I would like to submit comments in favour of the proposed amalgamation of Art History and Curatorship and Art Theory within the School of Art. This proposal unites the established strengths of both groups of scholars, but energizes them with the context of art practice provided by the School of Art.

There are obvious efficiencies and synergies to be gained through, for instance, bringing more closely together first year introductory courses in art and history and theory for both Arts and Visual Arts students or, at the other end of the scale, widening and deepening the pool of HDR supervisors and advisors. It is also easy to see how the options for electives and professional internships could be enhanced for all students. For instance some double degree students who are majoring in both Art History and Photomedia have commented to me that they have benefited from being able to think ideas through in both disciplines. Other Arts students who have taken the occasional Visual Arts elective in Photography and Media Arts have commented that the ‘hands on’ experience enhanced their overall program. These examples indicate how, without vitiating disciplinary strength, bringing together the already very closely aligned teaching methods, courses and research directions of Art History and Art Theory within an enlarged matrix of options for students, enriches the environment for everybody.

The School of Art is an excellent context in which the established research and teaching of both groups can continue, while also encouraging new and innovative research and teaching directions. Of the many ‘turns’ which have characterized the arts and humanities recently, the turn to practice based research, and an increasing interest in the various materialities of culture, is one of the most significant. Around the world, art schools are the origin for teaching, research and publications of the highest order, while practitioners are increasingly forming dynamic parts of collaborative teams. None of this need diminish the established work already being done so successfully, it can only add to it. In particular I am thinking of particular universities I have worked with in the UK and Canada who have taken advantage of the benefits of bringing these aligned areas together, where I have seen tangible benefits in the form of new research projects and interesting journals.

Within the RSHA as a whole it is the strength through dialogue across the areas which I have found personally most rewarding, and it is also that richer context which I know my students find most stimulating in their experience of the ANU.

Yours Sincerely

Martyn Jolly