Science

Monash University has consolidated its commitment to the Australian Synchrotron, providing $5 million to fund beamlines in the machine and also establishing a cross-faculty center with a focus on synchrotron science.

Vice-chancellor Professor Richard Larkins said the beamline funding acknowledged Monash’s belief that the synchrotron was a vital piece of infrastructure to be competitive at the highest international level.

In 2001, the university announced it would make land available at its Clayton campus for construction of the Australian Synchrotron. Building of the synchrotron at the corner of Blackburn and Wellington roads began last year. It is due for completion in 2007.

A synchrotron is a particle accelerator that uses high-energy electrons to create beams of light. This high-intensity light is directed along beamlines to experimental stations where scientists examine the structures of matter at an atomic scale.

Professor Larkins said Monash was delighted to make the land available for the synchrotron and wished to take full advantage of the new synchrotron at its Clayton campus.

“We have appointed a professor of synchrotron science, Rob Lewis, and have devoted considerable resources to establishing a centre for synchrotron science, bringing together researchers from different disciplines who will develop the expertise to exploit the potential of the synchrotron,” he said.

“This technology is so important to Australian science as a knowledge nation, with strong science and technology that over and above our commitment to the land on which the synchrotron is located and our internal investments in synchrotron science, we are now committing $5 million to the funding of the beamlines. We consider it a great investment not only in synchrotron science, but also in the future of Monash.”

Professor Lewis said the Monash University Centre for Synchrotron Science would coordinate synchrotron research across the university.

“The idea is that the centre will have staff in different faculties and departments so in one sense it’s a virtual center; however it will also have a staffed central office,” he said.

“The centre will have technical staff whose task will be to develop platform technologies for the synchrotron. For example, it will have a central instrumentation group developing technologies and measurement techniques such as detectors and optics that will assist Monash researchers in getting the best out of the synchrotron.”

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FEATURE

Synchrotron beams with $5m boost

The high cost of monkey business

Accident research

Children are continuing to break their arms in playground falls despite the introduction of Australian safety standards, according to a new Monash University study.

While current playground safety standards have reduced the risk of head injuries, they are not stopping playful youngsters fracturing their wrists, elbows and arms in falls from equipment.

Dr Shauna Sherker, a research fellow at the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC), studied more than 700 playground falls resulting in arm injuries. Her preliminary results indicate that the current safety standards should be reviewed.

The PhD study formed part of a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) project investigating playground safety, being managed by Dr Sherker’s supervisor Professor Joan Ozanne-Smith.

Dr Sherker’s study examined injuries to children under the age of 13 due to falls from equipment such as climbing frames, monkey bars and slides in Victorian schools and pre-schools.

The research team interviewed children in the playground about their falls and arm fractures continue to occur frequently in playground falls. This is despite the introduction of safety standards in 1996 aimed at minimising head injuries.

Current Australian safety standards recommend a maximum equipment height of 2.5 metres and a minimum surface depth of 20 cm. But the study’s preliminary results show consideration should be given to reducing maximum equipment height to 1.5 metres and ensuring the surface material—usually tanbark or recycled rubber—is maintained at a depth of 20 cm. The standard is failing to deterritorialise over time.

“The safety standards are voluntary—however playground owners—particularly schools, child care centres and local governments—recognise that they have a duty of care to the children who use the equipment, and generally a high level of compliance exists,” Dr Sherker said.

“Playground owners generally are doing everything they should be doing and it’s clearly not enough, so it’s the standard itself that is not sufficient to minimise the risk of arm fractures.”

Dr Sherker is presenting her study at the National Playground Conference in Sydney this month, organised by Kidsafe New South Wales Inc. The conference is exploring issues confronting the development of safe yet challenging and fun play environments.

Professor Ozanne-Smith said arm fractures were also the most common significant injury for many other sport and recreational activities and that MUARC was continuing to work in this important area of injury prevention research.

