



POLITICS!



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COFAtopia #7 2011
EDITORIAL

"Heal the world and make it a better place..."

Michael Jackson

"U can't touch this (oh-oh oh oh oh-oh-oh)"

MC Hammer

Politics. Whether you choose to follow it or forget it, it is everywhere and it affects all of us in a plethora of ways. But what does being political actually mean? Is our generation apathetic? Does 'being political' actually do anything? Anything? To end all this deliberation this COFAtopia we try and get to the bottom of POLITICS. Packed into this issue are hot hot articles on what politics means to us, today; as students, as artists and designers, as teachers and citizens. Featuring a report on the impacts of Voluntary Student Unionism, we then talk art and apathy with Firstdraft co-director Georgie Meagher and investigate the role of student politics with COFA SRC Rep Rivka Schembri.

So read on and work out if politics really is important. You might even find your inner activist.

Till next time, yours sincerely,

Arc @ COFA xx

(P.S Kudos Gallery Intern 2012 app's and KUDOS Art and Design Award entries are due on the 30 Sept. See Whats On pages for deets)



UNSW Student Life
College of Fine Arts

POST VSU: WHERE ARE WE NOW?



Firstly, and most evidently, the main difference was, pre-VSU student fees were compulsory. When you paid your annual Uni fees, a portion of that was given to your student organisation, of around \$256. This made you a member. Fee structures like this are similar to paying taxes to the government and worked on the same method- everyone paid so that everyone received the same services. This membership meant there was an autonomous organisation run by students, for students. Together these student org's enriched universities by creating independent student galleries, subsidised childcare, safe spaces for women, kitchens for hungry students, anti-government and uni protests and challenged student/uni issues at chancellery level. There was large membership and student unions were stronger than ever.

However, remove the compulsory part to fee's and people don't pay them, resulting in a smaller, less powerful student organisation.

It's been five years since the introduction of Voluntary Student Unionism. I remember it well.

I was on the COFA SRC as Women's Officer. The year was 2006 and student life as we knew it was about to drastically change. We made t-shirts emblazoned with slogans. We made badges, had cake stalls, sent letters, compiled reports to Senate, we protested. One particularly memorable rally with a thematic of bandages and black-eyes involved shouting "DOWN BUT NOT OUT!" with placards all the way to Central completely outnumbered by police. Despite these attempts VSU was passed into legislation the following session.

Though futile, these last clamors to save student org's were not fuelled by fear of losing revenue generated from student fees. It was symbolic of something much greater. For student org's, VSU represented a a reduction in the quality of our university experience and in our empowerment as a student body, as a group, as a union.

A union generally represents a larger group of people in the workplace, or as is the case at

university, to make sure students are getting the most out of student life. Unions facilitate structural change and prevent exploitation. As any old union lefty will chew your ear off about, without unions, it is difficult to have a voice, and having a voice is power.

"Bah!" some students say, "what is all the fuss about? Arc has replaced the student org's AND we don't have to pay the fees!" So what exactly is the difference between post and pre VSU?



And it shows. Since the introduction of VSU in 2007 there has been a significant reduction in student services, amenities and representation. Across most Australian universities, student org's, if functioning at all, have been forced to reduce their capacity, introduce a user-pays approach, privatize services and make redundancies due to a loss of more than 50% in its funding¹. Whilst UNSW was able to secure a large portion of their student run extracurricular facilities and services (Kudos Gallery, grants, residencies, ute and van loans, Clubs funding etc) by securing start up support from the University, they did so by dissolving four student organisations and creating one big one, what we now know as Arc.

Tharunka magazine recently published an article about the impact of such measures on student life, stating that since 2007 there has been an increase in university policies that are unresponsive to the political will of students such as shorter semester lengths, **Saturday examinations** and

1. La Trobe University Guild of Students, "The Impact of VSU on Services, Amenities and Representation for Australian University Students." www.oaew.gov.au/HigherEducation/Programs/StudentSupport/VoluntaryStudentUnionism/Documents/LaTrobeUniGuild.pdf

larger tutorial sizes². The irony of it all is that whilst students may not have to fork out the annual fee anymore, the cost of services has increased to compensate. In the process, Arc has lost significant numbers in members, which has affected students capacity to hear about proposed change and act on it in time to be effective.

