UNSW Library
Exhibitions Program and Public Art
2019 Year in Review
UNSW Library would like to acknowledge the Bedegal (Kensington campus), Gadigal (City and Art & Design Campuses) and Ngunnawal people (Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra) who are the traditional custodians of the lands where each campus of UNSW is located.
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2019 has been a transformative year for arts and culture at UNSW, and the Library’s Exhibitions Program and other public art initiatives have played a key role in driving this transformation.

In an increasingly digital and digitised world, UNSW Library as a physical place is becoming an even more important centre for community, culture and intellectual exchange. Through our exhibitions and associated public art projects, the Library actively supports and encourages the development of meaningful connections between people, ideas and collections, and has created a range of new opportunities for students – and the community more broadly - to engage in experiential, cross-disciplinary learning and discovery.

Throughout 2019, we have focused on creating new exhibitions that give visible presence to diverse perspectives and voices, and that connect students with some of the most interesting research on campus. Working with our academic partners across a range of faculties, we have delivered an even more vibrant and diverse program this year including Extended Reality, Dialogues with Real-Time, Sea Country, Gangaagundi Guunuwaygan, Photography, Race and Slavery and Strong and Powerful: Remembering the Age of AIDS. Each of these exhibitions have engaged new audiences, enriched the student experience and actively contributed to UNSW’s intellectual environment and engagement mission.

2019 has also seen the launch of the Library’s new Alumni Mural Program, with our first two Alumni Mural commissions being completed on levels 2 and 3 of the Main Library. This program aims to improve the student experience through art and culture in the Library, strengthening connections between current students and alumni, and celebrating the innovation and excellence of UNSW graduates.

Through this work, the Library has positioned itself as an important and innovative inter-disciplinary space for exploration, discovery and discourse at UNSW.

Martin Borchert
University Librarian

Hero Macdonald
Director, Learning Services and Digital Innovation
For students at UNSW, the Library’s Exhibitions Program is an important point of encounter. It’s a space to engage with arts and culture, with knowledge from outside their own disciplines and with a plurality of perspectives. Current students make up over two thirds of our audience for exhibitions and because of this all of our exhibitions in 2019 were designed to speak to two types of visitors: an engaged audience who have made the trip to see the exhibition, and the audience of our Library users who have an unplanned encounter with the content on display.

Each of the exhibitions presented have been the result of collaborations with researchers throughout the University. Bringing these exhibitions to the university community and public has meant leveraging our network infrastructure and faculty-neutral position to make it possible for cultural and intellectual initiatives in the University to find new modes of expression.

The success of the 2019 Exhibitions Program can be measured in the breadth of these collaborations. The Library co-created experiences across a spectrum of UNSW’s output throughout the humanities and into science and technology, in both faculty-based academic pursuits and initiatives generated in divisions and units throughout the University.

By creating the space and infrastructure for these collaborations to take place, the Library has become a driver of cultural production at the University. This program is a leading example of a larger shift that is seeing more academic libraries explore initiatives that cross the boundaries of galleries, libraries, archives and museums with the goal of community engagement.

Jackson Mann  
*Curator, Special Collections and Exhibitions*
UNSW Library
Exhibitions Program

In 2019 UNSW Library presented seven exhibitions and delivered related public programs for students, staff and community members. These exhibitions were curated and delivered in partnership with a broad range of collaborators, ranging from academic partners, community members, external organisations and units throughout the University.

Six of the exhibitions were shown in the Main Library Exhibition Space – our flagship space to deliver cultural initiatives. This year we also opened the inaugural exhibition in an integrated exhibitions and study space in the newly refurbished Law Library.

“There should be more of this. For me, studying in creative spaces or spaces where there is creative work makes me inspired and productive.”

Exhibitions visitor survey response
UNSW Student, 26 February
Our audience

This year the Library received 1370 responses to our Exhibitions Visitor Survey. The results revealed the primary audience for our exhibitions are current students, accounting for 62% of viewers. Just over a fifth of our audience this year were visitors from off campus.