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NEWS

A great investment: beamline funding for the Australian Synchrotron at Monash

Feast on the visual and performing arts at Monash

The Satellite Cities and Tabloid Life exhibition opening at the Monash University Museum of Art in May will feature high-impact images and pieces such as “Airline (sales manager) 2002”, left, by photographic artist Selina Ou. For details of upcoming visual and performing arts experiences at Monash, see page 6.
Monash graduates in London said

Monash graduates in London said...
Dietary supplements under the microscope

Science

Plants are rich in antioxidants, which are believed to protect human cells from the damage caused by unstable molecules in the body, called free radicals. Free radical damage has been associated with cancer and premature skin ageing.

Red wine is famously known as an effective antioxidant, but people concerned about the effects of alcohol have turned to other antioxidants, such as pine bark.

Dr Gordon Troup, from the School of Physics and Materials Engineering, and Mr Iris Chishol and Dr Steven Langford, from the School of Chemistry, used two scientific tests to measure the antioxidant activity of two pine bark extracts. The research was presented at the 26th Annual Conference and Materials Meeting in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, last month.

One test used electron paramagnetic resonance (EPR) spectroscopy, which picks up a signal from the free radicals that have been stabilised by antioxidants.

"If a compound has phenolic antioxidants in it, it should give you an EPR signal," Dr Troup said. "The strength of this signal is an indication of the concentration of the phenolic molecules and therefore of the antioxidant activity of the substance."

The other test was a chemical technique that measured antioxidant efficiency by seeing free radicals and then examining how efficiently antioxidant preparations caused the concentration of free radicals to fall.

"This study found that the two pine bark extracts were comparable in effectiveness," Dr Langford said. "However, price is also a factor for consumers, and the pine bark extract may be cheaper."

"There are good and bad supplementary extracts, and these pine bark extracts are two good ones," Dr Troup said. "But if one of the extracts had shown an efficiency of 2.9 per cent as was seen in the St John's wort test, we would have been a bit worried."

"These types of studies are not only of scientific and community interest. They also indicate that it is necessary for independent bodies to check manufacturers' claims about the efficacy of their dietary supplements and herbal remedies." - Penny Fannin

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Middle East road safety push

Accident research

The Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) campaign for safer roads, vehicles and driver behaviour is expanding into the Middle East.

MUARC, a world leader in road safety research and initiatives, is assisting the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) to establish the Middle East Research Centre (MUARC) campaign for safer roads, the Middle East.

"Large Holden cars are big sellers in the UAE and Saudi Arabia," Professor Brian Fildes said. Photo: Delwyn Hewitt

"There is a high accident rate, and cars tend to be small and suffer related to fatigue, speeding and road hazards such as animals - however, scarce data collection is a vital starting point," he said.

Professor Fildes said MUARC would assist the UAEU to set up the cross-faculty research.

"The detailed in-depth analysis of crashes involving Holden vehicles is a significant initial project for the new research institute, and MUARC will be assisting them throughout the study."

Muarc team vice-chair Professor Stephen Parker and Professor Fildes are travelling to the UAE this month for the March 15 signing of the historic memorandum of understanding with the UAE University to set up the institute.

Professor Parker said Monash University had a growing number of links with the UAE.

"This project by our highly successful Accident Research Centre will strengthen and deepen them, to the benefit of Monash researchers generally," he said. "I hope MUARC and its collaboration with Holden can make a contribution to road safety in the UAE in the same way that it has done in Australia."

"For instance, every week we drive to work with reassuring knowledge they had a beautiful body or a nice behind," she said.

Participants in the study said they had learned how to flip through watching television, particularly soapies, reading magazines and from their peers.

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Western influence on African flirts

Communications

Western influence in the media appears to be making young Africans question their traditional beliefs and values when it comes to flirting. Research at Monash University has found that traditional African cultures, young people were adopting Western flirting methods to attract members of the opposite sex.

"According to both female and male participants in our study, females usually make the first move, but it is done in very subtle ways, such as making eye contact with the male, smiling and looking away," she said.

"This is interesting because it is against the cultural norm in most African cultures for a female to approach a male. In most African cultures, strong eye contact is also seen to be aggressive, yet young people are adopting the Western trait while flirting."

At the Du-Plooy-Cilliers Institute, aimed at exploring the flirting techniques used in traditional African cultures and to examine the interaction between different cultural groups with regard to accepted flirting behaviour.

