

‘Intelligent’ art applies to all aspects of life

Art in a V8 engine block? Art at the bottom of a petri dish? Art History lecturer **ANDREA ASH** sees the academic application of art in almost every aspect of life.



TEXT

Lynda Baxter

IMAGE

Julianne Osborne

ABOVE

Andrea Ash with one of her artworks, entitled *East/-West. Media: Oils, collaged paper and gold leaf on board; dimensions: 137cm X 93cm.*

Dr Andrea Ash believes art is applicable to many aspects of our lives, not just in the traditional sense of, say, architecture and photography, but also in not-so-obvious fields such as science and engineering.

“There is art in sound and light, and numbers and text as well. For example, there is art in the soundwave patterns of a musical score and the tiny repetitive geometric shapes in digital imaging. Text and numbers can also be placed to form beautiful visual patterns.”

This academic and practical approach extends to a series of collaborative projects which will be undertaken by first year CDU students in a new subject, *Creative Practices*, offered through the School of Creative Arts and Humanities.

Dr Ash is excited about the prospect of teaching a subject that brings together students not only from the various arts courses, but also

from science, engineering, architecture and information technology.

She said she hoped this unique approach would help students understand that art could be applied to many disciplines, in both the aesthetic and functional senses.

“It will enable students to see that art does not just mean painting, drawing and sculpture. It also encompasses photographic and digital media, light and sound engineering, civil and mechanical design and construction, and certain scientific practices.

“It aims to challenge students to take what they have learnt in their own discipline and work out how it can be incorporated into an art form.”

Dr Ash is a firm believer in the maxim “teaching informs research, and research informs teaching”.

“Student interactions like those encouraged in the cross-disciplinary approach of *Creative Practices* give research much more relevance than relying on books and articles as information sources,” she said.

In a similar vein, Dr Ash wants to encourage active participation in her other classes as well. “I want all my students to contribute to the learning process by presenting their own material and research, not just sitting back and



Many visions of women

Andrea Ash's painting, entitled *East/-West*, is based on appropriated versions of femininity that appear throughout art history.

Images of the ideal woman are an important feature of the work from Japanese beauties to French poster girls.

The work is a pastiche of Eastern and Western art.

It is eclectic and full of cultural references, combining iconic female images with abstract decorative forms.

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ANTENNAE

Dr Andrea Ash lectures in Art Theory and History at the School of Creative Arts and Humanities. Her primary research focus is on Australian/Asian art and aesthetics, particularly in relation to women in art and globalisation. She is currently researching trans-cultural and trans-disciplinary contemporary art forms. Dr Ash has also worked in film and television production.

listening to a lecturer. I bring to the classroom my knowledge and skills in a wide range of art theories and practice and conversely, I am constantly learning from my teaching and my students."

Dr Ash moved from Brisbane to Darwin in March this year. She said the proximity of Darwin to South-east Asia and the opportunity to lecture in subjects closely related to her own fields of research were two of the primary attractions.

The depiction of women in art is one of Dr Ash's key interests and the focus of many of her own works. She is particularly interested in the fusion of Eastern and Western female images and different eras, for example, the melding of the iconic painted Japanese Geisha girl with the sinuous lines of the Art Nouveau females of Gustav Klimt.

"I am particularly interested in modern and post-modern art. I have

always been keen to move beyond our traditional view of art, which is dominated by the white European male painters and their depiction of subject matter."

Dr Ash said globalisation has also had a major influence on how art is used and perceived. "Art transcends cultural boundaries and language and religious barriers. We may not all speak the same language, but art provides so many instantly recognisable images from across the globe. I am keen to explore how this affects the way we think and feel about art and how artists chose and produce their work."

As a practising artist, Dr Ash was also inspired by CDU's Casuarina campus environment. "It is a gorgeous environment in which to work and study, like a huge tropical garden."

She said the school was well-equipped and the relatively small student population meant that individual students could receive guidance from lecturers as they required. "The environment here for students is fantastic. I have taught at universities where there are literally hundreds of students crammed into one lecture theatre. Those same students then compete for limited equipment and space, and the lecturer's attention during the prac sessions."

Although Dr Ash is familiar with the Queensland tropics, she finds Darwin presents a different kind of beauty to the artistic eye. "The endless twilight and the big blue skies at this time of year (the Dry) are just magical."

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