La Trobe University Art Strategy

1. BACKGROUND

La Trobe University has maintained a strong commitment to the Visual Arts since its early foundation years, through the formation of a nationally significant art collection in 1966, the study of art history until 2012 and the offering of a Visual Arts Degree over many decades.

The La Trobe Art Institute (LAI) was established in 2013 to build upon existing curatorial, exhibition, education and engagement programs in order to broker cultural partnerships and foster game changing initiatives within the creative industries.

Following the resignation of the inaugural Director, Dr Neil Fettling, in December 2015, Karen Quinlan, the Director of the Bendigo Art Gallery since 2000, was appointed as the LAI’s first Professor of Practice and Director of the LAI.

This appointment provided an opportunity to review the operations of the LAI and develop a La Trobe University Art Strategy. The strategy aims to define a new framework for delivering on La Trobe University’s ambition to be a leading arts institution locally, regionally and nationally.

The development of the strategy has been informed by:

- Comparative research across University arts institutions, including in-depth research on the role of an arts museum in relation to the University sector and the cultural industry sector (Appendix One)
- SWOT Analysis (Appendix Two)
- Extensive consultation (Appendix Three)

1.1 VISION

La Trobe University will be recognised as a national leader in the arts, and the Australian university of choice for local, regional, national and international arts and cultural industry partnerships.

1.2 PURPOSE

La Trobe University will build upon its strengths – curating, collecting and exhibiting; teaching and research; engagement and innovation – to make a significant difference to the cultural and economic life of the University and the communities we serve.

1.3 ROLE OF THE STRATEGY

The Art Strategy will provide a framework for the La Trobe Art Institute to position La Trobe University as a significant cultural institution within the wider creative industries ecosystem. By building upon La Trobe’s history and strengths, the LAI will become a catalyst for innovation and art appreciation; and an influential advocate and role model for the sector’s role in underpinning the social, cultural and economic welfare of our vibrant, connected and creative communities.
2. CURRENT LAI BUSINESS OPERATIONS:

There are four current business operations within the LAI.

1. LA TROBE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF ART (LUMA)

Located at the Bundoora Campus LUMA has offered exhibitions of contemporary art practice, dealing with historical and contemporary art debates that seek to make a significant contribution to contemporary critical discourse, while adding to the knowledge of Australian artists, movements and events.

2. VISUAL ARTS CENTRE (VAC)

Located in Bendigo the VAC has engaged similarly showcasing contemporary art practice while engaging with the community through a public lecture program, artist floor talks and residencies featuring local, national and international artists.

3. THE PHYLLIS PALMER GALLERY

Located within the existing visual arts building at the Bendigo campus this refurbished gallery space has been primarily used for the display of student art.

4. LAI

Broad objectives are to broker cultural partnerships and foster game changing initiatives within the creative industries for the University and the community both nationally and internationally.
3. LAI CORE BUSINESS

3.1 COLLECTIONS AND CURATORIAL MANAGEMENT

Provide professional expertise in the development of collection, care and conservation.

Develop and deliver relevant and interdisciplinary exhibitions that draw upon the permanent collection and industry loans; and which offer a strong academic curatorial rationale with associated opportunities for educational purposes.

3.2 INTERNAL/EXTERNAL EXHIBITIONS

Provide exhibition display areas that have international standard conditions, including lighting, environment and security.

3.3 ENGAGEMENT

Provide a framework for community focused events, research opportunities and professional development for students and staff, and connectivity with primary and secondary schools.

The profile of the LAI will enhance the reputation of La Trobe’s academic program in associated disciplines, particularly in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HUSS).

3.4 RESEARCH

Conduct relevant industry research that contributes to the growth and development of the sector (with research outputs aligned with the relevant Field of Research code for the Department of Creative Arts and English in HUSS).

Publish best practice and industry findings at relevant conferences and other suitable forums.

3.5 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Develop industry standard marketing and business plans for all LAI operations.

