The safety of motorbike riders appears not to have been fully addressed in the development of common roadside barriers in Australia or overseas, a report by the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) has found.

By DAVID BRUCE

Government seeks to address motorcycle groups' concerns that the system is restructured, according to a Monash researcher in gendered medicine.

The Faculty of Medicine's School of Rural Health's senior lecturer Ms Jo Wainer says a deeper understanding of the way women work in their profession is needed now that women comprise nearly half of graduating doctors.

Gendered medicine deals with the impact of sex and gender on the science, art, curriculum and structures of medicine, and the consequences of the near-absence of women in establishing the discipline.

Ms Wainer said Monash University and Australia generally were leading the way in the study of the relationship between women and rural medical practice.

She studied the experiences of women doctors throughout rural Victoria, commissioned by the Commonwealth-funded Rural Workforce Agency of Victoria.

Ms Wainer surveyed 150 female general practitioners and 18 specialists in country Victoria. The study's aim was to develop and implement programs to improve the retention and recruitment of female doctors in rural Victoria and to advise universities on training needs.

"The shortage of rural and remote area doctors means rural practice needs to be restructured so that women doctors are attracted to work in country areas," Ms Wainer said.

She said women doctors had a cyclical relationship with their profession, and her study showed the majority of rural female doctors surveyed were in a relationship and had children - which had a significant impact on the number of clinical hours they were able to work.

"Female rural doctors have specific workforce and professional and personal needs which differ in importance and priority to those of their male colleagues," Ms Wainer said.

She said women doctors in the country were challenging the notion that women could not behave like men for long enough - particularly the medical profession's definition of part-time work as fewer than 40 hours a week.

Research had revealed that one of the major issues facing female country doctors was the lack of childcare facilities when they were called on to emergencies. Such issues had not been a concern in the past because "the town doctor always had a wife", Ms Wainer explained.

"We've demanded women doctors believe they can exist for long enough - it's time to change," she said.

Ms Wainer said it took a while for rural communities to accept new female doctors.

"Many rural communities haven't had the option of a female doctor before, but increasingly they are being given a choice - and when they feel comfortable with the new doctor and realise she's competent and skilled, patients start bringing problems that have been hidden until then," she said.

Domestic violence and mental health are among the issues that patients tend to discuss more easily with female doctors, Ms Wainer said.

"They are more likely to go to a woman if they have a complex or multifaceted problem - and female doctors tend generally to have a more holistic approach to medicine, which could make rural practice particularly attractive because rural doctors know their patients in the context of their communities," Ms Wainer said.

Ms Wainer said that while Monash was leading the way in research into gendered medicine, the medical profession and governments needed to follow suit.

Continued on page 2

More research on motorbike barriers urged

By DAVID BRUCE

The safety of motorbike riders appears not to have been fully addressed in the development of common roadside barriers in Australia or overseas, a report by the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) has found.

The report, prepared for VicRoads and released recently by the Victorian Government, seeks to address motorbike groups' concerns that the increasing use of barriers, particularly wire rope barriers, has made motorcyclists more vulnerable to wireless injury in the event of a crash.

Wire rope barriers are currently being installed in the medium of some major roadways in Victoria, including the Goulburn Road and the Eastern Freeway.

The report has called for more research into motorcycle crashes involving all types of barriers so that more "motorcyclist friendly" barriers could be designed and installed in areas including known motorcycle accident black spots.

But the report concluded that wire rope safety barriers provided major safety benefits for road users overall and that the incidence of motorcyclists

Continued on page 2
Women's activist honoured at Federation ceremony

Ms Beatrice Faust, a Monash staff member and feminist, has been named in the first Victorian honour roll for women at a recent Centenary of Federation event.

The honour roll was presented to Ms Faust for her work on raising the profile of women's issues (Women Shaping the Nation), an active paying tribute to women pioneers and significant contributors in a variety of fields.

Currently working at the Gippsland campus, developing materials for use in traditional research roles, Ms Faust was one of the first women to argue for the repeal of anti-abortion laws. She also founded the Women's Electoral Lobby in 1972.

Prominent scientist encourages students

Nobel Prize-winning scientist Professor Peter Doherty talked to more than 500 students last month about 'The Scientific Life'.