Our 2019 collaborators

- UNSW Educational Design and Development, Pro-Vice Chancellor Education
- UNSW School of Arts and Media
- RealTime, Open City Inc
- UNSW Art Collection
- Global Water Institute
- UNSW School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences
- UNSW Archives
- Silk Roads @ UNSW Initiative
- Religion and Society Cluster, Western Sydney University
- UNSW School of Humanities and Languages
- UNSW Faculty of Art & Design
- UNSW Health Promotions Unit

Audience members attending In Response: Dialogues with RealTime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community member</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSW staff</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSW student</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Based on 1370 responses to our exhibitions visitor survey in 2019.
Extended Reality
11 - 15 February 2019

Hosted during O-week, this interactive exhibition presented immersive learning experiences developed by PVCE’s Educational Delivery Services.

The suite of Virtual and Augmented Reality experiences on display were designed for the classroom. They provide students with opportunities to engage with their disciplines in innovative and inspiring ways through experience-based learning.

The exhibition was facilitated by a team of students who were trained to guide visitors through each immersive experience.
Installation view, Extended Reality
“Thank you for taking such care with this wonderful exhibition. Such a powerful evocation of what these works were about. Yes, of course, performance is largely an ephemeral phenomena... but this exhibition brings us close to the lifeworld within which these works made sense.”

Exhibitions visitor survey response
UNSW Staff Member, 20 March

In Response: Dialogues with RealTime
25 February – 25 April 2019

This exhibition marked the closure of the RealTime art magazine and the launch of its archive on Trove – a collaborative digitisation project between UNSW Library, the National Library of Australia, publisher Open City and the UNSW School of Arts and Media.

The exhibition was co-curated by Dr Erin Brannigan (Senior Lecturer, UNSW School of Arts and Media), along with the featured artists: Branch Nebula, Martin del Amo and Vicki Van Hout. Coverage in RealTime of these Sydney-based artists’ work was presented in the exhibition through printed and spoken word alongside artefacts from relevant performances, documentation, and related texts. The exhibition brought to life the importance and impact of the RealTime publication and revealed the enduring relationship between the magazine and the artists it reviewed.
Public Programs

During the life of the exhibition each of the exhibiting artists presented a lecture-performance – new work commissioned by UNSW Library and performed inside the gallery.

The exhibition closed with the launch of the RealTime archive, an event which included performances by each artist as well as editors of RealTime Keith Gallasch and Virginia Baxter.

The In Response: Dialogues with RealTime catalogue published by UNSW Library, which included contributions by Dr Erin Brannigan, Keith Gallasch & Virginia Baxter, John Baylis, Lizzie Thomson and Amanda Card.
Artist Vicki Van Hout performing at In Response: Dialogues with RealTime
Sea Country: Yolngu Bark Paintings in the UNSW Art Collection

Gangaagundi Guunuwaygan (Future Life): Recent works by Chels Marshall

20 May – 02 August 2019

In collaboration with The Global Water Institute and UNSW Art Collection, the Library presented two exhibitions in association with the 3rd Australia New Zealand Marine Biotechnology Society Conference held at UNSW.

Sea Country showcased artworks from the UNSW Art Collection and told the story of the spiritual connection of the Yolngu to the land and the sea and the important role of art in expressing Yolngu cultural identity, asserting ownership of their traditional lands, and widening understanding and appreciation of Yolngu culture.

