

A New Lens: Emerging Researcher Perspectives on the Grimwade Collection

Presentations by the 2024 Miegunyah Student Project Awardees

5-8pm, Thursday August 22, 2024

Formed during the first half of the twentieth century, Russell Grimwade's (1879-1955) collection of art and books principally records the activities of Europeans since the arrival of the *Endeavour* in 1770 and the invasion of Gadigal Country in 1788. He wished the University of Melbourne to benefit from this material and it became his primary beneficiary. With his wife Mab (1886-1973) they further bequeathed their Toorak house Miegunyah and its furnishings, artistic décor and personal papers, as well as funds that continue to this day. Since being received by the University over fifty years ago, their collection has been used for academic engagement, research and a wide range of exhibitions. It is now a priority to reappraise this colonial material in order to contribute to the ongoing and ever-evolving dialogue about Britain's imperial past and Indigenous knowledge through a diverse range of voices and disciplines. In addition, acquisitions provided by the Miegunyah Fund are carefully selected to enhance their holdings. This year, for the first time, a nineteenth-century Indigenous drawing was acquired, by Kwat Kwat/Wiradjuri artist Tommy McRae.

PROGRAM

5:00pm

Welcome and introduction.

5:10pm

'A world of fern-trees': Ferns, Gullies, and the Enchanted Settlers

Emily Rayside

Bachelor of Arts (with Honours): History | Faculty of Arts

Moss-covered gullies laced with crystalline creeks are enchanting places, now and in the past. During the nineteenth century, tree ferns and their gully homes captivated settler-colonists in Tasmania and Victoria. In response, they created art and literature that emphasised how ferns mediated their relationship with stolen land. Examples of this art are represented within the Grimwade Collection. This presentation examines these pieces, including Eugène von Guérard's *Ferntree Gully, Dandenong Ranges (Victoria)* 1867 and John Skinner Prout's *Fern Tree Valley, Van Diemen's Land* c.1847, unpicking how settler-colonists interacted with ferns as cultural objects in order to negotiate a sense of Australian exceptionalism and imperial unity.

Emily, like the many settlers before her, often finds herself in awe of fern gullies throughout Kulin country, where she lives. She pays her respects to

past and present Kulin elders, who have skilfully cared for these lands and the beautiful ferns that have graced them since time immemorial.

5:30pm

'Haunted by the Narrative': Focalising Ogilvie's Haunted Landscapes

Donna Ferdinando & Sophie Mama

Bachelor of Arts: English and Theatre Studies and Linguistics and Applied Linguistics (Ferdinando), Politics and International Studies and Media and Communications (Mama) | Faculty of Arts

Helen Ogilvie's homesteads are the focal points of her works. In depicting them Ogilvie makes relics of them, imbued with a sense of nostalgia for a disappearing colonial Australian frontier culture. Her landscapes in these works are, however, voids made uncanny through the lack of flora, typically characteristic of the 'bush'. It is a gothic void, made so through the violent displacement, dispossession and spectralisation of Indigenous communities. Just as nostalgia for the colonial is ingrained in the homestead, so are the ghosts of the consequences of the colonial expansionist enterprise—particularly in the policies of terra nullius—tied to Australia's voided bush landscape. What does shifting our gaze from Ogilvie's homesteads to the surrounding landscapes mean for the colonial gothic narratives that have defined these works? What ghosts haunt Ogilvie's landscapes and what revenants?

Donna and Sophie are completing their Bachelors of Arts. Through this project, their interests in public policy, land laws and the Gothic experiences of haunting and being haunted converge, in order to interrogate the settler colonial narratives considered canon. In beginning to decolonize the canon they hope to contribute towards a diverse socio-historical understanding of art.

5:50pm

The Body and the Light: Rupert Bunny and the Grimwade Collection

Sebastian Moore

Bachelor of Arts: Art History | Faculty of Arts

Rupert Bunny (1864-1947) was considered to be one of Australia's most complex and important artists of his time. Producing a vast number of paintings and drawings during his career, he has remained an enigmatic figure in the history of Australian art. When he returned home to Australia in 1932 after a successful career in France, he was forced to reassess the country he left behind. The two paintings in the Grimwade Collection, *Sketch for a Scene in the Botanic Gardens* (c.1933) and *Mother and Child* (1910), are emblematic of the subjects and themes that blossomed in his work in the latter half of Bunny's career. They act as a vehicle to discuss questions of queerness in his life, as current research has not yet fully explored the relationships with men Bunny is alleged to have had. This presentation examines how Post-Impressionism, combined with contemporaneous social movements, allow for narratives of womanhood and Queer identity to be fashioned in Bunny's *Mother and Child*. Studying these works using Queer theory and relevant biographical information, the hidden histories of these paintings will be revealed.

