The first astronomers

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Looking to our past to inspire our future

As we start 2014, the University community is looking forward to the beginning of the new academic year and exciting developments ahead for the future of higher education.

Developments in online learning, for example, are allowing us to adapt the way we educate students beyond the classroom. Coupled with technological advances, the University continues to innovate in research and education. Put simply we are using the learnings from the ways in which students interact online to better understand how they learn.

As we look forward to a new year of research, teaching and learning, it is equally important to adopt a historical perspective.

This edition of Voice explores the unique history of Australia’s Indigenous population.

The University’s distinctive connection with both local and national Indigenous communities gives it a unique opportunity to advance Indigenous knowledge and learn from a culture which precedes Western liberal thought.

Astrophysicist Dr Alan Duffy tells of his time in the Pilbara. Dr Duffy intended to teach children about careers in Science, instead finding himself learning more from them about Indigenous astronomy.

University staff members and academics Professor Marcia Langton and Professor Ian Anderson, Director of the University’s Murrup Barak Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development, speak about what it means to them to be Indigenous leaders in the Academy.

Travelling to the Pilbara with Professor Anderson to view a childcare centre built by students from our Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning and adopting the curriculum based on advice from our early childcare experts was one of the personal highlights for me in 2013.

The University also prioritises its international Indigenous links. Each year an Indigenous academic from overseas is invited to Melbourne to speak to the University and wider community. Last year Professor Taiaiake Alfred, founding Director of the Indigenous Governance Program at the University of Virginia in British Columbia, spoke at an oration on the topic of ‘Being and becoming Indigenous: Resurgence against contemporary Colonialism’.

Professor Alfred is a First Nations man from Canada, who specialises in traditions of governance, decolonisation strategies, and land-based cultural restoration.

Professor Alfred’s oration was the fifth annual event of its kind. This year an Indigenous academic from overseas is invited to Melbourne to speak to the University and wider community. Last year Professor Taiaiake Alfred, founding Director of the Indigenous Governance Program at the University of Virginia in British Columbia, spoke at an oration on the topic of ‘Being and becoming Indigenous: Resurgence against contemporary Colonialism’.

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By looking back, we can learn from our past and move confidently into the future.

Margaret Sheil
Acting Vice-Chancellor

Melbourne scholarships go to top VCE students

More than 60 incoming first year students were welcomed to campus recently as part of the group of 2013 VCE graduates choosing to join us at Melbourne in the 2014 academic year. By Monique Edwards.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Sixty-eight of Victoria’s highest achieving VCE students have accepted National Scholarships to study at the University of Melbourne next year.

To be eligible for the scholarships students needed to receive an ATAR or equivalent of 99.90 or above following the release of VCE results. University of Melbourne Vice-Chancellor Professor Glyn Davis congratulated the National Scholars on their success.

“The University is delighted to be able to give all these outstanding students the opportunity to study in a challenging academic environment. Their presence at Melbourne can only enrich our academic community.”

The Melbourne National Scholarship provides students with a HECS-exempt Commonwealth Supported Place in one of the University’s undergraduate degrees and a $5000 annual allowance for the duration of their degree.

Recipients receive a guarantee of entry into the graduate course of their choice. Scholars from interstate also receive a HECS-exempt place as well as an annual allowance of $10,000 over the duration of the degree.

With its outstanding performance in international rankings, the University of Melbourne is at the forefront of higher education globally. It is ranked number 1 in Australia by the Times Higher Education World University Rankings and 28th worldwide. Melbourne’s position as Australia’s top University has also been reaffirmed in the 2013 Shanghai Jiao Tong rankings, in which it has moved up three places from 2012, to equal 54th in the world and third in the Asia-Pacific.

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HOW TO CONTACT US
Learning in the early years

Focused language programs for under-fours are having a huge impact in remote early-learning settings. By Catriona May.

Two major studies into early childhood programs underway in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education are confirming the importance of providing high-quality learning experiences for disadvantaged children.

There’s a real opportunity, especially if we start as early as possible, to change the lives of disadvantaged children through really focused, enriched language and learning games that enable children’s cognition and language development,” says Professor Collette Tayler, Chair of Early Childhood Education and Care.

Professor Tayler’s passion is palpable, and it is no wonder; she has witnessed first-hand the power of high quality early education, most recently through her work with the Gumala Aboriginal Corporation.

The University’s partnership with Gumala began in 2011, when a group of architecture students worked with the corporation to design and build its early childhood centre at Wakathuni in the Pilbara. Since then, Professor Tayler has been working with the centre to implement the Abecedarian Approach Australia (3A) program, along with Professor Joseph Sparling.

Pioneered by Professor Sparling, the Abecedarian approach uses learning games, conversational reading and enriched caregiving to ensure children from disadvantaged backgrounds do not fall behind their peers before school.

The children who took part in Professor Sparling’s original 1970s study in the US are now in their 30s, and have benefited significantly from this early intervention. By 21 years of age, almost 70 per cent of them were attending college or were employed in a skilled job, compared with about 40 per cent of their peers.

The 3A program is a version of the Abecedarian approach, tailored for Australia and especially to the needs of Aboriginal children. It is already reaping significant rewards for the families involved, with children developing a love of reading and strong vocabularies, standing them in good stead for school.

“Waiting until vulnerable children are three or four years old to intervene is too late to stop them falling behind their peers,” Professor Tayler explains. “We need to start as early as possible, and work with families, for the best results. Families are the first teachers and when they take up the Abecedarian approach children progress quicker and their learning becomes stronger.”

The project has produced a series of conversational reading books and learning games based on local stories, which are being used by families as part of the program.

“The program at Wakathuni is working because the children are in their own place, they have fun and families are really welcome,” Professor Tayler says. “More and more we hope that the families lead the program: adults don’t have to have high levels of English literacy to take an active part.”

Mainstream early childhood centres may be able to learn from the intentional, play-based teaching employed in the 3A program. Emerging findings from the major 4Kids study, also led by Professor Tayler, are showing that teaching within play programs, or instructional support, is lacking in Australian settings.

“We have three years of data on around 2700 children in Victoria and Queensland,” Professor Tayler says. “We’ve assessed every child on their cognitive development over time – for example verbal comprehension, visual acuity and concept formation. We also have a whole set of data about the quality of programs, looking at items like the quality of adult-child interactions and physical environments.”

Significantly, the study baseline established that, although the emotional and organisational support provided to children was generally high in most settings, the quality of instructional support was not high in any setting.

“Essentially instructional support is looking at where teachers are building concepts, modelling language and giving really strong feedback,” Professor Tayler says. “This area of intentional teaching in a play-based environment is quite new within early childhood programs and it seems to be a place where we can make improvements. As we have seen with the 3A program, it can make a huge difference – particularly for the most vulnerable children.”

It all comes down to the quality of adult-child interactions, Professor Tayler explains.

“Everyday talk is really important – children need to have many high-quality engagements with the adults around them. They need to be exposed to rich vocabulary and to be given the opportunity to have back and forth exchanges.”

At a policy level, Professor Tayler says Australia needs to prioritise making high quality early childhood education available to children from an earlier age – particularly for the most vulnerable children.

“It is no wonder; she has witnessed first-hand the power of high quality early education, most recently through her work with the Gumala Aboriginal Corporation.

The National Quality Framework encourages this through the introduction of an educational concept and intentional teaching in play-based environments, but there is a lot more work to be done,” she says. “This should absolutely be an area of national priority.”

E4Kids is led by the University of Melbourne’s Graduate School of Education and Queensland University of Technology, with the Victorian, Queensland and Commonwealth Governments.

Watch a time-lapse video of three staff and 16 Masters of Architecture students building a childcare centre in Wakathuni in 2011 at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kA2A991hP90

www.education.unimelb.edu.au
Leading by example

Marcia Langton and Ian Anderson are, respectively, the University of Melbourne’s Foundation Chairs in Australian Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Higher Education. Gabrielle Murphy spoke to them about their roles, their pathways, and their hopes for the future.

Marcia Langton, Chair of Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne, is a well-known, sometimes controversial figure in Australia, respected here and internationally for her work across academic fields linked to Indigenous rights, justice and artistic and cultural expression.

What many don’t know, though, is what the role of Chair actually means. Professor Langton says she’s often asked who the other members of her committee are.

In academic circles in Australia, Chair is the title given to professors responsible for a department’s academic, clinical, administrative and research activities. At the University of Melbourne, this is the case for Professor Langton in her role as Foundation Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies and for Professor Ian Anderson as Foundation Chair of Indigenous Higher Education. In both cases, they are also the first to be nominated in these roles – thus the ‘Foundation’ moniker.

But according to Professor Anderson, whose family are Palawa Trowerna from the Bidjara nations and came to the University in 2004, being appointed Foundation Chair of Indigenous Health.

It seems to me there’s always an element of surprise inherent in this reference to being first,” says Professor Anderson, “in much the same way as when someone mentions the first female aeronautical engineer, this can be inferred as somewhat patronising.

“What’s more important is to be recognised for actual contribution, not for being in the first-of-category.

“It’s not something the University has made much of. When I graduated it was recognised by a telegram from the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Gerry Hand but, by and large, I didn’t get singled out during my undergraduate years, although I was supported by scholarships and access to other financial aid which I needed and appreciated at the time.”

