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The Cutaway at Barangaroo was a striking subterranean venue for works in *rivus*, the 23rd Biennale of Sydney. Photo: Marjorie Lewis-Jones

Water theme flowed at 23rd Biennale

EXHIBITIONS

SSH

FROM March 12 to June 13, the 23rd Biennale of Sydney, titled *rivus*, was staged at the Cutaway (Barangaroo) and Stargazer Lawn along with a handful of other venues in Sydney and Parramatta. Rivers, wetlands and other salt and freshwater ecosystems featured as dynamic living systems with varying degrees of political agency.

Indigenous knowledges have long understood non-human entities as living ancestral beings with a right to life that must be protected. But only recently have animals, plants, mountains and bodies of water been granted legal personhood. If we can recognise them as individual beings, what might they say?
rivus invited aqueous beings into a dialogue with artists, architects, designers, scientists and communities, entangling multiple voices and other modes

of communication to ask unlikely questions: Can a river sue us over psychoactive sewage? Will oysters grow teeth in aquatic revenge? What do the eels think? Are the swamp oracles speaking in tongues? Do algae reminisce about the days of primordial soup? Are waves the ocean's desire? Can a waterfall refuse gravity?
Considering the water ecology's perspective entails a fundamental shift in understanding our relationship with the rest of the natural world as a porous

chronicle of interwoven fates. Rivers are the sediment of culture. They are givers of life, routes of communication, places of ritual, sewers and mass graves. They are witnesses and archives, our memory. As such, they have also been co-opted as natural avenues for the colonial enterprise, becoming sites of violent conflict driven by greed, exploitation and the thirst to possess. Indeed, the latin root *rivus*, meaning a brook or stream, is also at the origin of the word rivalry.

Sustainability should be an action, not a theme. *rivus* reflected on its own conditions of possibility, becoming the catalyst for works already in progress; encouraging the use of non-polluting materials and production processes; advocating for locality, collectivity, collaboration and reduced waste; acknowledging its own impact on the environment while aiming to lower it through a systemic and creative approach.

SSH

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Jenny Leong MP

STATE MEMBER FOR NEWTOWN

I was sickened when I heard the news that the Supreme Court of the United States overturned Roe v Wade – turning the clock back more than 50 years on abortion rights.

And while it might feel like a world away, we cannot become complacent.

It was only four years ago that the NSW Parliament finally passed laws to make abortion legal in this state, and I am proud to have been a part of that final push.

But we know that this change of law is not enough on its own.

Access to abortion in NSW is still not guaranteed – with people facing massive barriers depending on where they live, access to information, how much money they have, or the doctor they see.

The inequity is stark for those living in remote, rural and regional communities. Access is particularly difficult for Aboriginal people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those with limited access to health services.

Just last year, NSW passed foetal personhood laws that seriously undermine the hard-won struggle for abortion rights. And we have elected representatives in our state and federal Parliaments who attend rallies with, and stoke the flames of, the far right, anti-choice movement.

All of this and the dreadful situation for people in the US means that we must be vigilant and determined to fight the reactionary forces here which seek to undermine and remove our hard won right to choose. I want to acknowledge all those who have come together again now to condemn the US Court's decision and stand in solidarity with people in the US.

Way back in October 1984, one of the first aims on the Greens NSW election platform – just after the party was formed – was for women to have 'reproductive freedom and an unrestricted right to economic independence'. Since then, the Greens have consistently advocated for the right to determine our own reproductive destiny.

We will continue to do this and to advocate for free and safe abortions to be accessible to all who want them.

Sign the petition to show your support here.



Jenny Leong

Jenny Leong, MP for Newtown

If you have a question or are keen to be involved, send a text to 0421 665 208 with your name, suburb and message and we'll give you a call or you can email newtown@nsw.greens.org.au

Authorised by **Jenny Leong MP**, funded using parliamentary entitlements.

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Margaret Vazey on the Maroubra side of Magic Point, at Malabar Headland National Park. Photo: Courtesy of the Vazey family

Vale Margaret Vazey (January 18, 1939 - June 10, 2022)

LOCALS

MEGAN VAZEY

GROWING up in beautiful New Zealand, Margaret was enchanted by the natural world, from which she developed deep passion and expertise in the natural sciences. As well as completing a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Auckland University, Margaret completed a Masters in Zoology from Dunedin University; and upon retirement, studies in Botany and Bush Regeneration; and a Masters in Ecotheology from United Theological College (UTC) and Sydney University, combined.

Margaret met Brian when tied together on a rock-climbing trip, and they married in 1964. The couple moved from New Zealand to Sydney, where Margaret commenced work on a Teacher's Studentship at Sydney Girls' High School, as a high school science teacher. The couple's first child Robyn was born in 1967, and they purchased a family home in Maroubra. Their second child, John, was born in 1969, and their third, Megan, in 1971. A wonderful garden and many pets followed, including two dogs: Daisy and Texas; a number of axolotls including: "WotylLotyl" and "Speckle"/"Monster"; and more recently the family rabbit: "Fluffy."

Margaret commenced work at TAFE external studies and was part of a team that launched the Eora Centre for Indigenous students in Darlington. Margaret taught science and ecology to distance education students across rural and regional NSW in the 1980s, including disadvantaged students, students in jail and students in difficult-to-access communities. Margaret was well-educated, energetic, hard-working, broad-minded, creative and inclusive.

Margaret was an active member of the local community over a number of decades: notably as an elder at South Sydney Uniting Church; as well as with the Friends of Malabar Headland – Magic Point Bush

Regeneration group; yet also with the Coast Centre for Seniors art class, including as an oils art teacher. More recently Margaret paddled with Dragons Abreast to support survivors of breast cancer, notably competing in Venice at Dragon Boating, in her 80s. Recipient of the Randwick Council Vi Robbins Award as Volunteers of the Year in 2017, Margaret and Brian were instrumental in having the Malabar Headland ratified as a National Park, including with Alan Hall, and the Friends of Malabar Headland.

