

NOTES:

CREATIVE ARTS RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

Thursday 7 April
Friday 8 April
Saturday 9 April

'16



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA


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WELCOME

Professor Frank Millward

Head of School, School of Creative Arts

Faculty of Education and Arts, University of Newcastle

Dr Philip Matthias

Deputy Head of School, School of Creative Arts

(Research & Research Training)

Faculty of Education and Arts, University of Newcastle

DAY ONE: Thursday 7 April

Arjun Raina (Flinders University)

‘Kathakali Representation: From Mythology to Reality’

As part of my practice based research titled “Teaching Kathakali in an Australian Drama School”, with the potential need to explain my Kathakali practice to contemporary acting students in an Australian drama school, I locate within the following constructed arc of 20th century western representations, my research into the question “What is Kathakali?”

This historicity I construct through three separate phases. First, the European exploration of ‘other’ ‘oriental’ ‘Asian’ and eastern theaters. This includes a chronicling of the work of Artuad, Growtowski, Barba and Mnouchkine. Then the American phase led by Zarrilli, Schechner and Pitkow. Finally the Asian including, among many others, U.K educated Indian academic Santosh Nair, who is looking at Indian native theories and practices informing each other, and myself looking at the practice based research of teaching Kathakali in an Australian Drama School. This geo-socio-political shift from a European via an American to an Asian perspective, brings us symbolically as it were, to my teacher and Kathakali practitioner Sadanam Balakrishnan’s own representation of his Kathakali practice. With Balakrishnan’s work this story of representing cultures comes full circle with eastern practitioners expressing their own experienced reality.

Colin Spiers (University of Newcastle)

‘Developing a Methodology for Discussing Keith Jarrett's Solo Concerts’

Keith Jarrett's solo concerts are arguably the format on which his greatest popularity as a performer rests. Despite this, their true purpose has generally remained obscured by the force of Jarrett's outstanding pianistic abilities and charismatic performance persona - a regrettable fact considering that this genre is the most experimental, controversial and musically subversive of his large eclectic output.

It is the contention of this presentation that while standard analysis is important in addressing these concerts' purely musical aspects, balancing this with a broader philosophical approach that includes the recognition of their roots in G.I.Gurdjieff's Fourth Way practice is crucial to evaluating their true significance and involves the incorporation of phenomenological methods and a concatenationist experiential perspective framed within a broad hermeneutic analytical paradigm.

In doing so it examines the potential of time to create an experience that might resonate with the contemporary condition.

Based on the 1930s Dance Marathons of the Great Depression, the performance Yowza Yowza Yowza consists of a durational action. Two performers recreate photographic and film imagery taken during the 1930s marathons as tableaux vivant which can be viewed live in person or online. The static posing and repetitious scoring counter developmental time to highlight the aesthetics of slow time, of boredom and of emptiness akin to the temporal experience of the Great Depression, while its online presence highlights the temporal compression of Internet viewership; a temporality that underpins the way in which life is now lived.

This presentation reflects upon the research for this project.

Angela Williams (University of Wollongong)

‘It’s all just a game, you know, a stupid power game’: Memoir as a practice in self-surveillance

My research reimagines the process of writing a memoir as a form of self-surveillance. It aligns the surveillant functions – classification and risk mitigation – with the memoirist’s shift into narrator mode and self/other protection. Then it looks for the outcomes of surveillance – discipline and resistance – within the formation of a narrative identity and narrative probability. It has a very prescriptive methodology which is turned on three contemporary memoirs. Exciting, right? Then, in exegetical frenzy, it lets loose on my memoir – Snakes and Ladders – a book filled with not-very-nice things. My research takes this self-exposure and puts it under the academic lens, trying really hard to stick to that methodology, follow that thick black line.

This presentation isn’t about my research, so much as the research process. Living with a cacophony of voices (author/subject/narrator/researcher/imaginary marker) throughout 4.89 years of research isn’t easy. I can’t answer the question: ‘Why would anyone write about themselves writing about themselves?’ But it can tell you how I drew that thick, black line.

