



THE UNIVERSITY OF

MELBOURNE

Archives Digitised Collections

Creator(s)

Title

Correspondence: Burke's article for Vestes: The Fine Arts & the Australian Universities

Date

1963

Description

Item: 1978.0039.00009

Terms and Conditions

Preferred Citation

University of Melbourne Archives, Correspondence: Burke's article for Vestes: The Fine Arts & the Australian Universities, 1978.0039.00009

Please return to
Prof. J. Burke,
Melbourn Club.

Tuesday October 22nd, 1963

Dear Mr. Wheelwright,

I am enclosing the second half of Professor
Burke's article for Vestes, which I have just typed. *

I am also sending a copy direct to him with a stamped
and addressed envelope for forwarding to yourself.

Immediately he receives this he will check it and send
the corrected copy on to you.

I also enclose a substitute copy of the first
half with some minor corrections.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. E. L. Wheelwright,
Editor,
Vestes,
Department of Economics,
University of Sydney,
SYDNEY, N.S.W.

Enc.

* attached is the full
copy as it was printed.

Prof. J. B. Clark
Melbourne Club

*

* Attached is the full
copy of the printed

18th October, 1963.

Dear Mr Wheelwright,

I enclose five pages of Professor Burke's article for Vestes, and I shall be forwarding the remaining section early next week. I hope that you will not be inconvenienced by this delay.

Yours sincerely,

Secretary to Professor Burke.

Mr E.L. Wheelwright,
Editor,
Vestes,
Department of Economics,
University of Sydney,
Sydney. N.S.W.

encl.

Dear Sir,
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. in relation to the above matter.

I am sorry to hear that you are not satisfied with the result of the examination. I have been very anxious to see that all the facts were correctly stated, and I have been very careful to do so.

I have been very anxious to see that all the facts were correctly stated, and I have been very careful to do so. I have been very anxious to see that all the facts were correctly stated, and I have been very careful to do so.

I have been very anxious to see that all the facts were correctly stated, and I have been very careful to do so. I have been very anxious to see that all the facts were correctly stated, and I have been very careful to do so.

I have been very anxious to see that all the facts were correctly stated, and I have been very careful to do so. I have been very anxious to see that all the facts were correctly stated, and I have been very careful to do so.

I have been very anxious to see that all the facts were correctly stated, and I have been very careful to do so. I have been very anxious to see that all the facts were correctly stated, and I have been very careful to do so.

THE FINE ARTS AND THE AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

The term 'Fine Arts' has several legitimate meanings, each authorised by usage and acceptable to logic. In its widest sense it embraces music and theatre as well as the visual arts. Historically it gained ground in a narrower sense in close association with the rise of the Renaissance and Post-Renaissance Academy. 'Le Belle Arti', that is, architecture, painting and eventually sculpture, were distinguished from those more utilitarian arts and crafts which did not require a humanist education.

The academic origins of the term are not irrelevant to a discussion of the place of the Fine Arts in a University. For Universities are not the only heirs of Plato's Academy. In Academies of Art, Past and Present (Cambridge University Press, 1940), Nikolaus Pevsner surveyed the evidence for the existence and nature of the Accademia Leonardo da Vinci:

According to all we know of academies of the Renaissance, there is the greatest probability of its having been hardly more than an informal gathering of amateurs, such as the Pontaniana at Naples. Just as this was called Pontaniana from the name of its most famous member, Leonardo seems to have been the sponsor if not the founder of the Milanese group.

Pacioli records that Leonardo da Vinci honoured with his presence a debate on 9 February 1498 in Lodovico Sforza's castle at Milan, together with numerous clerical and secular scholars, theologians, doctors, astrologers and lawyers.