Gangaagundi Guunuwaygan was initiated through a partnership between the Faculty of Art and Design and the Global Water Institute, which engaged artist and cultural marine ecologist Chels Marshall to create new work with a focus on water management issues in Aboriginal communities.
"Amazing and insightful. A very beautiful way to be in touch with my cultural heritage... Very beautiful and profound. Loved it deeply."
Exhibitions visitor survey response
Community member, July 13

"Wonderful exhibition. It’s so good to see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and culture being celebrated. More, please! The AV piece helped me understand the difference in world view a bit better. Thank you."
Exhibitions visitor survey response
UNSW Student, 01 June

Public programs

During NAIDOC week, the Library and the Art Collection worked with the UNSW Cultural Mentors program to provide current international students with an opportunity to learn about and engage with First Nations knowledge through the exhibitions.

The exhibitions were also used as a tool for object-based learning for students in the Faculty of Built Environment studying the unit ‘The Culture of Nature’.
"Very interesting subject matter – it's great to be exposed to new information about a time and place that I didn't know about. Very special to have access to these photos."

Exhibitions visitor survey response
UNSW Staff Member,
24 October

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Photography, Race and Slavery: African Sitters of Qajar Era Iran
23 September – 14 November 2019

Tracing the unexplored history of African slaves in Iran during the Qajar dynasty, this exhibition looked at the unique relationship between photography and slavery in Iran from the 1840s to the 1930s. The exhibition was developed in collaboration with the Silk Roads @ UNSW initiative and curated by Dr Pedram Khosronejad (Western Sydney University).

The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue which included contributions from Scientia Professor Louise Edwards, Dr Ayxem Eli and Dr Pedram Khosronejad.
Audience members attending the opening event for *Photography, Race and Slavery: African Sitters of Qajar Era Iran*
UNSW: 70 Years
November 2019 – 2020

To mark UNSW’s 70th anniversary, the Library collaborated with the University Archives on the first exhibition presented in the newly refurbished Law Library.

*UNSW: 70 Years* featured archival material displaying some of the key moments in UNSW history; celebrating the diversity of the student population and unwavering student voice, and highlighting the academic and research achievements in problem-solving the grand societal, environmental, cultural and political challenges facing Australia, and the world.
Presented over World AIDS Day, Strong and Powerful brought together posters, artworks and ephemera from three private collections that captured the community-lead response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic during the 1980s and 90s in Australia. During the exhibition, UNSW’s Health Promotion Unit in partnership with Positive Life NSW hosted Speaking From Experience where visitors heard a current student talk about their experience of being diagnosed with HIV.

“This exhibition was amazing. I love that this taboo subject is being presented not only to raise awareness but to bring a sense of beauty and show the stages of AIDS prevention and the community it has produced. I enjoyed it thoroughly.”

Exhibitions visitor survey response
UNSW Student, 07 December
Partnership with
UNSW Art Collection

Enabled by Library funding and working consultatively with the Library’s Curator, Special Collections and Exhibitions, in 2019 we were able to acquire an important group of works by Indigenous artists for the UNSW Art Collection. This is a significant initiative, the first time in over a decade that funds have been available for developing the Collection. In consultation with the University Librarian it was agreed that the strategic focus for acquisition would be to reflect recent developments in Indigenous art, particularly regions and groups not currently represented in the Collection, and to increase the representation of Indigenous women artists. In total, twenty-nine works by fourteen women artists were acquired during the year.

During the past decade, women have emerged as amongst the most significant artists from Arnhem land. Two bark paintings by Malaluba Gumana and Djirrirra Wunungmurra and two limited edition prints each by senior artists Nonggirrnga Marawili and Nyapanyapa Yunupingu were acquired. The APY Lands in the north-west of South Australia have also recently been an important centre of artistic production and several paintings from this region area were purchased. These include two major works by Pitjantjatjara artist Sylvia Ken, winner of the 2019 Wynne Prize, and three paintings by emerging artists from the Tjungu Palya Art Centre. In a new direction for the Collection, works by urban-based Indigenous artists were acquired, including three photogravures by South Australian artist, activist and curator Nici Cumpston and three photographic collages by Victorian artist Hayley Millar-Baker from her 2018 Cookbook series which critically explores the merging of traditional Aboriginal cultural practices with Westernised 21st century knowledge and tools.

