The opportunity to build substantial strength in Art History and Theory as well as Art Practice at the ANU School of Art is truly significant, establishing one of the largest teaching and research departments of this kind in Australia as well as acknowledging the contribution the ANU has made to the Visual Arts. This ‘Art History and Theory Department’ within the School will enable closely related disciplines to have an essential critical mass in key areas of research and teaching. This merged contribution will further ANU’s international reputation in these fields and importantly build on current strengths, expanding resources and extending educational offerings. The strategic congregation of researchers is crucial and the close association of allied researchers with practitioners in object and image making disciplines is invaluable for both parties.

Currently synergies exist between Art History and the School of Art, in undertakings such as professional curatorship as well as discipline specific research. There are clear educational interactions through verifiable student course enrollments and staff collaborations- I have given guest lectures to Art History Masters students, as have my colleagues. As well, evidently there are Art History students who welcome the possibilities of joining our school, engaging with practice-led research and leading researchers. Several HDR Art History students have approached me at public functions and spoken of their positive response to a greater pool of supervisory support, as well as the possibility of a more organic relationship with art practitioners and their HDR cohort whose research is practice based.

The background training for many eminent curators is an art school based education. The School of Art is proud to count amongst its alumni curators and leaders in institutions including the National Gallery of Australia, the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra Museum and Art Gallery, and Heidi Museum of Modern Art to name a few. Our flourishing Professional Practices Program has expanded through student demand and such a program would complement or combine with Art History and Curatorship’s current offerings. Identifying cognate pathways and course options through effective use of academic strengths from both areas is educationally advantageous.

The School has consistently grown undergraduate and HDR numbers, achieving a 4 ranking in ERA. It is uniquely positioned with close ties to the national cultural institutions and with an unrivalled capacity for research and practice-led teaching. The national and international reputations of staff in the School of Art, Art Theory and Art History have the potential to fully activate and then cultivate a vitally important grant culture. An Art History and Theory Department of appropriate scale holds greater promise of fostering the support necessary to achieve success in being awarded grants and carrying out the necessary research in a busy and complex teaching and learning environment. Over decades I have been in a position to observe the mutual advantages of co-location for Art Practice disciplines and Art Theory at the School of Art. Those tremendous reciprocal benefits I certainly hope to share with colleagues and students from Art History and Curatorship in future.

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