What does this say to students about their role in larger society and within the workplace?

2. McPhedran, C. (2011) "Viva Arc?", Tharunka, August 2011 pg 11

"Far from extra loose change in student's pockets, VSU has impacts far beyond the parameters of university"

Far from extra loose change in uni student's pockets, Journalist Judith Langridge suggests the cost of VSU has social impacts far beyond the parameters of university stating "Today, students are individual shells...obeying the traffic rules society has set for them rather than (being) fully engaged, integrated participants in the institution."³

With this in mind, perhaps the biggest social impact of VSU might be that students forget

3. Langridge, J. as quoted from the article "Viva Arc?" by Cameron McPhedran, Tharunka, August 2011, pg 11

they have an empowered voice and aren't aware they have the power to change the system. Currently, those that do know, aren't getting the information quick enough to act against it. Add to that a general apathy across the student body and it seems we may get stuck in a struggle with little student voice in the right place at the right time leading to irreversible damaging change.

But it's not all doom and gloom. In this post VSU age it is important to remember that without students, universities are nothing. Without students making their own student culture, universities would only be KPI's and glossy graduate attributes. Though important, it is through involvement in student org's that we can continue to balance these learning outcomes with an enriching student experience informed by its own culture and hopefully create the changes we want to see.

Kelly Doley



Why not get involved?
SRC ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD IN WEEK 11 (from Tuesday 4 October to Thursday 6 October 2011). Voting will be available at the Kensington Campus with the times & locations to be advised.

WE ARE HERE: ART, APATHY AND ARI'S

ENTITLED 'WE ARE HERE' THIS SEPTEMBER SAW THE FIRST NATION WIDE SYMPOSIUM ON ARTIST RUN INITIATIVES (ARI'S) COUPLED WITH AN EXHIBITION 'THE FEELING WILL PASS'. INITIATED BY FIRSTDRAFT DIRECTOR GEORGIE REED IN COLLABORATION WITH BRIANNA MUNTING FROM NAVA, THE SYMPOSIUM FEATURED DIVERSE SPEAKERS FROM SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ARI'S WORKING IN AUSTRALIA TODAY. GEORGIE AND I RECENTLY CAUGHT UP TO TALK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCH EVENTS...

HOW DID THE PARTNERSHIP WITH NAVA AND FIRSTDRAFT COME ABOUT?

Firstdraft were already planning an ARI forum for the end of 2011. We imagined a small-ish gathering that might grow if another ARI wanted to take the reigns. Then Brianna Munting from NAVA (Co-convenor and co-curator of The Feeling Will Pass) contacted me to sit on an advisory committee for a symposium for ARI's they were planning. After meeting we realised our visions were similar and decided to team up. This also took a great deal of the administrative burden off Firstdraft and enabled a much bigger event to happen.

WHAT IMPACT DO YOU THINK SYMPOSIUMS LIKE 'WE ARE HERE' COULD HAVE ON THE FUNCTION AND FUTURE OF ARI CULTURE?

We wanted to talk about networks, exchange and connectivity. We wanted to think about ways of strengthening ARI's in Australia by coming together, sharing knowledge and ideas. We certainly aren't being prescriptive with any outcomes, but we're quietly confident that by simply bringing such a diverse group of people together that all sorts of new connections can and will be forged.

HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT CHOOSING THE ARTISTS AND THE THEMATIC FOR THE EXHIBITION?

For the accompanying exhibition, The Feeling Will Pass, Brianna and I separately researched a large number of artists whose work actively engages audiences in its production and engage with performance and the ephemeral. We also tried to get a spread of artists from across Australia.

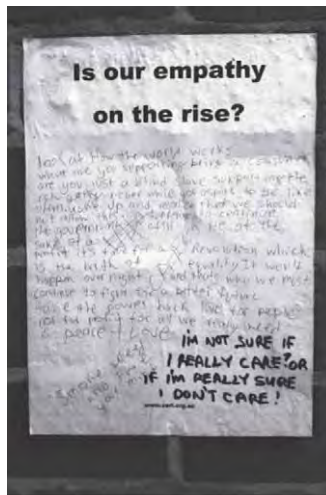
The exhibition has a political bent to it, with one artist (Carl Scrasse, pictured) asking the public 'Is Empathy on The Rise?' Through this project I think Carl is trying to evoke a consideration of interpersonal relationships as they exist in everyday life. One of my favourite responses was written on a poster reading, "RIDE A BIKE".