Ensure that the budget for operation has strong revenue lines and encourages alternative sources of income.
4. PROPOSED STRATEGY FRAMEWORK:

4.1 STRATEGY 1: COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Goals

Provide professional expertise in the development of collection, care and conservation.

Develop and deliver relevant and interdisciplinary exhibitions that draw upon the permanent collection, industry loans and offer strong academic curatorial rationale.

Specific Tasks

4.1.1 Review Collection Strategy

• Develop and implement an agreed process for acquisition.
• Establish an Acquisitions Committee.
• Develop an annual budget and budget process for acquisitions.
• Maintain and further develop the existing donor program.

4.1.2 Review LUMA operations

• Determine an industry standard solution for a preferred location and exhibition program.
• Temporarily close the existing facility as an exhibition venue (while the preferred location and exhibition program is determined).
• Improve Collection Storage
  o Relocate the La Trobe University Art Collection into appropriate storage – ensure that international best practice is in place in relation to care and conservation of the collection
• Significance Assessment
  o Conduct a significance assessment of the art collection, which is comprised of more than 2,000 post war and contemporary Australian art works covering most media and periods of Australian art (the largest holding of works are by the Australian Surrealist Bernard Boles, expatriate artist Allen David and the Etta Hirsh Ceramics Collection).
  o Include the F M Courtis Collection and the Stewart Fraser Collection of Chinese Propaganda Posters within this assessment.
• Other Collection/s
  o Revisit and reassess the Dunmoochin Foundation Art Collection so that a permanent solution is developed that satisfies the Foundation and the University.
  o Ensure that the storage care and conservation for the Ethnographic Collection is consistent and ongoing and that consideration is given to its access and display within the University’s programs.
  o Build a stronger relationship with the Trendall Collection of Antiquities and work collaboratively to ensure access and promotion through the LAI ’s engagement programs.
4.2 STRATEGY 2: INTERNAL/EXTERNAL EXHIBITIONS

Goal
Provide exhibition display areas that have international standard conditions, including lighting, environment and security.

Specific Tasks

4.2.1 50th Anniversary Exhibition
• Develop a 50th Anniversary exhibition and tour to regional galleries as the key priority for 2016/2017

4.2.2 Exhibition Gallery at Bundoora
• Investigate the possibilities for a suitable location for an exhibition gallery at the Bundoora campus including:
  o feasibility study and business case; and
  o plans for an international standard exhibition space to showcase collections and temporary exhibitions, including highlighting the existing Leonard French stained glass feature.

4.2.3 Sculpture Trail
• Develop a proposal for an outdoor sculpture trail (aligned with the Bundoora Campus Masterplan) including:
  o assessment of current onsite public art for conservation purposes;
  o repositioning and removal of sculptures that don’t ‘fit’ within the Masterplan and the revised collections policy; and
  o investigation of potential commissioning or acquisition of new sculptures through mechanisms such as an annual prize or expression of interest process.

4.2.4 Redevelopment of VAC Bendigo
• Scope the redevelopment of VAC Bendigo to include:
  o international best practice exhibitions spaces;
  o display of the permanent collection;
  o best practice storage facility;
  o lecture and workshop areas; and
  o catering and other engagement amenities.

4.2.5 Flora Hill Camps, Phyllis Palmer Gallery
• Maintain the programming and exhibition of student work at the Flora Hill campus, Phyllis Palmer Gallery.

4.2.6 Collins St presence
• Investigate the possibilities for exhibitions or display at 360 Collins Street in order to create a Melbourne CBD presence.
4.2.7 Donor Relationships (see Engagement below)

- Maintain relationships with existing donors to ensure that the support is continued during the next four years.
- Build new relationships with potential donors and philanthropists.

4.3 STRATEGY 3: ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY

Goal
Provide a framework for community focused events, research opportunities and professional development for students and staff; and connectivity with primary and secondary schools.

Specific Tasks

4.3.1 Branding and website
- Develop a new look and identity for the LAI
  - Investigate options and feasibility for creating a stand alone website to launch a redefined LAI, including all aspects of the operation.
  - Investigate options for creating dialogue through social media networks, for example, consider the feasibility of appointing a Marketing and Online Engagement officer and/or alternate mechanisms for delivery.