People young people aged 18 to 25 from South, Zulu, Tsonga, Sepedi and Setswana communities took part in the study. The findings were presented at the Transformation in Politics, Culture and Society Conference in Vienna in December and will lead to further research in the area.

"For instance, men would say to women that they had learned from Western influences," she said.

"This is interesting because it is against the cultural norm in most African cultures for a female to approach a male. In most African cultures, strong eye contact is also seen to be aggressive, yet young people are adopting the Western trait while flirting."

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"Large Holden cars are big sellers in the UAE and Saudi Arabia," Professor Brian Fildes said.
**The evolution of faith**

**Biological sciences**

Faith-based systems, such as religious, may behave like biological species by forming interactions and adapting to their cultural, environmental, and social conditions and evolving. These are the conclusions of a Monash PhD researcher who, with a team of fellow students and academics, has built a computer model that tracks the fate of competing systems of ideas for survival as genes.

The model is one of the first systematic explorations of an idea usually attributed to evolutionist and biologist Richard Dawkins — that cultural information is passed from person to person in a way similar to genes, passing from parent to offspring. Dawkins argues that cultural information is subject to the same pressures of natural selection and competition for survival as genes.

Ms Suzanne Sadelci, a PhD researcher in the School of Biological Sciences, decided to investigate Dawkins' idea by building a model that simulated how complex ideas might evolve. She made the decision while attending a Santa Fe Institute summer school on complex systems in Budapest, and while there, built the model with the help of Polish physicist Dr Bartlomiej Dybiec and English computer scientist Mr Gerard Reiss.

"It has always fascinated me that there is such huge diversity in what people believe," Ms Sadelci says. "People can believe completely contradictory things. Why does this diversity exist? Dawkins' idea is quite broad and open to interpretation.

"In fact, there are clear examples of religious beliefs that are maladaptive for individuals," Ms Sadelci says. This means that faith-based systems can spread on their own merits or ideas.

The simulation used agent-based modelling, where each agent or person was randomly assigned a faith-based system and particular rules for four characters relating to faith that could be passed on to offspring — the tendency to receive conversion, to help transmit the faith, to convert other agents or to invent a new faith. Each faith was defined by its tendency to receive conversion, to invent a new faith or to help others.

The model of the system was a two-dimensional grid — either 10 by 10 or 20 by 20. During the simulation, agents interacted with their neighbours and converted or failed to convert them on the basis of their own characteristics and those of their faiths. Agents could reproduce and also die.

"What the researchers found was that the more complex the system — if you bigger the grid or the bigger the number of interactions between agents — the greater the number of faiths coexisting at any point in time. But one faith almost always ended dominating. Probably the most interesting thing was to come out of the work was how closely it reflected ecological theory," Ms Sadelci says. She says the results are limited because the model was set up to reflect a small, isolated community.

"Humans don't live in a forest, but in rich social networks. The initial model was a way to see whether the idea was worth pursuing."

Ms Dybiec says, she is now building a more complex model that more closely reflects human social networks.

**Dubai connection for Monash paramedics**

The Monash University Centre for Ambulance and Paramedic Studies (MUCAPS) is developing educational links with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) city of Dubai.

The centre has begun training its first international student, Ms Jumila Khalaf Salem Al Zaabi, a staff sergeant and three-year course at the Monash Dubai Ambulance Service.

When she completes the three-year course at the Monash University campus, Ms Al Zaabi will return to Dubai as an ambulance paramedic clinical instructor.

MUCAPS is also planning to provide a paramedic training course in Dubai, in collaboration with the Dubai Police Ambulance Service and the Dubai Women's College.

According to MUCAPS Director, Dr John Shag, senior lecturer and head of MUCAPS' Parkville site, it was the centre's interest in the country that led to its involvement in the development of the course. "The Dubai Police Ambulance Service and Dubai Women's College are keen to develop their ambulance paramedic program to the international university standard with a vocational emphasis supported by the local emergency ambulance service," Dr Shag said.

"They felt we were ideal for the project."

MUCAPS has appointed Mr Owain Sadedin, a specialist with the Dubai Police Ambulance Service, as an associate lecturer (international) to support the centre's work in Dubai.