The seminar, organised by Monash's Department of Physiology, included several other award-winning scientists and aimed to give students an insight into possible scientific careers.

Professor Doherty described his own scientific career, which led to the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1996, and encouraged students to think beyond traditional research roles.

He said many opportunities existed for building saluds in areas such as intellectual property management.

Australian authors win American prize

A book authored by Monash University's Professor Simon Marginson received the Outstanding Publications Award for the post-secondary education group at a recent American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference in Seattle.

Professor Marginson and co-author Associate Professor Mark Constable, from the University of Melbourne, received the award for their book, The Enterprise University: Power, Governance and Revolution in Australia.

It is the first time the award has gone to scholars or researchers outside the US.

The book, published by Cambridge University Press, looks at how universities are dealing with a changing world, where global markets and economic rationalism have caused major cultural shifts in approaches to tertiary education.

Rare books on show

Monash Rare Books Librarian Mr Richard Overall will take visitors on a tour of the university's rare book collection during the second Club 66 event for 2001.

Club 66, organised by the Monash Alumni Office, includes regular lectures from members of the Monash community working in the fields of writing, publishing and journalism. Club 66 functions are open to the public.

The rare books collection consists of more than 50,000 items, the earliest being a 1476 commentary on the Bible. Other highlights include first and early editions of English literature and history, and early books of cookery and household management.

For more information or to book, contact Mr Gerard Healy, Monash Alumni Office, on +61 3 9905 2044 or email gerrard.healy@adm.monash.edu.au.

Rural health centre vital to bush: MP

Monash University's Centre for Rural Health is playing a vital role in the Gippsland community, according to Federal Member of Parliament Mr Christopher Zarah.

Centre staff briefed Mr Zarah, member for McMillan, on their current research and projects during a recent visit.

"We've identified and are working with a 'sea change'. In Sweden, for instance, the government has mandated that the universities teach about such issues, and in the US the Institute for Medical History has just published a report recommending the study of sex differences from womb to tomb," she said.

At last month's Victorian Rural General Practice Conference, doctors took part in workshops on issues arising from the school's research, such as provision of after-hours services by female doctors and how to structure a profitable female-friendly rural practice.

"This is an outstanding example of how public health strategies can be built on sustained research integrated with education and implementation outcomes," Ms Waite said.

Changes needed to attract women GPs to rural areas

Continued from page 1

Since identifying the need to restructure rural practice in 1996, the School of Rural Health has developed an undergraduate curriculum on gender issues for rural doctors, encouraged few other medical schools to do the same, and held conferences on the subject.

"We've identified and are working with a 'sea change'." Sweden, for example, has a female-friendly rural practice, which is being developed to assist rural health practitioners in areas of the state where there are few female doctors.

More research on motorbike barriers urged

Continued from page 1

"Clearly, any type of barrier can pose an injury risk to a fallen rider. But, with our current knowledge, it is unclear whether the motorcyclist would sustain injuries more or less severely if there were no barriers along these major roads.

"Both roads present the danger of a rider striking objects like the lighting towers and overpass columns, or crossing the centre median into oncoming traffic. Along the Geelong Road, in particular, there are also trees, poles, culverts, rocks and other objects to contend with."

The report also called for closer consultation with key road and interest groups, both in Australia and from overseas, to develop a strategic direction for research into roadside barriers.
New $300m science and technology cluster for Monash

BY JUNE YU

Monash University has launched its concept for an International Centre for Science Technology and Emerging Industries at the Clayton campus.

Federal Industry, Science and Resources Minister Senator Nick Minchin and Victorian State and Regional Development Minister Mr John Brumby attended the launch last month.

Deputy vice-chancellor (Resources) Ms Alison Crook said the centre would provide opportunities for business and industry to collaborate with researchers and be located in an innovation cluster at Monash.

This would give industry the chance to be part of one of Australia's most prominent research universities, which has six campuses in metropolitan Melbourne, overseas campuses in Malaysia and South Africa, and centres in London and Prato.

Ms Crook said the centre would be multidisciplinary in its approach, involving the faculties of Science, Information Technology, Engineering and Pharmacy, with other faculties contributing specialist skills as required.

"Some of the most exciting things happening academically at the moment tend to be occurring across disciplines and faculties, for example, bioinformatics, nanotechnology and environmental science," she said.

