[www.cdu.edu.au/creativeartshumanities/](http://www.cdu.edu.au/creativeartshumanities/)

## QUEENSLAND

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 South Bank Campus  
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**James Cook University**  
 Townsville QLD 4811  
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**Creative Industries Faculty**  
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 Victoria Park Road  
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**Faculty of Arts**  
**University of Southern Queensland**  
 Toowoomba QLD 4350  
[www.usq.edu.au/faculty/arts/VISARTS/](http://www.usq.edu.au/faculty/arts/VISARTS/)

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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**Adelaide Centre for the Arts**  
**TAFE SA**  
 GPO Box 1872 Adelaide SA 5001  
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**South Australian School of Art**  
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## TASMANIA

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**School of Visual & Performing Arts**  
**University of Tasmania**  
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 Geelong VIC 3221  
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**Faculty of Humanities & Social Science**  
**La Trobe University**  
 PO Box 199 Bendigo VIC 3552  
[www.latrobe.edu.au/visualarts/](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/visualarts/)

**Faculty of Art & Design**  
**Monash University**  
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**School of Art**  
**Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology**  
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[www.rmit.edu.au/art/](http://www.rmit.edu.au/art/)

**National School of Design**  
**Swinburne University of Technology**  
 144 High Street Prahran VIC 3181  
[www.swin.edu.au/design/](http://www.swin.edu.au/design/)

**Arts Academy**  
**University of Ballarat**  
 PO Box 663 Ballarat VIC 3353  
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**Victorian College of the Arts**  
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