The centre has also held discussions with Dubai's Rashid Hospital to provide a range of professional and graduate programs.

"MUCAPS, together with MUCAPS' direct Associate Professor Eamonn Adair and Professor Hospital Director Associate Professor Jeff Wasserman, will visit Dubai this month to speak at an international emergency medical disaster conference and enhance the centre's relationships in the UAE."

- Robyn Anna

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www.med.monash.edu.au/caps

First international paramedic student: Ms Jumila Khalaf Salem Al Zaabi

**How to engineer decision-making**

Decision-making is an everyday event. What shirt to wear to work, go to social events, or just out with friends — most people make these decisions with little fuss. But when it comes to larger decisions, especially workplace or life-changing decisions, having a more systematic approach, a more sophisticated approach is required.

For the past 30 years, many businesses, mostly in the field of electronics and technology development, have used a simple decision-making technique developed by Charles Eames and Olgivie Peg. But, this technique has some drawbacks such as intangible results.

Now, Mr Samuel Sela, a visiting academic in Monash's Department of Mechanical Engineering, has developed a new technique that uses quantitative tools and statistical methods for choosing the best alternative.

Mr Sela, on sabatical from RAFAEL, an Israeli research and development institution, said the basic technique had been developed to address problems in engineering but could be adapted and used to help decide the best person to employ, the best worker for a particular task, the ideal marketing strategy or the most prudent political decision.

"Decision-making can apply to anything, not just design engineers in software," Mr Sela said. "In everyday life, when decisions are made on what car or dishwasher to buy people make their judgment based on cost, colour, size and speed, as well as other factors. In engineering, with the development of new products, you frequently get to points where important decisions need to be made. Choosing a tool and not a problem, but when you have to make decisions that could cost millions, it is really hard to help make the decision-making."

Mr Sela's decision-making method involves assigning a team and a leader to the problem. The team members represent the different areas or specific problem — for example mechanical, electrical and software engineers as well as management.
Taiwan's push for democracy moves forward

China seems more aware today that threats backfire when aimed at Taiwan ... But China has increased the number of missiles aimed at Taiwan year by year, and now at least 496 missiles are pointed at the island.

Rallying the voters: Above, supporters wave flags in front of a poster of Lien Chan (left), presidential candidate for the main opposition Kuomintang, and James Soong, vice-presidential candidate for the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, joins supporters for an anti-Chinese missiles election rally.

Photos: AAP

The people of Taiwan face new challenges as they vote in two referendums. Having moved forcefully for democracy, they now face ever-increasing missile threats from China.

The island of Taiwan lies 130 km off China's southeast coast. With an area half the size of Tasmania, it has a population of 23 million.

Chinese and Europeans first came to Taiwan in the 17th century. The Dutch, Spanish and Chinese rebels all ruled Taiwan until 1683, when the Qing or Manchu Dynasty, which ruled China from 1644 until 1911, incorporated Taiwan as a colony.

In 1895, after the Sino-Japanese War, China ceded Taiwan to Japan, which ruled the island as a colony and source of rice and sugar for 50 years. The Japanese did, however, raise standards of living and implemented strong administrative systems.

Taiwan again became part of China in 1945 after World War II. Taiwanese welcomed their return to China, but became disappointed when the ChineseCommunist Party saw Taiwan as occupied enemy territory rather than as a part of China reunified with the mainland. In addition to being brutal, the occupying regime was also corrupt.

The Chinese Nationalists (Kuomintang), who had come to power in China in 1927, lost power on the Chinese mainland to the Chinese Communists in 1949, but retained it in Taiwan. They instituted a strong dictatorship that insisted on Taiwan as part of China and a need to recover the mainland from the Chinese Communists. The government in Taiwan discriminated against native Taiwanese in favour of mainlanders and instituting a "white terror" with firing squads and strong prisons for Communists and those supporting Taiwanese independence.