Whereas Professor Anderson is an alumnus of the University of Melbourne – having commenced his undergraduate studies in 1983 and completing his Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) in 1989 – Professor Langton grew up in south-central Queensland and Brisbane as a descendant of the Yiman and Bidjara nations and came to the University in 2000 to take up the Chair in Indigenous Studies after a distinguished career as a student, academic and campaigner for Indigenous rights.

These days, as leaders of the Indigenous Studies and Higher Education portfolios at the University, they agree that much has changed over the years and much is still to be done, but also that solid foundations had already been laid to enable them to oversee the achievements made under their direction.

“Contrary to what most people seem to believe – that there was a paucity of Indigenous studies at the University of Melbourne when I was first appointed – there were in fact 36 subjects, wholly or partly covering Indigenous areas,” Professor Langton says.

“Over the seven years I was in the Faculty of Arts, there was a rich niche of programs, some core, some developed by myself, that included 90 postgraduate students researching Indigenous-related topics.

“Thereafter, when working out of the Pro Vice-Chancellor’s office, these subject areas have been honed across the disciplines of linguistics, history, politics, medicine and health sciences, architecture and environmental science to concentrate in a more focused way on matters of everyday concern to Indigenous people including native title, traditions and customs, and political institutions.”

In line with their shared commitment to a sustained growth of Indigenous staff and student numbers, Professor Langton and Professor Anderson have worked together to see the establishment of the Murrup Barak Melbourne Institute of Indigenous Development and have overseen a substantial increase in the number of Indigenous academic and professional staff at the University which currently includes three professors, one associate professor, and 230 academic staff. Projected growth of both staff and students has been enshrined in the University’s Reconciliation Action Plan, the introduction of which is a source of satisfaction and pride for both Professor Langton and Professor Anderson, as is the fact that the University has, at 80 per cent, the highest completion rates of any Australian university.

“Being in a position to encourage young Aboriginal people to come to university to pursue an academic career if that’s what they want or to forge a professional career in education is marvellous,” Professor Langton says.

Says Professor Anderson: “Being able to support capability and to watch young Aboriginal students grow and realise their aspirations gives me an immense sense of pride, as it does many other Indigenous Australians.”

www.murrupbarak.unimelb.edu.au

About Murrup Barak

The Murrup Barak Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development was established in 2009 to increase the impact of the University of Melbourne’s Indigenous programs and maximise the University’s contribution to Indigenous development.

The Institute takes it name from the Woiwurrung language. ‘Murrup Barak’ means the Spirit of Barak. The name was chosen to honour the memory of the visionary Aboriginal leader William Barak. The name reflects our respect for Indigenous cultures and knowledge and our vision for an Institute that will drive innovation, creativity and the development of trusting and ethical relationships.

Murrup Barak operates across three program areas:

1. Indigenous Student & Staff Programs
   - Services to support the recruitment, retention and ongoing support of Indigenous students and staff

2. Academic Programs
   - Activities to enhance the productivity and impact of teaching, learning and research in Indigenous Studies

3. Partnerships and Development
   - Partnerships and initiatives to create an enabling institutional environment for Indigenous development and promote respect for Indigenous knowledge, culture and values
The first astronomers

Andi Horvath speaks with astrophysicist Andrew Duffy about teaching Indigenous astronomy to students in the Pilbara, and what he learnt from them in turn.

As Australia has the oldest continuous culture on Earth, the first Australians were very likely to have also been the first astronomers. In 2008 CSIRO astrophysicist Ray Norris set out with wildlife expert Cilla Norris to learn, collect and document the stories of Australian Aboriginal astronomy from community elders who were the custodians of these stories.

There are hundreds of different Aboriginal cultures, and therefore as many different stories about the night skies. Some have been lost since colonisation and some were sacred, private knowledge. One thing was universal: Indigenous Australians valued the sun, moon and stars for information about seasonal survival, but also for its keeping of culture and story.

Ray and Cilla Norris’s publication Emu dreaming: An introduction to Australian Aboriginal Astronomy became the message stick to a new generation of teachers, who are now adding the richness of Indigenous observations to astronomy science classes.

Astrophysicist Alan Duffy is one who, after being introduced to concepts of Indigenous astronomy, will never look at the Milky Way the same way again. And after visiting the Pilbara earlier this year to share his knowledge about Indigenous astronomy with students in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous schools, he is even more encouraged, with new knowledge, and optimism about the future of astronomy in Australia.

Dr Duffy’s invitation to visit schools in the Pilbara to share his love of astronomy came about as part of Pilbara Joblink and the Federal Government’s ‘Inspiring Australia’ initiative called the ‘Science Career Carousel’. Dr Duffy visited Karatha High School, St Luke’s College and Roeburne, a Year 6 to 9 Indigenous school.

I initially felt awkward about being the Irish boy from the Emerald Isle who visits the red regions of the Pilbara to talk to Indigenous kids about their own ancestral knowledge,” he says. “As there is a huge variety of Indigenous stories from different regions of Australia I decided to share the ones I knew in the finest oral tradition of storytelling.”

Dr Duffy explained to the students that Indigenous astronomy is a great example of how sophisticated Aboriginal science and culture was through its development. He also explored the fundamental difference in the way traditional European astronomy conceives the constellations by connecting the dots of stars to form pictures attributed to Greek mythology, whereas Aboriginal astronomy connects not just the stars but also the black spaces in-between. Two different ways of viewing the same night’s sky!

The school kids were very excited by the “emu in the sky” which stretches out in what European astronomers call the Milky Way.” He says. “Once you see it, you can never look at the Milky Way the same way again. As a constellation, it is far more convincing than the obscure European pictures.

“There is an engraving of the emu in the sky in stone at Ku-ring-gai Chase national park just north of Sydney, where the Guringai people lived until the British arrived in 1788, and the time of year when the emu rises just above the horizon is also the season when real emus lay their eggs; it has remarkable timekeeping accuracy. This knowledge is important to survival, especially if you were keen on a fresh egg for dinner.”

Dr Duffy also explains that stretches of the Pilbara resemble the Martian landscape more than any other on Earth, and have been used by NASA to test and train their Mars rovers.

He found the red terrain fascinating and beautiful, and was not immune to the irony that during sessions students were enjoying a NASA app allowing them to simulate driving the Mars rover on Martian landscapes created from the very place they lived and learned.

Dr Duffy says he was amazed by how much he had learnt from visiting these students in the Pilbara.

“I spoke to the students about Indigenous astronomy, on using the sky as a ‘GPS’ and a calendar. I had no idea until I had done the research that the European story of Orion the Hunter (who is upside down in Australia) chasing seven sisters (a cluster of seven stars) is essentially the same story in Indigenous astronomy where a fisherman hunter and his three brothers are also chasing the seven sisters. I agree with Ray and Cilla Norris this suggests the possibility that these stories may have come from one set of people a very long time ago.”

Dr Duffy says one of the most memorable student questions during his time in the outback also revealed complex analysis of physical concepts in astronomy.

“A girl asked, if the sun is so hot why is space so cold? While the answer is simple the question is wonderfully complex. The simple answer is, just as we walk further and further away from a campfire the energy is less and it feels cold in the next paddock. But the question is beautiful, Einstein would be proud, because there is logic in the observation that is embedded in the question. Consider the notion that it takes time for a room (our planet) to heat up. It suggests there was a time when the sun did not shine but now it does. It suggests there must have been a beginning to the universe.”

Dr Duffy laughs at himself and reiterates “I’m the Irish boy from the Emerald Isle who visits the red regions of the Pilbara to remind them of what they already know. That is, the universe is a fascinating story any way you look at it.”

Learning from the elders in any culture has allowed for knowledge and know-how to be passed down the generations. Their stories have helped us make sense of the world, navigate our lives and celebrate annual rituals,” he says.

Cover image shows a detail from Alma Nungurrayi Granites’ Yanjiypirri (Seven Sisters Dreaming), depicting the constellation Pleiades. Yuendumu, Warakurlangu Artists Aboriginal Corporation. Used with permission.

How to find the emu in the sky

Find the dark patch of sky between the Southern Cross and the pointers. The dark area is known as the Coalack by astronomers, which are dense clouds of interstellar dust. The Coalack forms the head of the emu and stretching to the left is its long dark neck. Its roundish body is next to Scorpius and its legs are towards the horizon. Images: Barnaby Norris.
Preserving ancestral knowledge with painting on body and bark

An exhibition currently showing at the University’s Ian Potter Museum of Art shows Yolngu designs on bark. Following are highlights from a public forum led by curator Joanna Bosse, featuring comments from Yolngu artist Wanyubi Marika and ANU anthropologist Howard Morphy.

JOANNA BOSSE

This exhibition, Transformations, Early Bark Paintings from Arnhem Land, draws upon two key cultural collections, the first of which is the Donald Thomson collection, under the joint custodianship of the University of Melbourne and Museum Victoria. The second is the Leonard Adam collection of international Indigenous art which is one of the University’s very treasured cultural collections.

Many of the Yolngu paintings in this exhibition are sacred clan body painting designs. The significance of these particular works, aside obviously from their staggering aesthetic presence, is due to the fact that these are the earliest in existence that depict those sacred Madayin minytji designs from clans in north-eastern and central Arnhem Land.

They were made by clan leaders and others with ritual authority for the anthropologist Professor Donald Thomson in 1935 to 1937 and again in 1942, and they were made specifically for the purposes of educating European Australians about the relevance and complexity of Yolngu culture. So engagement was really a very clear objective producing these works, and I think it’s fair to say that this remains true for the Yolngu contemporary art that’s made today.