The first Academies of the quattrocento were private and philosophical, not specifically professional and artistic. When the first official Academies of Art were founded under princely or Papal protection in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they inherited the philosophical interests of the earlier private and amateur bodies. Paradoxically they included science in their programme, whereas the Universities still excluded art. The Royal Academy in London was one of the last (1768) of the great Academies to be founded. Long before the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge had appointed a Professor of Fine Arts, it provided chairs of Anatomy (William Hunter, 1768), Ancient Literature (Samuel Johnson, 1770) and Ancient History (Oliver Goldsmith, 1770; not a strong appointment, but bettered by Edward Gibbon in 1787). Chemistry (Frederick S. Barff, 1871) was added much later, but finally dropped.

The term 'liberal education' has been used in various senses, and it is not possible to give a precise definition of it. It is, however, generally understood to mean a broad and general education, which is not confined to any particular branch of knowledge. It is a term which has been used since the time of the Greeks, and it has been used in many different ways since then. It has been used to describe the education of the ruling class, and it has been used to describe the education of the masses. It has been used to describe the education of the individual, and it has been used to describe the education of the nation. It is a term which has been used in many different contexts, and it is a term which has been used in many different ways.

The word 'liberal' is derived from the Latin word 'liber', which means 'free'. It is a word which has been used in many different contexts, and it is a word which has been used in many different ways. It has been used to describe the education of the ruling class, and it has been used to describe the education of the masses. It has been used to describe the education of the individual, and it has been used to describe the education of the nation. It is a word which has been used in many different contexts, and it is a word which has been used in many different ways.

According to all the known authorities, the word 'liberal' is derived from the Latin word 'liber', which means 'free'. It is a word which has been used in many different contexts, and it is a word which has been used in many different ways. It has been used to describe the education of the ruling class, and it has been used to describe the education of the masses. It has been used to describe the education of the individual, and it has been used to describe the education of the nation. It is a word which has been used in many different contexts, and it is a word which has been used in many different ways.

The word 'liberal' is derived from the Latin word 'liber', which means 'free'. It is a word which has been used in many different contexts, and it is a word which has been used in many different ways. It has been used to describe the education of the ruling class, and it has been used to describe the education of the masses. It has been used to describe the education of the individual, and it has been used to describe the education of the nation. It is a word which has been used in many different contexts, and it is a word which has been used in many different ways.

The word 'liberal' is derived from the Latin word 'liber', which means 'free'. It is a word which has been used in many different contexts, and it is a word which has been used in many different ways. It has been used to describe the education of the ruling class, and it has been used to describe the education of the masses. It has been used to describe the education of the individual, and it has been used to describe the education of the nation. It is a word which has been used in many different contexts, and it is a word which has been used in many different ways.

It was possibly more fitting that Gibbon should receive his Chair of Ancient History from an Academy of Art than his own alma mater, which he had sharply criticised. But of course his duties, like those of the others, were largely nominal. When Felix Slade died in 1868, he left by will money to found Professorships of Fine Arts at Oxford, Cambridge and at University College, London. These foundations more closely resemble Visiting Lectureships than Chairs. Their stipends are as modest as the duties. But from Ruskin to Sir Kenneth Clark, the Slade Professorships have attracted authorities on art of the greatest distinction, and sometimes of commanding influence.

A University cannot be true to its ideal while it excludes from its study one of the greatest spheres of human achievement. So long as art is excluded, it is like a body missing one of its limbs. This analogy scarcely applies without striking reservations to any great University in the English-speaking world. The Ashmolean at Oxford and the Fitzwilliam at Cambridge ~~house~~ great collections of art, and they are University collections. The scholars who administer them are members of the University. Similarly, any modern as well as ancient university that teaches architecture has admitted at least one of the Fine Arts into its curriculum. University archaeologists study all three over vast periods of time, and to-day in all quarters of the globe.

