News from the collections

Cultural Treasures Festival, 28–29 July 2012
The biennial University of Melbourne Cultural Treasures Festival is a free program of exhibitions, walks, talks, seminars, demonstrations, displays and guided tours—all showcasing the university’s rich array of museums and collections. Included among the many walks through the historic Parkville campus will be programs focusing on botanical, medical, musical and scientific collections, architecture and ‘Cultural rubble’, a guided tour of some of the outdoor sculptures. In addition, staff and researchers will be running seminars and presentations.

This free, two-day event will take place over the weekend of 28 and 29 July 2012. On the same weekend two other major events will be held on campus: the 39th Australian Antiquarian Book Fair (in the splendid Wilson Hall) and the Melbourne Open House program, which gives visitors a rare opportunity to explore numerous buildings of architectural interest.

Knowledge through print: A Melbourne perspective
To coincide with the Cultural Treasures Festival, the University Library’s Special Collections will present an exhibition that revisits elements of the renowned Printing and the mind of man exhibition. Held in London in 1963, the original exhibition explored the technical progress of printing as a craft, the finest achievements of printing as an art, and the impact of printing on the western mind.

Our exhibition will showcase a selection of Special Collections items represented in the 1963 exhibition, including first editions of Johnson’s Dictionary and Darwin’s On the origin of species, as well as works by Vitruvius, Godwin, Newton and Hobbes. The marginalia, bookplates and provenance of many Special Collections volumes on display reveal rich cultural stories about the development of knowledge in Melbourne. The exhibition also aims—in a much smaller compass—to recognise some of the things that have changed in half a century. More recent scholarship on print and human communication will be featured, along with 20th-century works by Melbourne thought leaders.

For further information about the Cultural Treasures Festival 2012 see www.unimelb.edu.au/culturalcollections/treasuresdays, email cultural-collections@unimelb.edu.au or call (03) 8344 0216. The website will be updated as new programs are confirmed.

Ceramic art of ancient Cyprus
The University of Melbourne has one of the most important collections of Cypriot antiquities in Australia. It is representative of the human history of this strategically important island, and includes a wide range of Bronze Age and Iron Age artefacts brought to Australia by the late Professor J.R. Stewart between the 1930s and early 1960s.

Cyprus is the third-largest island in the Mediterranean and is renowned as the island of Aphrodite. The exhibition Ceramic art of ancient Cyprus, curated by Dr Andrew Jamieson, features significant ceramic assemblages recovered from Bronze Age tombs at Vounous from 1937 to 1938, and the Bronze Age cemeteries at Karmi in 1961.

The exhibition Knowledge through print: A Melbourne perspective will be on display in the Leigh Scott Gallery, Baillieu Library, from June to August 2012. It will complement the Australian Antiquarian Book Fair in Wilson Hall on 28–29 July.

The exhibition Ceramic art of ancient Cyprus is on display at the Ian Potter Museum of Art until 14 October 2012. See www.art-museum.unimelb.edu.au.
Grand gestures: The Marion and David Adams Collection
Kerrianne Stone

The names Marion and David Adams are familiar to many supporters of the University of Melbourne. The late Professor Marion Adams, a specialist in the field of German literature, was dean of arts from 1988 to 1993. Her husband, David Adams, graduated from the university as an engineer and later pursued his interest in ancient civilisations through an arts degree. The couple’s shared fascination with world cultures saw them amass an impressive collection of artefacts and works of art. They presented a grand gift of antiquities and artefacts from many cultures to the Ian Potter Museum of Art in 2009, and an exhibition showcasing and celebrating that collection was held in the Potter’s classics and archaeology gallery the same year.²

In 2011 David Adams donated to the Baillieu Library his and Marion’s collection of prints and drawings. David has said that the antiquities collection was his focus, while the works on paper were Marion’s chief project, reflecting as they do her interest in German culture. So this latest gift gives us captivating insights into Marion’s discipline. The collection comprises 76 works on paper by various artists, with a particular emphasis on early German printmakers, their circle, and German Dadaists and Expressionists whose art explores the power of gesture. The inclusion of a number of works by the Dutch artist Lucas van Leyden (c. 1494–1533) enhances the holdings already in the Baillieu Library Print Collection, which are regularly used by students in undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The gift also introduces new artists to the collection, such as the innovators Hannah Höch (1889–1978), George Grosz (1893–1959) and Josef Scharl (1896–1954). The Adams purchased most of the works from print dealers in Germany, with David maintaining excellent records. The collection is a tribute to Marion’s relationship with the university as a scholar and teacher. A key motivation behind the gift is its practical potential to inspire and inform many keen scholars at the university and beyond.

Acquisitions:
John Brack’s The Queen

A major painting by John Brack, The Queen (1988), has been donated to the University of Melbourne Art Collection by Helen Brack, the artist’s widow.