HOWARD MORPHY

It’s very interesting, because people often have assumed that bark paintings were somehow done for Europeans, and when you read many works about Aboriginal art it’s as though a European arrived, a missionary or something like that, and said let’s think of something to sell. How about doing some paintings on bark?

But nothing could be further from the truth. Bark has been a medium used by Indigenous Australians obviously for many thousands of years. We know about the use of bark in Victoria from very early on because the earliest bark works, engravings, in fact do come from this part of Australia. Bark paintings were used in many different contexts in Arnhem Land and bark was used in many different ways. So the paintings on the inside of wet season huts were something that was done for generation after generation after generation. That’s one of the contexts in which bark paintings are quite familiar.

WANYUBI MARIKA

Bark painting is a message of education, a message that Yolngu have been here before Europeans landed in Australia. Madayin minytji is a pattern that holds inside our soul, that links to the land, and that identifies every clan and tribe that belongs to their country. Without this minytji, we’re nobody. We’d be changing colour, we’d be talking without a language, without having any mission, without having any identity within our clan.

Then maybe if someone has an injury or something like that, their could be a painting done on them recovering. So when people are sick, maybe their spirit is a little bit weak, but when they’re recovered, then they will get back that identity, that strength from that ancestor.

JOANNA BOSSE

Can I also just ask you, Howard, to talk about this idea that this information, these designs are sacred and they appear in different contexts, but their meaning doesn’t change in itself. The meaning stays the same but the knowledge of the person looking at the design is what activates different aspects of the meaning.

Because I think there’s an understanding that whatever government we have, but in a Yolngu way to understand how you want to bring people into your unity, one mind, one heart.

During the cleansing ceremony the pattern is put on our body. It means respecting God’s governance and the law of Yolngu, to have a good manner, respecting each other like that.

JOANNA BOSSE

Wanyubi, when you saw these works [on show] for the first time, you said we should write down the country on the label that each of these paintings refers to. You were really particular about that. And we went and looked at Google Earth zooming so that I could make a note of all of these places, this is a really key point, that they refer to country and then the ancestors that made that land and then all of the people and those relationships.

But you also said something really fascinating yesterday, in talking about your own work and the way that you paint designs today, that your innovations and your slight changes were like twisting the arm of your father. I’d like to know more about that and what you mean.

WANYUBI MARIKA

Well, my tribe clan design is not meant to be changed. But the way the original artists see the sea and the land is different from the way I see it. I see country that is movable, the wind is moving and the water is moving, and the sand is moved by wind. They’re moving, that’s how I see it and put it into my painting. My vision is different, but still links to the story, to the information that is given to us. Then it becomes a twist in the hand — I’m twisting my father’s hand, just a little bit, not too much. His name has been recognised but somehow where in the line I had to make my hand a little bit recognised.

HOWARD MORPHY

So all of these paintings are connected to land and place and they’re used in a different ceremonial context for different kinds of reasons — including a dhapi or circumcision ceremony, when it will be used on body painting on the chest of a young boy who will be losing there for maybe four or five hours hasting that painting put on their chest. It’s an incredibly important occasion in that child’s life.

Then maybe if someone has an injury or something like that, their could be a painting done on them recovering. So when people are sick, maybe their spirit is a little bit weak, but when they’re recovered, then they will get back that identity, that strength from that ancestor.

So there’s lots of information, if you really want to know more about these paintings, those resources, in a way, have been made available, both by Yolngu themselves, but also through working with people like me. One of the reasons they do work with people like me is to go out there and tell people about these kinds of things. My Yolngu name means Kingfish Tail, because a kingfish flicks its tail from side to side, and in dances is throwing strips from side to side, not to kill people, but sending information. So they say, you’re going out there like the kingfish tail, sending information to the people.

Watch the panel discussion of Arnhem Land bark painting and hear all the participants’ comments at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLGvAIe-kKM&feature=youtu.be

Transformations: early bark paintings from Arnhem Land is on show until 23 February.
One of the central questions for all of us who live in countries with colonial histories and a colonial presence is how to transcend the relationships that have gone into forming the societies that we have inherited. How do we transcend the histories of racism, dispossession and injustice as opposed to the just relationships that we all hope to have in the countries that we inhabit?

Colonisation is seen as something of a historical period. People think of colonisation as a time in the past when ancestors from Europe came and did the things, both positive and negative, that resulted in the formation of the societies that we call Canada, the United States, Latin American countries, and Australia.

People think about colonisation in terms of European peoples coming and with a pioneering spirit getting a foothold in the continent and putting the work into developing these societies, which are now paying off in terms of the prosperity and the level of comfortable lives that such people have today.

People think about colonisation in the past, and it’s true that it’s an historic period and it’s an historical phenomenon. From the 1500s onward [in Canada] people came from Europe and in effect dispossessed the indigenous peoples. People came and imposed belief systems and imposed ways of being. They came with the intent of imposing their own law and their own sovereignty on this area of the world that we call Canada and the United States. Those things happened.

But the problem in using this framework of colonisation as a framework for resolving issues and for understanding issues today and for making arguments today, is when people imagine that it is a strictly historical concept.

It’s a problem if people imagine that because now there are indigenous peoples in universities, that we speak English, that we’re Christian or that some of us indigenous people enjoy as well.

This is a fundamental problem for us who are still living with the legacy of colonisation in terms of the fact that our land was dispossessed, our belief systems and our cultures were disrupted, our families were dispersed and all of the other things that people associate with that historic era.

If colonisation was the intent to take land away, to impose foreign laws and to disrupt culture, if that would define colonisation in the year 1600 it pretty much defines the relationship today.

Therefore colonisation is not a historical reality but it’s a contemporary political, social, cultural and psychological framework for the relationship between indigenous peoples and non-indigenous peoples in countries like Canada.

In fact we’re not in a post-colonial society, we’re in a contemporary colonial society which the settlers have redefined in such a way that releases the burden of colonial guilt, by creating new words, new frameworks, new understandings that create a legitimacy for not only their presence on the land, but also for the things that happened in relation to culture, for the kind of privileges that they claim in relation to native people and the land.

And our society does this without acknowledging that today these processes are just as vital, just as ongoing, just as harmful and just as present in the lives of the indigenous population as they were in the 1600s.

The fundamental problem is the fact that these societies are built on an ongoing re-colonisation of people that allows these societies to enjoy the privileges and the prosperity that non-indigenous people have, and admittedly some of us indigenous people enjoy as well.

If we’re not looking at the dispossession, the continual occupation and the separation of indigenous peoples from the fundamental essence of who they are, we have a massive engine generating social, cultural and psychic discord.

It leads to more and more problems that need to be addressed by institutions of the society, and tragically the institutions are finding themselves unable to keep up with the issues that indigenous peoples are living, because that engine is rolling.

That engine is continuing to produce discord and harm, continuing to produce psychological effects of dispossession.

We’re fooling ourselves if we think that we can resolve the problem of colonisation without addressing the fundamental need to put people back on the land. That it’s not simply a matter of dealing with the effects of colonisation, which we all agree need to be dealt with. You can’t let people suffer in that regard.

But we have to look at the fundamentals and we have to recognise that the disconnection from the land is more than just an economic deprivation. The disconnection from the land is more than just a political injustice. The disconnection from the land when native people are in that situation means they cannot be indigenous, they are prevented from living out the basic responsibilities of their nation in terms of their original teachings, and in terms of what it is to speak as an indigenous person.

Unless you are able to live out your culture and have the connection in your own homeland and to relate to that in a meaningful way, there is really no justice in the relationship at all. There’s really no justice in that person’s life.

Watch the video of the Narm Oration and hear Professor Alfred talk about the Canadian resurgence movement and reconciliation at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwJNy-B3fPA

Laureate Professor
Peter Doherty AC

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Daphne’s ‘Unimelb Adventures’

Politics, Media and Communications student Adesola Ore speaks with fellow scholar and friend Daphne Ng about her blogging life.

Daphne Ng often finds herself spotted and approached by students on campus. But she is not a lecturer or tutor. The bubbly third year Science student is the face behind the popular student blog, ‘Unimelb Adventures’.

The independent website documents student life through Daphne’s eyes. It covers news and events on campus, study tips and memes to lighten the mood during exam periods.

“It’s an honest blog about what things are like” Daphne says. “It’s the light side of uni as well, not just the serious. University can be quite tough sometimes, so it is good to bring in some laughter.”

I feel like there is a gap within the University – there is either really academic information that is very official, and then there is the real party information, but there is nothing in between. So I try to bridge the gap,” she explains.

Daphne’s idea to honestly portray student life on a blog started when she first received her acceptance into the University of Melbourne. However, it was not until finishing first year and beginning a part-time job on campus that she decided to start serious blogging.

“It was when I got a job at uni over the summer that I learnt everything about university; all the services, the student centres and the policies,” she explains. “I thought there are going to be people out there just like me who have no idea what to expect. So, blog away!”

Beginning in February 2013, the blog has grown in popularity over the past months, receiving positive feedback from both the University and students.

Daphne says she hopes the blog acts as a platform to highlight shared experiences at University.

“I hope readers feel more like they are not alone in this, even though sometimes you feel like university is really overwhelming. I would like people to know that they are not the only one.”