4.3.2 Build on existing partnerships
- Maintain and build upon existing partnerships and relationships including:
  - Bendigo Art Gallery ‘Exhibiting Culture’ series;
  - MAMA (Albury);
  - Castlemaine State Festival (regional);
  - Ateneo de Manila (International);
  - NGV Summer School (Melbourne); and
  - Edge of the Outback (Mildura).

4.3.3 New partnerships
- Form new partnerships or MOU’s with the Castlemaine Art Museum and the Shepparton Art Museum
- Form new international partnerships with like minded institutions in Asia, the US and UK.
- Investigate an internship program for future post graduate students with major international institutions such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.
4.4 STRATEGY 4: RESEARCH

Goals
Conduct relevant industry research that contributes to the growth and development of the sector.

Publish best practice and industry findings at relevant conferences and other suitable forums (with research outputs aligned with the relevant Field of Research code for the Department of Creative Arts and English in HUSS).

Specific Tasks
4.4.1 Undertake economic, social and cultural impact studies of the arts.

4.4.2 Post graduate courses
• Assist the academic school with the development of a post graduate course in curatorial studies.

4.4.3 Partnership with Public Galleries Association of Victoria
• Form a collaborative partnership with the Public Galleries Association of Victoria and work with regional galleries to provide access to collections in regional areas.

4.4.4 Internships and exchanges
• Initiate internships and exchanges for students providing access to collections and research projects.

4.4.5 STRATEGY 5: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Goals
Develop industry standard marketing and business plans for all LAI operations.

Ensure that the budget for operation has strong revenue lines and encourages alternative sources of income.

Specific Tasks
4.5.1 Touring exhibitions
• Building on the 50th anniversary exhibition tour, include touring exhibitions in future programs as a source of income generation.

4.5.2 Increase access to existing spaces
• Develop a new schedule of fees taking advantage of newly appointed and revitalized exhibitions spaces and meeting rooms.

4.5.3 Innovation
• Explore options for innovation and industry engagement to stimulate business development and job opportunities.
4.5.4 Sponsorship
• Engage with commercial sponsors to offset operating costs.

5. SUMMARY OF PROPOSED DELIVERY TIMETABLE: (See APPENDIX Four)
2016 – 2017 (TRANSITION PLAN)
• Maintain commitment to venues and exhibitions until end of 2016.
• Temporarily close LUMA at start of 2017 and reduce programming at VAC.
• Special edition of print/s for 50th Anniversary to replace artworks removed from campus office and meeting room spaces for significance assessment, exhibition and audit.
• Contribute to the 50th Anniversary visual arts program, including a major exhibition at Bendigo and subsequent tour ready by July 2017.
• Explore opportunities for suitable Bundoora campus exhibition spaces in 2017.
• Complete planning for sculpture trail at Bundoora campus in 2017.
• Development of LAI Change Proposal to clarify the operational requirements of the revitalised plan and staffing implications.

2017 – 2018
• New operational structure implemented.
• Collection storage (long term) solution resolved by end 2018.
• Exhibition presence at Bundoora by 2018.
• Refurbishment of VAC in Bendigo by 2018.
• The launch of a revitalised LUMA and/or LAI by 2018.
• Announcement of new game changing partnership/s.
• Sculpture trail proposal completed to permit the announcement of a major biennial sculpture commission (or equivalent).
• Development of a digital (and/or digital disruption) strategy to complement the art collection and exhibition program, including links to the wider body of knowledge and expertise within the University.

2018 – 2019
• Fully operational La Trobe University Museum of Art in Bendigo (including relaunch).
• Fully functional ‘collection on loan’ program to Bundoora Campus.
• La Trobe University Collection comprehensively on line.
• Commence implementation of digital strategy.
• Review and refine the arts strategy and operational priorities.