Business incubators and facilities for secondary school programs have also been incorporated into the concept.

Specialist advice, strategy and commercial, Ms Susan Heron, Dr Tom Forgan and Monash deputy vice-chancellor (Resources) Ms Alison Crook with a model of the precinct Picture: GREG FORD

"We need to make sure that we capture the imagination of secondary students who are the future of science and technology in Australia," she said.

Ms Crook said Monash academics worked on the concept with Dr Tom Forgan, who founded the Australian Technology Park in Sydney.

The cluster will include a fully integrated living environment where business and the community could be part of the campus.

"In addition to pure research, much of our research has commercial potential. Therefore we want to be involved, with business and industry keen to start with our researchers working alongside them," she said.

"By progressively including companies here with us, students, staff and the local community can see the whole process of taking ideas through to industry growth and the creation of employment opportunities."

She said Monash owned land next to the Clayton campus that could serve as an expansion route for companies as they grow out of their space within the centre. This would enable them to stay close to leading research so that they continue to develop.

Businesses will benefit from having access to Monash's best graduates, while students will have the advantage of working closely with industry and gain part-time work.

Ms Crook said several outside organisations had already expressed interest in locating space within the centre.

Construction on the first of seven buildings will begin in September and is scheduled to open in July 2002. The entire project will total up to $300 million and develop progressively over the next 10 years.

Giving spark to the scientists of tomorrow

BY COREY NASSAU

At a time when science appears to be losing its appeal for young Australians, Monash University has announced a multi-million dollar project designed to rekindle enthusiasm for the discipline.

The Monash Science Centre, under construction at the university's Clayton campus, will provide a link between researchers, academic staff, school teachers and students and the public to deliver educational and informative programs to inspire children about science.

Due for completion during 2002, the centre will attract school groups and families who will come to learn about science through a range of interactive programs.

Monash's Professor Patricia Vickers-Rich, an internationally respected palaeontologist and the driving force behind the project, believes children need to be encouraged to consider science as a valuable career path as well as something they should simply experience.

"Kids are like sponges with an enormous capacity to observe and learn," Professor Vickers-Rich said.

"The Monash Science Centre will be an environment where science can be seen, felt and practised as a habit of mind, a way of thinking that can be used throughout life."

"We want to give children the tools and inspiration to think about what they are seeing and then perhaps rethink their futures," she said.

Monash Science dean Professor Robert Norris sees the centre as part of a long-term program to reverse the prominence of scientific contribution in our society.

"We want to excite the minds of Australian youth and make them see that they can be part of a positive future where talented young female and female scientists are as relevant role models as sport stars and artists," Professor Norris said.

The centre has been designed as an environmentally friendly building using through selected building materials and energy-efficient features. The building will also incorporate the latest in both waste management and recycling programs.

New study probes Latrobe Valley employment trends

A new Monash University survey into industry and employment trends in the Latrobe Valley will help promote the region's skilled but under-utilised labour market.

The project will review an annual Employment and Industry Survey conducted within the Latrobe region between 1994 and 1999.

The survey is an initiative of Monash's Geopolitical Research and Information Service (GRIS) and the new Research Unit for Work and Communications Futures (RUWCF). According to GRIS manager Ms Tina D'Urbano, the City of Latrobe in southeast Victoria was once reliant on major heavy industry but has experienced a dramatic shift in employment patterns over the past decade.

She said restructuring, downsizing and centralisation of industry from the early 1990s had encouraged an early 1990s had encouraged an increase in casual and part-time employment in the region.

"There have been many changes in employment in the years following the 1994 survey, and resurrecting the employment survey will give us a detailed understanding of the current employment situation and what the region can expect and build on in the future," she said.

Ms D'Urbano stressed the importance of this type of research in attracting new industry and employment to the Latrobe Valley.

"The survey results will be a great marketing and strategic planning tool for business and community leaders in the Latrobe Valley. We will find out not how many of the region's skilled labour force are currently being under-utilised but what can be done to improve overall employment patterns," she said.

Dr Darryl Snell and Dr Marion Collins, researchers associated with the new RUWCF at Monash, are currently working with GRIS on the first stage of the project with the support of a Strategic Monash University Research Fund (SMURF) grant.