Daphne’s honest detailing of both the positive and negative aspects of University has seen students express their gratitude for her expressed feelings.

“I blog about things when I’m feeling down and people will say, “Oh my goodness, I’m feeling like that too”.

The blog also highlights and promotes the numerous student services available for students on campus. Daphne explains that services like the University’s Academic Skills Unit can often appear hidden away to new students. “I think through my blog I can promote these services. I tell people that it’s OK to seek help and that there are all these services available.”

‘Unimelb Adventures’ is not just for current students though. Using blog statistics, Daphne is able to see the breadth of visitors the blog attracts. Among postgraduate students, the site’s readers include staff members, high school students and alumni.

“I received a message from a guy who did his exams 40 years ago and he said that things are still the same,” Daphne says.

With a fast-growing audience, Daphne is planning to expand ‘Unimelb Adventures’ in the new year to include guest bloggers.

“I’m going to completely revamp it and make it more community-centred. So I will be inviting students to come on board and blog about their experiences,” she says.

She hopes the blog can allow students from other faculties to share their university experience to allow a cross-degree understanding of University life.

Daphne, who will be graduating in the middle of 2015, is still pondering the future of the blog. She hopes to pursue further study in Science communications.

“For now, she is still amazed at the popularity of the blog. With an average of 600 readers a day and visits from over 130 different countries, she says she is still surprised at the large audience it has attracted.

“It was just supposed to be a small blog with around 10 readers,” she says, laughing.

“I’ve met so many amazing people and had opportunities I would never have had if I hadn’t started the blog.”

Follow Unimelb Adventures at:

http://unimelbadventures.wordpress.com/
Positive psychology is based on the acronym PERMA, which are five criteria he has identified for promoting wellbeing.

- **P:** Positive Emotions – the promotion and appreciation of positive feelings and states like happiness, contentment and excitement.
- **E:** Engagement – using character strengths to connect more fully with daily activities and to achieve flow states.
- **R:** Relationships – placing value on one’s relationships and supporting others through gratitude, empathy and kindness.
- **M:** Meaning – enhanced by belonging to and serving something bigger than the individual self.
- **A:** Accomplishment – using qualities such as determination, self-regulation and ‘grit’ to achieve meaningful goals.

Positive psychology shows us how the recognition of how important positive psychology is to the education sector.

“Educators have shown they connect really well with positive psychology because it provides a refreshing and different perspective to learning about mental health,” she says.

“Often young people who are not feeling very well are reticent to seek professional help and so to deliver positive psychology within a more general context, to everybody within a school system, enables more accessibility and normalises discussions about mental health issues.

“Research has found that positive psychology programs can boast desirable outcomes such as hope, gratitude, life satisfaction and resilience in young people. Bringing the positive aspects of life to the fore can make a huge difference,” Associate Professor Vella-Brodrick says.

“Very often when young people are feeling anxious, depressed or stressed they become preoccupied with negative thoughts, so getting them to think about what they can be grateful for in their lives is really important. It shifts their mindset from being caught up in this negativity to a focus on what is positive in their lives.

“In addition, we need to keep in mind that negative events are prone to what we call negativity bias – which is where we tend to give negative events more attention than positive events. To counter this negativity bias we need deliberate strategies.”

Such strategies might include expressing gratitude to others, committing random acts of kindness, and generally being kind, savouring everyday life, using your signature strengths for the greater good and writing down three good events. To counter this negativity bias we need deliberate strategies.”

“Positive psychology has the benefit of being able to help a full range of people, from those who are depressed to those who are OK,” she says. “For those who are OK, it will help everyone, not just those at risk of mental illness. Associate Professor Vella-Brodrick says.

“Positive psychology has the benefit of being able to help a full range of people, from those who are depressed to those who are OK,” she says. “For those who are OK, it will enable them to prosper and make the most of their lives. And when we are feeling quite well ourselves it enables us to be in a position to help others, to be more civic minded and to engage in activities that will benefit the community more broadly.”

Research in the field also shows that living a full life requires a variety of different pathways to happiness. Joyful, hedonic happiness is part of the picture, but engagement, connection and meaning are important too.

“We all need to know why we wake up in the morning,” says Dr Vella-Brodrick. “Everyone, including our children and young people, needs goals to work towards to help us feel valuable and to give us purpose.”

Professor Seligman is Zellerbach Family Professor of Psychology and Director of the Penn Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania. He is in Australia for the Fourth Positive Psychology and Wellbeing Conference. Look for a lecture extract in March Voice.

Professor Martin Seligman will give a public lecture for the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the Melbourne Town Hall on Friday 7 February at 6.30pm. Tickets: $65 www.education.unimelb.edu.au/positiveseptember2014/public_lecture

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Scottish accolade for Melbourne head of Design’s architectural firm

Melbourne’s head of Design Alan Pert has won Scotland’s most prestigious architectural award. By Niamh Cremins and Rebecca Scott.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Scotland’s most prestigious design award has been awarded to the Director of the Melbourne School of Design, Professor Alan Pert’s architectural practice NORD (Northern Office of Research & Design).

Professor Pert along with his NORD colleagues, were presented the Royal Incorporation of Architects (RIAS) 2013 Doolan Best Building in Scotland Award at the Scottish Parliament in November.

NORD’s project involved the conversion of a rundown Edwardian workshop, WASPS South Block in Glasgow, turning it into artists’ studios with a gallery and coffee shop.

South Block is a 50,000 square foot, four-storey studio complex in the heart of Glasgow’s Merchant City. There are 96 studios in total for visual and applied artists, cultural social enterprises and creative businesses.

The RIAS Doolan Award for Architecture’s objective is to find and celebrate the best buildings in Scotland.

The architects of the winning building receive £25,000, making it both the most valuable architectural prize in the UK and one of the most significant architecture awards in the world.

The NORD team received the award for “adapting a behemoth Victorian city block into new studios, gallery space and visitor facilities is crisply and ingeniously achieved. An intelligent and appropriate facility within a very creative city.”

One of the judges wrote: “This building delivers to its users, to the local economy and to the creative industries in spades. The architects, with the most modest of budgets, have taken an unloved Edwardian city block and transformed it into a superbly attractive and welcoming new focus for invention, innovation and creativity, buzzing with energy. This is an extraordinary architectural achievement.”

“This building is a great new example of community architecture in Glasgow and we are extremely proud of this award,” Professor Pert says.

www.rias.org.uk/awardsdoolan-award/

Melbourne awarded $20M for new ARC Centre of Excellence

The University of Melbourne will lead the establishment of a new $20 million ARC Centre of Excellence which will create innovative mathematical and statistical models for analysing big data sets.

Many data sets and collections have the potential to make vital contributions to society, business and government, as well as impact on international developments, but they are so large or complex that they are difficult to process and analyse using traditional tools, according to Melbourne ARC Laureate Fellow Professor Peter Hall.

Professor Hall says current solutions are ad hoc, since adequate, mathematically founded statistical techniques currently don’t exist.

“The aim of this Centre is to uncover the knowledge concealed within the size and complexity of these big data sets,” he says.

The new ARC Centre of Excellence for Mathematical and Statistical Frontiers of Big Data, Big Models, New Insights is aligned with the National Research Priority Area of Frontier Technologies for Building and Transforming Australian Industries.

These national priorities focus investment on research in key areas that can deliver significant economic, social and environmental benefits to Australia.

Genetic clue to fighting new strains of flu

Researchers at the University of Melbourne have discovered a genetic marker that can accurately predict which patients will experience more severe disease in a new strain of influenza (H7N9) currently found in China.

Published in the Journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, senior author Associate Professor Katherine Kedzierska from the Department of Microbiology and Immunology says being able to predict which patients will be more susceptible to the emerging influenza strain will allow clinicians to better manage an early intervention strategy.

“By using genetic markers to blood and lung samples, we’ve discovered there are certain indicators that signal increased susceptibility to this influenza. Higher than normal levels of cytokines, driven by a genetic variant of a protein called IRF7M3, tell us that the severe disease is likely,” she says.

Professor Peter Doherty, Laureate Professor and a lead author of the study from the University of Melbourne says predicting how influenza works in individuals has implications for the management of disease and the resources on our health system.

“We are exploring how genetic sequencing and early identification can allow us to intervene in treating patients before they become too unwell. As new cases of influenza emerge in the Northern Hemisphere, we try to keep a season ahead and prepare to protect the most vulnerable in our community.”

Chickless birds guard nests of relatives

New research has solved the mystery of why about nine percent of all bird species choose not to reproduce, and instead drive off birds like cuckoos, which lay their eggs in the nests of other birds.

“Birds like cuckoos are called brood parasites, which means they are reproductive cheats. They lay their eggs in the nests of other birds, imposing the costs of rearing their young on their hosts, who often lose their own entire brood of chicks as a result,” says Dr Naomi Langmore, the lead investigator at ANU.

Dr Michelle Hall and Associate Professor Raoul Mulder, co-authors on the study from the Department of Zoology at Melbourne, says: “When it comes to guarding the nest, if there is extra help for the breeding pair, it enhances protection against brood parasites, and the chances that their own chicks will survive.”

The team from the University of Melbourne contributed to the study with data from over 100 families of superb fairy wrens living at Serendip Sanctuary, near Melbourne, and Campbell Park, near Canberra.