DO YOU THINK THE THEMATIC OF THE EXHIBITION IS INDICATIVE OF A GENERATION CRAVING POLITICAL CHANGE AND DIALOGUE?

Most of the works in the exhibition are not overtly political, but reference various specific social and cultural phenomena that is quite personal. Hossein

Ghaemi's performance (pictured) for example, is directly related to his own religious upbringing and reconciling that incongruous sense of history and tradition with his own experience.

Through the exhibition, we are considering politics obliquely, which of course reflects a number of artist's conceptual investigations at the moment.



We particularly wanted to do this by including participatory and performance works that extend outside the gallery. Curatorially speaking, we are looking at a broader idea of 'intervention as activism'.

We Are Here: National ARI Symposium was held in Sydney, from 1-4 September 2011. The Feeling Will Pass exhibition included Blood & Thunder, Cake Industries, Hossein Ghaemi, Michaela Gleave, Rachael Haynes & Alice Lang, Sebastian Moody and Carl Scrasse, held at Firstdraft from 1-11 September 2011. Georgie Reed is an artist and current director of Firstdraft Gallery.



Hossein Ghaemi, Ussef/Issiac I can't tell which one is wearing the hat, 2009. Photo: Nudzejma Avdic.



We Are Here: National ARI Symposium, Frasers Studios, Sydney. September 2011

Inset: Carl Scrasse & collaborators, Experiment 03- Viral posters project, mixed media, 2011

WHAT'S ON WHAT'S

WEEK EIGHT

QUEER WEEK

Mon 12 Sept

1-4
Canvas Embroidery W'shop
COFA @ KENSO Courtyard.
Free for Arc Members,
\$2 non.

2-4
Queer Collective Meeting
Queer Space.
920, Level 9, Chemical
Science Building, UNSW

4pm
**Nominations for
2012 SRC close**

Tues 13 Sept

2-5
Equal Love Art Project
COFA @ KENSO Courtyard.
Free for Arc Members,
\$2 non.

1-2
SOCCER
Moore Park

1-3
FREE LUNCH
Free for Arc members,
by donation for non.
COFA Common Room
Lvl. 1 E Block COFA

5-7.30
@KUDOS:
Tim Olsen Drawing Prize
Kudos Gallery 6 Napier St
Paddington

Wed 14 Sept

1-3
WATCH MOVIES
Fassbinder 'Quarelle'
COFA Common Room,
Lvl. 1 E Block COFA

3-4
YOGA with Jess Olivieri.
Free for Arc Members,
\$5 non.
E109, Common Room,
Lvl. 1 E Block COFA

4-7
WEDNESDAY NIGHT SOCIAL
Pizza, beer and bingo.
Free for Arc members,
by donation for non.
COFA Common Room
Lvl. 1 E Block COFA

Thu 15 Sept

4-6
Queer Collective Meeting
Queer Space.
920, Level 9, Chemical
Science Building, UNSW

Fri 16 Sept

10- 12
Sketch Club
E109, Common Room,
Lvl. 1 E Block COFA

WEEK NINE

Mon 19 Sept

9-10
SRC Free Breakfast
Library Forcourt UNSW

1-4
Craft Workshops with Alan
COFA @ KENSO Courtyard.
Free for Arc Members,
\$2 non.

Tues 20 Sept

2-5
Craft Workshops with Alan
COFA Courtyard @
KENSO. Free for Arc
Members, \$2 non.

1-2
COFA SOCCER, Moore Park

Wed 21 Sept

1-3
WATCH MOVIES
Fassbinder 'The Bitter
Tears of Petra Van Kant'
COFA Common Room,
Lvl. 1 E Block COFA

3-4
YOGA with Jess Olivieri.
Free for Arc Members,
\$5 non.
E109, Common Room,
Lvl. 1 E Block COFA

4-7
WED NIGHT SOCIAL
Pizza, cider and bingo.
Free for Arc members
COFA Common Room
Lvl. 1 E Block COFA

Fri 16 Sept

10- 12
Sketch Skills
E109, Common Room,

4-6
Falun Dafa Meditation
Squarehouse, Rm 217

WEEK TEN

Mon 26 Sept

9-10
SRC Free Breakfast
Library Forcourt

1-4
Craft Workshop with Alan
COFA @ KENSO Courtyard.
Free for Arc Members,
\$2 non.