2019 – 2020
Assistance with the delivery of the Post Graduate Curatorial Studies Program utilising gallery network and collections and the expertise of professional curatorial staff.
APPENDIX One:

Comparative research: University Art Collections and Museums

In developing this strategy, research was undertaken into the key issues facing other Australian Universities in using their art collections in developing their cultural mission. The following summarises some of this information which can be found in more detail in a separate report.

Art Collections
- Detailed knowledge about a University’s collection(s) is a key starting point and it is that which leads to all sorts of possibilities from new partnerships with academics and other galleries to de-accessioning.
- It is accepted practice and often a core principle to have work exhibited throughout campuses – but this needs professional management and investment.
- It is accepted practice to build an exhibition program and other public programs to reflect and respond to the collection and include items from the collection regularly in exhibitions.
- It is not usual to have a gallery space for the sole exhibition of the collection.
- There is an increasing trend to focus/specialize in different areas rather than be catch all.
- Where there is public art in university art collections it does not seem to be well documented and maintained or form a key focus of public programs.

Facilities
- In terms of both exhibition, education and storage; quality, location, and design for purpose are all key success factors.
- Education and ancillary spaces are key to any future university art museum.
- Easy access of collection storage to the main education/exhibition facilities is crucial.

Staffing
- The use of students as volunteers and interns is important.
- Staffing levels and roles vary across universities and the number of staff compared to the level of activity and expectations are included below for comparison.

Relationship to academic courses
- There is a mixed approach but all focused on professional development and some have extensive research focus across all disciplines not just arts

Branding
- This is important and both the art facilities at Monash University (and in the future at Griffith) are being re-branded as Art Museums not just Galleries.
Future themes

- There is a need to fundraise and diversify income sources for future activity although all Universities consulted also received increased investment to go through a change process.
- Partnerships internally and externally are key but needs to be some specific framing and purpose around all these linked to the core mission.
- There is a need for flexible business models aligned to but not necessarily part of a University’s central system.

Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Size of collections</th>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Number of staff</th>
<th>Number of exhibitions per year</th>
<th>Annual Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Queensland</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>Major facility in main quad - 113 running metres upper space 136 running metres main gallery on ground floor 30 running metres in basement</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6/7 per year</td>
<td>2.8 mill not inc. acquisitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffith University Artworks</td>
<td>4500 plus some public art</td>
<td>Two - one purpose built 280 sq and one adapted</td>
<td>5.4 staff fte and lots of volunteers and interns</td>
<td>4-5 a year plus managing collection and public programs</td>
<td>1 mill trying to grow to 1.4 which is what needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUT Art Museum</td>
<td>2000 and c. 7% out at any time plus 165 Robinsons</td>
<td>One adapted 532 sq – can be 6 spaces – basement of Chancellery, Also manage William Robinson collection in OGH</td>
<td>Part of broader cultural precinct where staff shared – only two full time for Museum</td>
<td>Exhibitions in main galleries change over every 12 weeks was 8 sometimes across whole space or across 2 – Robinson new exhibition annually</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monash University art Museum</td>
<td>There are 2000 objects and 900 out on loan around the campuses at any one time.</td>
<td>New Gallery have flexibility plus educational space and looking at developing bookstore. 466 sq meters 46 sq meters for education space.</td>
<td>Have 10 staff but only three full time — have Director, Senior Curator and Collections Manager and Museums officer</td>
<td>They have four exhibition periods with 1 or 2 exhibitions at a time plus managing collection and public programs</td>
<td></td>
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LA TROBE UNIVERSITY ART STRATEGY
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<tr>
<td>University of Melbourne Ian Potter Museum</td>
<td>16,000 in total art and classics, plus another 355 when the receive Michael Buxton - 1600 art works across campus’ (4 or 5) – all managed by them</td>
<td>3 levels and more than 900 square metres of gallery space. New Gallery being planned</td>
<td>20 plus at any one time - full time and a number of part time and casual – will increase for new gallery</td>
<td>14 curated exhibitions plus managing collections and public programs</td>
<td>$3 million (60% salaries) and small acquisition budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUMA</td>
<td>7000 works</td>
<td>Two facilities in two different locations</td>
<td>Numerous including touring,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX Two:

SWOT ANALYSIS

Current Situation

This has been considered through internal and external conversations with key stakeholders from which the following is a summary:

**Strengths to Build On**

- Appointment of Karen Quinlan as Director – significant partnership approach, national and international engagement and considerable knowledge of the visual arts and cultural economy.
- Cultural history of the University through its Art Collections and development of the cultural facilities.
- Cultural partnerships and sponsorships that position the University in the community.
- Significant post 1960s work in the collection, with some earlier works from the Courtis Collection and public art at Bundoora.
- Good public programs and exhibitions run through Visual Arts Centre (VAC) and (LUMA).
- Great partnerships with Bendigo Art Gallery (BAG), National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), and Murray Arts Museum Albury (MUMA).
- Some earned income through activities of (VAC).
- Visual Arts Degree to be incorporated into a Bachelor of Creative Arts.

**Weaknesses to Resolve**

- A lack of understanding of the core purpose of the LAI (and hence its component parts) and the ‘vision’ the University has for what it will achieve.
- Lack of visibility beyond Bendigo and nationally confused by a number of brands.
- Limited knowledge of the collection, its status and condition due to lack of assessment and investment in maintenance.
- Out of date policies across all aspects of collection acquisition and management.
- Limited use of the collection in public or academic contexts.
- Confusion over the idea of whether there was ever to be an art school and if so, the role the LAI would be expected to play.
- Current LUMA location at Bundoora is not ideal.
- Phyllis Palmer Gallery is a good space for students but not necessarily aligned to the vision of the LAI.
- Lack of small scale or artists run facilities in Bendigo.
- Limited information about the markets in which the current LAI operates. LAI has been principally funded by the University with additional support leveraged through partnerships ( limited engagement with donors to date).
Opportunities

- A recognition that LAI could play a significant role in the next stage of cultural development in Regional Victoria aligned with state and local government objectives and particularly focused in Bendigo.
- Re-positioning of Bendigo as a contemporary voice for art and ideas.
- Digitization and the exploitation of new technology is a key opportunity across all areas of activity, including potential for proactive engagement with the University’s wider body of knowledge.
- Build on the history and current student intake and courses offered by La Trobe which have key features such as a large percentage of students from different cultural backgrounds and a traditional of access for all.
- Opportunities for post grad/research focus and engagement through cultural discourse and with design led practice across the whole University.
- Opportunities to further professional development opportunities for creative arts students.
- Enhanced public programs across disciplines particularly in Bendigo and through partnerships in other campus locations.
- Bendigo is well placed to re-house and conserve the collection – it has an arts precinct capacity for venue development and a city base for LAI activities.
- Opportunities for developing income streams related all aspects of business.

Barriers to its success

- To achieve its full potential LAI needs to engage beyond the visual arts and across the broader cultural economy incorporating design, screen, performance, media etc within the resources available.
- An understanding that to operate effectively LAI will need to be a new organisational model for the University and for the delivery of regional arts and cultural development.
- The requirement of new resources to overcome the weaknesses and seize the new opportunities offered.
- Continued confusion over the vision, purpose and brands.
APPENDIX Three