The role of hospital Boards in quality of care

Research conducted by the University of Melbourne reveals that some Victorian public hospital board members are constrained by financial challenges that leave little time for priorities such as quality of care.

Published in the British Medical Journal, Quality and Safety, lead author Dr Marie Bismark from the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health found wide variation in hospital boards’ efforts to improve quality and safety.

“While some health service boards in Victoria are highly engaged in improving the quality and safety of care, others are struggling to gain traction. A deeper understanding of the benefits of investing in quality improvement is needed, but demanding levels of reporting at local and national levels is hindering efficiency.”

International evidence suggests hospitals whose boards are highly engaged in quality improvement may also have better patient outcomes.

“Boards take the issue of quality of care seriously and many would like to do more in this area. But they face a number of barriers including insufficient resources, gaps in the skills and expertise of board members, inadequate information about hospital performance and layers of regulatory control,” Dr Bismark says.
New partnerships support Indigenous health

Philanthropic support is enabling two young Indigenous researchers to make a lasting contribution to the health of their communities. By Joe Fennessy

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Shayne Bellingham possesses an unrelenting commitment to the study of genetics and what his research means for brain diseases. Since completing his PhD at the University of Melbourne in 2005, his research has continued to focus on genetics for diagnosis and understanding of Alzheimer’s and Prion diseases.

“My focus is on trying to capture genetic signatures and utilise this information from a diagnostic point of view, as early detection generally leads to better health outcomes,” he explains.

Earlier this year, Dr Bellingham, whose family are Wotjobaluk people now located in the Horsham region of Victoria, was appointed as the inaugural Bellberry Indigenous Health Research Fellow.

The fellowship – valued at $200,000 – is funded by a philanthropic donation from Bellberry Limited, a not for profit company that was funded by a philanthropic donation from GlaxoSmithKline and philanthropic donation from GlaxoSmithKline to support her Masters of Health Social Sciences.

The funding will support her thesis, which has been developed out of a specific issue within Indigenous communities in Shepparton in country Victoria, that sees numerous youth disengaging from education and sport.

“The problem isn’t so much engaging them in sport, it’s keeping them engaged,” Ms Nixon explains.

“For example, the Rumbalara Football Club has always had a large number of Under-14 footballers, often enough for two teams, but consistently struggles to fill a single Under-17s team. This coincides with the period in which statistics show Aboriginal youth disengagement from education and sport.”

The partnerships with Bellberry Limited and GlaxoSmithKline enhance the University’s investment in this area, and allow for a more significant role in closing the gap in health outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

“Associate Dean (Indigenous Development) of MDHS, Associate Professor Shaun Ewen, says the University is thrilled to be partnering with Bellberry Limited and GlaxoSmithKline.”

“The support will continue to generate new and important knowledge in Indigenous health and improve health outcomes for Indigenous Australians,” he says.

“The collaborations recognise our shared commitment to building the Indigenous health workforce, as detailed in each organisation’s Reconciliation Action Plan.”

“Professor Ewen notes that while much work has been done, much remains to do.”

“We need to leverage the experience and expertise of our Indigenous-specific programs to the breadth of enterprise undertaken by the Faculty. In doing so, we will not only be a great health precinct, but a uniquely Australian one.”

www.mdhs.unimelb.edu.au

Dr Shayne Bellingham

I would like to be able to begin this conversation with my family, Wotjobaluk people, to help translate this into positive outcomes for Aboriginal people suffering from dementia in Australia. My ultimate goal is to incorporate a diagnostic approach within the Aboriginal community.”

Raelene Nixon, who is also an Indigenous researcher based at the University shares a similar conviction towards improving Indigenous health.

A Gurrangwarr woman from Mitchell in South East Queensland, Ms Nixon was recently awarded a $20,000 capacity building grant from the pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline to support her Masters of Health Social Sciences.

The support will include programs to help improve the health and wellbeing of our staff and students.

The University of Melbourne will go tobacco-free across all campuses in February to support health and wellbeing. By Zoe Nikakis.

The University will go tobacco-free on all campuses from World Cancer Day on 4 February to provide a healthier environment for staff, students and visitors.

It currently prohibits smoking inside all its buildings and vehicles and within six metres of entrances and doorways, but smoking is allowed in its open spaces.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Glyn Davis says the move is a natural progression of the University’s commitment to healthy campuses.

“The University is committed to helping improve the health and wellbeing of our staff and students, and this is a step towards further encouraging our community to take action against the harmful effects of smoking,” he says.

“It also aims to minimise the harmful impact of second-hand smoke to others across the campus.”

The move will include support programs for those seeking to quit smoking and aims to further promote health and wellbeing for all staff, students and visitors to the University.

Public health expert in the School of Population and Global Health Professor Rob Moodie says the University is an internationally recognised leader in health research, education and training, and policy and practice, and the organisation should match its best practice education and research with best practice policy.

“Over 40 per cent of deaths from tobacco are due to cancer. Young people – who comprise much of the undergraduate population – who are exposed to tobacco smoke carry the health harms of involuntary smoke much longer,” he says.

“The University’s younger students are also most susceptible to developing potentially harmful smoking habits.”

This change means from next month, the new anti-smoking rules will apply: smoking on University grounds will be prohibited and no campus businesses will be able to sell cigarettes.

The University will phase out smoking across its campuses from 4 February, with a view to requiring full compliance from the beginning of 2015.

This step is in keeping with moves by the national tertiary education sector to go tobacco-free with the support of Quit and VicHealth. It is also in line with discussions with partners across the Parkville precinct to establish a tobacco-free precinct.

www.tobaccofree.unimelb.edu.au
Coranderrk: Showing the way in the fight for justice

Some 130 years after residents successfully lobbied for a Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the management of Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, the history of this remarkable little-known chapter of Australia’s past has been brought to life, first on stage, and now in print. Gabrielle Murphy reports.

In evidence given to the Victorian State Government inquiry into Coranderrk officially titled ‘The Board Appointed to Enquire into, and Report upon, the Present Conditions and Management of the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station’, official spokesperson and community Elder, William Barak, encapsulated his community’s central demand:

“...for the land and the management of Coranderrk...We claim it be no longer over us...Then we will show to the world that the same caring for each other still lives on between our families.”

From the authors’ perspective, their book, which features a special annotated and referenced version of the verbatim script from the play of the same name, together with a history of Coranderrk, a fascinating range of archival images of the residents and station itself, maps, timeline and a foreword by Wurundjeri Senior Elder Aunty Joy Murphy Wandan, is one of many outcomes, including curricular development in Victorian secondary schools, that have resulted from the Minutes of Evidence ARC Linkage project. The project is led by criminologist Julie Evans of the School of Social and Political Sciences, together with a range of industry partners including Arts Victoria, Rijbien Theatre, Koone Heritage Trust, La Mama Theatre, VicHealth, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. Victorian Department of Education, Regional Arts Victoria and the State Library of Victoria.

The book, like the play before it, derives its power and impact from the fact that the text and the script feature the actual words spoken by the Aboriginal and European men and women who testified before the 1881 Parliamentary Inquiry into the management and future of the Coranderrk reserve.

“The power of Coranderrk stems from the authenticity of the voices it depicts on stage,” says its authors. “It is the knowledge that the words we hear (or read) were spoken in real life that enables them to inspire powerful emotions of shock, rejection and respect.”

“In the process, we realised that Coranderrk not only tells a story of Aboriginal and settler collaboration, but also embodies the spirit of such collaboration.”

Keep up to date with the University of Melbourne’s specialist websites

Balancing the bacteria: Why the right mix of microbes is important to our health

Microbiologist Professor Rob Knight explains why we need the millions of microbes that make a home in and on our bodies.

Microbiologist Professor Rob Knight is based at the University of Colorado in Denver.

Online now.

Speaking Siraya: Revitalizing a “dormant” language, rediscovering cultural identity

Historical Inquest Associate Professor Alexander (Sander) Adelaar discusses the growing popularity of the once dormant language Siraya in Taiwan, and explains its influence on a reawakening of cultural identity.

Associate Professor Alexander Adelaar is Honorary Principal Fellow at the Asia Institute, University of Melbourne, and Fellow at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS).

Online 17 January.

Crowdfunding: How a new model of finance is radically changing product development, research and the arts

Crowdfunding researcher Professor Richard Swart describes the explosive growth of crowdfunding in its very short history, and explains how crowd-sourced funding is radically and irrevocably changing how business is done.

Crowdfunding researcher Professor Richard Swart is based at the Fung Institute of Engineering Leadership at the University of California, Berkeley.

Online 24 January.

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Visions Podcast

This month, VISIONS marks the University of Melbourne’s 160th birthday with a special tour of the Parkville campus, and some interesting photo montages from the past and the present. Available via iTunes Store, YouTube or online at: visions.unimelb.edu.au

Up Close Podcast

http://upclose.unimelb.edu.au

Deferring dementia: Research efforts to keep Alzheimer’s at bay

Neurologist Professor Colin Masters explains current medical understanding of Alzheimer’s disease, and discusses ongoing research efforts towards delaying onset of this as yet incurable condition. Presented by Dr Shane Huntington. Colin Masters is Executive Director of the Mental Health Research Institute and Professor of Pathology at the Florey Department of Neuroscience and Mental Health at the University of Melbourne.

Online now.