For more information, contact Dr Snell on + 61 3 5122 6347 or Ms D'Urbano on + 61 3 5122 6418.

By COREY NASSAU

“Are there any dirty games?”

Australian Football League player Brendon Gale was puzzled by the question.

“You say football is a big money business now. Are there any dirty games going on, like bribery?” came the reply.

Gale has faced tough questions before in his long football career, but a group of Indonesian journalists visiting Monash University tossed in some extra curly ones.

The visit is being organised by Mr Robert Norris, Monash University's director of external relations, and Ms Alison Crook, deputy vice-chancellor (resources).

The Indonesian visitors are undertaking journalism and communications futures research, under the auspices of the Indonesian Centre for Australian and Indonesian Studies.

Gale is a graduate of the Faculty of Arts at Monash, and studied under Mr Koestli on his way to a major in Asian Studies. He is currently studying for a law degree at Monash.

“The Monash Science Centre will be an environment where science can be seen, felt and practised as a habit of mind, a way of thinking that can be used throughout life."

Media Mingle: AFL footballer Brendon Gale surrounded by the Indonesian visitors Picture: GREG FORD

It's more than a game

BY DAVID BRUCE

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Media Mingle: AFL footballer Brendon Gale surrounded by the Indonesian visitors Picture: GREG FORD
The relationship between China and the United States could be better — but it has been far worse in the past, writes political scientist DENNIS WOODWARD

**OPINION**

**RELATIONS** between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China (PRC) seem to have reached a particularly low ebb since the election of George W. Bush to the US presidency.

A number of events coming close on each other's heels have exacerbated what was already far from harmonious relations. Before examining this latest wave of events, however, it is worthwhile placing them in the overall context of the two countries' bilateral relations.

The PRC was established in 1949 at the end of a civil war in which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) defeated the (US-supported) Nationalists, with Mao Zedong proclaming that 'the Chinese people have stood up'. While the remnants of the Nationalists fled to Taiwan, the new People's Republic of China by seizing Taiwan and definitively ending the civil war were dashed when it became embroiled in the Korean War, stressing its credentials in terms of legitimacy as the last significant communist regime: Meanwhile, the CCP continued to seek to rebuild its legitimacy by claiming the leadership of the Chinese people, as can be seen by the mass protests that swept China in 1989.

The collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the then Soviet Union removed the strategic motivation for maintaining close US-China ties and left China largely isolated as the last significant communist regime. Meanwhile, democratization of Taiwan was providing a sharp contrast with the continued political repression on the mainland.

With the diversification of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, China was forced to reassess its strategic priorities and its relationship with the United States.

**The 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre** in which a pro-democracy movement was ruthlessly crushed, to the outrage of US public opinion, which has since been influential in pressuring the US government to take a firm line on human rights violations in China.

Criticism of China’s human rights record, blocking China’s bid for the 2000 Olympics, imposing conditions on its entry into the World Trade Organization, and warning against any Chinese attempts to use force to resolve the Taiwan issue have all been part of a pattern to block Chinese aspirations and interfere with its sovereign internal affairs.

For some Chinese leaders, these actions are seen as attempts to overthrow the communist regime and prevent the breakup of China itself.

A series of books along the lines of China Can Say No, which is intensely nationalist (if not outright xenophobic) in their hostile depiction of opposition to Chinese goals, have been bestsellers in China.

State-sponsored nationalism is used by the Chinese government for its own legitimising purposes but also strikes a responsive chord among the Chinese people, as can be seen by the mass protests that swept China in 1989.

For China, however, worse was to come with the discrediting of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

For some Chinese leaders, these actions are seen as attempts to overthrow the communist regime and prevent the breakup of China itself.

**The handovers of Hong Kong in 1997 and Macau in 1999** were given much fanfare in the PRC as the righting of past humiliations by foreigners, and the determination to complete Chinese reunification by joining with Taiwan has been constantly emphasised.

The US, however, was not impressed. The US is portrayed as the great bully in trying to prevent China from taking its rightful place among the world’s great powers.

The 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre soured US-China relations.

For better or worse
Stamping the nation

BY DEBORH BROWN

Few would consider the humble postage stamp a valuable historical resource, but for one Monash academic it provided the perfect framework for a new book celebrating 100 years of Australian federal burning.

