

THE GRIMWADES' BEQUESTS: LEGACIES AND OPPORTUNITIES UNIVERSITY HALL, OLD QUAD 11 October 2023 1–5pm

The names Grimwade and Miegunyah appear across the University of Melbourne – including in the Grimwade Collection, Grimwade Conservation Centre and Miegunyah Press.

This half-day forum explores the ongoing impact and legacy of Sir Russell and Lady Mab Grimwade's generous support to the University of Melbourne, notably through the Grimwade Collection of art and books; funds bequeathed to historical publishing and biosciences; and the Russell and Mab Grimwade Miegunyah Fund.

Russell (1879–1955) was closely involved with the University of Melbourne during his lifetime, and was always supported by Mab (1886–1973), who died fifty years ago this year. Their philanthropy continues to impact creative, historic

and scientific research at the University, and also, importantly, student engagement through annual funding of scholarships, prizes and fellowships.

Celebrating the many decades of the Grimwades' landmark donations, academics, collection managers, students and fellows come together to share their stories of inquiry, experimentation and achievements.

The forum concludes with celebratory drinks, followed by the launch of the biography *The World of Mab Grimwade* by Thea Gardner (The Miegunyah Press).

Supported by the Russell and Mab Grimwade Miegunyah Fund



POTTER
MUSEUM
OF ART

PROGRAM

1–1.15PM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY AND WELCOME

Professor Su Baker | Pro Vice-Chancellor | Cultural Partnerships

Introduction and housekeeping

Alisa Bunbury | Grimwade Collection Curator | Museums and Collections

SESSION 1

1.15–2.15PM

Chair | **Rose Hiscock** | Director, Museums and Collections

'A phase of prosperity and renown': Russell Grimwade and the reimagining of the University

The University of Melbourne was transformed through the middle decades of the twentieth century, in part by the contributions of Russell Grimwade (1879–1955). Russell was often at the heart of pivotal decisions through his chairmanship of the University Buildings Committee and as a lay member of the University Council and explained, when persuading John Medley to accept the position of Vice-Chancellor, his vision for a period of 'prosperity and renown'. Russell's optimism and imagination ring through this period. This paper examines the influences that shaped his approach to the University and traces the changes he helped to bring about.

Dr James Waghorne is University Historian and author (with Gwilym Croucher) of *Australian Universities: A History of Common Cause* (UNSW Press, 2020) and *By Students, For Students: A History of the Melbourne University Union* (Australian Scholarly, 2022).

Mab Grimwade and the University of Melbourne

Mab Grimwade (1887–1973) played an important role as a benefactor and patron of the University of Melbourne. Both alongside her husband and in her own right, Mab dedicated her time, money and organisational skill to improving the conditions, infrastructure and development of the University. This presentation sheds light on Mab's enduring legacy, showcasing her commitment to education, cultural heritage, and the University's future.

Thea Gardiner is a PhD candidate in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, researching and writing on the place of women in Australian historical memory. Her book *The World of Mab Grimwade* is released in October 2023 by The Miegunyah Press.

Developing and expanding the Grimwade Collection

Russell and Mab Grimwade each bequeathed 'furniture, furnishings and articles of household use or ornament' to the University, to which Russell added 'all pictures and books comprised in my collection of Australiana'. Settler Australian history was one of his great interests over many decades, and these prints, drawings, ephemera and books form the core of the Grimwade Collection. This talk will give a brief overview of the Collection and expand upon the way that it is being developed through selected acquisitions of works of art, as Russell proposed in his will.

Alisa Bunbury is the Grimwade Collection Curator in the Museums and Collections department and specialises in colonial Australian art and its implications. She was the editor of *Pride of Place: Exploring the Grimwade Collection* (The Miegunyah Press, 2020) and was lead curator of the major exhibition *Colony* (NGV, 2018). She researches and writes regularly on early Australian settler art.

2.15–2.25PM
SHORT BREAK

SESSION 2

2.25–3.15PM

Chair | **Dr Kyla McFarlane** Academic Engagement Manager, Museums and Collections

An overview of the Miegunyah Student Project Awards

Over several years, the Miegunyah Student Project Awards have given students from all faculties in the University an opportunity to develop and deliver research projects on selected works of art from the Russell and Mab Grimwade Miegunyah Collection. The Miegunyah Student Project Award scheme gives students experience in working in an interdisciplinary context with a significant and extensive material and visual culture collection, and the opportunity to think about how to share their research with student colleagues and public audiences, while gaining professional development experience from Department staff.

Dr Kyla McFarlane is Academic Engagement Manager in the Museums and Collections department. Originally from New Zealand/Aotearoa, she has held key curatorial positions at the Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art; Centre for Contemporary Photography and Monash University Museum of Art. Kyla has a strong interest in practice-based, interdisciplinary programs and working with artists and collections and also practices as an independent art writer.

Tacitly Mab

Arabella will speak about her experience working with the Russell and Mab Grimwade Miegunyah Collection in 2021 and her focus on Mab Grimwade within her project. She will discuss how her participation in this project opened new avenues of curiosity which led her to pursue an interest in conservation.

Arabella Frahn-Starkie, Miegunyah Student Project Awardee 2021, is a dancer and choreographer and graduate of the Victorian Collage of the Arts. She is interested in the documentation of performance, and the ways in which ephemeral experiences remain and are proliferated. She is a graduate of the Victoria College of the Arts and is currently completing a Masters of Cultural Materials Conservation at the Grimwade Centre.