In the 1970s, some reform began to take place and an opposition supporting democratisation emerged. Yet, especially in the late 1970s and early 1980s, repression continued and many opposition leaders ended up in areas of imprisonment. Finally, President Chiang Ching-kuo died in January 1988, his Taiwanese Vice-President, Lee Teng-hui, succeeded him. Many of the old mainland elite expected President Lee to be a figurehead, but he proved a tough political operator who worked hard to democratise the island. One notable advance was the implementation of direct, popular elections for the presidency, the first of which took place in 1996.

In 2000, Chen Shui-bian, the presidential candidate of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party, won owing to a split among the Nationalists. Despite not having a clear majority in the parliament, President Chen and his government have attempted to implement a variety of reforms. This has not been easy when the new government has had only a limited number of political appointees and faces civil servants used to 55 years of Nationalist rule.

Thus, the presidential election of 20 March is particularly significant. Will the people give the Democratic Progressive Party another four years to consolidate the reforms already begun? Or would they prefer the old Nationalist Party rule, which some believe has a firmer grasp on Taiwan's self-defence capabilities and (b) engage China in continued arms negotiations? The proportion that consider themselves 'Taiwanese' has increased from 17.3 per cent to 41.5 per cent. The proportion that consider themselves both 'Taiwanese and Chinese' has declined slightly from 45.4 per cent to 43.8 per cent, while the proportion that consider themselves 'Chinese' has declined from 26.2 per cent to 9.1 per cent, with those who believe themselves Taiwanese having increased from 17.5 per cent to 41.5 per cent. The proportion that consider themselves as both 'Taiwanese and Chinese' has declined from 26.2 per cent to 43.8 per cent, while the non-expert rate has declined from 11.4 per cent to 4.9 per cent. This suggests that such issues are widely discussed in Taiwan today.

President Chen, in an attempt to capitalise on these changes in identity, has decided to have the population vote on two referendums at the same time as the presidential election. These referendums basically ask voters whether they agree the government should (a) acquire more anti-missile missiles to strengthen Taiwan's self-defence capabilities and (b) engage in negotiations with China to establish a peace and security framework.

Most people expect these two referendums to pass easily. The key question will be whether voters also vote for President Chen's re-election at the same time. Current polls indicate the final result will be very close.

The increasing threat of China shadows these domestic concerns. China claims Taiwan as its own territory. Unfortunately, the Chinese have proved unwilling to talk to President Chen despite his peaceful overtures. Rather, the Chinese seem to believe that threats work. The circumstances, however, have repeatedly proven them wrong. Chinese missile exercises with dummy warheads crashing near Taiwan's harbours during the 1996 election campaign only increased President Lee Teng-hui's vote by some 20 per cent. Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji's rude and threatening speech during the 2000 campaign shocked Taiwan voters and probably helped President Chen win election.

China seems more aware today that threats backfire when aimed at Taiwan, so it has not made many high-level statements on Taiwan this year. But China has increased the number of missiles aimed at Taiwan year by year and now at least 496 missiles are pointed at the island.

The combination of Chinese threats and democratization has changed the perspectives of Taiwan's population. A series of polls since 1991 indicate that the number of Taiwan residents who believe themselves 'Chinese' has declined from 26.2 per cent to 9.1 per cent, while those who believe themselves Taiwanese has increased from 17.5 per cent to 41.5 per cent. The proportion that consider themselves as both 'Taiwanese and Chinese' has declined from 45.4 per cent to 43.8 per cent, while the non-expert rate has declined from 11.4 per cent to 4.9 per cent. This suggests that such issues are widely discussed in Taiwan today.

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Great diversity in new performing arts season

The Monash University Performing Arts season 2004 offers a rich tapestry of performance, with some exciting lesser-known companies. The Alexander Theatre at Clayton campus, featuring productions from top Australian companies including Melbourne Theatre Company, Playbox and Bell Shakespeare, as well as offerings from some exciting lesser-known companies. Performing and Visual Arts director Ms Jan Clancy said the university's emphasis on supporting Australian material and actors would continue in the 2004 program.

"This policy of celebrating the best Australia has to offer has proved very popular with our audiences – and it’s a vision that will give great flexibility and diversity," she said. The season will commence on 10 March with Wallflower by Peter Murray. Featuring Nicole Brown and Doug Jones, it is a funny and poignant play about the nature of marriage and the elusive pursuit of happiness.