Key strategic priorities for 2016

- Undertake a thorough economic (financial value), cultural (aesthetic and historical) and social (period and discourse) assessment of the current collections including all integrated and stand alone public art.
- Undertake a re-branding of the LAI and all its activities.
- Identify and confirm budgetary commitment from the University.
- Maintain commitments to existing shows at LUMA in 2016 only.
- Temporarily close LUMA by 2017 and store the Collection (apart from those works in the 50th) at industry standard storage facilities.
- Maintain some programming at VAC during 2017 where commitments have been made and where programming is beneficial for dialogue.
- In partnership with Bendigo Art Gallery curators develop and deliver a 50th anniversary exhibition to be held at Bendigo Art Gallery, with touring potential for that exhibition during 2017 and 2018.
- Develop an exhibitions policy for 2017-2020 (reviewed every 4 years). Include in that policy a specific vision for all campuses and a specific strategy for the commissioning of public art.
- Undertake a feasibility study for the development of the VAC building as a 24/7 contemporary art space, cultural economy incubator and innovation hub for Bendigo and possible principal home of the Collection/s.
- Investigate the development of an international partnership with a leading design focused cultural institution such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London to develop a strategy for design at La Trobe.
- Develop a fundraising strategy for foundations and donors in partnership with the Alumni and Advancement Office.
- Develop a staffing structure appropriate to the goals including investigating further the engagement of students as interns and volunteers.
- Identify assets and areas of activity where reductions in expenditure can be made.
- Identify assets and areas of activity which could be developed to earn income.
- Development of LAI Change Proposal to clarify the operational requirements of the revitalised plan and staffing implications.
- Special edition of print/s for 50th Anniversary to replace artworks removed from campus office and meeting room spaces for significance assessment, exhibition and stocktake.
Strategic priorities for 2017 and beyond

- In partnership with the City of Bendigo, become the leading organiser of the establishment of ‘sculpture plaza’ for temporary installations such as ‘Forever Marilyn’ (corner of View street and Rosalind Park in Bendigo).
- Explore hosting a significant national arts and cultural conference in partnership with the Public Galleries Association of Victoria incorporating curating in a contemporary regional context.
- Support the development of cultural programs in partnership with other arts and cultural organisations across all La Trobe locations/campuses, including Mildura, Albury-Wodonga, Shepparton etc.
- Investigate a partnership with the City of Bendigo to celebrate the multiple cultures of the La Trobe student cohort and residents of Regional Victoria.
- Investigate international internships and exchanges for students and academics at key cultural institutions.
- Explore other sites across the Bendigo CBD for artists spaces and cultural activation.
- Undertake a feasibility study for the development of a new space at Bundoora for the future exhibition and educational use of the La Trobe collections.
- Complete collection significance assessment.
- Plan and implement a sculpture trail proposal for the Bundoora Campus, with possible announcement of a major biennial sculpture commission (or equivalent).
- Resolve collection storage requirements.
- Launch a revitalised LUMA and/or LAI by 2018.
- Feed into new course with professional development opportunities for all creative arts students.
- Explore Post Graduate Research focusing on diploma and masters programs including curatorial studies in a regional context.
- New operational structure implemented.
- Refurbishment of VAC in Bendigo.
- Announce new game changing partnership/s.
- Develop and implement a digital (and/or digital disruption) strategy to complement the art collection and exhibition program, including links to the wider body of knowledge and expertise within the University.
Acknowledgement

La Trobe University has campuses and undertakes a range of activities in the traditional lands of the following people: Wurundjeri, Boonerwong, Jaara Jaara, Ladi Ladi, Barkindji, Matha Muthi, Wiradjuri, Dharawal, Wai Wurrin, Yorta Yorta, Bangerang and Taungurong.

The University acknowledges Aboriginal people’s ongoing connection to the land upon which its campuses are located and values the contributions Indigenous Australians make to its activities.

There is a special synergy between Bunjil, the creator Spirit of the Kulin Nations and the La Trobe University logo of an eagle.

The image above captures this significant connection between the two icons. Bunjil, the eagle, is a primal symbol particularly significant to Melbourne and regional Victoria.

The connection between Bunjil and the University logo exceeds mere coincidence: as a leading contemporary university we aspire to principles of global citizenship, leadership, responsibility and environmental sustenance similar to those values represented by Bunjil and beliefs held by Indigenous Australians.

The symbolism and significance for both La Trobe University and for Aboriginal people challenges us all to ‘GAMAGOEN YARRBAT’ (to soar).

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is indicative only. While every effort is made to provide full and accurate information at the time of publication, the University does not warrant the currency, accuracy or completeness of the contents. The University reserves the right to make changes without notice at any time in its absolute discretion.

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