Margaret loved the arts and was musical, joining the Coast Centre for Seniors Ukulele Group. Yet Margaret was foremost a skilled painter and sculptor, with more than 300 works, including a painting in oils, located at the Randwick Council premises, of the fallen Randwick figs [along Alison Road]; a sculptural installation at Sydney Girls' High School; and many paintings of the Sydney coastline chronicling headland, seaside and beach aspects of the ever-changing Mahon Pool, Maroubra and Malabar coastlines.

Margaret was a much-loved friend, companion, daughter, sister, cousin, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Margaret would comprehend multiple dimensions and perspectives to problems, and the many solutions; with deep pragmatic empathy; and she worked diligently and thoroughly, with knowledge and expertise. Inquisitive, good-humoured and fun-to-be-with, Margaret adored her friends and extended family, including her great-grandchild Grace, as well as her black childhood (toy) cat, who was able to comfort her to the end.

A beautiful funeral service was held for Margaret at South Sydney Uniting Church. Family and friends spoke about her life, and their love and respect for her: a capable, practical, skilled, passionate, artist, teacher, family member, friend and woman; a person, committed by faith; and with a deep love of friends, family, her headland, garden, pets, nature and life. Family members extend love and appreciation, to those who knew Marg.

Digital literacy program empowers mature-aged refugees

HUMAN AFFAIRS

SSH

ONE hundred and five people from refugee backgrounds have increased digital independence, English language proficiency and access to online services thanks to a program coordinated by Settlement Services International (SSI).

SSI, with support from Settlement Engagement and Transition Support Program providers and NSW public libraries, provided a comprehensive 10-week digital literacy course for mature-aged refugees over 35, based in Sydney and regional NSW and struggling with digital-based learning.

SSI found that, by increasing their digital literacy and improving their access to digital content, mature-aged refugees could improve English language proficiency, literacy and numeracy, participation in education and training, employment outcomes, and social cohesion.

SSI General Manager, Newcomers, Settlement and Integration, Yamamah Agha, said accessing digital platforms and many essential services online was an increasing concern for mature-aged refugees.

“With online application to mainstream services increasingly encouraged and physical branches closing, online access is often the only option with critical services such as banks and government departments, and this impacts many refugees SSI supports.

“The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this digital divide and further impacted mature-aged new arrivals committed to English language learning and further education.

“Feedback from mature-aged refugees included difficulty engaging with learning materials online. That caused withdrawals from learning altogether, with many waiting until face-to-face classes returned.”

Ms Agha said the digital literacy course was co-designed with mature-aged refugees to ensure modules were tailored to the unique needs of each region.



A digital literacy course for mature-aged refugees over 35 is improving their English language proficiency, literacy and numeracy, participation in education and training, employment outcomes, and social cohesion. Photo: Supplied

“A listener campaign with refugees from diverse backgrounds and a facilitator who generated conversation around specific areas helped identify gaps and determine what topics needed to be covered in the course.”

SSI Digital Literacy Project Coordinator Moones Mansoubi said that 20 Digital Champions who had already completed the course had been selected to improve social cohesion outcomes.

“Those students that excel in the program and aspire to upskill

community members, educate and mentor their families and friends are promoted within community to demonstrate and share their newly acquired skills and knowledge,” she said.

Digital champion and refugee Rafid Al-Qesmoussa has recently graduated from the course and said that he gained many new skills in digital literacy and is looking forward to skill-sharing with others in community.

“I improved my skills while attending the sessions

and found them very useful. “I improved my skills while attending the sessions and found them very useful,” he said.

“My confidence increased, which has helped me support everyone in the class and some from my community.

“It was a nice surprise and privilege to be nominated as a champion, and I’m looking forward to helping others who need extra support.”

Refugee Week was celebrated from June 19-25.



Robyn Fortescue campaigned hard for the Darlington branch of the ALP, of which Trevor Davies had been the long term Secretary, to be re-named in his honour. Photo: Lyn Turnbull

Lecture honours Labor titan Trevor Davies

POLITICS

LYN TURNBULL

ON June 14, 107 Projects was buzzing with members of Young Labor who had, with a couple of local branches of the Party, organised a lecture in honour of Trevor Davies’ contribution to the Australian Labor Party. The lecture will be an annual event and Steve Murphy, the AMWU (Australian Manufacturing Workers Union) National Secretary, presented the inaugural lecture, “How to build effective grassroots coalitions between unions, the ALP and the environment movement”.

Robyn Fortescue introduced Trevor (also the *South Sydney Herald’s* founding editor) to those present who hadn’t known him personally. She was one of the branch members who campaigned hard for the Darlington branch, of which Trevor had been the long-term Secretary, to be re-named in his honour. It is the only ALP

branch in the country to be named after an individual.

Trevor served on the governing bodies of many local groups and organisations from South Sydney Community Aid to South Sydney Uniting Church and helped establish many others, including Residents in Defence of Darlington.

Robyn spoke of Trevor as a man who cared deeply for his community and would work with all sides of politics but emphasised that everyone knew he was a Labor man. His two beliefs were in Jesus Christ and the Labor Party. Whether he was working for South Sydney Council as a street sweeper or as he sat outside the café at the Darlington shops with his shopping trolley, taking a break from delivering the latest issue of the *South Sydney Herald*, he used every opportunity to talk to people as they walked through his community.