Dr Mark Peel, from the School of Historical Studies, is the author of the general history sections included in Stamping the Nation: Australia Since Federation and released by Australia Post early this year.

He said stamp was a vital source of information on how Australians have seen themselves over the 20th century.

"There have been many times when Australia Post has had to decide who or what should represent Australia on our stamps. Should it be the monarch's head, a prime minister, a kangaroo, sheep or wheat? The answers change over time," Dr Peel said.

In the early controversy on youth and sport, stamp became a variable towards the incorporation of original art into our stamps and the inclusion of cultural festivals from the 1970s onwards."

He said Stamping the Nation provided the opportunity to counter popular but misleading versions of our past.

"The history I have written tries to answer some of the mistaken notions we have about our nation, including the idea that Australia was born in 1913. Basically that we weren't a real nation until Australians died during the First World War," he said.

"This notion denies a great deal of activity undertaken in Australia from the 1800s onwards when it was one of the most progressive countries in the world. Australia was one of the first countries to officially recognise women's right to vote, to introduce pensions and to implement compulsory arbitration in industrial disputes."

In many histories written during the early part of the century, the voice of Indigenous Australians is often conspicuously absent, said Dr Peel, who attempted to faithfully reflect the experiences of Australia's indigenous peoples since 1851 in the book.

"I aimed to show that as the century progressed they became increasingly vocal in their argument that they had never consented to what had happened to this country."

While Stamping the Nation deals with major issues such as indigenous land rights, the world wars and women's liberation, Dr Peel hopes people will also be able to find their own histories in the book.

Stamp of success: Historian Dr Mark Peel. Picture: PETER SMITH

I wanted to write a history where people could locate themselves - one that showed what people were eating at the time, what they wore and what they talked about. I wanted people to remember what it was like the first time they ate ice-cream or had a television in their home," he said.

Stamping the Nation can be purchased from the Australia Post's Philatelic Bureau, from your local post office or by contacting 1800 331 794 (from within Australia) or +61 3 9887 0035 (from outside Australia).

Arts graduates need to hone career skills: study

BY FIONA PERRY

Arts students have valuable skills that they could be more proactively 'selling' to potential employers, a Monash University survey of employers, graduates and recruiters and careers advisors has found.

Researchers Dr Maryanne Dever and Ms Liz Day, from Monash's Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research, conducted the qualitative study earlier this year to see how employers view arts graduates. The study was conducted as part of a larger project examining career outcomes for women's studies students.

The researchers talked to more than 100 Melbourne-based employers and graduate recruiters in the government, not-for-profit and corporate sectors, in arts, cultural and media corporations, and in health and welfare areas. They also spoke to university careers officer. Ten percent of those surveyed were selected for in-depth follow-up interviews.

According to Dr Dever, the results indicate that graduates and employers held differing views about the recruitment process.

"There are some strongly unpromising ways in which arts students can approach their studies and their early career development," she said.

She said the researchers consistently found that employers recognised the valuable attributes that arts graduates could bring to a position, including skills in research, problem-solving, critical analysis, project management and the ability to handle and communicate complex ideas.

But employers and career advisors reported that many new graduates were not conscious enough of the range of skills that they had developed through their studies and careers, she said.

She said employers were more interested in arts graduates' transferable skills than in the specific knowledge gained from their studies.

"Employers said the better the candidate's personal skills and attributes - such as confidence, flexibility, ability to communicate well and work in a team, creativity and verbal reasoning - the less their particular discipline seemed to matter," Dr Dever explained.

She said employers suggested that lecturers could assist students by placing more emphasis on the development of their skills, by encouraging them to talk more effectively about the significance and application of their skills, and by acquainting themselves with contemporary recruiting processes and workplace conditions.

Employers also stressed the importance of internships and work experience, noting that arts students generally underestimated the benefits of these opportunities and too often failed to seek them out during the course of their degree, Dr Dever said.

Monash wins World Bank and AusAID tenders

BY JUNE YU

Monash University has been recognised internationally for its academic excellence by winning an unprecedented number of AusAID and World Bank training projects.

Monash International, secured the tenders for courses to be delivered by Monash's Private and Public Accountancy (PPAC) and by the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law and the School of Asian Languages and Studies.