Charles "Bud" Tingwell will return later in the year in his remarkable role as Captain Packer in The Cane. Ms Clancy said another highlight would be the return of the Bell Shakespeare Company, which will present A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

In addition, we have an exciting performance of Japanese drumming, Thunder Has a New Name, by one of Australia’s most exciting drumming groups, and Runners Up, a high-energy take on the world of sport, incorporating acrobatics, dance, and aerial and circus skills," she said. We are also very pleased to be presenting Melbourne Theatre Company’s production of Second Childhood, by Glenn Perry from the novel by Australian writer Morris Gleitman.

Pamela Magic, suitable for the whole family but perfect for three-to-eight-year-olds, celebrates 21 years of Australia’s best known picture book.

Now in its ninth year, the Monash University School of Theatre Festival will again showcase short theatre performances devised or written by Year 9 or 10 student in Victoria. Booklet for Teenagers is another popular initiative that will continue this year. "Young people tell us that hearing the authors talk is inspiring, and they find the performances by our student great fun," Ms Clancy said.

Subscriptions to the Performing Arts Program are now available. Visit the 2004 program online at www.monash.edu.au/monarts/event or contact the Monash Box Office on +61 3 9905 1111 to request a brochure.

Award-winning view of the family

A Monash University postgraduate student has recently won the inaugural $20,000 Energex Contemporary Australian Family Award. Ms Bronwyn Wright, who lives in the Northern Territory, is undertaking a Master of Fine Arts in photography, via off-campus learning, at Monash’s Caulfield campus.

The inspiration for her award-winning photograph – taken in the Swamp, a wetland area on the edge of Darwin – was family; but not the stereotypical family. The image depicts a mother watching her son jumping athletically from an abandoned car.

"Family life is often ragged, but in this moment this family is together, uplifted and united. There is a sense of fun, hope and promise," Ms Wright said. "The image is essentially an expression of family life. This solo parent family is typical of one time. The image depicts a shared intimacy and celebrates a unique bond and, I believe, captures the joy of both childhood and parenthood."

Ms Wright has had her work featured in galleries in the Northern Territory, Adelaide and New Zealand. She has also received recognition for several short films. Aside from her studies at Monash, she lectures in graphic design at Charles Darwin University. After completing her Masters degree, Ms Wright plans to add back her teaching commitments and concentrate on her art practice.

The Monash University visual arts calendar across its three galleries – at Clayton, Caulfield and Gippsland campuses – offers rich and varied exhibitions for the next five months.

MUMA (Monash University Museum of Art) at Clayton campus will present an exhibition by Australian artist Imants Tillers (24 March to 15 May). Often hailed as one of the most important Australian artist of his generation, Imants Tillers has had extensive solo exhibitions overseas and represented Australia at the Venice Biennale.

A leading exponent of "postmodern appropriation," Tillers takes from other artists’ works to create new works, commenting on contemporary society, spirituality, the human condition and originality in art.

Transmissions will present some of his lesser-known works including several that have been shown in Australia before. The works will inform and provide a wider context for the two-Tillers works held in the Monash University Collection.

Sunset Cross and Tableland Life (26 May to 3 July) is a mix of photography, installation and painting. The works focus on high and low cultural forms, art and design, and straight and bent lifestyles to explore concepts of space, expressions of popular culture, and public and private life experience.

The exhibition will include about 20 works by eight artists, including Howard Arkley, Patrice Passantino, who represented Australia at the 2000 Venice Biennale, and Michael Griffin, who has been commissioned to create a large high piece for the exhibition.

At the Faculty Gallery, within Art and Design at Caulfield campus, an exhibition of winning student sculpture will be on display from 4 March to 1 April, it showcases the work of the successful finalists in the fourth Baldessin Foundation Travelling Fellowship.

The entrance to the competition were all third-year sculpture students last year at Monash, Latrobe, RMIT or the Victorian College of the Arts. This exhibition will be followed by Shanara Jenkins: Contemporary Artist (8 April to 13 May), which will pay homage to the ancient Japanese tradition of printmaking through the works of 28 graphic designers and 11 fine artists.