Tues 27 Sept

2-5
Craft Workshop with Alan
COFA Courtyard @
KENSO. Free for Arc
Members, \$2 non.

1-2
COFA SOCCER, Moore Park

5-7.30
@KUDOS:
Organism: Jack Stahel
Kudos Gallery 6 Napier St
Paddington

Wed 28 Sept

1-3
WATCH MOVIES
Fassbinder: 'Fear
Eats The Soul'
COFA Common Room,
Lvl. 1 E Block COFA

3-4
YOGA with Jess Olivieri.
Free for Arc Members,
\$5 non.
E109, COFA Common
Room, Lvl. 1
E Block COFA

4-7
WEDNESDAY NIGHT SOCIAL
Pizza, cider and bingo.
Free for Arc members
COFA Common Room
Lvl. 1 E Block COFA

Thu 29 Sept

5.30-8
UNSW UNIT Event
'Investing in Times of
Turbulence', speaker Julia Lee
Electrical Engineering,
G25, UNSW

Fri 30 Sept

10- 12
Sketch Skills
E109, Common Room,
Lvl. 1 E Block COFA

30 SEPT
DEADLINE!

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KUDOS GALLERY
INTERN 2012

<http://cofa.arc.unsw.edu.au>

COFA SRC REP SPEAKS OUT!



Rivka Schembri is the COFA SRC Representative whilst completing her Fine Arts/Arts Degree at COFA & UNSW. I recently got the low down from Rivka about her vision for the SRC, student life and the importance of politics.

What does the Student Rep Council mean to you?

The SRC means students taking an active role in co-creating their learning environment. Importantly, the SRC is completely student-run, it is students working for students. It is a platform for students to contribute directly to their learning environment and university life in general. Often at university students go through their degrees without realising that it is within their power to make changes or improvements. Uni is also about new opportunities and learning on all levels of life, it is about networking and making deep friendships and about self-discovery. This is what the Student Rep Council is for. It is that small collective of students that represents the voice of the larger student body, or in some cases, the

voice of a subgroup of the student body, such as women students, or Indigenous students, or queer students. The SRC provides a space for students to have a say in how things are run, to have their needs recognised and met by the university such as the staff, the management and the government. The SRC also facilitates fun stuff for students like parties, workshops, film nights, seminars, art exhibitions.

Why did you want to get involved in your Student Representative Council?

In my first year at COFA I had some ideas for projects for women students, and Bronwyn (who was the SRC COFA Rep at the time) introduced me to what the COFA SRC does. She explained that the SRC has access to funding and support to realise my projects. In that same year I was also part of the annual Dissonance Exhibition at Kudos Gallery, curated by the SRC Women's Officer. Being a part of this show was a great experience and I was passionate about keeping it alive, so in my second year at COFA I was the Women's Officer on the SRC.

I also joined the SRC because I was interested in working with a team of passionate and active students. I learned valuable skills that I would not have the opportunity to learn in the classroom.

What is the main vision you have in your role as COFA Rep for the SRC?

The current COFA SRC really needs to get the word out to COFA students that the SRC exists! Since the shift from compulsory student unionism to the current voluntary student unionism (VSU) in 2007, the COFA SRC profile has dropped. In addition, COFA is undergoing a challenging time at the moment with the campus redevelopment, so with the student body separated out all over the city there is a lack of cohesion. It's really important that COFA SRC continue to have an active presence on campus and encourage students to get involved. We've contacted the COFA presiding Member to ensure we get student representation on Faculty committees, we are working on our budget for next year, so thinking about the future, and this session we're running a COFA Environment Campaign to help reduce disposable waste on campus.

During our time as students at Uni, do you think being political is important?

Yes. Sometimes the word "politics" freaks me out a little, but the word is really about being aware of the larger social environment in which we live, and taking an active role in co-creating that environment, rather than just consuming it. The world is the way it is because people helped make it that way. It is particularly important for students to be politically aware and active because they are our next generation of leaders and parents. It is the job of each new generation to look at what their parents gave them and then improve it.