William Barak, Wurundjeri Ngurungaeta (clan head) and spokesperson who led the campaign to save Coranderrk, drawing a corroboree (c 1898). Image used with permission, and courtesy State Library of Victoria (H91.258).
The University’s Grainger Museum celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2013 with an exhibition and accompanying book. Curator of Exhibitions and Public Programs Brian Allison introduced the essays with an exploration of Grainger’s aims for the Museum and its current interpretation as one of only a handful of autobiographical museums in the world. Following is an edited extract.

The purposes of the Grainger Museum were held in creative tension from the outset by its creator.

For Percy Grainger, it was to be at once a museum dedicated to music in general and his life in particular: themes spiralling together to tell the stories of creativity, celebrity, loss, the pushing of intellectual and cultural boundaries, and simple domesticity.

And in his framed museum ‘legend’ in which he describes, ‘The aims of the Grainger Museum’ (1955) he wrote:

‘...great achievements in musical composition are seldom the result of a purely individualistic effort of (sic) the part of a composer but are often the outcome of several proptious circumstances or frustrating personalities. I have tried in this museum to trace as best I can the aesthetically indebtedness of composers to each other... and to the culturing influence of parents, relatives, wives, husbands and friends.

There is no evidence that Grainger ever uttered or wrote the now axiomatic: “Art does not occur in a vacuum”. But his almost obsesive desire to preserve fragments of the cultural fabric that surrounded him and his fellow composers while engaged in musical invention suggests acknowledgement of the concept.

Stored in the Grainger archive are 24 linear metres of letters giving today’s researcher insights into the multiplicity of dialogues Grainger and his intimates, close associates and colleagues entered into throughout their lives. Kipt in close proximity are 13.5 linear metres of business archives relating to Percy’s life with his mother Rose, his career as a concert pianist, and his 33 years of domicile with his wife Elia.

Within these boxes we can mine information as disparate as what dairy goods Percy and Rose purchased in London, the cost of Rose’s lavish costumes, and what a top-flight concert pianist spent on advertising in the 1920s.

The Grainger Museum’s approximately 330 artworks and over 400 items of furniture and decorative art objects give the contemporary researcher or Museum visitor an understanding of what Grainger saw as he entered his living room, the furniture that surrounded him on a daily basis, the china from which he ate his meals, and the cutlery and condiment receptacles that were at his fingertips.

Approximately 15,000 photographs document Grainger’s professional life, his social milieu and his intimate world with his mother, wife and ‘sweethearts’. Black and white snaps, often ill-framed, forgotten with prints from some of the finest studios in Australia, America and Europe, the latter constantly reaffirming Grainger’s prominence as composer or performer, the former recording the minutiae of a life from childhood to grave.

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Celebrating 75 years of the Grainger Museum

Melissen monkey orchestra (Affencapelle), 1863-1900, porcelain, glazes, gold luster. Photo: private collection

Janet Bocohen

Getting better, and back into learning

Three Masters of Teaching students have received a Dreamlarge grant from the University to create a film festival that engages school-aged patients at the Royal Children’s Hospital. By Catriona May.

Community Engagement

Keeping hospitalised children interested in learning is a challenge for hospitals and schools alike. Three Masters of Teaching (Primary) candidates are working with The Royal Children’s Hospital’s Education Institute to help.

Elizabeth Watson, Nathan Welsh and Louise McLeod won a University Dreamlarge grant to work with the Royal Children’s Hospital on the Jumbunna Film Festival, which will take place in November. The festival, which is named after the Wurundjeri people’s word for ‘storytelling’, is an opportunity for patients to take part in a wide range of learning activities.

The hospital’s Education Institute offers teaching and learning opportunities to children with stays in hospital longer than five days, so they can continue to learn while away from their usual school. They do this through ‘passion projects’ – engaging projects that spark the children’s interest.

The candidates were involved in the festival’s planning, and are now working with the children on a range of activities tailored to their individual interests. The grant enabled them to buy two new laptops for the hospital, to support activities like writing and designing invitations to teach literacy skills, and planning and designing sets to teach mathematical concepts.

Sparkling the children’s interests is one of the biggest challenges facing the candidates; particularly with a wide age range of five to 15 years to cater to.

“The children don’t have to be there – it’s not like a school environment,” Elizabeth says. “So you really have to engage them. The principles of learning and teaching become so important, in particular knowing your students and how they learn. These kids have caring adults reaching out to them all day – so you have to be pretty impressive to break through!”

An added challenge is the high turnover of patients as children are discharged and others admitted.

“We need to be resilient and really efficient and flexible,” Elizabeth says. “We have to learn where a student is up to, what interests them and engage them very quickly and not necessarily with much information. It’s a short time-frame to assess their needs and build rapport.”

For Nathan exploring a child’s interests is not like a school environment,” Elizabeth says. “So you really have to engage them. The principles of learning and teaching become so important, in particular knowing your students and how they learn. These kids have caring adults reaching out to them all day – so you have to be pretty impressive to break through!”

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New GP teaching facility for north-west Melbourne growth corridor

Opportunities for the training of general practitioners have been extended with the establishment of new teaching facilities in Melbourne’s fast-growing northern and western suburbs. By Annie Rahilly.

The University of Melbourne now has access to new teaching facilities for medical students in GP clinics and Community Health Services in Melbourne’s rapidly growing northern and western suburbs.

The initiative demonstrates and strengthens the commitment that GPs have towards training the next generation of health professionals.

Australian Government Grant funding of $1.9 million for the University was made under the Innovative Clinical Teaching and Training Grants, aiming to increase the number of clinical teaching and training opportunities around Australia.

The project has provided infrastructure funding for 2D healthcare settings (including two Aboriginal medical services) to enable GP clinics to create suitable teaching and learning spaces. Clinics have been extended or renovated to provide space for students while they are on placement.

Professor Jane Gunn, Head of the Department of General Practice at the Melbourne Medical School, says the program will assist medical students to gain critical primary care experience in a real-life setting.

“Primary care experience in the suburbs is crucial in the training of doctors. The Melbourne Medical School has two clinical schools in the Northern and Western/Sunshine hospitals and this program being rolled out over actual working clinics means our students receive real and immediate insight into primary care.

“Our students attend these clinics one day per week and participate in all aspects of the practice and receive the benefit of continuity of care for patients, under the supervision of a GP.

“The rise in chronic disease, the ageing population and the need for more prevention means that more health care will be delivered in the community. Doctors of the future will benefit from being trained in the setting in which most health care will be delivered.

“These students are not being trained to be GPs but rather they are learning medicine in the setting where people experience most of their health care,” Professor Gunn says.

www.mhs.unimelb.edu.au
Identically different: you are not your twin

Liz Banks-Anderson explores the bonds that link identical twins, and the reason twins have different health profiles despite their identical genes.

Often a topic of fascination and enquiry, twins can also provide insight into our own health and advance the nature versus nurture debate.

“The idea that people can look the same, yet be different human beings, makes us realise there is more to life than appearances; twins have different health profiles despite their identical genes.”

The significance of twin research and why identical twins can have very different lives and health despite their shared genes was a key question explored at a recent public forum, “Twins: changing the future of genetics”, hosted by the ATR, based at the University of Melbourne.

Keynote speaker Professor Tim Spector, a UK expert from London’s Kings College, explored how genes shape our personal characteristics, health and identity.

He says that even genetically identical twins can be very different, and we can learn much about diseases and our own health by understanding similarities and differences between twins.

“The idea that people can look the same, yet be different human beings, makes us realise there is more to life than appearances; twins have different health profiles despite their identical genes.”

He explains theories on what makes twins so different from their siblings: why they may vote a certain way, love salads, believe in God, get cancer or depression, dislike sport or never put on weight.

“We are not just skin and bones controlled by our genes, but evolving minds and bodies slowly changing shape, driven by many processes we still cannot comprehend,” he says.

“Many of the subtle differences between us appear now to be due to chance or fate, but as science rapidly evolves and explains current mysteries we will be able to become more active participants in this human moulding process.”

ATR member Paul Tillig, 62 (above right), is identical twin to brother Peter, and says twins offer insight into “nature’s laboratory”, providing opportunities for diverse research in many areas of science and health.

Despite possessing shared genes twins can and do have significantly different health and identities.

“Peter is generally more healthy than me with lower blood pressure and cholesterol; more likely to take on endurance exercise; more driven to achieve in all initiatives that he starts, and is a teetotaler,” Paul Tillig says.

Paul also describes his experience of being a twin as “a bit of a lifesaver”.

“We have been able to help each other in ways that would be highly unlikely if we were ordinary siblings. No strings attached.”

Peter developed rheumatoid arthritis at age 39, while Paul has never been afflicted with a life-changing illness. To assist Peter with treatment of his rheumatoid arthritis, Paul donated stem cells to him as part an experimental program investigating the cause of the disease, with Peter receiving Paul’s stem cells after chemotherapy.

“I was not required to undertake subsequent immune-suppressant drugs as Paul’s stem cells were identical to mine. I have been cured. While this has changed my life, it hasn’t really changed my relationship with Paul (and his with me). I would be the first to offer to do the same, without thinking twice. That encapsulates the positive relationships twins may have,” he says.

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Both men encourage other twins to join the ATR, describing it as a simple contribution that can provide great benefit to the general population.

“It is a great opportunity to use our relatively unique positions as twins to make a contribution. It gave me an insight into how others see us even though we see ourselves as individuals, and spend most of our lives living our separate lives,” Paul Tillig explains.

