



ALUMINA

RECENT WORK BY GOLD AND SILVERSMITHING WORKSHOP ALUMNI 2009

FOREWORD

The exhibition **Alumina** is a celebration anticipating the ANU School of Art Gold and Silversmithing (G&S) Workshop's 30th anniversary. Coinciding with a major survey exhibition of work by Head of the Workshop Johannes Kuhn, the **Alumina** exhibition comprises recent work by 26 G&S Alumni who have graduated during the past 15 years. They have established themselves as professional practitioners in the ACT, interstate and overseas. Their work exemplifies the high quality of silversmithing and jewellery teaching and making at the School of Art and demonstrates a commitment to ideas, excellence and innovation. Personal biographies indicate the diverse career paths pursued by the graduates and the contribution they have made to Australia's contemporary visual culture. The excellent catalogue essay by Mia-Lee Ching, another graduate, elaborates further on the wide range and variety of work in the exhibition.

The word alumina is another term for aluminium oxide. It is the main constituent in the production of metallic aluminium and also refers to the hard, porous coating formed through oxidation that protects the lightweight, silvery-white metal from corrosion. Alumina appropriately lends its name to the exhibition as it plays on the word Alumni. In the hands of G&S Workshop and Alumni, alumina becomes the basis for the aluminium anodising process pioneered in Australia by Johannes Kuhn and which has become notorious with the staff and student work produced in the ANU School of Art G&S Workshop. The exhibition **Alumina** reflects the diversity of the work produced by G&S Alumni, through its ability to take many shapes and forms. From vibrantly coloured metallic surfaces to precious gemstones (alumina in its crystalline state appears as sapphires and rubies). In another sense, alumina can be likened to a 'case hardening', a description relevant to the G&S alumni, who having completed School of Art studies, are developing their careers and coping with the rough and tumble of life in the wider world for which their visual art education has prepared them.

The Workshop terminology Gold and Silversmithing addresses the traditional origins for the design and production of wearable and utilitarian objects. The art of gold and silversmithing in its ancient origins, was often the initial training for some of the world's most respected artists. The use of precious material as indicated in the name, is not a limitation for the works produced by students and staff. It is an historical reference. The materials used in the Workshop reflect contemporary practice and encompass a wide range of plastics, synthetics, natural fibres and alternative metals including aluminium for both functional and non-functional purposes. The Workshop has facilities specifically set up for casting in various materials, cold and hot forging, machining and lathe work, toolmaking, metal finishing, polishing and anodising as well as design studio techniques including computer aided design and rapid prototyping. The work in the **Alumina** exhibition reflects use of all these processes and techniques to realise a wide range of innovative design ideas.

Since its establishment in 1980, the G&S Workshop has marked various milestones with significant exhibitions showcasing the work of its staff and graduates. To celebrate the 20th anniversary, the exhibition **31@20**, 31 graduates from the first 20 years were selected by School of Art historian Anne Brennan for a national/international tour to Canberra, Melbourne, Taiwan and the prestigious Deutsche Goldschmiedehaus in Hannau, Germany. To mark the 25th anniversary, the exhibition **In the Can** was selected by National Gallery of Australia Senior Curator Robert Bell. This was organised to coincide with the Jewellers and Metalsmiths Group of Australia JMGA conference in Sydney in January 2006. Since the Workshop's establishment, staff and graduates have been regularly represented in other significant national jewellery, metalwork and silversmithing exhibitions shown in Australia's National, State and

Regional Galleries. The **Alumina** exhibition demonstrates the Gold and Silversmithing Workshop graduates' talent and commitment to jewellery and silversmithing over an extended period. Their continued association with the ANU, the School of Art and the Workshop as Alumni is testament to the quality visual arts education and experience at the ANU. We are proud to present the exhibition **Alumina**, an exhibition of 26 graduates who continue their contribution to the profile of Australia's cultural life.

Emeritus Professor David Williams AM

ANU Research School of Humanities

Chair, ANU Foundation for the Visual Arts

[Director ANU School of Art Oct 1985 - June 2006]

SUNDAY IN THE WORKSHOP...

The title of this exhibition has been thoughtfully and appropriately chosen, certainly it made this particular graduate smile. For the uninitiated the word alumina refers to the oxide layer that begins to naturally form on the surface of the metal aluminium when it is exposed to oxygen. Though invisible to the naked eye it is of particular significance that this oxide layer renders the surface both air and water resistant, that it is particularly tough, that it withstands high temperatures and that it renders the surface of the metal more resistant to wear. It is common knowledge amongst the participants in this exhibition but also more generally of all of our Alumni that this layer of oxide (once deliberately cultivated to a thickness suitable through a process known as anodising) is also porous and able to be dyed vivid colours. Through this process the natural grey of the aluminum can become permanently and startlingly fire engine red, canary yellow or even regulation workshop blue. It is this quality of strength and quiet endurance with more than one or two flashes of brilliance that is also characteristic to the work and methodology of the Alumni of the Australian National University's Gold and Silversmithing Workshop.

The Workshop was founded in 1980 by Norwegian silver-smith and former head Ragnar Hansen. In 1985 he was joined by Roger Hutchinson, and in the same year by Johannes Kuhn who was appointed head of workshop in 2001. The influence of the core and founding members of staff is far reaching and the threads of their teaching is evident in this exhibition, as is the more recent influence of Cinnamon Lee, a former graduate of the program who joined the teaching staff in 2003. Of the core staff members it is notable Hansen, Kuhn and Hutchinson have all dedicated above twenty years each to the teaching of a slowly diminishing discipline, and the dissemination of a set of skills that are labour intensive to teach, time consuming to learn and to apply in a climate that demands continual economic justification.

This continuity of staff is a contributing factor towards evidence of certain uniformities in the work presented in the exhibition **Alumina**. The identification of a common quality in this varied group of work, does not refer specifically to an over arching set of aesthetic values but moreover to a kind of approach in the treatment and selection of certain materials and accordingly the use of appropriate and often innovative techniques. Indeed, the mediation of a diversity of precious and non precious materials represented in the exhibition include not only metal, but glass, jewels, porcelain, Perspex, polyester and even video. The use of these materials however, is closely linked by a consideration of materiality and technique.



GILBERT RIEDELBAUCH

Arc Light 2009

Brass, rubber, LEDs, feathers, power pack
500x100x100mm

Graduated with a Graduate Diploma of Arts (Visual) 1993, currently practicing in Canberra, ACT.
Lecturer ANU School of Art since 1994.

ALUMINA

An Exhibition of Recent Work by Gold and Silversmithing Workshop Alumni 2009

April 30 - May 30, 2009 School of Art Foyer Gallery
The Australian National University School of Art, Canberra ACT, Australia

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David Williams for accompanying Johannes Kuhn as guest curator in the selection of exhibiting artists and for his continuing support of the Gold and Silversmithing Workshop. **Mia-Lee Ching** for volunteering her time to write the catalogue essay. **Gordon Bull** - Head of the School of Art and **James Holland** - Gallery Co-ordinator of the School of Art Gallery. **Roger Hutchinson** for being a Class-A Champion. All participating **G&S graduates** for their time in providing new works for this special exhibition.

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