How do you think the student experience could be improved at COFA?

Most of the impacts on student life at the moment are due to the COFA redevelopment. The loss of the courtyard and relocation of classes has had a massive impact on the community, as well as the

individual student experience. We are working on the design for the new student hub in the redevelopment now. In the meantime, there are a few things we're working on or want to start working on...

In some cases, students' experience could be improved by having more access to COFA studios after-hours. I have had several students in challenging situations because they need to use the design labs after hours in order to complete their projects, but have restricted access.

I also think that course outlines must be made available to students at least a few weeks before the course starts. I have noticed that often COFA course outlines are not made available until after the course starts, and sometimes students can't even access an outline more recent than 5 years ago! For me, it is really important to know what I will actually be studying before I enrol in a course, especially given that courses can be really expensive

and demand a lot of one's energy. I think this issue really needs to be addressed.

For International Students, I feel that they ought to have the same concessions as local students, such as travel concessions. I think this is really unfair, especially because international students already pay so much to study at UNSW.

We are joining the SRC at Kenso on some of these campaigns, and looking to get access to faculty Committee's to raise other requests for the student body.

In the meantime, I would love to see COFA become more environmentally friendly. I'm thinking recycling bins on campus, discounts for bringing your reusable own coffee cup or container, and eco-friendly disposable products if they must be used. We need support from you (COFA students) on this, so if you agree, look out for opportunities to put your name on this when we send out notice soon!



From left: COFA SRC Rep Rivka Schembri, Rebecca Hyneck (SRC Education & Welfare Officer), David Langdon (SRC Postgraduate Officer), Alan (SRC International Officer). Not pictured: Camilla Tully (Disabilities Officer), Freya (Environment Officer)

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WHAT DOES BEING MEAN TO POLITICAL YOU?

Its 2011.

The days of hippies singing protest songs with flowers in their hair at anti war protests is certainly a thing of the past, along with the polyester moo moo's and couderovy flares. So we asked you, "what does 'being political' mean today?"

"Speaking up
and having your
voice heard"



"Being,
aware!"

"Reading widely to understand the issues of the government and trying to raise awareness because though the media is more powerful than ever before they are also utterly disinterested in, educating people."



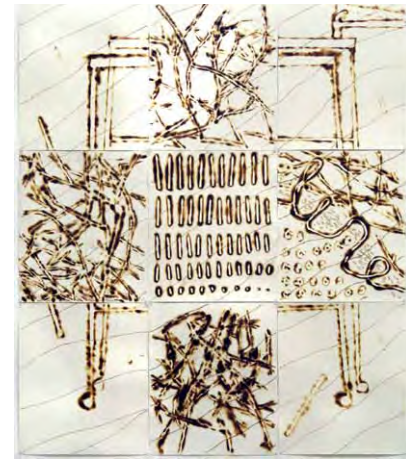
TIM OLSEN DRAWING PRIZE

A collaborative initiative, now in its eleventh year, between the Tim Olsen Gallery and the Department of Drawing and Painting at COFA, with the intention of encouraging excellence in drawing.

Image: Kendal Heyes

OPENS 5-7.30PM TUESDAY 13 September
EXHIBITION CONTINUES TO 24 SEPTEMBER 2011

TIM OLSEN
GALLERY



ORGANISM: JACK STAHEL

Driven compulsively by his process, Jack Stahel's practice is a continuous and obsessive exploration of the human mind. It resembles a living, growing life form, as well as acting as a documentation and mapping out of thought patterns.

OPENS 5-7.30PM TUESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER
EXHIBITION CONTINUES TO 8 October 2011

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KUDOS GALLERY 6 Napier St Paddington NSW, 2021
Wed to Fri 11am - 6pm, Sat 11am - 4pm, Mon + Tue by appointment only
T: (02) 9326 0034 arc.unsw.edu.au kudos@arc.unsw.edu.au

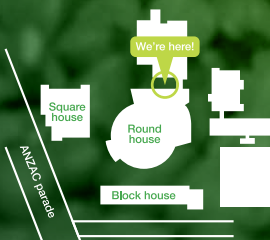
Kudos Gallery is run by COFA Students and funded by Arc @ UNSW Limited

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