Watch an episode of Visions announcing the appointment of HRH Crown Princess Mary of Denmark as International Patron of the Australian Twin Registry (ATR), and members and researchers at the ATR about the significance of the announcement for raising awareness of the benefits of twins research at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DC/nJr-eG8

Liz Banks-Anderson explores the bonds that link identical twins, and the reasons twins have different health profiles despite their identical genes.

The Australian Twin Registry brings twins and researchers together for vital research that benefits everyone. If you’re a twin and want to make a difference, register now with us at www.twins.org.au or phone 1800 037 021

We welcome non-identical and identical twins of all ages to join the ATR.
The truth about soap

Andi Horvath asks microbiologist Elizabeth Hartland about the pros and cons of the soap you encounter in public facilities, and how soap works in relation to infection control.

H A V E  Y O U  E V E R  W O N D E R E D ?
You are on a road trip and you need to take a pit-stop at a public toilet. The soap, if there is any, is likely to be grungy and sodden. You know washing hands is important, but is wet, dirty, cracked soap safe to use? Isn’t it a breeding ground for scores of dangerous germs? What do you do? What would a microbiologist do?

The definitive answer comes from Head of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Melbourne, Professor Elizabeth Hartland, who says: “Soap and water is a very effective way to clean your hands. As a surfactant, soap removes dirt, grease and microbes along with it – they are simply washed away.”

But standard soap doesn’t kill the bacteria, it just disrupts and rearranges the oil layer on our hands, allowing it to slide off and be rinsed down the drain.”

Professor Harland also points to one study that showed higher bacterial loads have been found in old-style refillable liquid soap dispensers.

“Wet soaps do contain more bacteria than dry soaps but they get rinsed off when you wash, so cross-contamination of disease doesn’t usually happen because of soap use. Cracked soap harbours lots of bacteria too.”

But it appears numbers of bacteria are not the only issue; what is more important is that bacteria present on our hands can be easily transferred to food. The bacteria get into your body – which happens when we touch our eyes, mouths, and the insides of the nose, and through open wounds.

The unfortunately asked but haunting question is ‘do microbiologists use grungy wet soaps in public loos?’

Cheryl Power who teaches Microbiology at the University of Melbourne suggests we leave public convenience soap alone.

Just rinse your hands under water. Most harmful microbes that you may have acquired will not adhere to your skin firmly so will be removed by rubbing your hands vigorously under running warm water and drying them using a clean paper towel. Best of all, carry an alcoholic handrub and don’t rely on washrooms to provide soap or hand-drying facilities.

And as a point of interest, the world became a safer place in 1847 when a Dr Semmelweis suggested medical students wash their hands after doing morning autopsies before helping women deliver their babies. The spread of infections and therefore deaths in that clinic dropped sharply. Sadly and surprisingly he had a difficult time convincing the medical profession. Once Pasteur made the link to germ theory, the rest is public health history.

The washing of hands with soap is the single most important public health directive to prevent the spread of diseases, and has saved many lives. It just needs to be clean soap.

Ever wondered how or why? If you have a question you’d like an expert answer to, email us at: news@media.unimelb.edu.au.

Foresters in Spain

Masters of Forest Ecosystem Science student Sarah Dickson-Hoyle reflects on her experiences representing Melbourne at the 2013 gathering in Spain of the International Forestry Students’ Association.

It was a swelteringly hot August day when I stepped off the plane in Madrid. For the past year, during my Masters of Forest Ecosystem Science studies, I have been the student representative and contact between University of Melbourne and IFSA – the International Forestry Students’ Association – and thanks to funding from the Department of Forest Ecosystem Science (DFES) at the Melbourne School of Land and Environment, I was in Spain to attend the major event on the IFSA calendar: the annual International Forestry Students’ Symposium (IFSS).

IFSA is an international network connecting ‘local committees’ (LCs) of forest science students all over the world. When the announcement came to register for IFSS 2013, I took this as an opportunity to learn more about IFSA and to hopefully bring back what I’d learnt to our department here in Melbourne.

There was the itinerary that took us from the mountains outside Madrid to the mountains and islands of Galicia, on ‘beach days’ and epic hikes, and recreated childhood sleepovers on an epic scale as we stayed in sports centres and school halls in tiny villages and coastal towns until we made our way back to the big city once again.

There was the official IFSA business – the five plenary sessions of the General Assembly in which we seemed to suddenly transform from a group of young students into a group of organised and motivated adults, voting on statutes and electing officials and setting the agenda for the upcoming year.

And then there was everything else that, while not on the formal agenda, to me formed the most important aspects of IFSS and signified what IFSA is really about:

The many conversations over dinner or drinks that – at times despite our best intentions – once again went back to forestry, in all its many and diverse forms.

The moments when I found myself sitting next to someone on the bus, or walking side-by-side with someone down the street, whom I had hardly spoken to before, and realising we shared the same interests, or that they had incredible stories or experiences to share that I could never have imagined.

Listening with interest (and some amusement) to Northern Europeans scoff at the idea of a dehesa agroforestry system being classified as a ‘forest’ and wondering what they would think of our Mallee landscapes, or with astonishment at hearing the strong opposition that seemingly every other country has to prescribed burning or ecological fire management, something that is such a part of forest management in Australia.

The exciting developments for University of Melbourne, from the formation of an informal partnership with the three Indonesian LCs – our closest neighbours – to joining, with a vote and a resounding cheer, the new Asia Pacific region.

And of course, converting half the group to vegetarianism during International Night, albeit with avocado and cheese.

There’s something quite amazing about being thrown into such a diverse group of people from all over the world, and coming out two weeks later counting 100 new friends. While we all came from different backgrounds, and had different interests and views on many things, there was something that we all had in common, that brought us together: IFSA and IFSS are all these things: bringing people together, sharing stories and knowledge and opportunities, opening our eyes to the different ways forestry is known and understood and studied and practised all around the world (and maybe causing us to wonder what we could do differently at home).

I have come away with so much – not just new friends, not just a better understanding and appreciation of IFSA, or my new official role as liaison officer with the Centre for International Forestry Research – but a motivation to do something more and to bring the opportunities that IFSA offers to students at DFES and University of Melbourne as a whole.

So, to any students who are studying (or interested in) forestry in any of its many forms (be it forest management, policy, climate change, development), and who are interested in getting to know other students in our Uni and around the world, or in hearing about internships or getting funding to attend international events, join me through getting involved with IFSA: www.land-environment.edu.au www.facebook.com/groups/DFESAdmin www.facebook.com/IFSAdotnet www.ifsa.net
A physics and visual art collaboration has been installed in the new National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Seoul, South Korea. By Zoe Nikakis.

An installation artwork by Physics’ Dr Andrew Melatos and visual artist Briony Barr, called ‘Drawing on Complexity: Experiment 4’, has been unveiled at the inauguration ceremony of Seoul’s $230 million National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA). The event was attended by the President of South Korea, Park Geun-hue.

The artwork was one of four commissioned for the Aleph Project, a four-month exhibition at the MMCA inspired by the ideas of the writer Jorge Luis Borges. It explored the themes of complexity and emergence in an art-science context.

Dr Melatos says exploring the deep connections between art and science through the creation of an artwork, in partnership with an established artist like Briony Barr, had been a wonderful experience.

“To be invited to contribute an artwork to the opening of Seoul’s premier contemporary art museum was a real honour, not to mention a lot of fun for someone who plays with mathematical equations for a living,” Dr Melatos says.

“The enthusiastic response Briony and I received from the Seoul public when lecturing about art and complex systems in the museum’s educational program replicated the sort of excitement we have encountered in Australia over the past two years, for example during activities with primary school kids at the civic studio ArtPlay.

‘Drawing on Complexity: Experiment 4’ is an expanded drawing constructed from three kilometres of coloured electrical tape by a team of 25 local volunteers, or agents, enacting the rules of a cellular automaton on a 10 metre by 10 metre grid.

Each agent is assigned a two-component genetic code, and when agents meet at a point in the drawing, their interaction and hence the tape marks they make are determined by the combination of their genetic codes, leading to the emergence of scale-invariant forms.

The drawing and video are on public display at the MMCA until 16 March, when the artwork will be “undrawn” – and the process recorded – by the same group of volunteers. It will also feature in the MMCA’s educational program.

Watch a time-lapse video of the artwork’s creation: http://vimeo.com/brionybarr (see Experiment 4).

VCA Art graduation show

After years at work in the studio, completing VCA Bachelor of Fine Art students traditionally celebrate with a graduation show opening party. William Noonan (Drawing) with his work ‘Best Restaurant in the World’ and Grace Wood (Photography) with ‘Scroll Series’ were among the graduating class of 2013.
Get creative in performing arts summer schools

In Europe and the US, summer schools in music, art, drama, and other creative and performing arts disciplines are commonplace. Many secondary school and tertiary students spend weeks over their summer break meeting new friends, developing new skills and discovering hidden talents. Programs such as the Dartington Summer School in the UK and the California State Summer School for the Arts in the US attract hundreds of participants each year.

In Australia, these programs are less common, probably due to the fact that our Christmas and New Year holidays fall at the same time as our summer break. However, there are a number of creative and performing arts programs that run during January for teenagers and adults all around the country. Many universities and arts colleges run summer programs, as well as several arts institutions and youth arts organisations.