Robyn explained how, in the 1990s, Trevor’s connections led to him starting Chippo Politics at the former Thurles Castle Hotel on Cleveland Street. He cajoled

people, no matter how important they thought they were, or where they stood, to come and talk on Sunday afternoons, including Father Bob who came up from Melbourne, Alan Jones, Bob Ellis, Richard Glover, Piers Ackerman, Mungo MacCallum, a very young and new Tanya Plibersek who hadn’t yet been elected to anything and the cartoonist Bill Leak. Chippo Politics News came out those afternoons, written up by Trevor and photocopied at one of the union offices.

Trevor was concerned that the mainstream media either didn’t cover his local community and take its issues seriously or only reported bad news stories so, after a couple of different iterations where he drew on his local community for support, 20 years ago in 2002 he took the idea of a local independent community newspaper to the South Sydney Uniting Church which has been its publisher since.

Support Trevor’s legacy and keep local stories live by donating to the SSH – QR code below.



SUPPORT INDEPENDENT MEDIA

Every donation, large or small, is valuable.



TANYA PLIBERSEK MP

Federal Member for Sydney

After a busy few weeks, here is a brief update on what Labor has already achieved in just one month of government.

Right after the election, we got straight to work creating a better future for Australia. Because as you know, we inherited a decade's worth of challenges.

We successfully argued for an increase to the minimum wage, because the lowest paid workers don't deserve a pay cut.

We made Australia's emissions reduction target 43% by 2030 – a key step on our path towards making Australia a renewable energy superpower and achieving net zero by 2050.

We started the important work of repairing and strengthening our relations with other countries and institutions, so we can rebuild Australia's standing in the world and be a responsible global citizen.

And we allowed the Nadesalingam family to return home to Biloela, because Australia can be strong on borders without being weak on humanity.

Personally, I've loved diving into my new Ministerial area of the Environment and Water – visiting our iconic Reef to hear about what needs to be done, speaking to scientific experts and **attending the UN World Oceans Conference, where I committed Australia to taking a global leadership role on environmental issues.**

We know that there is still a lot more to do. The rising cost of living is hurting families and businesses, and we're facing an energy crisis resulting from a decade of inaction and denial under the previous government.

We're working closely with energy companies and the energy market operator to avoid blackouts in the short term, and to stabilise our energy system in the long term.

ELECTORATE OFFICE

My electorate office provides support with Centrelink, Veterans' Affairs, Medicare, Immigration, NBN and other federal matters.

If you require assistance, then please don't hesitate to call us on 9379 0700 or email Tanya.Plibersek.MP@aph.gov.au

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Sentient Paper exhibition celebrates artistry and innovation

SPONSORED

MARK SCOTT

SENTIENT Paper, the latest exhibition in the China Gallery of the University of Sydney's Chau Chak Wing Museum, celebrates the dynamic spirit of paper – a supple yet robust material that has a special place in Chinese history, thought and art.

Shuxia Chen, the curator of the China Gallery said, "For our second exhibition, following *Auspicious: Motifs in Chinese Art*, I wanted to feature a material that is both everyday and "mighty" – paper. While society continues to embrace the digital, we have an ongoing relationship with paper as both a familiar, tactile object and an ancient, enlightening technology that transmits knowledge and artistic expression."

Some key works from the exhibition:**Technology**

Papermaking is believed to have been invented by Cai Lun (57-121) in 105, according to one of the earliest historical records.

Papermaking is recognised as one of the four great inventions of ancient China, and the refined papermaking process was explained and illustrated in the Ming dynasty technical encyclopedia, *The Exploitation of the Works of Nature* (1637), by Song Yingxing, together with important skills such as jade carving and metallurgy. A three-volume 1959 reproduction of this work is displayed, from the University of Sydney Library's Rare Books and Special Collections.

Also featured in this part of the exhibition, from the same library collection, are examples of the famous *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (1884-1898), a supplement in the Shen Bao newspaper founded by British businessman Ernest Major. As the first long-lived periodical to be industrially produced in Shanghai and vividly illustrated, its content met the popular desire for the "sensational and strange". Its coverage of local and global events provides a significant record of the society and politics of late-Qing China.

Ideology

Together with the availability of printing technology, paper played a unique role in visualising competing ideologies and cultivating cultural elites, the growing urban middle class and the general public in early modern China.

Sentient Paper includes print works continuing the legacy of the left-wing woodblock movement in the early 20th century, original photos taken by Mao Zedong's "red wall" photographers Hou Bo and Xu Xiaobing (who lived in Zhongnanhai, the



Guarding our Great Motherland (1974), Shen Jiawei. Photo: Supplied

central political headquarters); and notable examples of countless propaganda posters disseminated across China.

Guarding Our Great Motherland (1974) by Chinese-Australian artist Shen Jiawei, was originally selected for the National Art Exhibition in China where, after earning praise from Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, it was used as an image on calendars and posters, displayed in workplaces and people's homes.

Artistry

The fusion of xuan paper (rice paper) and ink has enthralled Chinese painters and calligraphers for centuries and continue to inspire creative innovation.

In this exhibition paper transcends its conventional image as a flat two-dimensional surface by being painted on, printed, cut, knitted, sculpted and hung.

During the pandemic, Australian-Chinese artist Tianli Zu, adapting the folk art of paper-cutting, created *Eight Treasures Masks* made from rice paper, each one featuring an ingredient from the popular ceremonial dish "Eight Treasures Congee". Zu has described the work as "a symbolic object that simultaneously provides physical protection from illness and the nostalgic comfort of a favourite meal."

Twelve works of Australian-Chinese artist Ah Xian are featured, created on rice paper when the pandemic prevented him doing his usual work with ceramics, including rubbings and printing using gum leaves and ferns from the Australian bush.

Other artists featured in this section are Guan Shanyue, Guan Wei, Hongbo Li, Xun Sun and Tianmiao Lin. The exhibition was designed by Youssofzay + Hart.