THANK YOU

and texture of the voice. Vocal timbre and texture are largely unexplored areas in classical singing, and in classical music generally. Emphasis has been placed on those elements of the voice that are more easily defined and measured, such as the harmonic spectrum of the voice.

The microphone also reveals a rich palate of expression available from the sounds of the mouth (phonemes) and the processes of the larynx. These elements of vocal expression are considered noise in classical vocal pedagogy, and their use challenges fixed concepts of ideal classical voice. This paper draws on emerging areas of sound studies by theorists such as Konstantin Tomaidis, Nina Sun Eidschein and Brandon Labelle to explore the microphone as the catalyst for an emerging area of classical voice. It is argued that there is no longer one dominant approach to the classical voice (if this ever was the case).

This paper analyzes a range of new works incorporating classical voice and microphone to explore how the microphone is transforming classical singing. Classical composers and singers use of the microphone has encouraged the exploration of elements of other vocal genres such as folk, contemporary popular and Latin American vocal styles. Intersections between some areas of jazz and contemporary art music with areas of Western art music are continuing to evolve. The microphone reveals more of the unique history and physiology of each singer than the unamplified voice is able to. Performance becomes less fixed and constrained by the need for the performing venue to provide a particular acoustic, and becomes more intimately effected by and responsive to the performing environment. This emerging area of classical singing is exploring a wider range of vocal expression and performing contexts that are unconstrained by the need to be heard unamplified.

Dale Collier (University of Newcastle)

‘Hyperventil-Nation: What can contemporary art tell us about decolonisation and de-institutionalisation as well as the changing representations and experiences of lived Australian culture?’ <http://www.dalecollier.com/#!hyperventil-nation-soca-2016/fygtu>

I am, you are... we continue, to neglect a multitude of histories concerned with lived Australian culture.

This research project suggests the need to employ post-disciplinary analysis of the contemporary Australian art climate in order to communicate ideas and processes looking forward to decolonisation. A continued criticality towards the manifestation of institutional structures within a colonial landscape has made explicit the prejudicial complexities of cultural production and it's relation to art, tourism and civic duty. This project investigates public spaces where neglected pasts, the present and possible futures are embedded and converge to initiate new dialogues surrounding sites of transition and spaces facilitating collectivization and collaboration. It is by re-locating ourselves at this intersection that we can potentially transcend identity politics within a collective liveness through the production of mediatised culture.

By embracing the ideas of both site specific & dematerialized arts practice, as well as processes akin to digital humanities, we have the opportunity to re-evaluate the way we engage with ideas, identity, and furthermore, the Australian socio-political agenda.

Deborah Pollard (University of Wollongong)

‘The experience of empty and accelerated time’

My scholarly and practice-led research addresses the question: what is the aesthetic and political significance of time to the theatre medium? The creative component underpinning this inquiry is not separate from its theoretical concerns but informs it. It sets out to explore the aesthetic potential of time as a dramaturgical strategy by constructing a performance of extreme length (twenty-four hours) in order to consider the ramifications of duration on the staging and reception of this work.

Bernadette Matthias (University of Newcastle)

‘From Soundwaves to BrainWaves: Investigating the effects of choral singing on recovery from stroke and aphasia’

Stroke is a leading cause of death and disability in Australia and recovery frequently compromised by reduced well-being, mood, socialisation and quality of life. Music and singing are recognised as powerful tools for enhancing well-being and a growing body of research highlights their benefits for people living with chronic illness. Recent evidence suggests that choir singing may improve the fluency of people with aphasia. While choirs already exist for people with brain impairment, existing research is weakened by issues of design and outcome measurement.

The BrainWaves Choir project began as a pilot study in August 2012 in Newcastle, NSW in collaboration with Hunter New England Local Health District and the University of Newcastle's School of Medicine and Public Health and School of Creative Arts.

38 stroke survivors and 7 carers participated in a mixed methods study exploring the effects of choral singing on quality of life, well-being, mood, community participation and communication. Individuals were assessed before and after a 12-week rehearsal period and a waitlist control was used. Interviews were also completed at the end of the 12-week period. While still in the analysis phase, preliminary pre-test post-test results will be presented.