When the Renaissance artists rejected the mechanical arts for the artes liberales, they created their own Academy. This historical achievement and its consequences are basic to an understanding of the varying attitudes of Universities in the western tradition to the study of art and the training of artists. 'There is really no such thing as Art,' pronounced Ernest Gombrich, 'there are only artists'. He was echoing literally the earlier protest of a German scholar against Winckelmann's thesis of 'Kunstgeschichte ohne Namen'. Leonardo, Raphael and Michelangelo were trained neither at a University nor an Academy of Art. But each became a hero of the latter. Raphael, the academian Vasari tells us, lived more like a prince than a painter. Charles V made Titian a Count Palatine. Michelangelo, after being refused access to the Pope on an urgent matter, immediately left Rome; he was celebrated as 'Angel divino' or 'il Divino' by Ariosto, Aretino, Cellini, Palladio, Varchi and Biondo. When Reynolds painted himself in the robes of his Oxford D.C.L., his hand rested below a bust of Michelangelo. He was deeply gratified by the tribute of the University to his genius. But he was also proud of the autonomy of an Academy which in its own right could honour Johnson in letters, Gibbon in history and William Hunter, the

distinguished brother of the famous John, in science.

Both Mr Trevor Jones and Mr Felix Weiner, writing on music and theatre arts respectively, have discussed the potential rôle of the Universities against the wider background of the community at large. Artists, like musicians and dramatists, have historically managed to flourish without the benefit of a University education. Indeed, their debt to scholasticism appears to be the smallest of the three, for music was grouped with arithmetic, geometry and astronomy in the higher course of study in mediaeval Universities, and Shakespeare was undoubtedly stimulated by having to compete with the 'University wits' for the laurels of the Elizabethan stage. There are two schools of thought about the desirability of the Universities training artists, and neither can be condemned as uninformed.

When Leonardo separated painting from craftsmanship, he was well aware that the social system by which the former had flourished in the Middle Ages was no longer operative. He knew, Pevsner observes, that this was so 'and rejoiced in it'. The day of the guild was over. Its place was taken by the Academy. The attitude of English-speaking countries to Academies of Art is possibly biased by certain consequences of the late arrival of the Royal Academy in London in the international scene. It is too readily ignored that by the date of its foundation the brilliant success of the French Academy had been largely instrumental in transferring the artistic capital of Europe from Rome to Paris. It is sometimes conveniently forgotten that the early history of the English Royal Academy was more often distinguished by the encouragement of genius than its neglect: Constable may have had to wait until he was fifty-three before he became R.A. in 1829, but Turner, who unlike Constable had been taught in the Academy Schools, was elected A.R.A. at twenty-four in 1799, R.A. at twenty-seven, and Professor of Perspective at thirty-two.

The importance of the Academy for the present discussion is that it is in its existing form as much a symbol of social outmodedness for the contemporary artist as the mediaeval guild was for the artist of Leonardo's generation. Its influence, like that of the guild, has had ramifications as vast as its roots are deep. Under Louis XIV and Colbert Charles Lebrun forged the French Academy into a magnificent tool for the State patronage of art and for the State monopoly of art education at its summit. The artistic results were sometimes magnificent, the programme survived the French Revolution, and the last of the great Academicians, Ingres, was by no means the least. For a time Manet and Degas included his name hopefully in their litanies, 'we beseech thee to hear us, good Ingres', and when it became quite clear that he never would, Manet, Degas, Renoir and Cézanne continued to speak with admiration of his art.

What Mr Trevor Jones and Mr Weiner have said about the state

of music and theatre arts in Australia is often so true of the visual arts that I need only make one or two additional points. There is no Australian Academy of Art, but during the nineteenth-century the whole fabric of State art education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels was built on the pattern of a system which overseas had its pinnacle not in the University but the Academy. The values and standards of State art education were therefore nineteenth-century academic ones, and the system worked against the recognition of any other kind of art, with consequences which are still operative to-day. The vitality of art was sustained by private teachers, private schools and private groups. Most of the significant movements from the Heidelberg School to the Antipodeans have had to struggle for recognition against the prevailing 'academic' taste of the public. To-day the situation is radically different in that art is taught as a creative activity rather than a mechanical and realist skill at primary schools, the appreciation of art at the secondary stage embraces the study of the moderns as well as the Old Masters, and the avant-guarde artist is as often as not on the staff of a School of Art. Contemporary Australian art enjoys a high reputation overseas, and an Australian Council of Industrial Design is getting under weigh with a Design Index. A new National Gallery and Arts Centre is being built in Melbourne on a truly splendid scale. Already Miss Pamela Hansford-Johnson and other critics are speaking of a 'Renaissance of Australian Art'.