Sentient Paper draws upon the art collection of the Chau Chak Wing Museum, with selections from the Powerhouse Museum and the White Rabbit Gallery Collection, and from private collections and artists. The exhibition was made possible thanks to the Pauline and Tim Harding Asian Collection Fund. Five of the University's works on display were obtained through the Dr M J Morrissey Bequest Fund. SSH

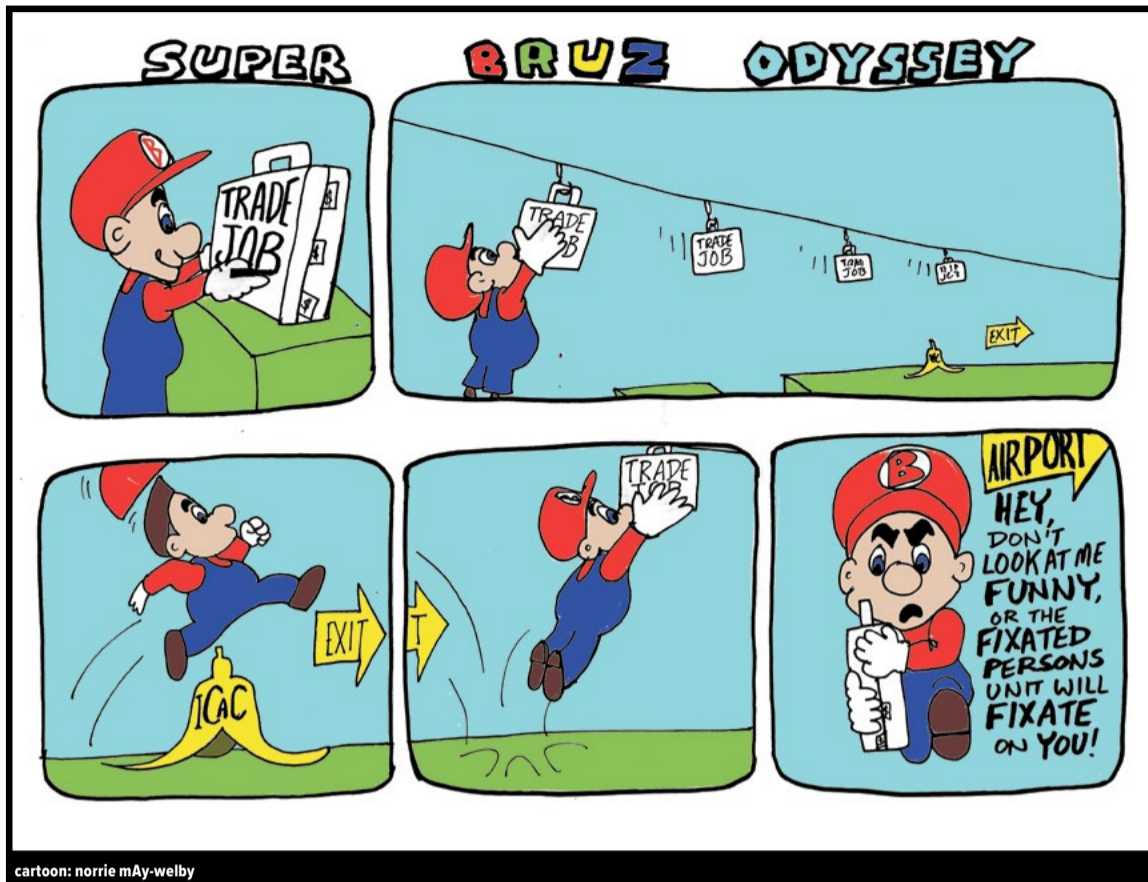
The exhibition closes on April 2, 2023. Admission to the museum is free.



Authorised by Vice-Chancellor and Principal Prof. Mark Scott.
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Aunty Shirley Lomas at 107 Projects, Redfern, on Wednesday June 29 for the launch of the 2022 NAIDOC Week Bridge Housing tenant art exhibition curated by Blak Douglas. More than 15 tenants contributed paintings, drawings, photography, sculpture, poetry, jewellery, t-shirts and bags. The exhibition is open 11am to 5pm Wednesday to Saturday until July 9. Photo: Paul Bramble



cartoon: norrie mAy-welby

Home – a Waterloo South tenant responds to LAHC plans

GUEST EDITORIAL

NORRIE

WHEN I go for a walk around my neighbourhood in the south part of Waterloo public housing estate, I see blue sky and green trees and grass and bushes. I see gardens that people have made around their homes. The people I see have lived here for a long time, unlike private rentals where people come and go. But the state LNP government has plans to knock all our homes down, and, in its first draft,

replace them with buildings higher than the aeroplanes fly.

They are not planning to knock these places down because they are falling down or due for demolition. Like most buildings, they were built to last. They are no older than I am; we were both built or born around the 1960s, and while my body has had to have some renovations as it ages, it's not ready for demolition yet.

No, the plan is to knock them down so huge towers can be built for private enterprise to make

money out of. Greedy developers have long objected to poor people living in the inner city and having nice views.

If we go from the medium density of inner-city Sydney to the towering density of island megalopolis Hong Kong, the streets will be too windy for old folk to stroll around, and sunlight will be rare.

If this truly were a worthwhile project then why wouldn't the government be investing in the redevelopment, rather than privatising public housing and public land, for private profits? SSH

Better social housing for people with disabilities?

HUMAN AFFAIRS

MAGGIE KORENBLIUM

IN a few months, the Disability Royal Commission will hold a public hearing on homelessness for people with disability. A key piece of the puzzle is the kinds of housing people at risk of homelessness find themselves in – which means we need to talk about social housing, and especially public housing (which is the social housing run by the government, rather than non-profits).