ASPERA Research Sub-Committee

(Australian Screen Production Education & Research Association)

Associate Professor Craig Batty (RMIT University)
Dr Susan Kerrigan (University of Newcastle)
Dr Marsha Berry – (RMIT University)
Dr Bettina Frankham – (University of Technology, Sydney)

‘Writing with/on/for Screens: Screen Production and the Doctoral Experience’

This panel considers what it means to write with/on/for the screen in the research space, and how underlying pedagogies of creative practice research inform the methodological scope, shape and experience of the screen production doctorate. Speaking on behalf of the Australian Screen Production Education and Research Association (ASPERA) Research Sub-Committee, panelists discuss their experiences of undertaking, supervising and examining research degrees in this area.

Specifically, they consider what excellence does and might look like; how supervisors might encourage innovation in content and form; common methodological pitfalls; and contributions that candidates can make to the emerging screen production research discourse. The panelists will also discuss the personal and professional challenges that candidates often face, and strategies for encouraging them to not only overcome and succeed, but also use the challenges as a springboard for innovation and excellence.

Barbie Clifton (University of Newcastle)

‘Making the Ephemeral Permanent’

Every aspect of life is embedded with a trace of ourselves. We leave pieces behind: in the ways we interact with others, cherish or abhor a possession or place, use and discard objects of necessity, and in our speech and handwriting.

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The spiritual concept of trace passes through all civilisations and prompts the proclivity to preserve and make permanent the lives of others based on cultural or personal significance. In the course of daily life, we discard pieces of ourselves that contain distinctive information, because we deem these traces to no longer be useful and therefore unimportant, for example handwritten notes/manuscripts. Each manuscript is autobiographical, regardless of content or authorship, and is as unique as fingerprints.

My research documents the lives of unknown people through discarded traces by collecting handwritten manuscripts, and examines cultural and spiritual ideologies of trace. By employing methods of preservation through my artistic practice, I am to confront cultural standards of permanence and ephemerality to create a living memorial.

Paul Young (Griffith University - Queensland Conservatorium) **‘ASKEW: Noise and feedback in spatial works’**

My practice-led research explores the use of distortion, feedback and electro-acoustic devices to create immersive sonic environments in site-specific locations using a multi-speaker layout. The project, titled ASKEW, strays between the borders of installation and live performance with set parameters being manipulated live to create elongated 'noise-fields'.

Research currently problematises how noise and distortion can be integrated with traditional harmonic and rhythmic devices to create minimalist aesthetics. It is the intention of this presentation to discuss the consolidation of research to date and future artistic directions. ASKEW draws inspiration from the drone music of La Monte Young, industrial groups such as Throbbing Gristle and noise/electronic artists Masami Akita, Ryoji Ikeda and Ryoichi Kurokawa.

Kathryn Jeanes (University of Newcastle) **‘A conceptualisation of girls incarcerated on Cockatoo Island’**

Historically islands have been used as prisons, penal colonies and as isolation for these displaced from society. Today islands also provide a safe haven for the vulnerable, victims of change in circumstance, children and those less resilient to cope with life. Cockatoo Island, the largest island in Sydney Harbour, was such an establishment.

From 1871 – 1888 the purpose built sandstone gaol had a name change from Biloela, a Reformatory School for Females and a Public Industrial School for Girls. This Masters Topic researches the history of Cockatoo Island and the girls incarcerated at Biloela. The first intake of girls in 1871 were transported by steamer from Newcastle when a similar Military Barrack facility closed in Watt Street, Newcastle. A number of girls were convicted of crimes, some were young orphans and others destitute and neglected. I will establish the reasons why this eclectic group of girls, and in some instances very young boys, came to be sentenced to Biloela; and through my creative process I will explore conceptual art practices to exhibit onsite at Biloela. My exhibition aims to liberate the girls from the gross management and cruelty they endured to enlighten the viewers to their plight.