In this rapidly improving situation, should the Australian Universities enter the field of art education? More particularly, should they train painters and sculptors as well as architects?

Historically, the assumption of new responsibilities by Universities has been linked either with the rise of new professions or the development of new branches of knowledge. The history of art is at least as old as the Stone Age, and the artist has long ago won his battle for professional status. Many Universities overseas, notably ⁱⁿ the U.S.A., train painters and sculptors as well as architects, and an increasing number teach art history. A sound approach to finding an answer to these questions is to consider their achievement.

Play, The art historian, unlike the artist, is a genuinely late arrival on the professional scene. Opinions may differ as to whether Vasari or Winckelmann is the Father of Art History, but there can be no doubt that the academic discipline originated in the German Universities. Fiorillo took up his University post at Göttingen in 1813, G.F. Waagen at Berlin in 1844. The great period of expansion was during the 'golden age' of the German University in the second half of the nineteenth century. The British Universities kept in

reasonably close touch with German philosophy, science, philology, historical studies, even the 'higher criticism' of the Bible, and the brilliant achievements of German scholars were cited to promote the introduction of new disciplines and the modification of old ones, a process which lasted into the twentieth century, so notable for the influence of the German-speaking Austrian and Swiss psychologists. The outstanding exception was art history. Admiring glances were directed to Burckhardt in his eagle's nest in Basel, but no attempt was made to establish a comparable post.

When Felix Slade wrote his will, he can scarcely have intended that the grandiose title of 'Professor', however eminent and influential the men who filled the posts, should have obscured a masterly inaction in recognising the discipline, with the exception of the University of London. The University of Durham may have trained artists, the University of London art historians, and the University of Edinburgh both. Oxford and Cambridge kept proudly aloof.

Meanwhile the German lead had been followed in France, Italy, the Scandinavian countries and especially the U.S.A. Art scholarship was sustained in England by amateurs, the Museums and Galleries, including notably the Ashmolean at Oxford and the Fitzwilliam at Cambridge. Strange as it may seem, in the light of what has been said, English art scholarship has always been highly respected on the continent. But its reputation has been essentially for connoisseurship. A reputation for art history scarcely existed before the foundation of the Courtauld Institute, and the even more momentous decision of the Warburg Institute to choose the University of London and proximity to the continent for its home, rather than the remoter wealth of one of the great American Universities.

To-day Cambridge has made the inevitable decision, and Oxford with one of the outstanding German-trained liberals in its Chair of Art History, this time a true Professorship, is about to follow suit. One can look forward hopefully to the day when a great branch of learning will no longer be excluded from any University in the true sense.

This scarcely answers the question about training artists. If I here refer to my own experience in the first Chair of Fine Arts to be established in an Australian University, it is only because this is strictly relevant to Australian conditions.

The Herald Chair of Fine Arts was founded in 1946 with an endowment of £30,000, subsequently increased by £20,000, from the Herald and Weekly Times Limited, of which the late Sir Keith Murdoch was then Chairman. Its purposes were defined as:

For teaching the understanding and appreciation of the Fine Arts and the application of their principles and practice to the life of the community.

These are Ruskinian goals and none the worse for that. An explanatory statement written by the Vice-Chancellor and approved by the donors excluded art from 'regular courses of instruction' and therefore by implication the building up of a Department of Art History:

It must not primarily be a teaching chair, though its holder will doubtless give lectures both inside and outside the University precincts. But it is not by means of courses of instruction that he will do his work so much as by serving as an inspiration and instigator of the standards of taste, of appreciation and criticism, both in the University and throughout the community at large. He must of course work in the closest collaboration with other Departments. Art cannot be an isolated cell, if it is to take its proper part in life. Our professor will, I hope, play an active rôle in the School of Architecture, in the operations of the University, in the Conservatorium of Music, and in the departments of History, Philosophy and Languages. He should be brought into the closest contact with the Trustees of the National Gallery.

