

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST **OF AUSTRALIA**

Report by Elizabeth Lamont – 2003 Churchill Fellow
Visual Artist
Brisbane, Australia
Ph: 61 + (7) 33005778 Mob: 0401382433
lamont05@powerup.com.au

“A Visual Art project to investigate contemporary and traditional Drawing practices in the US, France and Italy”

I understand that the Churchill Trust may publish this Report, either in hard copy or on the Internet or both, and consent to such publication.

I indemnify the Churchill Trust against any loss, costs or damages it may suffer arising out of any claim or proceedings made against the Trust in respect of or arising out of the publication of any Report submitted to the Trust and which the Trust places on a website for access over the internet.

I also warrant that my final Report is original and does not infringe the copyright of any person, or contain anything which is, or the incorporation of which into the Final Report is, actionable for defamation, a breach of any privacy law or obligation, breach of confidence, contempt of court, passing-off or contravention of any other private right or of any law.

Elizabeth Lamont

January 2004

INDEX

- 1 Introduction and acknowledgements**
- 2 Executive Summary**
- 3 Program**
- 4 Main Body - Churchill Fellowship Project**
 - The New York Studio School
 - Transcriptions
 - Museums
 - Visit to Louise Bourgeois
- 5 Conclusion and Recommendations**

1. Introduction

This report details the program and outcomes from a 2003 Churchill Fellowship. The project involved visiting key International Art Collections in the United States, France and Italy and to receive intensive training in Drawing at the New York Studio School. The aim of the project was to enhance my skills and nurture my creativity by studying both contemporary and traditional applications of drawing in Visual Arts practice. In particular I examined the role of fabric and women's costume in contemporary art and compared this to the work of traditional 15th century Renaissance Masters.

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the support of the Winston Churchill Foundation. The fellowship opened many doors of friendship and goodwill with artists, curators and directors of public institutions. Throughout my experience of travelling as a Churchill Fellow I encountered enormous support from museum staff enabling me to research and access specific collections not readily available to the general public.

In addition to the Winston Churchill Foundation I would like to thank the following organizations which offered support and encouragement for my project: The Ian Potter Foundation; Queensland College of Art, Griffith University; The New York Studio School; Artworkers Alliance; Louise Bourgeois Studios; Fogg Museum, Harvard University Cambridge; Museum of Fine Arts Boston; Louvre Museums, Paris; Rodin Museum Paris; Gallery 482, ARTOURS Gallery; Logan Gallery; Metro Arts; Bellas Gallery. I would also like to thank the many friends and relatives who gave me encouragement and finally my family Peter, Michelle, Katherine and Christopher Lamont whose love sustained me throughout my travels.



Pantheon, Rome (2003) Photo Peter Lamont

2. Executive Summary

Name: Elizabeth Lamont
Occupation: Visual Artist
Address: 8 Belinda Close The Gap, QLD 4061 AUSTRALIA
Phone: 61 + 7 33005778
Email: lamont05@powerup.com.au

Fellowship Objective

To enhance my skills and nurture my creativity by investigating contemporary and traditional visual art practices relating to drawing, visiting international Museums and galleries and studying at the New York Studio School.

Fellowship Highlights/Findings

1. The New York Studio School
I undertook an intensive two-week drawing course at the New York Studio School. I have been introduced to new methods and strategies for interpreting and expressing visual information. This will be fully assimilated into my studio practice and impact on future exhibitions. Attending the college as a participant also afforded me the opportunity to observe and learn teaching techniques that I can readily introduce into my own drawing workshop programs in 2004 and beyond. The experience of studying at this international college is one that I will value for many years to come
2. Visit to Louise Bourgeois
One of the most influential days of my Churchill Fellowship was a visit to the home of internationally celebrated artist Louise Bourgeois. Louise holds regular Salons for invited visual artists who have an affinity with her work. I had the opportunity to discuss my art practice and have my work critiqued by Louise. As an outcome of this critique Louise has recommended that I have my work assessed by The Reviewing Committee at the Drawing Centre, New York for consideration for international exhibition opportunities.
3. Museums
Visiting Museums in US, France and Italy was an integral component of my project. My research included examining visual material from a total of over 35 Museums in a seven-week period. I was able to maintain short intervals between visits to museums thus allowing me to contrast and compare the range of visual material. Visiting the Museums also offered me an opportunity to draw and paint directly from original frescos. One the most rewarding highlights were in regional Italy, where I spent a number of days drawing transcriptions based on the Ghirlandaio frescos in the Santa Fina Chapel, San Gimignano. Outcomes of these drawings together with drawings from New York and the Louvre, Paris have resulted in a small collection of artist's books and folios for future exhibition.