Professor Richard Vella (University of Newcastle) Chair of Music, School of Creative Arts **‘The Rhetoric of The Musical Imagination’**

DAY THREE: Saturday 9 April

Liz Linden (University of Wollongong) **‘Reading the Art of Appropriation’**

As an artist working with appropriated text, it has always been clear to me that my formal, contextual, and aesthetic treatments of the text in my works matter, that in fact these decisions are often, in essence, the work. And yet the theories of appropriation that were developed in the late 1970s by Douglas Crimp as he curated the Pictures exhibition at Artists Space in New York, in which he claimed that appropriation is a critical engagement with ‘representation’, in fact only concern themselves with the operations of images, even when other types of representations, such as text, present. This oversight of the central role of text in many seminal appropriation artworks, both by Crimp and his peers at the art theory journal October, was fundamentally ironic given their reliance on semiotic theory to support their arguments about appropriation’s engagement with ‘signs’.

Of course when Douglas Crimp curated the 1977 exhibition, and he called it ‘Pictures’, he very clearly signalled his priorities to the world. At issue here is not the necessary delimitation of Crimp’s interest in how images signify, but that the incomplete way ‘representation’ was defined in this circumscribed context has been married with what has since become known as appropriation art. As text in appropriation art has continued to be disregarded over time, its absence has resulted in a contemporary understanding of appropriation as narrowly concerned with image-as-sign, to the exclusion of the linguistic (and other) signs also appearing within an artwork’s frame, ultimately restricting not only the types of representations appropriation is recognized to critique but also, importantly, the politics it is allowed serve.

Amy Lovat (University of Newcastle) **‘Halfway to Nowhere: the experience of liminality in postgraduate creative writing research and practice’**

My PhD research began in 2013 with Young Adult literature, extending toward literary Bildungsroman, Liminality theory and Young Narrative Voice as the accompanying novella took shape. Thus, my exegesis evolved into both research-led practice and practice-led research – a symbiosis. My practice was writing a creative project that informed my exegesis (and vice versa), and in being a 20-something navigating the liminal space between adolescence and adulthood. In the same way that parts of my novella are semi-autobiographical, sections of my exegesis became punctuated with creative nonfiction: an autoethnographic account of my lived, subjective experience as a ‘liminar’ (Neumann 1909).

I’ve been navigating the liminal zone between recognised stages of youth and adulthood, student and teacher, researcher and writer, while feeling like I belong to both and neither. In an ongoing self-creation process, the postgraduate journey was merely gravel on the bitumen road – and not the last.

Karen Cummings (University of Newcastle) **‘Timbre, texture and the Landscape of the Mouth: vocal expression, the microphone and classical voice’**

Classical composers and performers are using the microphone to bring to the forefront the timbre

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As one of the last holders of the disappearing and self-reflexive Bengali/ South Asian women's quilting tradition of the 'Kantha' my auto ethnographic and diasporic reactivation explores its usefulness as a methodological approach to contemporary art practice as research. My enquiry opens by examining through published images, the existing examples of 'Kantha' from nineteenth century Bengal, held in the collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Indira Gandhi Centre in Delhi, Gurusaday museum in Kolkata and the Bangladesh Art museum.

It concurrently explores cultural anthropology for an understanding of how historical events effected mythology and the creation of South Asian goddesses as embodiments of ideals imposed on or negotiated by women. These myths then sewn into existing works, provides evidence to suggest the subtle subversions offered by a more reflexive personal interpretation of events, both local and historical.

It continues by referencing conflicts such as the partition of Bengal and India in 1947, causing enforced displacement of the practitioners of 'Kantha'. This and subsequent communal conflicts have arguably forced ordinary women to take on complex roles of nurture: both victim and warrior and turned a personal domestic practise and tradition into an economic product for survival. Simultaneously cross referencing with the mostly unhampered continuing tradition of scroll paintings made by Bengali 'Chitrakar' (makers of images in Hindi), currently on display at the APT 8 in GOMA, as also the paintings of senior Indian artist, Arpita Singh, who is of Bengali origin and lives in Delhi, this study examines both the pictorial elements as well as the alternate forms of storytelling, often performative, with empowered narratives that navigate trauma, awakening the 'collective unconscious' in a search for resilience.