More than 120 Indonesian and Thai government officials and 24 Indonesian journalists will undertake the courses before the end of the year.

The World Bank is funding another programme for 40 Indonesians to visit Australia in June for commercial law training by Monash's Law faculty.

Monash International manager of development assistance Mr Paul Verwoert said winning so many AusAID tenders reflected Monash's academic expertise in international areas of need.

"The main training need in the region, since the Asian financial crisis has been in the area of good governance - Monash has the expertise and is well placed to meet this need," he said.

"Securing the World Bank project is also an indication of our international standing, as we competed against education providers from all over the world."

Mr Verwoert is an affiliate of the School of Asian Languages and Studies' Indonesian department, is Aboriginal legal and health services.

"There are many frameworks which were created by Monash's Castan Centre director Professor David Kunley said Monash had also joined one human rights course for 14 Indonesian delegates," he said.

"The purpose is to provide Indonesians with a platform of human rights law, but to give them a perspective on how Australia implements its human rights obligations," he said.

He said the delegates would meet representatives from a range of institutions, including the Federal Government, Amnesty International, the Australian Aborigines Advancement League, drug rehabilitation units, and Aboriginal legal and health services.

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Burning an Aboriginal 'farming' technique, research reveals

BY FIONA PERRY

Aborigines used periodic burning primarily to create and maintain ecosystems necessary for their survival, according to research by a Monash ethnobotanist.

Dr Beth Gott, an honorary researcher in Monash School of Biological Sciences, said burning or 'firing' was used by Aborigines to manage food resources for themselves and the animals they hunted. This challenged the commonly held belief (that burning was used only as a hunting, path-clearing and communication tool, etc.

"The ecosystems found in Australia are not pristine - they are artefacts of Aboriginal land management," Dr Gott said. "Aborigines were experts at manipulating fire to maximise plant food and the vegetation that supported animals."

To conduct her research, Dr Gott examined historical records and undertook fieldwork, including individual food plants used by the Aborigines and their location. She also studied the charred remains of Aboriginal campsites.

Aborigines used regular burning to produce food.

According to Dr Gott, Aborigines would systematically burn small patches of land in the dry season and grasslands of southeastern Australia, possibly every three to five years. This returned nutrients to the soil, removed ash, created deep charring and cleared areas favorable to seed germination and the regeneration of plants from underground organs. The new green growth also attracted grazing animals.

Dr Gott said that a wide food plants thrived in these ecosystems which adapted to the frequency and seasonal timing of burning.

To ensure the survival of herbaceous species such as Liliaea, Orchidaceae and Microseris lanceolata, it was necessary to burn in high-late summer, when these food plants had already shed seed and existed underground as tubers.

Dr Gott said only those plants that could withstand the burning regime survived.

"We can only guess at how the landscape in these areas would have looked if there had been no burning," she said.

In the 6000 years before European settlement, both plant and animal food was abundant.

"Historical records indicate that before European settlement, Aborigines were tall, strong and athletic, with exceptional eyesight and particularly fine teeth."

"Land management techniques, learned and passed down orally through the generations for thousands of years, ensured the resources on which Aborigines depended for their existence were renewed and not depleted."
A Monash researcher has developed a biological control that could save the Australian wine industry millions of dollars in lost crops.

Dr Mary Cole, director of Monash’s Wise Technology and Marketing Unit in the Faculty of Business and Economics, has helped identify and develop a unique organism that fights botrytis, which causes rot in grapes.

Her research could reduce that by up to 90 per cent — and save many small vineyards from financial ruin.

She stumbled across a unique organism that had apparent inhibitory effects against botrytis in 1989 when she was working as a consultant to wine-makers Brown Brothers and researching botrytis in Monash’s Botany department.

“This organism was taken off a grape surface in a lab at Brown’s and was sent to America and was informed it with agrichemical companies to produce the organism for commercial sale.

Dr Mary Cole’s research could save the wine industry millions of dollars.

Is ‘best practice’ really the best we can do?

By Fiona Perry

Artists have long held up a mirror to society, causing us to pause and reflect on who we are and where we’re going.

In a new exhibition at Monash University’s Faculty Gallery this month, four artists have come together to examine and challenge the best notion of ‘economic rationalism’ — the popular management mantra of ‘best practice’.

