16. THE 1970S

CONVENOR: GEORGINA DOWNEY

Although Australian art history is constantly undergoing a process of revision, the period of the nineteen-seventies continues to elicit controversy. Often labelled the "vanishing mediators" period, it is a period for which the Australian art world has been too what, and it is not to be found in its entirety in the work of the 1970s, nor in its entirety in the work of the 1980s. However, it is a period that the seventies era is to be regarded as a crucial and dynamic period which initiated the contemporary era.

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3. FEMINISTS AND FORMALISTS

EDWARD HANFLING

The New Zealand women's art movement emerged in the 1970s when modernist steps and styles were increasingly visible. Peter Yates had opened the Pollock Gallery in Sydney in 1972, showing the work of predominantly male abstract painters in pursuit of aesthetic purity. Many women artists, in line with feminist reassessments of women's roles and styles were increasingly visible. Peter Yates had opened the Pollock Gallery in Sydney in 1972, showing the work of predominantly male abstract painters in pursuit of aesthetic purity. Many women artists, in line with feminist reassessments of women's roles and styles, began moving away from traditional styles and forms. This was especially true of abstract and conceptual artists, who began experimenting with new techniques and materials. The 1970s and 1980s saw a shift towards more traditional and figurative forms, as well as the emergence of new groups such as the "abstractionists" and "conceptualists.

How have the performances of artists like Juliette Lowie stood the test of time, or against the works of more traditional postmodernists such as painting? And how are these abstract paintings shown at Vixen's gallery evaluated now, when formal values are devalued? In addressing such questions, the paper hopes to raise the possibility of some sort of reappraisal of the aesthetic and the political, in order to find space for both feminism and formalism, in Australian art history of the 1970s-80s.

Dr. Edward Huntley is the senior lecturer in the School of Art and Design at the University of Auckland, where he teaches regularly on the Auckland-based course "Art and Design History." His publications include the first major book on New Zealand abstract painter William Srok, "Melbourne: The Art of Transformation" (Auckland University Press, 2005), co-written with Alan Jorgensen, and the article "Melbourne: The Art of Transformation" (October 2009 issue of the Burlington Magazine).