Nearly half of the households in public housing include at least one person with disability, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. But the 2018 National Social Housing Survey found that disabled people report less improvements to their life from living in social housing compared to others.

I spoke to Carolyn, a public housing tenant with a chronic

illness and psychosocial disability.

After a childhood in poverty, moving around frequently between private rentals, and a “nightmare” stay in a boarding house, public housing symbolised stability – but came with its share of problems.

“Thirty years of complaining about mould,” they laughed, telling me about how they ended up in a tribunal hearing just to get their poorly maintained, rusty, leaking gutters fixed.

Among its other challenges, Australian public housing is stuck in a vicious cycle that goes something like this:

1. Not enough public housing stock
2. More and more of those places, proportionally, go to highest-needs/lowest-income tenants
3. Government collects less total rent from public housing tenants (and doesn't compensate with extra money from the budget)
4. Less money for maintenance means the buildings

wear out faster

5. Government sells off older stock to fund maintenance and building costs
6. Now they have less land to build public housing on
7. Go back to number one

Concentrating more and more people with disability in what Lynda Cheshire (2019) called “pockets of severe disadvantage” makes it more and more urgent that the housing system doesn't coordinate well with other systems that provide services to their tenants. Limited communication and collaboration between these systems makes them each worse at supporting people to keep their health and housing situation stable. For all the good changes NDIS has made to disability services, it only worsened the collaboration gap.

In her 2019 paper “Where has the community gone?” Betty Stampoulis-Lyttle says, “Providers cannot sell this, nor can they make any money from it, hence,

Finding my way

FAITH

MELINDA KEARNS

THE New Testament abounds with stories about people on journeys – the path to Jerusalem and the way of the Cross feature prominently as part of Jesus' ministry. Paul's evangelical mission criss-crossed the Mediterranean. The Hebrew Bible, too, is replete with stories about people on the move – searching, finding, being banished, being reclaimed.

We are encouraged to think, more metaphorically, about our Christian lives as a “walk”, acknowledging the many ways in which people grow and change over the course of their lives. For most people, the path of following Jesus is not a clear line that runs in one direction. Everyone has moments of doubt and frustration, some that are minor and some that are debilitating, leading to their abandonment of the teachings of Jesus entirely.

Over the past couple of years, I have started to think about serving the church

in a more formal manner. My journey on the path to ordained ministry has been a long one and while I have never doubted Jesus, I have, at times, been confounded and disappointed by those who speak in his name.

I have served the church throughout my life in a range of different capacities, but it was really only when I came to the Uniting Church that I felt my authentic self was complete and called into ministry in a clear way, rather than hearing a niggling whisper that would fade with some of life's other distractions.

The path that I have walked so far has been guided by my wonderful minister and church family at South Sydney Uniting Church, and selected other mentors, who have done a great deal to heal the damage done by the bigotry I experienced in other settings. The path that lies ahead of me will be long and unfamiliar, but I feel confident in being consistently challenged to assess and reflect on my direction in the light of God's love and the church's commitment to bring hope to the world. SSH

Uni backs Refugee Language Program

LETTER

The Refugee Language Program has been an important support for refugees and asylum seekers for two decades, and remains as vital as ever – we will continue to support it, in line with our institutional commitment to leadership for good (*Language service offers a lifeline – but for how long?* June 7, 2022). Originally funded by the University, over the last decade it has been supported through donations for which we are very grateful. In the last couple of years, we've seen our

donor support shift towards other University projects such as student bursaries, while the Program's costs have also risen significantly. This year our Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences will fill the Program's funding gap, and is working with the program team to develop a strategy and operating model that will ensure it is sustainable into the future, with funding from a mix of sources.

Professor Annamarie Jagose
Provost
The University of Sydney
Camperdown NSW

most of this work is now placed at the bottom of the priority list.” A 2020 study by Mind Australia and the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) found that “state, territory and Commonwealth housing, homelessness and mental health policies ... are essentially separate systems with little integration.”

“People think once you've got a roof over your head, everything's solved,” said Carolyn.

But high-needs tenants, the first off the overwhelming waiting list, need the right supports – otherwise their problems not only get worse but affect everyone around them.

Carolyn told me about a series of neighbours who moved in with violent histories and no apparent plan for behavioural support or protection for other tenants. Many of them were eventually evicted after a terrifying period of regular assaults, drug-dealing and building damage.

At that point, Carolyn and their highly traumatised neighbour Sara were offered support, but it “never happened”. And the stress triggered a downward spiral in Sara's mental health, including paranoia and “turning on everyone” – continuing the cycle.

“If they're going to house marginalised people,” Carolyn said, “they should know how to deal with us.”

But Housing isn't funded to know how to deal with that, and those who are face many unnecessary barriers to their effectiveness. People like Carolyn are left to do unpaid, unresourced work supporting their neighbours. And the people who lose their place in public housing after doing damage to their surroundings (and neighbours)? Well, they wind up back on the streets or in prison. But that, of course, is someone else's problem.

My question for the Royal Commission, the government, the community, is – can't we do better than that? SSH

Rosie Meader plays Hope in her musical comedy *Everybody Loves a Wedding*. Photo: Supplied

Rosie's on the rise

THEATRE

MARJORIE LEWIS-JONES

FROM performing in a play in Redfern, to writing and staging her own musicals, Rosie Meader is scaling creative heights.

What did you do between graduation from Newtown High School of the Performing Arts in 2018 and the 2021 Covid lockdown?

After graduating from the Talent Development Project in 2019 and then from Brent Street's Musical Theatre Diploma course in 2020, I knew I wanted to continue on the journey of creating and producing my

own work. At Brent Street I'd composed my first one-act musical *Everybody Loves a Wedding* (music and lyrics by Rosie and Paul Meader) and I was very eager to get this comedy in front of audiences. Together with a self-formed independent theatrical production team (Business Productions Theatre Company), we rehearsed and workshoped the musical.