Best Practice? questions the current trend of categorising companies, industries and even individuals in line with notions of ‘best practice’, according to exhibition curator Samantha Comte, from 200 Gertrude Street Artists’ Spaces.

The term ‘best practice’ has come to embody efficiency, cost effectiveness and productivity, but who has determined these standards? How does it incorporate the intangibles of experience, knowledge and enjoyment?

“Contemporary art explores ideas and challenges structures — Best Practice looks at how art fits within an environment that demands a best practice standard, and what the broader social, political and cultural implications of that practice are.”

Penelope Aitken’s piece ‘The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen’ is a delicate work by promising young Australian artists.

Penelope Aitken’s piece ‘The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen’ is a delicate work by promising young Australian artists.

Dr Mary Cole's research could save the wine industry millions of dollars.
Lighting up Federation Square

By June Yu

Monash digital artist Mr Jon McCormick has designed an interactive outdoor sculpture to be displayed in the courtyard of the Victorian Government’s Federation Square programming.

Mr McCormick, a computer science lecturer in the Faculty of Information Technology, said the display, titled ‘Future Garden’, will consist of thousands of glass blocks laid in the ground next to the Atrium.

The lights, known as light-emitting diodes, or LEDs, will be programmed to show different coloured patterns that change according to the seasons and human touch.

“It is a way of creating a digital world that connects to the physical world,” Mr McCormick said.

The sculpture, which Mr McCormick has designed in collaboration with the Melbourne company Bates Smart Architects and Lighting Design, will use light to create an interactive experience for visitors.

Mr McCormick said the sculpture would be brought to life by algorithms in the display to reflect events and trends of the present.

“The lights will evolve and change according to the text by the Hebrew word ‘Shoah’, meaning catastrophe,” Mr McCormick said.

Analysing a number of narratives including poetry, novels, popular films such as Schindler’s List and a selection of images, the author argues that an historical approach to understanding the Shoah serves no one’s interest and to put the past behind us. In contrast, the memories and testimony of Shoah survivors reveal the Holocaust as a lived experience with a direct impact on the present.

Mr Rood completed his BA honours degree in the Department of History at Monash University in 1997 and is now undertaking doctoral research exploring the lives of Australian Vietnam veterans. Books published by Monash Publications in History can be purchased by contacting 61 3 9905 2104.

The Indian Family:
Change and Persistence

By Parimal Roy

Gyan Publishing House

RRP: $35

The traditional Indian family is a large web of kinship which, since unprecedented social change in India and around the world during the 1970s and 1980s, has increasingly come under attack.

The Indian Family attempts to provide readers with a better understanding of the changing structure and functions of the extended and nuclear family in rural and urban India. By analysing the impact of caste, land and industrialisation on traditional structures, the text provides a well-researched and informative snapshot of the current frictions and tensions in the family, social relations, social change, family, social networks and inter-ethnic marriage.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:
Castes, Materials and Commentary

By Sarah Joseph, Jenny Schultz and Melissa Gyan

Oxford University Press

RRP: $320

The need for a wide-reaching world treaty on human rights led the United Nations General Assembly to adopt the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1966. Under the covenant, nations are obliged to take specific legal and other measures to protect human rights and to provide remedies in case of violation of these rights.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aims to bring the work of the Human Rights Committee, the monitoring body established under the covenant, to a wider audience. Through an analysis of the jurisprudence of the committee, the authors hope to encourage understanding of the covenant’s potential, implications and limits.

Mr Sarah Joseph and Ms Jenny Schultz are senior lecturers at Monash University, and Ms Melissa Castri is a lecturer in law, also at Monash.

Birds play key role in local habitats

By Corey Nasseu

Birds are as picky as people when it comes to choosing which fruit to eat, according to a Monash University researcher.

While it may appear that birds are happy to eat anything they can get their beaks into, the Department of Biological Sciences research shows that there is much more decision-making involved than is otherwise evident.

The study could help scientists better understand the role of birds in seed dispersal and vegetation regeneration.

Assistant Professor Sea Nguyen, author of the thesis “Factors influencing fruit choice and seed dispersal by the silvereye”, a number of issues affect which fruit a bird will choose to ingest.