Synchronously, my practise uses their strategies of portability, restitution, cathartic mark making, creating of symbols and motifs from my own diasporic split contemporaneity, blending then my personal, local, historical, within densely patterned paintings, and collaged in photo narratives. In my post-modern taking apart as it were of tradition, in unpicking its folds, I infuse new narratives of nurture, empowerment, reconnection with nature, rejuvenating Kantha practise into becoming a contemporary aesthetic medium.

The final presentation takes the form of an immersive installation that includes new doll- goddess sculptures, large paintings, digitized artist books and convergent sounds from Delhi and Brisbane.

Amelia Besseny (University of Newcastle) **'Handmade Music: Folk Instruments & Internet DIY Culture'**

'Digital' may not be the first word that comes to mind at the mention of folk music. Folk instruments are predominantly acoustic and often handmade. Crafted from wood, metal, bone and other materials, these instruments represent landscapes and act as an extension of the player's body. Despite widespread integration of the Internet and other facets of digital technology in everyday lives, there is a reluctance in pop culture to sway from the notion of folk music as acoustic and face-to-face. Notwithstanding these assumptions many musicians are making interests of folk music and the Internet attuned. In social media, folk music is linked in hashtag folksonomies to independent and DIY music.

This paper investigates examples of such links in online music DIY tutorials and forums that marry the tactility of folk instruments with online knowledge sharing. This, at least in thought, returns 'digital' to its etymological origins (relating to your digits) assuming a hands-on process of understanding and curation by musicians and makers.

The eclectic, broad and self-generated vocabulary and approaches we commonly use online to categorise, organise and understand open great possibilities to see folk music and musical genres at large anew: emergent, diverse and personalised.

Benjamin Mitchell (University of Newcastle) **'Creativity, Collaboration and Authorship in Comic Book Production'**

This is a comparative study between the design processes of collaboratively produced commercial comic books and the work of independent cartoonists producing work in isolation, and the distinctive characteristics associated with the latter that have these creatives celebrated in the same manner as film auteurs.

Auteur theory has been a polarising point of discussion in the context of comic books in the past, however mainly with the focus being on commercial comic production. In commercial comic book production, companies like Marvel and DC have teams of writers (in control of textual information) and artists (in control of visual information) work in collaboration to create multimodal narratives. As this collaborative process begins with the development of a comic script – effectively a screenplay – comparing the writer's role to that of the screenwriter of a film would mean the artist would be effectively taking the roles of both cinematographer and production designer. The way the artist and writer collaborate creatively means that in the roles of commercial comic book production, there is no direct correlation to a film director, in charge of overseeing and unifying the textual and visual elements of the narrative.

As such, the idea of auteurship in comics has been discussed in the context of commercial production, such as artist Stan Lee and Jack Kirby developing a distinct style working together on Fantastic Four, but using auteur theory to evaluate a text produced with a collaborative process quite different to film can be difficult. Without a "director" in the same sense as a film director, the question is raised as to whom in this case, out of Lee and Kirby, would be the auteur?

DAY TWO: Friday 8 April

RMIT University (School of Media and Communication) **Creative Writing: Innovative Approaches to Knowledge and 'Text'**

Associate Professor Craig Batty
Louise Sawtell
Mattie Sempert
Peta Murray
Sophie Langley

This panel considers how creative writing candidates can use the research space to text, expand, experiment with and reflect on the written form. Focusing on modes of storytelling for both fiction and non-fiction, four current candidates will present ideas and work-in-progress to reveal how they are negotiating the relationship between theory and practice. Specifically, they will offer innovative ways in which they are expanding the written form to connect and combine creative and critical modes of thought, resulting in distinctive contributions to knowledge and practice that are authentic to the discipline.

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The candidates, who are working across performance writing, screenwriting, radio and the lyric essay, are also part of a peer-to-peer learning group that supports research training in creative writing, and various research groups within the university. As such, they will also speak of how such collaborative and connected support structures assist them in their transformation from creative practitioners to creative practice researchers.

Marie Van Gend (University of Newcastle) **‘Using Voice analysis software to classify singing voices’**

Adolescent voices are going through a process of constant change. In the context of a high school choir this has an impact on the music a student is able to sing, and the overall sound an ensemble is capable of producing.