These recent acquisitions will progressively be placed on display around the UNSW campus and support the University’s Indigenous Strategy, and 2025 Strategy; Strategic priority B: Social Engagement, Theme (B1): ‘A Just Society’. Two paintings by Sylvia Ken and Betty Chimney can already be seen in the foyer of the refurbished Clancy auditorium, and several other recent acquisitions have been installed as part of the permanent display of Indigenous Art on Level 4 of the Main Library.

Elena Taylor
Senior Curator, UNSW Art Collection
Sylvia Ken
Seven Sisters 2019
synthetic polymer paint on linen
Installation view, Main Library Level 4
UNSW Art Collection UNSW P 2019/1138
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UNSW Library Alumni Mural Program is a series of site-specific public artworks by UNSW alumni created for the lift foyers of the UNSW Sydney Main Library. This series is part of a broader strategy within UNSW Library to enrich the student experience by embedding art and culture throughout the Library.

This commission series invites UNSW alumni to create a new temporary artwork which responds to the site of the Library lift foyers as a place of transition – a gateway to knowledge, information and learning, as well as collaboration and relaxation. Artists are selected for their artistic excellence and whose practices reflect the ideas and concerns at the forefront of contemporary consciousness; First Nations history and culture, the natural environment, migration, geopolitics and a more inclusive society.

With these ideas in mind, this project seeks to enhance the student experience of UNSW Library as a welcoming space with distinct spatial identities, fostering a personal connection with the Library. This commission series highlights the important role the Library plays within the University as a site of learning and community, celebrates the diversity of the student population and reflects the innovation and excellence of UNSW graduates.

The UNSW Library Alumni Mural Commission series aligns with UNSW’s 2025 strategic priorities in Academic Excellence, in building a personalised student experience and Social Engagement to foster diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, this project supports UNSW graduates by providing opportunity for professional development.
Louise Zhang: Waves of chrysanthemums
Lift foyer, Level 2, Main Library

Louise Zhang’s Waves of chrysanthemums is rich in Chinese and Western symbolism; larger-than-life chrysanthemums overlay a fantastical imagined landscape of rising suns and raining liquid forms in rich and seductive colours. Many of these symbols are found throughout Zhang’s work as a Chinese–Australian artist and embody a duality of meaning.

Drawing from her experience as a “third culture kid” Zhang reconciles her Chinese and Western identities through an interplay of colour, form and scale, asking us as viewers to question what we ‘see’ and how this is informed by our lived experiences, family background, education and beliefs.

Zhang is a recent graduate of UNSW and is an artist at the beginning of her career, she has exhibited widely and undertaken large scale projects with critical success, a finalist in the NSW Visual Arts Emerging Fellowship in 2017 and awarded the Fisher’s Ghost Art Award – Sculpture category, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney in 2015. Zhang is represented by Artereal Gallery, Sydney.
Lisa Sammut: Waiting room

Lift foyer, Level 3, Main Library

With an interest in celestial architecture Lisa Sammut’s Waiting room embodies the curiosity and sense of possibility of the cosmos, echoing the spheres and stars, constellations and planetary bodies that make up the night sky. Sammut has used a subdued colour palette in soft and subtle gradients, abstracted images to depict forms and shapes in various states of change. Sammut sought to respond to the context of the lift as a site of movement and where visitors can experience time, inviting the audience to consider waiting as an opportunity for creativity and exploration.

A recent graduate of UNSW, Sammut has participated in several solo and group exhibitions and undertaken large scale projects including HIGH LOOM, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Sydney (2019) and a monumental echo, Firstdraft, Sydney (2018). Sammut has been recognised for her artistic talent in several prizes including the Churchie Emerging Art Prize, receiving the Sam Whiteley Memorial Commendation in 2016, and in 2018, was a finalist in the John Fries Award, UNSW Galleries.