This portrait of an Admirable Crichton of the Fine Arts,

The first chair of this area was founded in 1958.

It is an example of a chair, which is usually intended to last for

from the first and second time, of which the first

the first time was then chairman. The purposes were defined as

for teaching the mathematics and statistics

of the area and the application of these principles

and practice to the life of the community.

These are the main aims and have been the main

in its history, which is the first time, or the

history of the department and the first time, or the

history, and therefore by definition the history of

the department is history.

It is a very simple and a very simple

history of the department, which is the first time

the first time and the first time, which is the

the first time and the first time, which is the

the first time and the first time, which is the

the first time and the first time, which is the

the first time and the first time, which is the

the first time and the first time, which is the

the first time and the first time, which is the

the first time and the first time, which is the

the first time and the first time, which is the

the first time and the first time, which is the

the first time and the first time, which is the

the first time and the first time, which is the

the first time and the first time, which is the

the first time and the first time, which is the

the first time and the first time, which is the

the first time and the first time, which is the

in the cloak of a Professor without Portfolio, was accompanied by a letter stating that the occupant would probably spend half his time inside the University, and half outside it.

Any contribution which a University makes to the cause of the arts must be first and foremost based on scholarship. The case for 'regular courses of instruction' was presented strictly on the grounds of scholarship, and was immediately accepted without any opposition from the donor, just the reverse. A cardinal point in its favour was that the Chair had been partly founded to support a collection, the National Gallery of Victoria. Already the Felton Bequest had supplied from income more than a million pounds for the purchase of works of art, and this with other gifts and the State grant, the early formation of a large art library in the Public Library of Victoria and the splendid project for building a new National Gallery and Arts Centre made Melbourne a natural centre for art historical studies. A collection stands in natural alliance with a University. The value of this alliance is doubled if curators and art historians co-operate in the common task of research and training. Moreover, Sir Daryl Lindsay, the Director of the Gallery, had repeatedly stressed that the time was ripe for Australia to train its own art scholars.

The effects of the change of policy were most encouraging in their consequences. What had previously been vague, floating and tentative now had a focus. An early and congenial task had been to make contact with other art historians already in Australia. These were, in chronological order of their special fields, the late Dr Leonard Adam, Professor Dale Trendall (primus inter impares), Mr. Franz Philipp from the University of Vienna, later to become my colleague and the chief architect of the Department, Dr Ursula Hoff and Dr Bernard Smith. Professor Pevsner in London had

urged me to seek out Mr Robin Boyd, whose brilliant articles he had already published in the Architectural Review. All were ultimately to lecture in the courses, and Dr Smith accepted the invitation, suggested by Mr Philipp, that he should join the staff, with the special responsibility of setting up a centre of studies in Australian art history. Professor Hunt appointed Mr John Carter from England to his staff, and generously arranged for him to lecture on the art history of classical antiquity to Fine Arts as well as Classics students.

What could scarcely have been foreseen was the immediately beneficial effect on extra-mural activities, and the immensely improved relationships with other Departments. Parallel with the contacts with art historians had been other ones, at this stage necessarily closer, with the different Faculties, notably the Faculty of Architecture, the Departments of the Arts Faculty, the National Gallery and the National Gallery Society recently formed by Sir Daryl Lindsay, the Schools of Art and Art Inspectors of the Department of Education, and finally with those especially active individuals and groups shortly to bring about the formation of a Victorian Society of Industrial Designers, an Australian Council of Industrial Design, a Victorian Society of Collectors with an Inter-State membership, the first Art Teachers' Association to be founded in Australia, and a National Trust of Victoria.