3. - Program

Boston:

17th – 21st September

Fogg Museum, Harvard University
Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University
Museum of Fine Arts
Howard Yezerski Gallery
Judy Ann Goldman Gallery
Robert Klein Gallery
Victoria Munroe Fine Art
Nielson Gallery

New York:

22nd September – 11th October

Studying at the New York Studio School
Visit to Louise Bourgeois
Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art
Museum of Modern Art (Queens)
Solomon R Guggenheim Museum
The Drawing Center
The Whitney Museum
Peter Blum Gallery

Paris:

12th – 21st October

Fiac International Contemporary Art Fair
Musee Rodin
Louvre Museums
Centre Pompidou
Musee National Gustave Moreau
Musee de la Mode
Musee National des chateaux de Versailles
Le Sarat – *Botticelli* Exhibition

Rome:

22nd – 25th October

Spada Gallery, Spada Palace
Scuderie del Quirinale, *Metafisica* Exhibition
Vatican Museums
The Pantheon

Florence and Tuscany Region:

26th October – 1st November

Uffizi, Florence

Palazzo Pitti, Florence

Palatine Gallery, Florence

Santo Spirito, Florence

Museo Civico, Prato

Cathedrale di S. Stefano

Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Pecci, Prato

Museo di Pittura Murale, Prato

The Collegiate Church Of San Gimignano (Frescos)

Museo Leonardiano, Vinci

Contacts established overseas

Louise Bourgeois, Chelsea, New York

Graham Nickson, Dean, The New York Studio School

Patrick Murphy, Curator of Prints and Drawings, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Howard Yezerski, Director of Howard Yezerski Gallery, Boston

Jean Fremon, Director of Galerie Lelong, Paris

Helene Morel, Assistant Curator, Rodin Museum, Paris

Daniel Soutif, Director, Luigi Pecci Contemporary Art Center, Prato, Italy



Leonardo Museum, Vinci Italy (2003) Photo Peter Lamont

4. Main Body - The Project

The New York Studio School

The New York Studio School provided me with the opportunity to attend an intensive study program in Drawing. Graham Nickson, Dean and founder of the Studio Schools Drawing Marathon took the program. The drawing program ran for two consecutive weeks from 9.00am - 10.00pm. The program is equivalent to one semester's drawing course at the School. Visual Artists who attended the program came from various American States and many came from overseas countries. The program was structured on a disciplined approach to drawing and provided participants with enhanced observational and perceptual skills. An emphasis on perceptual skills resulted in participants experiencing the subject matter from a personal viewpoint. The content of the course analysed form and matter, distance and space, always taking into account relational aspects of mark making.

Attending the New York Studio School had shared benefits both from professional and teaching perspectives. Skills that I have acquired by attending the school will inform my practice well into the future. In respect to professional development attending the intensive training program has given me an insight into new methods and strategies in interpreting and expressing visual information. I have learned a practical disciplined approach to drawing, which I can use as a tool when producing work for future exhibition. From an educational viewpoint I will be able to inject knowledge that I have learnt into my own workshop program that I will deliver into the community when the exhibition '*Presence*' tours QLD, NSW and VIC in 2004/2005.



The New York Studio School 2003

Transcriptions

A significant outcome of attending The New York Studio School was my introduction to the practice of transcriptions. The act of transcribing or drawing from a masterpiece is an activity, which bridges time, history, and culture.