The Queen complements the Potter’s existing holdings of art by John Brack, who is now represented by works spanning his entire career, from the 1940s to the 1980s, including prints and drawings, an oil study and one oil painting, A face in the mirror (1965).

The Queen, with its intriguing arrangement of cut-up postcards of the ‘Phoenix’ portrait of Queen Elizabeth I (attributed to Nicholas Hilliard), presents many of the themes that recur in Brack’s paintings. There is the ambiguous use of space—of which he was a master—and visual puzzles. How do the scissors balance and support the cards and how do the...
John Brack, *The Queen*, 1988, oil on canvas, 137.0 x 106.5 cm. Reg. no. 2012.0001, gift of Helen Brack, 2012, University of Melbourne Art Collection

Reflections in the mirror relate to the postcards? Where does the viewer stand in relation to the image? There is an interplay of forms: between the ovals of the mirror and the marble table as well as among the rectangular shapes of the postcards and their reflections. Brack also uses the different material qualities of card, marble, steel and glass to great effect in this fascinating still-life portrait.

*The Queen* has been included in several exhibitions and featured in the 2009 National Gallery of Victoria retrospective *John Brack*. It is on display at the Ian Potter Museum of Art until 26 August 2012.

**Visions past and present**

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the University Art Gallery in 1972, the Ian Potter Museum of Art is producing a much-needed book on the University of Melbourne Art Collection. *Visions past and present: Celebrating 40 years* illustrates 50 highlights and combines an introduction to the collection with essays by a range of art experts who have a connection with the University of Melbourne, including Jaynie Anderson, Frances Lindsay, Margaret Manion, Patrick McCaughey and Angus Trumble. The selection of works ranges in date from the 9th century BCE to the present day, and although the focus is on Australian art from the early 19th century to the present, the book also includes classics and archaeology and some fine European works, including a small late watercolour by the supreme master of the medium, J.M.W. Turner.

*Visions past and present* tells the story of the generosity of the many donors who have built the collection over 100 years. Their support for the university has made the collection the great one it is today. Donors such as Dr Samuel Ewing and Sir Russell and Lady Grimwade, as well as many others, had the foresight to build their collections and donate them for the benefit of the public and the university community. This is a continuing tradition, and featured in the book is the most recent gift to the collection, *The Queen* by John Brack (discussed above). *Visions past and present* is the major collection publication for the Potter in its 40th anniversary year. Its publication is supported by the Gordon Darling Foundation and the University’s Cultural and Community Relations Advisory Group.

*Visions past and present: Celebrating 40 years*, Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, 2012 (paperback, 116 pages), can be purchased for $30 from the Ian Potter Museum of Art.
Acquisitions: Book sculptures by Brian Dettmer
Susan Millard
Baillieu Library Special Collections has purchased two book sculptures—or ‘altered books’ as they are often called—by Brian Dettmer. Born in Chicago, Dettmer now lives in Atlanta, Georgia, and has achieved international recognition for his work, which involves taking a scalpel to obsolete books to create completely new and extraordinary objects. He seals the book with glue and then starts carving. There is no plan; he just begins cutting and lets the work speak to him as it emerges.

Dettmer’s concept of taking hard copy objects designed for a particular use and re-purposing them into art raises questions about the march of technology and the place of these objects in an ever-changing world. He has also used cassette tapes and vinyl records in his sculptures, melting and cutting them, often into skulls. The finished works are exquisite and rarely fail to elicit a gasp from onlookers.

There are no other Dettmer works in Australian institutions. The Baillieu holds around 250 artists’ books, mostly Australian. The Dettmer purchases are part of our plan to develop our international book arts holdings further.

Managing volunteers
Emily Wubben
Helen Arnoldi, the Projects Coordinator for the university’s cultural collections, has written an insightful publication that draws upon her years of experience in, and dedication to, the cultural sector. Her book, Managing volunteers in museums and cultural collections: Ten things you should know, was launched by Margaret Birtley, General Manager of Heritage and Tourism, Melbourne Cricket Club, on 22 September 2011 in the Leigh Scott Room of the Baillieu Library.

The book provides a comprehensive, practical guide for people who manage volunteers in collecting institutions, such as museums, galleries, libraries, archives and historical societies. It raises awareness of issues that should be considered to ensure the relationship between volunteers and institutions is a mutually beneficial one. Helen Arnoldi has more than ten years of professional experience in collection and heritage management, including roles with the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the Baillieu Library Print Collection and the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). She has greatly contributed to the university’s cultural collections in her position as Projects Coordinator for the past seven years.

The Cultural Collections Projects Program enables students, alumni and volunteers in the wider community to engage with the university’s magnificent cultural collections through tailored programs that provide them with the opportunity to expand their vocational skills and explore their particular interests. At the same time, the projects add real value to the collections by contributing to their interpretation, management and long-term preservation.