Usually running for a week or more, summer schools offer a unique opportunity for teenagers to immerse themselves in a particular pursuit or discipline, unencumbered by the usual demands on their time during the year, such as school, homework and sporting commitments. It’s a great way to experience “life as an artist”, by spending a whole week playing music, creating visual artworks, making films, or developing a puppet show.

For those who are already involved in a particular artform, summer schools are the perfect time to delve deeper into their discipline, encounter different influences and teaching styles, and meet other like-minded students. On the other hand, many summer schools have programs geared to beginners, or those who would like a “taste” of something different. This can be a great way to quickly learn a bunch of new skills – in photography, theatre-making or percussion, for instance – while also meeting new friends, and having lots of fun!

So what should you expect at a summer school? Expect lots of fun! Don’t be put off by the word “school” in the title – they are usually not like normal school! Most of the time will be spent participating in whatever artform you’ve signed up for – whether that be dance, theatre, music, or something else entirely. There is often a mix of large group sessions and smaller, more niche streams as well. Sometimes you will be encouraged to try something new, sometimes you will be challenged to finesse a particular aspect of technique.

Social time is also an important aspect of summer schools, with many life-long friendships forged through these programs. One student said to me this year, “You didn’t tell me this course would break my heart!” She had made such good friends during her week at the program, that she was really sad to say goodbye at the end. But don’t worry – you can always come back again next year!

— Anastasia Slippr

The Faculty of VCA & MCM at The University of Melbourne run summer schools in music, theatre, film & television, dance and visual art.

www.vca-mcm.unimelb.edu.au/shortcourses

Spiked! Melbourne Uni women take national volleyball title

Melbourne women were champions of Australia’s highest-level volleyball league this year. David Scott caught up with the triumphant team.

The University Blues Women’s Volleyball Club shocked perennial favourites the Western Australian Pearls to take out the 2013 Australian Volleyball League (AVL) grand final in early December.

The win marks the second time the club has taken out the title, with the previous victory coming in 2007.

The win was fantastic and the team couldn’t have asked for a better end to the season.

“It was an unbelievable experience for a young team to work together to develop and improve every game, and for it all to come together so perfectly in the final. Without a shadow of a doubt, this year was 100 per cent a team effort.”

“We had targeted this year as a rebuilding one across the board: building up a new culture, a new playing list and a new program for our younger players. It came together perfectly, we finished at the peak and it’s a testament to everyone involved at the club,” says Ms Walter, who has captained the side since 2012 after returning from a sports scholarship in the USA.

“It’s been one of the easiest groups to lead, as everyone has had the same goals in mind, the same work ethic, and everyone has led by example.”

Club administrator KC Chong says the victory was due reward for the hard work the entire team had put in across the 10-week season.

“We’re still on cloud nine to be honest, though it wasn’t a surprise for us even if a lot of the predictions heading into the finals were of a Western Australia victory. We’ve won the competition before, and led by the coach Shannon Winzer, we had a team that worked very hard and with a high degree of professionalism that turned the season vision into reality.

“And it was good to get a victory over Western Australia, as we’ve finished runner up to them twice since we last won the title.”

The focus for some at the club now switches to the AVL/FIVB (Fédération Internationale de Volleyball) World Series events in 2014.

“We have a number of national players in the squad who are very strong candidates to play,” Ms Chong says. “The AVL is Australia’s peak pathway for female volleyball players looking to play for the national team at an international level, which is further testament to the quality of the play the clubs face.”
SHORT COURSES

ACTING

The Actor’s Process
Introduce you to the process of acting — from stagecraft to rehearsal and performance. You’ll explore different approaches to developing character and delivering text, being alive onstage and working with an audience.

TV Acting
Designed for those who have some prior experience with theatre/stage acting, who want to branch out and gain the essential skills needed for TV work.

TEENS

Theatre-making
Unleash your creativity and imagination and explore movement, objects, improvisation, writing, sound and image as key elements in creating and presenting performance.

VCA Drama Unit 3
Get a head-start on your VCE year! This is specially designed for those students about to undertake VCE Units 3 & 4 Drama, and will introduce you to the non-naturalistic performance styles and techniques you’ll need for the Unit 3 assessments.

Acting Boot Camp
The perfect introduction to acting for teenagers -- you’ll discover and develop acting skills using improvisation, characterisation and text, as well as having a lot of fun in the process!

ADULTS & TEENS

Puppetry
An introduction to puppetry that explores various forms, applications and manipulation methods. Over the five afternoons you’ll explore different puppetry styles, culminating in a “showing” for family and friends where you can showcase your puppets and puppetry performance skills.

MUSIC SUMMER SCHOOL

Dally, 21 January – 24 January
10.00am – 3.00pm
Four-day intensives offering unique aural and musicianship training. Each day commences with a fun warm-up, followed by classes in your chosen stream from one of the following.

Contemporary Jazz Singing
Fundamentals
For vocalists from any background with an interest in learning more about jazz singing. You’ll work with songs from the jazz standard repertoire to develop interpretation and phrasing skills, improvisational language and fundamental musicianship.

Jazz Piano Basics
Introducing jazz harmony and improvisation to pianists with a background in classical or pop piano.

Perception for Non-Percussionists
Discover the world of percussion! This course provides you with a broad introduction, covering performance techniques and written notation for instruments ranging from classical orchestral and to African djembes.

Performing with Confidence
Learn how to perform confidently and overcome performance anxiety! Open to all musicians who want to explore, understand and develop their performance skills.

VCE Musicianship
Giving Units 3 & 4 Music Performance students a head start for the year! All elements of VCE theory and aural will be covered; including scales, intervals, chords, progressions, transcriptions and rhythm.

ACTIVITIES

Events and Courses at the University of Melbourne

Missed a public lecture?

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For a weekly digest of upcoming free public lectures in 2014, subscribe at events.unimelb.edu.au

Notices and Courses

SHORT COURSES

Acting Studio
3 February – 10 December
Monday & Wednesday evenings
Time to act! This is a rigorous and rewarding part-time evening course, introducing you to the essentials of acting, performance making and artistic expression. The curriculum has been designed to introduce and develop the fundamental skills of acting that are extended through practice and showings.

TEACHER SUMMER SCHOOL

Daily, 20 January – 24 January
10.00am – 4.00pm
Week-long intensives for adults and teens in all aspects of acting and theatre making. Choose between one of the following streams:

ADULTS

The Actor’s Process
Introduce you to the process of acting — from stagecraft to rehearsal and performance. You’ll explore different approaches to developing character and delivering text, being alive onstage and working with an audience.

TV Acting
Designed for those who have some prior experience with theatre/stage acting, who want to branch out and gain the essential skills needed for TV work.

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ADVANCED SHORT COURSES

Classical Singing
Wednesday evenings, 15 February – 5 April
Aimed at beginning and relatively untrained singers, this course develops skills, technique and knowledge in the art of classical singing. Participants in the 8-week course will gain a solid foundation from which to take their singing further, unleashing hidden intuitive skills and training new understandings.

EXHIBITIONS

Ian Potter Museum of Art – The University of Melbourne
Swinburne Street, Parkville
Gallery hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am-5pm; Saturday and Sunday 12-5pm. Closed Monday.
Free admission
Enquiries: 03 8344 0327
art.museum.unimelb.edu.au

Gigi Scaria: Dust to 9 March 2014
This major solo project will present new painting, photography, installation, sculpture, video and video works by leading New Delhi-based artist Gigi Scaria. Scaria’s interests span art history, architecture, planning, sociology and anthropology. Through his inventive, materially wide-ranging practice, he engages with some of the most pressing issues of our time: urban growth, migration, and social displacement and alienation.

Designing ‘The Shop’: the Parkville campus past and future to 9 February 2014

Celebrating 160 years of excellence, this exhibition explores the ideas of the University campus past and present. The physical space of the University is integral to its position in Melbourne’s collective psyche, and our architecture tells a story of a community’s embrace of higher education and intellectual development. Designing ‘The Shop’ reflects on the achievements, from the foundation stone laid in 1854 to the cutting-edge conceptualised in the University’s current and future plans for its built environment.

Floor talks:
Saturday 1 February 2014, 2-3pm
Christine Elias, registrar, archaeologist, researcher on selected key works in the exhibition
Wednesday 12 February 2014, 1-1.30pm
Joy Kremier, Curatorial Assistant, National Gallery of Victoria on the changing role of women in Mediterranean archaeology
Wednesday 5 Mar 2014, 1.00-1.30pm
Christopher Davey, Director, Australian Institute of Archaeology on Kenyon: methods and memories.

Transformations: early bark paintings from Arnhem Land to 23 February 2014
The remarkable bark paintings presented in this exhibition date from 1935 to early 1950. Collected by Professor Donald Thomson in the mid-1930s and early 1940s and by Dr Leonard Adam in the early 1950s from Central and Eastern Arnhem Land, Caledon Bay and Groote Eylandt in the Northern Territory, these extraordinary works of art are the first representations on bark of important ancestral beings, sacred clan designs and totemic animals made in the region specifically for outsiders. They represent some of the earliest translations onto bark of designs and motifs painted on bodies, sacred objects and rock surfaces.

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One defining choice.
Only at Melbourne.

Graduate Study Expo
30 January 2014
4pm–7pm
The Hotel Windsor
111 Spring Street

Register:
onlyat.unimelb.edu.au