Great art of the past did not appear out of a vacuum; it had a continuous link with its precursors, distant and recent. It reached for the life line of understanding the past holds out to the present (Nickson, n.d. online)

By carefully observing and transcribing from a masterpiece the participant is led to experience the mind and the creative processes of a Master. The transcription is a vehicle for a quest of knowledge and it is a process, which seeks to understand the structural, conceptual and spiritual essence of an artwork rather than a visual likeness. On completion of the drawing program I visited Paris and was able to have the opportunity to do transcriptions from original masterpieces in the Louvre. In particular, I spent three days transcribing Eugene Delacroix *Liberty Leading the People* (1830).



Eugene Delacroix 'Liberty Leading the People' (1830) (detail)

In Italy I made several repeat visits to Prato and San Gimignano spending several days working in Chapels and Basilicas transcribing details of Fresco paintings by 15th Century Italian Masters. The outcomes of the transcriptions are conceptual in nature rather than representational culminating in small a collection of artist's books and folios that will be exhibited in 2004/05.

Museums and Galleries

Researching visual material in Museums formed a significant component of my Churchill Fellowship. The aim of my research was to view exhibitions and access collections, which were related to the use of women's costume and dress in contemporary and traditional art practice, themes which I have been exploring in my own practice for a number of years. Over a period of seven weeks I visited public and private Art Museums in Boston, New York, Paris, Rome, Florence and Tuscany. Maintaining short intervals between visits to museums allowed me to contrast and compare the range of differing visual material. Overall I received enormous support for my project. At times, Curators took special care and attention to show works from collections which were of particular significance to my studio practice and investigations, as was the case in the Mongan Center at the Harvard University's Fogg Museum, Boston; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Rodin Museum, Paris; and the Museo di Pittura Murale (Fresco Collections Museum) Prato, Italy.

- In the United States, curatorial staff member Patrick Murphy at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston was able to identify and bring to my attention several contemporary US Artists who are working on themes related to my own practice. Patrick provided me with notes, web site addresses and books on local US contemporary artists as well as bringing out from the museums collection artworks for me to view. I took advantage of visiting the Museums exhibition 'Visions and Revisions, Art on Paper since 1960'. This exhibition surveyed the diversity of style and unconventional use of media in the late 20th century and early 21st century the exhibition showcased prints, drawings and photographs. The benefit of this introduction is that I am able to continue to research contemporary US art practices in order to inform my own practice as well to use as helpful teaching aids.
- The Mongan Center and the Reisinger Museum are located in Harvard Universities Fogg Museum, Cambridge US. I spent several days at the Mongan Study Room researching their collection. The centre is home to 12,000 drawings, 60,000 prints and 20,000 photographs of European and American artists from the 14th century to the present. Museum staff was especially helpful in locating works by Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse, Celmins and local artist Lesley Dill. The Reisinger Museum has a special collection of Northern European Artists. Recently this museum has focused on collecting post war and contemporary art from German speaking Europe and I was able to access the complete set of prints by post war artist Joseph Beuys.
- In Paris I spent an afternoon at the Rodin Museum with assistant curator Helene Morel. The Rodin museum holds a collection of 7,000 drawings by Rodin and a small collection of Drawings by Camille Claudel. Numerous volumes of catalogues document the collection, which are housed in archival folders. I was fortunate to view the museums expansive collection of drawings as access is extremely limited. Helene brought to my attention a large selection of drawings and watercolours by Rodin, which focused on dress and costume. I was also able to view a collection of rarely exhibited drawings by Camille Claudel.