Our opening night was June 26, 2021, and we had a limited season of shows to follow ... but then lockdown hit, which turned our opening night into our closing night. This was a devastating turn of events. But with emotions so high, it was an extraordinary

night. The following morning, I woke up and knew I had to distract myself, so I started writing *Spitfire Girls The Musical*.

In June 2022 you staged *Everybody Loves a Wedding* at the Flight Path Theatre in Marrickville. What inspired you?

I've performed at countless nuptials with my dad and brother in our family jazz trio, and I loved the idea of giving an audience a front-row seat into the behind-the-scenes of a wedding. I also wanted to provide the "nameless" staff with character and heart and to create a musical celebrating the beauty of love and hope. The music was written by me and my father, Paul Meader, and once the characters were brought to life on the page, our imaginations

were ignited. Each character told us precisely what music they would express, from grungy rock to piano ballads, samba to pop.

What was it like to be the musical director and to play the role of Hope in the show?

A unique and life-altering experience! I've learnt the business side of getting an original musical on its feet and also the power of trusting my instincts, collaborating, and allowing the best idea in the room to win. We had a sold-out show for our closing night, which was a remarkable achievement for our team; we were thrilled. Coming out of the dreariness of the last couple of years, I genuinely believe people are seeking joy and fun. Being in a room buzzing with laughter, joy and excitement was true magic.

In March you were awarded \$20,000 from the Brent Street Artists Fund to develop *Spitfire Girls The Musical*. Where is this up to?

The story was sparked after seeing a beautiful black-and-white photo of a young woman standing in front of an aircraft. She looked both elegant and bad-ass at the same time. From her clothes, I knew this photo must be from the '40s, but I didn't realise women were flying planes at this time in history. In *Spitfire Girls The Musical*, I tell the inspiring true story of young female pilots during WW2 and their remarkable fortitude – which I now want to share with as many people as possible. The \$20,000 is going towards producing a 10-day workshop of the musical in early July with a team of incredible creatives and an entire cast. I'm excited and grateful for the opportunity.

What was it like to perform at the Actor's Pulse Theatre in Redfern in a play inspired by Natascha Kampusch who was abducted and held in a cellar for more than eight years?

One of my favourite things about being an actor is the opportunity to delve into different people's lives and approach their situations with empathy. To be part of Amber Spooner's new original play, *The Various Methods of Escape*, directed by Liviu Monsted, and gain an understanding of such a powerful story, and then to share these experiences with audiences has been a privilege.

Learning to rest ... the hard way

HEALTH

MARJORIE LEWIS-JONES

IT'S ironic that it took a broken ankle for me to finally log in to do a three-part online workshop about Rest.

The workshop was a gift from a friend I received months ago for my birthday. Could she see how tired I was back then, when I couldn't see it myself? Perhaps it is symptomatic of a world perpetually operating in overdrive that it took me so long to stop running here and there in pursuit of stories and being glued to the computer for work to have the time to watch the recorded sessions.

With a broken ankle it's simple: I can't run from pillar to post.

I can stay glued to my screen if I wish – but my body and my brain are not up to the task. All I really *want to do* is rest. In fact, it's

as if *rest wants me*. The crushing tiredness takes over and I wake in shock from long sleeps I had no inkling were about to engulf me.

It takes more than a week for the pain to loosen its grip enough for me to log on to the first recorded workshop. David Whyte, who presents the series, is an Anglo-Irish poet and philosopher who practises Zen. He recites his own and other people's poetry and also quotes from a small essay called "Rest" in his book *Consolations*. "When we give and take in an easy, foundational way, we are closest to the authentic self, and closest to that authentic self when we are most rested," he says.

"To rest is not self-indulgent; to rest is to prepare to give the best of ourselves, and perhaps, most importantly, arrive at a place where we are able to understand what we have already been given."

Whyte's ways of expressing his ideas were sometimes too esoteric

for my pain-fogged brain to grasp so I had no choice but to let them wash over me. However, I do keep thinking of his image of a river – carrying, holding and supporting life in its flowing waters: "It's doing work, but it's rested."

So, did I need a break to take a break?

Being so badly injured was probably the only way I was going to feel okay about resting so much, which is sad in a way.

I really hope the workshop talks have given me the confidence to lean in to rest and to find a route to living and working less frenetically. Stronger arm muscles have me back on my feet – and the crutches are helping me learn not to rush, which is great – especially given that rushing for the bus was how I broke my ankle in the first place.

The Necessary Art of Rest was a three-part online workshop by David Whyte.



A broken ankle and enforced immobility offered a small window into the art of rest. Photo: Marjorie Lewis-Jones

Theatre Review by Catherine Skipper



Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes

Writer: Hannah Moscovitch
Director: Petra Kalive
Upstairs Theatre, Belvoir
June 2 – July 10, 2022

You may hesitate to leave your warm home on a very cold evening to go to the theatre but you will be well rewarded if the production is Belvoir Street's *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes*. Playwright Hannah Moscovitch's engaging script charting one young woman's reversal of the embedded gender power imbalance underlying our everyday transactions is superbly performed and stylishly staged.

Marg Horwell's set and costumes work with the script to enhance its meaning visually. The almost bunker-like set can at one time reflect the fortress of the male's impenetrable ego or at others become the architecture that underpins the institutional gendered authority. With a simple change the set becomes the front lawn of a suburban house in need of a motor mower suggesting the unexceptional ordinariness – the unconscious and daily assumption of gender inequity.