My masters research is using a free, publicly accessible program called Praat to analyse the voices of high school students. The combined data will be used to create a model that represents a typical high school choir. It is hoped this will become a tool for both teachers and composers to assist them with understanding, teaching and writing for this unique ensemble.

Today I will demonstrate the use and application of Praat for this process.

Benjamin Phillips (University of Newcastle) **‘Can Digital Artists use Modern Art Aesthetics to Create a Defining Post-Digital Art Aesthetic?’**

Despite a century of vantage over Duchamp’s radical rejection of the retinal as a requisite feature of art, much contemporary art and culture remains visually centred. At the same time, however, the legacies of Duchamp and his disciples still drive many artists and theorists to view visually centred cultural formations with suspicion.

This research project will explore various ways in which these legacies are potentially compromising a richer critical engagement with the image-making possibilities availed by digital technologies. In identifying a need for new visual languages with which to describe image-making possibilities availed by digital technologies, this research project will establish historical connections between painting, photography, experimental film, sound art and post-digital culture. Just as the language of medium-specificity in painting once helped to drive and describe innovation in modernist painting, the specificities of digital image making technologies will help to drive and define artistic innovation in the twenty-first century.

The parallel studio component of this research project will extend upon these ideas via a series of works underpinned by material and formal connections between painting, photography, experimental film, sound art and post-digital culture.

Tiffany Knight (Flinders University) **‘So what are you working on?’ Acting the role of researcher**

I am an actor. It is through art that I not only express my ideas, but also how I identify and work through problems (Manovski, 2014). However, I am an actor who cannot perform as much as I want to, or used to, because I made choices that have brought me to a place – both geographical and emotional – where I can rarely do the kind of work I love. I have discovered an inherent conflict between the peripatetic, unstable nature of the actor’s identity and the fixity that comes with familial obligations. And so I made a decision to become an actor-educator instead.

My first year of PhD research has been a process of claiming the identity of artist-scholar, and identifying a methodology that will support the questions I need to interrogate.

'Letters to a Young Actor' is an autoethnographic exploration of belonging, identity, feminism and actor training. It began as a playful experiment: a search down the rabbit-hole of memory to identify a research question. It morphed into a blog. It is in the process of becoming a solo performance.

Penny Dunstan (University of Newcastle) **‘A Single Day Walking on Terraformed Land: strangeness and familiarity in rehabilitated open cut mine land at Rix’s Creek’**

Terraforming the Upper Hunter Valley occurs when piles of open cut mining waste are transmuted into hills and plains, covered with topsoils and planted with a mix of trees and pasture plants. Animal and bird systems self-establish in over the top of the human designed landscape. Due to economic constraints, land forms are different from the original and the plant and animal systems that establish, diverge from that prevailing in undisturbed sites.

At Rix’s Creek mine in the Hunter Valley, NSW, Australia, I explore strangeness and familiarity in a landscape terraformed 10 years ago and through the prevailing years, transformed into a woodlot, pastures and wild places. Plants are familiar but they are in strange configurations. Soils are recognizable but they are divested of their origins. Water finds form in upland swamps yet hillsides remain dry. The landscape is recognizably Hunter Valley and yet alien in quality.

This research records what I found on one sunny winter day in Lot 100, New England Highway. I traverse the land on foot, using my agronomic eye to see and my art practice to interpret the landscape. Whilst it is tempting to keep a list of the missing and the alien, I use the idea of respectful wayfinding (Instone 2015) as a methodology to understand the new configuration of life evolving in the terraformed environment. Direct photographic printing, sound recordings, video and digital photography, seek to honour the life force that will not be denied in this terraformed land.

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION:

Professor Stephen Goss

(University of Surrey, UK)

Professor of Composition

Director of Research, Department of Music and Media

Director of the International Guitar Research Centre

Natasha Narain (Queensland University of Technology)

‘Reactivating Kantha’

I am an Indian-Australian artist living in Brisbane, currently pursuing a Masters of Fine Arts by Research from QUT.

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