A few examples of the closer and more effective relationships must suffice for many. All students of Architecture now take a Fine Arts course. So, too, do all those studying in the Schools of Art to become art teachers. Indeed I regard the association between the University and art teachers as the most important and far-reaching result of setting up a Department, as regards the specific purposes for which the Chair was founded. Advanced classes are held in the National Gallery, and Honours graduates have been trained to take up

** This is no longer true*

...to the ... of the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

...in the ...

posts in this and other Australian Galleries. Dr. Hoff's initiative in founding the Quarterly Bulletin of the National Gallery of Victoria as a strictly learned publication has led to an equally close partnership in research. The Society of Collectors has pledged itself to support the Orde Poynton collection, itself a magnificent benefaction to the University. Dr Bernard Smith is currently editing for Georgian House a series of monographs on contemporary Australian artists, each with a chronological catalogue giving details of medium, measurement and ownership, and a full bibliography. This has brought about an invaluable collaboration between the University and living artists.

Any Australian University which introduces art history as a scholarly discipline may reasonably expect to share and improve on this experience. An important principle is to build on existing roots, and for this reason I would recommend that the first occupant of a Readership or Chair should be given a first year completely free of academic commitments, so that he can frame his policy of an original and distinctive contribution in the light of the experience he has gained both inside and outside the campus.

The Power Bequest of more than one and a half million pounds to the University of Sydney is without rival in the history of Australian private benefactions. The tangles of an imaginative will and a complicated estate are at present being sorted out, and the formulation of a policy awaits the outcome. Because the Bequest is for the advancement of contemporary art, Sydney has been given an opportunity unique among the Universities of the world. The central responsibility for scholarly standards in this field rests with the ~~U~~Museum of Modern Art in New York, but this is not a University institution. Lord James has rightly pointed out that the notion of every University teaching everything has been rendered obsolete by the expansion of knowledge. He

was referring, however, to specialisations, not to art as a fundamental basis of education. The proper stage for those specialisations that are best reserved to individual Universities in this country is at the post-graduate level. A University Institute of Modern Art which included the teachers, library and photographic collections for post-graduate research could well be taking a step of international significance. To achieve this, Sydney University would independently have to provide for the teaching of art history. If the scope is to embrace the collection of modern works of art and the training of artists, then these undertakings can only benefit from the background of scholarship.

This discussion can fittingly be brought to a conclusion by raising the central question with which it began. In an age of social change at least as remarkable as that which separated the Renaissance from the Middle Ages, should the Universities enter the field vacated by the post-Renaissance Academies of Art? The strongest single influence on the activities of my own Department in the sphere of art education has been that of L. Hirschfeld Mack, an original member of the Bauhaus staff who has devoted his life in Australia to the application of its principles to education generally. A belief which he shares with Sir Herbert Read is that creative activity should not be thwarted by a system of examinations. My short answer to the question is that a University should undoubtedly teach art history, but can best contribute to its making by inviting the artist into its company of scholars. At least one artist should be appointed to the staff of every University on a full academic salary. To paraphrase Sir John Medley may help to elucidate his duties:

It must not solely be a teaching post, though
its holder will doubtless give instruction to students

from both inside and outside the University precincts. But it is not so much by holding classes that he will do his work, as by his own example as an artist. He must, of course, be interested in the work of other Departments than Fine Arts. Art cannot be an isolated cell, if it is to take its proper part in life. Our Instructor will, I hope, play an active rôle in eliminating clichés from the drawings of students of Architecture, in designing scenery for the University Theatre and settings for the Conservatorium of Music, and in correcting and enlarging the value judgements of the departments of History, Philosophy, Languages and Fine Arts. He should not merely be brought into the closest contact with the Trustees of the State Gallery, but actually become one himself. No doubt the first step of such an Admirable Crichton amongst artists would be to proceed quietly with his plans for teaching art seriously, as the soundest of all bases for realising the wider aims.