Sebastian Moore is an emerging art historian, curator and writer. Currently studying Art History at The University of Melbourne, his work has focused on 19th Australian Century painting and printmaking.

6:10pm

Break – light refreshments

6:30pm

Stitch-by-stitch: Embroidery, girlhood and embodied practice

Gillian Duncan & Ilika Srivastava-Khan

Master of Arts and Cultural Management | Faculty of Arts

Alongside the prints, drawings, watercolours and paintings in the Grimwade Collection are three embroideries: a traditional sampler (1871), a map of the United Kingdom (1794) and an embroidered castle (unknown). These embroideries are records left by two young girls of their existence. Brought from the United Kingdom to the new colony of Australia, they tell a transnational story of girlhood, empire and tradition. While they are a material object steeped in the time in which they were made— some with dates stitched within them—they are also an object that represents becoming; an object that guides the transition from girlhood to womanhood.

By engaging in the rituals and methods of embroidery we can connect with the girls that came before us through this embodied practice.

Ilika and Gillie are currently completing their Masters of Arts and Cultural Management, with a focus on public history and cultural heritage. Through their academic journeys and personal histories, they come together with a shared passion for the history of girlhood, material culture, textiles and decorative arts. Through embodied practice they endeavour to connect the past with the present.

6:50pm

Lyrics to a Lyrebird

Imogen Kerr

Master of Contemporary Art | Faculty of Fine Arts and Music

‘Lyrics to a Lyrebird’ is a tactile reimagining of Eugène von Guérard’s coloured lithograph, *Ferntree Gully, Dandenong Ranges (Victoria)* (1867). By deconstructing and then reassembling the lithograph’s colours, lines and textures, the project transforms the sublime landscape into a sculptural and textile expression. Just as the lyrebirds in von Guérard’s work mimic their surroundings with their song, this response reflects and reinterprets the landscape, creating a dialogue between past and present, tactile and textual.

Born in 1997 in Ngarangwal (Gold Coast), Queensland, Imogen Aili Angé Kerr is an artist based on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung and Bunurong Boon Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nation (Melbourne). Currently completing her Masters of Contemporary Art at the Victorian College of the Arts (2024), Kerr has participated in various exhibitions,

including an Artist-Run-Initiative gallery activation with Incinerator Gallery (2023), Ascent Art's 30 Under 30 (2022), and the Forty-Five Downstairs Emerging Artist Award (2021).

7:10pm

The Atmosphere as Raw Material: The Sky Above Melbourne and the Grimwade Collection

Hannah Perkins

Master of Art Curatorship | Faculty of Arts

Russell Grimwade founded *Australian Oxygen and Industrial Gases* – one of the first companies to import industrial machinery to manufacture and distribute liquid oxygen in Australia. This essay explores how Grimwade's art collection reflects this interest in the materiality of the atmosphere. What did colonial views of the sky above Melbourne mean in the 19th century when these lithographs and watercolours were made, what did they mean in the early 20th when Russell was collecting these prints and distilling the atmosphere into its constituent parts, and how might these things speak to us now in a time of climate change? How does this collection breathe?

Hannah Perkins has worked closely with social history museum collections for fourteen years, including time at Queensland Museum and Museums Victoria, where she currently works as a Collection Manager within the History and Technology department. Through her studies at the University of Melbourne, Hannah hopes to push the boundaries of her professional practice through critical writing and research. Her learning is focused on a deeper engagement with the philosophical and environmental aspects of our relationships to the material *things* of the world.

7:30pm

Join the Awardees for light refreshments and exhibition viewing.

8:00pm

Close.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands upon which our Parkville campus situated, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and extend our respects to the First Nations artists, audiences and collaborators involved in this project.

With its iconic archways and bold architectural presence, the 'Old Quad' is the oldest building on the Parkville campus and endures as our strongest connection to the University's fledgling years. Redeveloped by heritage architects Lovell Chen and reopened in 2019, Old Quad is experiencing its newest chapter as a museum and events space, programmed by the Museums and Collections department at the University of Melbourne.



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