When we first meet the casually touselled Jon (a sublime Daniel Spielman), "rock professor, popular lecturer and successful novelist", we know him. The boyish charm of the almost 40-year-old – the crumpled jacket, the untucked linen shirt, the sneakers – is disarming, as his true confessions are intended to be. His third wife has left him, he is experiencing writer's block and he feels "restless", and his restless eye has been attracted by the red coat and an apparently "sexual pencil-in-the-mouth" of 19-year-old student, Annie (a lovely Izabella Yena).

Annie happens to be his neighbour and awkwardly approaches Jon, a man who represents a world to which she would like to have entry. She writes, of course, but is reticent about it. Jon's soliloquising shows the extent to which Jon's gendered, privileged view of the world is reality for him and after indulging in rationalisations cannot resist youth and admiration in the one attractive and – yes, flirtatious, and why not – package. An out-of-depth Annie accepts sex – possibly "love" – as the price of mentorship.

However, a meeting with his wife prior to his affair with Annie, has created a problem. He discards Annie who is about to sit for an examination but then he must unburden himself to square his conscience as he chooses the option which now suits him best. Apart from bravado, we don't know how Annie deals with Jon's dismissal, but then we don't know much about Annie (and neither does Jon) other than is beautifully conveyed through her posture, her silences and a single moment of rebellion. We meet her again twice and each time her costume and manner of approach reveal her progress. At her

second interview, she is wearing the pants, and unapologetically takes Jon down in speaking (performatively) truth to power.

We might like to think that abuse stemming from the assumption of gender-based privilege is of the past but unless you are a privileged person yourself, it is not. Despite the "me-toos" the change is cosmetic. The reality for many young and older women is that unconscious assumptions still prevail.

» theatre@ssh.com.au

Book Review by Catherine DeMayo



Nightcrawling
Leila Mottley
Bloomsbury \$26.99

With her debut novel, *Nightcrawling*, 19-year-old Leila Mottley has achieved sudden fame; her widely acclaimed book is already an Oprah Book Club pick, with Mottley the youngest author so honoured.

I approached the book with trepidation, wondering whether the author's youth was earning it a disproportionate response. I now think *Nightcrawling* would be widely praised whatever the age of its author.

Mottley, who was awarded the title of Oakland's Youth Poet Laureate in 2018, makes it clear that her novel is by no means a fictionalised autobiography. Like her protagonist, Kiara Johnson, Mottley is young, Black and lives in Oakland, California.

Kiara, however, lives in dire poverty and has been abandoned by the adults in her life. Her father died of cancer, her mother is in a halfway house after a suicide attempt. (Mottley, by contrast, thanks both her parents in her Afterword.)

Nightcrawling was inspired by a case in Oakland, in which members of several Bay Area police forces abused their power to exploit a young woman, and got Mottley thinking about the countless sex workers whose stories are never told.

Kiara Johnson, age 17, lives in a rundown apartment in Oakland with her older brother Marcus. Marcus has delusions of grandeur, believing himself the next big rap star; Kiara, a high school dropout, is largely unemployed and can't pay the rent. She is also surrogate mother to 9-year-old Trevor, whose mother is strung out on drugs.

A chance encounter starts Kiara on lucrative but dangerous sex work; another chance encounter with the cops brings in lots of work with members of the Oakland Police, who know that Kiara can't refuse. Kiara doesn't even know their names, only their badge numbers.

When a cop dies by suicide and leaves a note naming Kiara, she is called to be a witness against his abusive colleagues. Success will mean the possibility of suing the police and getting enough money to start a new

life; failure, the likelihood that Kiara's already desperate struggle for food and shelter will become even harder.

Kiara's two main relationships are with the sweet, neglected Trevor and her friend Ale, whose offerings of food from the family restaurant provide nourishment beyond the physical. Mottley's depiction of the former relationship is convincing, and the deep love between Kiara and Trevor suffuses the book. "Sometimes I think this little kid might just save me from the swallow of our gray sky, but then I remember that Marcus used to be that small, too ..."

Ale's loyalty wavers at times (she is deeply disapproving of the sex work), although a sex scene between her and Kiara in the book's final pages seems artificial, contrived and out of place.

While *Nightcrawling* is frequently harrowing, and readers hoping for a fairytale ending will be disappointed, it is a compelling work deserving of the accolades it has earned.

» books@ssh.com.au

Film Review by Lindsay Cohen



Top Gun: Maverick
Director: Joseph Kosinski
Starring: Tom Cruise, Jennifer Connelly, Miles Teller
Genre: Yep, exactly

How do you rate a film that meets all your expectations both good and meh?

One of the complexities of being a film reviewer is avoiding other people's reviews, and I'm not talking about film critics here but friends, family, colleagues and imperfect strangers. It's why I tend to review art house films – hardly anyone sees them so no one will spoil them.

But *Top Gun: Maverick* is very popular. Everyone is seeing it (which admittedly kind of defeats the need for it to be reviewed) so everyone was telling me what they thought of it. And what they all agreed on is that the action sequences are awesome and everything else is filler.

And, of course, they were all correct.

Now, I have to admit that I never saw the original *Top Gun* or if I did there was nothing memorable about it. It was released in 1986 after all. Indeed, most people seeing *Maverick* were too young to go to the cinema or not even born in 1986 and there's part of the problem – if there are inconsistencies with the original no one cares and much of the filler is just retelling the original story. Indeed, there are lots of flashbacks which are just clips from the first film. And none of them really matter.

So don't contemplate Tom Cruise's perfectly dyed hair (he is nearly 60 after all), the irrelevant romance subplot with Jennifer Connelly and the extreme political correctness, and just sit back and enjoy the ride – as long as you don't suffer from motion sickness.