- My visits to the Louvre Museums were extremely rewarding. I visited a special exhibition of drawings by the 15th century Italian Florentine artist Lorenzo di Credi (c.1458-1537). I was able to examine traditional drawing techniques by this master and in conjunction with this exhibition I viewed large 15th century cartoons. I spent several days drawing from artworks in the collection (see Transcriptions). In the Louvre's 'Musee de la Mode' I viewed an outstanding exhibition of contemporary women's clothing which explored the visual and conceptual themes very akin to fine art practices. It was supported by video and text.
- In Paris I attended the Fiac Contemporary Art Fair which represented both the historical avant-gardes and the emerging trends in contemporary art by 174 international Galleries from 22 countries. At Fiac I was introduced to Jean Fremon, Director of Gallery Lelong in Paris. Gallery Lelong represents artists such as Kiki Smith and Rosemarie Laing (Australia). Jean Fremon was also able to recommend to me contacts at Lelongs New York Gallery in order to further research visual artists who are exploring issues of dress and costume in their studio work.
- Museums and Churches in Italy provided a rich primary source of 15th century Renaissance artworks. In Rome, Florence and Tuscany I was able to pursue my special interest in frescos. The Vatican Museum provided a rich primary resource of frescos and paintings by Botticelli, Raphael, Melozzo da Forli and Michelangelo. I was able to closely examine beautiful frescos which detailed excellent examples of flowing robes and costume relevant to my investigations. The regional centre of Prato was especially rewarding to visit and holds major frescos by Fra Filippo Lippi (c.1406-1469) many of which at the present moment are under restoration.
- During my visit to Museo di Pittura Murale curatorial staff provided me with helpful information on recent fresco restoration projects and I was able to access 15th century graffiti by Girolamo Ristori (1455 ca. – 1512).



*Girolamo Ristori (1455ca-1513)
Graffiti (detail)
Museo di Pittura Murale, Prato Italy
Photo Peter Lamont*

- The Museo di Pittura Murale also houses a considerable collection of cartoons and under-study drawings of frescos by Paolo Uccello (1397 –1475), which were uncovered during restoration in 1964. In addition to significant Renaissance holdings Prato is an innovative centre of Contemporary Art and is home to the Luigi Pecci Contemporary Art Centre. The Director, Daniel Soutif provided me with a tour of the gallery which showcased a number of international and Italian contemporary artists.

Visit to Louise Bourgeois

The most memorial and influential day of my Churchill Fellowship was my visit to the home of Louise Bourgeois in Chelsea, New York. Internationally acclaimed, Louise Bourgeois art practice has spanned over 50 years and she has been a major influence on contemporary art. Bourgeois status as an artist was not recognised until the 1980's by which time she had entered her seventies.

In 1982 the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) held a retrospective of her work. Bourgeois has since received numerous international exhibitions and her intimate drawings *The Insomnia Drawings* were featured at Documenta 11, 2002. Bourgeois has been an enormously influential role model for me both on a personal and professional level. The Churchill Fellowship afforded the opportunity to meet with the artist personally and to have my work critiqued by her.



***Home of Louise Bourgeois,
Chelsea, New York***

Bourgeois holds regular Salons and invites visual artists to participate. The sessions are documented on film, where critiquing, debate and lively discussion on the nature of contemporary art are all a part of the afternoon, which runs well into the evening. Louise displayed her sharp wit to the dozen or so artists who attended the Salon, and at the age of 92 proved to be a tireless hostess.

5. *Conclusion and Recommendations*

Presently there is a growing interest in a return to traditional skills in the visual arts. This is occurring on both a national and international level. By undertaking this project I have acquired knowledge of the latest trends in contemporary arts practice, examined visual material at key international Museums and received intensive training in drawing at the New York Studio School.

The Churchill Fellowship has allowed me to develop a higher level of professional maturity in my visual arts practice. The training I have received at the New York Studio School together with exposure to a wide range of visual material in international museums has afforded me a valuable platform in which to pursue my studio investigations. It is my goal to fully assimilate my experiences into my studio work, which will impact significantly on my exhibition program to Australian audiences.

Attending the New York Studio School gave me the opportunity to observe and experience innovative teaching techniques. The intensive nature of the program ensured participants were wholly focused for the duration of the program. Strategies used employed a high level of critiquing of participants work. Immediate feedback ensured maximum direction and accelerated learning curves for the participants. I intend to disseminate the knowledge gained at the New York Studio School through my own drawing workshop program. Throughout 2004/2005 I will be holding workshops in local, state and interstate regional communities. I have a special interest in fostering a love of drawing in young people and youth. I look forward to imparting my knowledge in the hope that young people can use drawing as an effective tool for visual communication. My findings show that used discriminately drawing as a medium is a powerful tool in which one can participate and engage in current discourse in the visual arts adding to the quality of cultural life in Australia. The benefits of which will be reaped not only in the short term but well into the future.



Drawing Installation, Paris (2003) Photo Peter Lamont