Developed as a support for the Gippsland Centre for Art and Design, the Switchback Gallery presents both travelling and local exhibitions, providing a hub for artistic and community activity in Gippsland. Its current exhibition (until 18 March) is Rod and Beads: by ceramic artist Meriem Eison, a potters graduate student at the Caulfield campus.

In this exhibition, the artist explores family and cultural identity as well as concepts relating to scale, form and function.

This will be followed by Cloud and Empire, by Michael Riley (23 March to 23 April). One of Australia’s most respected artists, Riley uses photography and film to provide a poignant exploration of Aboriginal life and history.

In Cloud, which is based on his personal experience, Riley investigates the legacy of an enforced Christian upbringing on Indigenous communities throughout Australia. Empire is the highly acclaimed 1997 film directed by Riley for the Festival of the Dreaming, with music by the Tasmanian Symphony.

Cloud and Empire is presented at the Switchback Gallery by MUMA and is an Australia Centre for Photography touring exhibition.

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Show notes:

MUMA

Art and Design building
Monash University
Clayton campus
Clayton, VIC 3168
Open: Tuesday to Friday
10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Saturday 2 pm to 5 pm
Closed: 9 to 13 April

Faculty Gallery

Art and Design building
Monash University
Caulfield campus
Caulfield East, VIC 3162
Open: Monday to Friday
10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Closed: 9 to 13 April

Switchback Gallery

Monash University
Gippsland campus
Nagambie, VIC 3808
Open: Monday to Friday
10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Closed: 9 to 13 April

The Arts

Monash News, March 2004
Aboriginal mission dig unearths lifestyle evidence

Chicken gizzard stones, sheep bones, pitch pits, glass and plate fragments, buttons, beads and doll parts are providing a Monash archaeologist with clues about what life was like on Victoria’s first Aboriginal mission in the 19th century.

They are just some of the items found by Dr Jane Lydon, from the Monash Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies, and her team of around 20 archaeologists, Indigenous community members and student volunteers during a recent dig at the former Ebenezer mission site.

Located near Dimboola, in north-west Victoria, Ebenezer was set up in 1839 by the German Protestant sect, the Moravians, to bring Christianity to the local Aboriginal people.

The mission, comprised of a church, Aboriginal cottages, a kitchen, dormitories and a mission house, was built on a traditional ceremonial ground.

The dig, over a two-week period in November last year, was the first stage of a three-year project, headed by Dr Lydon and funded by a $180,000 ARC Discovery grant, to explore cultural exchange between black and white community members and student volunteers during a excavation at the former Ebenezer mission site.

The site is now owned by the National Trust and Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative and administered by Heritage Victoria and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.

"Evidence of a diet based on sheep and chickens came from pieces of sheep backbone and chicken gastroliths or gizzard stones — small stones swallowed by birds such as chickens and emus, which help in their digestive tract as help pulverise food."

"But the relative lack of ceramics and other domestic and personal items in comparison with the architectural material we dug up suggests luxury European goods were scarce commodities at Ebenezer."

Dr Lydon said that while the ceramics found were of mainly British or Australian origin, some small ceramic fragments of brown-glazed and white-glazed stoneware were more likely to be from Germany.

"In general though, the evidence was that the mission house inhabitants had adapted to a British/Australian way of living, rather than resisting or adopting a Moravian lifestyle."

Excavation also demonstrated that substantial additions were made to the original mission house within the space of a few years and that it remained the real heart of the settlement.

"In other missions, the church and the school were the public spots, but at Ebenezer it was definitely the mission house that represented the public face of the settlement," Dr Lydon said.

A second dig in another part of the mission site is planned for later this year, probably in October, with a third dig due later next year.

"The mission house had been designed and built, as well as the lifestyle of the missionaries and Aboriginal residents of the house."

"We wanted to know if the missionaries brought their own German-made gear with them, whether they were leading a typically German way of life and whether there was any evidence of Aboriginal people retaining aspects of their traditional lifestyle," Dr Lydon said.

"The house was divided into several 'apartments' for the missionaries and their families, and for the Aboriginal families who lived there too at various times."