Wood, brass screws, porcelain, silver, bone: Denaturalising everyday objects in the Grimwade Collection

What are the roles of domestic objects in the social reproduction of colonial society? In this presentation, we use object biography to unpack the Grimwade Collection and interrogate the mundane processes that turn stolen lands into fabled white possessions. The social and material histories of a table, a plate, a cutlery set and a tea set tell us about placemaking and Empire, taking us from dining rooms to

University House and into the space of the archive itself. This project is an invitation to the table, to sit down and interrogate our place in the everyday rituals of ongoing colonisation – over a cup of tea.

Madeline Frohlich and **Willow Ross**, Miegunyah Student Project Awardees 2023, are MA students in Human Geography (School of Geography, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences) whose research practices focus on food and waste as sites of social transformation. They approach questions of the everyday with attention to materiality, embodiment and power.

Russell Grimwade's motoring world

A prominent Australian figure in business and philanthropy, Russell Grimwade had a curious mind and an exploratory nature towards technological and scientific advances around him. He had a diverse range of interests, including photography, botany, and cabinetry. However, Grimwade's passion for motoring stood out, revealing an adventurous side of him. This talk explores Grimwade's fascination with motoring through his early stories of automobile contests, motoring anecdotes, and the first ever Melbourne-Adelaide road trip, completing a fuller picture of his personality.

Shiyun Zheng, Miegunyah Student Project Awardee 2023, is currently undertaking a Master of Art Curatorship. Her research for the Miegunyah Student Research Project taps into her keen interest in Formula 1 racing.

3.15–3.45PM

AFTERNOON TEA AND VIEWING OF ARABELLA FRAHN-STARKIE'S INSTALLATION

SESSION 3

3.45–5pm

Chair | **Charlotte Day** Director, Art Museums, Museums and Collections

No small thing: 35 years of support for the conservation of cultural materials at the University of Melbourne

For over thirty-five years, the Russell and Mab Grimwade Miegunyah Fund has provided essential support for the Grimwade Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation, commencing with the position of University Conservator. The largest conservation project supported by the Miegunyah Fund has been the establishment of what was The University of Melbourne Conservation Service in 1990, (later to become the Ian Potter Art Conservation Centre, and now the Grimwade Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation). In this presentation Robyn explores some of the significant projects supported by the Miegunyah Fund, from Indigenous partnerships, Visiting International Fellows, the development of scientific capability and conservation of the University collections.

Professor Robyn Sloggett AM PAICCM is Cripps Foundation Chair in Cultural Materials Conservation and Director of the Grimwade Centre. Her teaching and research explore interdisciplinary studies in materials and techniques, art attribution, ethics and philosophy of conservation, and community-partnered conservation with remote, rural and regional organisations.

How the field of biochemistry has benefitted from the Grimwade bequests

Laura was supported by the Grimwade Research Fellowship in Biochemistry (2018–2022). She will speak about the Grimwades' keen interest in biochemistry and how their legacy continues to support cutting-edge research in this area. She will share how this unique fellowship afforded her the opportunity to launch her independent research career and build a vibrant team at Bio21. She will also give a brief introduction to some exciting work that her lab conducted during the course of the fellowship that has the potential to improve the quality of life for patients with cancer pain.

Dr Laura Edgington-Mitchell is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Biochemistry & Pharmacology at the Bio21 Molecular Science and Biotechnology Institute, where she leads the Protease Pathophysiology Laboratory. She was the Grimwade Research Fellow 2018.

Miegunyah Fund support of the University of Melbourne Herbarium projects: Mobilising biodiversity data to expand our knowledge of the Australian flora

Natural history collections are enriched when a diverse cohort of users, locally and globally, can engage with and access collection-based objects. Miegunyah funding has enabled the mobilisation of a wealth of biodiversity data and generation of high-resolution images from specimens held in our Herbarium. This has facilitated the active engagement of scientists, researchers, citizen scientists, and the global public with the collection. This talk will provide a brief snapshot of the diverse Herbarium projects supported by the Grimwades and the Miegunyah Fund, from the 1938 Mount Buffalo flora survey to recent projects digitising eucalypt specimens and revising Australian fungi species.

Dr Joanne Birch is a Lecturer and Curator of the University of Melbourne Herbarium in the School of BioSciences. Her research focuses on Australian plant and fungal evolution and digitisation of natural history collections.

Design is a Living Plant

My fellowship hopes to produce both a consideration and an interrogation. The Russell and Mab Grimwade Miegunyah Collection develop our understanding of colonial botanical knowledge and categorisation and trace our contradictory use of eucalypts as both agricultural crops and life forms with profound aesthetic, even spiritual, dimensions. Not surprisingly discussions around categorisation and forestry are ongoing and contested. I will also consider what archives have to teach us about the ways in which knowledge is built: they can both illuminate and distort our understanding of the past; they resonate and dissonate in the present and they offer possibilities for how we think about our future.

Sophie Cunningham AM is the author of nine books including *City of Trees: Essays on life, death and the need for a forest* and (co-author) of *Wonder: 175 Years of Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria*. She is the 2023–24 Miegunyah Creative Fellow.

5PM

CONCLUDING DRINKS