Findings from the research suggest that birds are considered reliable pollinators in terms of profitability - weighting up the expected energy return of eating the fruit with the quality of its pulp and the size of the seeds are likely to affect their behaviour.

“If the fruit is one they can swallow whole, it is a catch because they can take it as a whole,” Ms Nguyen said.

Researchers Ms Margaret Stanley and Professor Sea Nguyen found that silvereyes eat seeds from different plants and may have different preferences. A new book by Monash arts graduate Ms Sally Dentzley explores the life of one of the first Indigenous political leaders in 19th century Australia, Walter Grange Arthur. A Fire Remembered has been recently published by Monash University in History, and can be purchased by contacting 61 3 9905 2164.

If you are a member of the Monash community and have a forthcoming book, contact monashnews@adm.monash.edu.au.

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London artist brings his passion to life

By June Yu

London-based multimedia artist Mr Richard Brown brings his passion for art and science to Monash for a two-month artist-in-residency. Mr Brown's unique ability to combine the two disciplines produces interactive installations that fascinate the viewer.

His Millie, a virtual reality environment, was a popular exhibit at the Mind Zone at the London Millennium Dome.

The interactive starfish projected onto a hard surface allowed people to touch and interact with the characters. Mr Brown said:

"Over the space of a year or so, the starfish were away from the millions of people who were interacting with the work," Mr Brown said.

His current work, 'Bohola', was inspired by the theme of artificial life and exhibited in London and New Orleans.

It simulates a three-dimensional physical space with flying objects that evolve, change and interact with the viewer, an experience of artificial life.

"Biota" also explores the idea of emergence, which involves programming simple rules into an artwork that produces constantly changing complex patterns.

Mr Brown, a research fellow at the Royal College of Art in London, briefly runs a multimedia company but for five years he has been doing "research in the representation of real people and places." The starfish is one of the glass and metal objects where "emergence", which is how he has been doing, he said.

"The glass and metal objects constantly change and produce different colours over time, and viewers will be able to see this process on-screen as a type of animation."

What is the subject of two new exhibitions at the Gallery on 19 June?

Multimedia artist Mr Richard Brown at work. Picture GREG FORD

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ARTS SCENE

National Gallery honour

Monash visual arts student Ms Diana Ashlafkar has won the National Gallery Award for excellent achievement in her first-year studio work.

She produced a series of mixed media works consisting of abstract paintings and fabric. Ms Ashlafkar is now undertaking postgraduate studies in visual arts at the Graspflag Centre for Art and Design.

A glass act

New York is the next destination for ambitious Monash glass blowers Ms Sophie Evans and Ms Elaine Milner, known collectively as Seem Designs.

They are now branching out into the overseas market following successfully selling their range of glass vases and ornaments through several outlets around Australia. These include Space Furniture, which has stores in Melbourne and Sydney and is due to open a new store in Singapore, where Seem's merchandise will also be available.

The duo plans next to target the New York market, where there has been interest in their products from prestigious stores such as Global Table, Trotters and Bloomingdale's.

Winners win a Monash visual arts student Ms Diana Ashlafkar has won the National Gallery Award for excellent achievement in her first-year studio work.

The works, selected from the permanent collection of the Latrobe Regional Gallery, are mainly by Gippsland artists from the 1970s and 1980s, including Brian Hirst, Rob Wynne, Tracy Allen, Nick Mount, Warren Langley, Tony Hanning and Eddy Rea.

According to the judges, Mr Brown's design was "backed by a strong idea and executed with conceptual rigor". They also noted the "elegant mix of style and content" of the design and rated Mr Brown's cover as the one with the most magazine rack appeal: "It's definitely the most sophisticated: other covers would be lost," they said.

Mr Brown's cover design was featured on the cover of the January/February issue of Print magazine this year. Monash visual arts student Mr Spencer Bizzolo was awarded second place in the competition.

Magritte-inspired cover a winner

BY FIONA PERRY

A design paying homage to surrealist artist Magritte has won a Monash visual arts competition. The cover was inspired by Magritte's "double image" concept and was created for Convert magazine, a publication on years of glass, liquids and metals, which he referred to as "transparent curtains".

"The glass and metal objects constantly change and produce different colours over time, and viewers will be able to see this process on-screen as a type of animation."

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