

University's art illustrating academic issues



Photo by Duncan Shaw-Brown, C&D

Denise Copland's *Indigenous* etchings hang in the School of Forestry.

Think art is all about pretty pictures? Many departments at the University of Canterbury are proving that an educational art collection can be much more than just decoration.

Julie King, Chair of the Art Purchases Committee, said that many of the University's artworks are part of a "thinking collection" because the pieces address the concerns and points of view of the departments that house them.

For example, the School of Sociology and Anthropology holds photographs from the *Working Men* collection by Glenn Busch, who teaches photography in the University's School of Fine Arts. The photographs depict New Zealand working men of the 1980s, and they are used in a third year sociology course to discuss issues of work and unemployment.

The photographs are complimented by three other photographs – two by Anne Noble about life inside a convent and a third by Margaret Dawson, a Canterbury Fine Arts graduate and former visiting lecturer.

Rosemary Du Plessis, senior lecturer in sociology, said that the art works benefit students in the department because "they are photographs interested in people's lives".

Similarly, Dr Tiina Vares said that artwork in the School of Culture, Literature and Society provided "real talking points for staff and students". The school has chosen pieces that Dr Vares said were "provocative and passionate, and that students and staff would respond to in various ways". The school's art collection includes works by Jane Zusters, Margaret Dawson, Heather Straka and graffiti artist Michael Slade, who

was commissioned by the department to produce a painting about popular local culture.

The School of Forestry also finds its interests reflected in the art adorning its walls. Dr Hamish Cochrane, lecturer in biosecurity at the Forestry School said that he uses various artworks in the department "to explain indigenous forest values to visitors".

The school requested the University's *Indigenous* etchings, which feature indigenous trees by Denise Copland, who trained at Canterbury's School of Fine Arts. The theme of the etchings is human impact on the natural environment, and Ms King said the pieces were "a forceful commentary on contemporary issues".

Other departments that have artworks related to their academic

expertise include the School of Biological Sciences, which has a piece about cloning, and the School of Political Science and Communication, which holds several pieces about colonisation, including a photographic work by Margaret Dawson called *Colonial Vision* about how Caucasian New Zealanders establish their cultural identity.

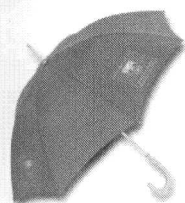
All of the pieces throughout the University are also used by Honours students in Fine Arts courses who conduct projects on individual artworks.

Ms King said the collection was a way to "enhance the University and also a way to start a collection that will be of interest to future students because of what the art has to say."

Laura Sessions



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