"Materials we found suggested this domestic family use, including fragments of household crockery and furnishings, doll parts, slate pencils, buttons and beads."

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Car Wars
How the Car Won Our Hearts and Conquered Our Cities
By Groanne Davison
Published by Allen & Unwin
RPP: $29.95

In this story of how a car changed a city, leading urban and transport historian Professor Graeme Davison explores his hometown, Melbourne, to deconstruct how the car became part of our national consciousness.

Not only an object of desire, the car is also seen as a status symbol, a measure of freedom and a shape of societal norms.

Car Wars takes the reader on a journey through chapters with titles including 'Dream machines', 'Women take the wheel', 'Sex, speed and power' and 'The freedom of the road'.

Professor Davison is the Sir John Monash Distinguished Professor of History at Monash University.

Terror Laws
ASIO, Counter-Terrorism and the Threat to Democracy
By Jenny Hocking
Published by University of New South Wales Press
RPP: $34.95

"Terror Laws looks at the expansion of Australia’s internal security from the birth of ASIO over 50 years ago to the counter-terrorism network that has woven into the fabric of our lives. Jenny Hocking argues that Australia has some of the most draconian counter-terrorism measures in the Western world, adversely impacting on our freedoms of expression, association, movement and the right to independent legal advice."

She poses the question of whether we can ever protect ourselves by removing the freedoms that define us as a democracy.

"I hope this book makes you think about the issue of counter-terrorism in Australia, and whether or not we should have laws that allow us to commit crimes to save our lives."

The Serendipity Machine
A Voyage of Discovery Through the Unexpected World of Computers
By David Green
Published by Allen & Unwin
RPP: $22.95

"Computers have changed the world irreversibly, allowing us to make surprising, fantastic and unexpected discoveries by accident—the definition of serendipity. These 'serendipity machines' have also made life more complicated and impacted on our personal privacy, particularly in connection with the internet."

"This book seeks to make sense of recent developments in information technology, explaining how innovations such as data mining and evolutionary computing deal with complexity by exploiting serendipity. It also highlights surprising links between computing and everyday life, answering questions such as 'What do cars, planes and traffic congestion have to do with computing?' and 'Why do computer scientists increasingly look to nature for inspiration?'."

David Green is professor of information technology at Monash University.

postscript

Leading Melbourne businessman and philanthropist Dr Henry Krongold was born in Poland in 1909 and fled to Australia during World War II. His philanthropy helped Monash University build its Krongold Centre for Exceptional Children in 1976 and Dr Krongold was made an honorary Doctor of Laws by the university in 1991.


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

The declining reputation of politicians could change the legitimacy of parliament itself, Monash University researchers have found.

The research could lead to therapies for preventing miscarriage, according to Associate Professor Ioan Wallace from the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Monash Medical Centre.

They have also interviewed state parliamentarian staff and politicians to gauge their perspectives on parliament as a public service process.

Preliminary findings of their study indicate that many people in the general community are not aware of the difference between state and federal politics, thinking that when federal MPs get bad publicity, it rubs off on their state counterparts and vice versa.

"People think politicians are all tainted with the same brush, which isn't fair," Dr Lewis said. "So every time a trend has come from media reports of scandals and controversies," Dr Lewis said. "National opinion polls show that in general, people don't trust the politician. Twenty years ago, the percentage of people who trusted MPs was around 20 per cent, but these days it's down as low as 10 per cent in some polls. The concern is that if the trend of declining reputation continues, it could threaten the legitimacy of parliament itself."

Dr Lewis said a recurring theme throughout the research had been the role played by the media in determining the reputation of politicians and the parliament. "Focus groups with members of the general public, and MPs from Victoria public across Victoria revealed that while they didn't really trust the media, it was the source of most of their information, and the shaper of their opinions, which is a real contradiction," she said.

Parliamentary staff also commented about the way the media only concentrated on question time and sensational events, despite the fact that there were a lot of good things going on in parliament that got no coverage, and were subsequently hidden from the public.

"This decided that the media came up so much when interviewing community groups and MPs, we felt this was a good opportunity to conduct further research," Dr Lewis said. "We had expected our project would be part of the study, so a selection has been interviewed and results of their comments are now being processed."