Rating: Three Gs

» film@ssh.com.au



Jazz Money at this year's Sydney Writers' Festival. Photo: Stephen Webb



Evelyn Araluen at this year's Sydney Writers' Festival. Photo: Stephen Webb

Sydney Writers' Festival etched in mind

FESTIVALS

MARJORIE LEWIS-JONES

JAZZ Money (*how to make a basket*) and **Evelyn Araluen** (*Dropbear*) featured with **Anne-Marie Te Whiu** (*Te Rarawa*) (**Red Room Poetry Senior Producer**) in a wide-ranging discussion about creativity and climate change in a stimulating session at this year's Sydney Writers' Festival in May.

These stellar First Nations writers were interviewed by fellow Indigenous author Tony Birch (*The White Girl, Whisper Songs, Dark as Last Night*).

I was also lucky enough to be

at Carriageworks in Eveleigh to see Sarah Winman (*Still Life*) in discussion with Ailsa Piper (and now you can listen to the podcast), Michael Mohammed Ahmad (*The Tribe, The Lebs* and *The Other Half of You*) and Mehreen Faruqi (*Too Migrant, Too Muslim, Too Loud*).

And to appreciate a poignant remembrance of writers past hosted by Susan Wyndham, with Jackie Huggins (*Sister Girl*) on bell hooks, Sarah Krasnostein (*The Believer*) on Joan Didion, Melissa Lucashenko (*Too Much Lip*) on Keri Hulme; and Clem Bastow (*Late Bloomer*) on Stephen Sondheim.

Change My Mind was a great theme and an inspiring festival!



Lance 'Buddy' Franklin. Photo: Getty Images

Franklin in talks to renew Swans contract

SPORT

STEVE TURNER

SYDNEY star Lance Franklin is in talks regarding a new one-year contract at the Swans that will ensure his AFL career continues in 2023. The 35-year-old's nine-year, \$10 million contract that he signed to move from Hawthorn to Sydney as a free agent in 2013 is due to expire at the end of this season.

Franklin has continued to show he can compete at the highest level in 2022. He is yet to finish a game goalless this season, with his best performance coming with a haul of six goals against Brisbane in Round 7, while he recently kicked five goals to help the Swans over the line versus Richmond.

Star Aussie sprinter beats the world's best at Royal Ascot

Champion Sydney racehorse Nature Strip recently defeated the world's best sprinters in the Group 1 Kings Stand Stakes (1000 metres) at Royal Ascot in Britain. Ridden by his regular partner James McDonald, the 8-year-old was

with the leading contingent throughout the race, before exploding clear at the 200-metre mark to gap his rivals and win by four-and-a-half lengths.

Trainer Chris Waller went into the race with Nature Strip already holding the mantle of the world's best sprinter, due to his deeds in Australia over several years. "This win just confirms his status. He is very special. Nature Strip was a difficult horse to train earlier in his career as he was fractious. He has matured and mellowed."

Nature Strip has headed back home and will be aimed at the \$15 million Everest (1200 metres) at Royal Randwick in October, the world's richest race. He won the race last year.

You can't beat a good walk

Walking is a basic physical function with a wide variety of purposes. They include: getting from A to B; for exercise – whether locally, at the beach or in the bush; for orienteering and for athletics competition. Whether it is fast, medium-paced or leisurely, walking is a great physical activity. It clears the mind and provides social interaction. The SSH is holding a walkathon on October 15. Stay tuned for details!

SSH

Volunteers' News

PAT CLARKE

Congratulations John Lanzky

SSH volunteer John Lanzky has been recognised in the recent Waterloo & Redfern Volunteer Awards presented by Counterpoint Community Services and the City of Sydney. John received an award for his work as a barbecue chef. Good work John! Wonderful to see you enjoying better health.

Introducing Paul Bramble, photographer

You may have noticed a new name among our photographers for the last two issues.

Paul is a local, having been born at Paddington Women's Hospital and lived in Redfern and Waterloo for almost 30 years. His interest in photography started when he was struggling with mental illness, and he bought a cheap digital camera. He would use this every day as a creative escape from other pressures in his life. He found permanent housing and gave up photography until recently when Covid hit. Paul was able to use this hobby again as a way of getting out of the house, and a few people started buying his photos from Facebook and telling their friends. He's bought some good cameras and has had a few photos published. He says he'd like to have an exhibition later this year and become professional. In the meantime, he loves helping out in his "beautiful community of South Sydney"; and volunteering with the Tribal Warrior organisation. Great work Paul, you have overcome a lot in your life, and we are delighted that you've joined our SSH volunteer family.

Free Digital Literacy Classes, Cliff Noble Centre Alexandria July 22, 10am-11am

Bookings are essential on 8512 8000 or <https://cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au>

Here are a few things to do for winter in the City:

Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney Guided Walks Daily

Take advantage of lovely Sydney sunny winter days and book a guided walk from 10.30am. Only 15 persons per tour, so bookings are essential. Enquiries 9231 8317, or book <https://rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/what-s-on/guidedwalks>

Kids in the Garden has lots of activities for the School Holidays.

If you fancy a break from your City shopping or business, then lunchtime concerts could be just the thing.

St James Church, King Street, Sydney – Thursday July 16, 1.15-1.45pm

William Jack, Cellist with This Old Cello Box.

Concerts are free, but donations to the artist appreciated.

St Stephen's Uniting Church, Macquarie Street, Friday Lunchtime Concerts

Each Friday from 1.10-1.50pm. There are Organ Recitals on the last Friday of each month. Entry is by a note donation, which supports the Church's Sydney Music and Cultural Foundation, providing scholarships to young people studying at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

As always, take care and keep safe, especially if you are vulnerable or immunocompromised. If you celebrate Christmas in July, or Yulefest, as many seem to do to break up the monotony of winter, enjoy the warmth and good cheer.

Until next time, keep safe and well,
Pat Clarke

SSH

» volunteers@ssh.com.au

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