

Beth Jackson interviewed by Angela Goddard

Angela Goddard

Beth, thank you so much for joining me here today on June the 8th of 2021. We're really grateful that you've made some time to come and sit with us and reflect on your time at Griffith University, and your involvement with our institution. We've got lots of questions to get through but please feel free to tell stories, to respond in any way that you feel like you'd like to in terms of the interview and us recording this oral history. Feel free to not answer any of the questions as well if you feel like you just want to move on and that you would like to keep moving through and then we can...there's a couple of questions at the end... oh yeah, so we've got about thirty questions to get through today. So, we're just really interested in terms of painting a picture of that time at the university at that time and the history of this collection as well as the institution itself which underwent quite a lot of change during your time here. But maybe it'd be best to begin with the first question which is "How did you come to Griffith University?".

Beth Jackson

Thank you, Angela, it's good to be with you and to reflect on this time which feels like a long time ago now. "How did I come to be at Griffith Artworks?". I was a student at University of Queensland in the Art History department. I'd done my undergraduate and I just completed my honours year. Urszula Szulakowska was my honours supervisor, and I was, I guess I didn't really have a plan. I thought that I might do a PhD, but she, Urszula introduced me to Griffith Artworks. They needed someone to help catalogue the collection, and so I was employed initially on a casual basis to come in. It was a time when computers were just being introduced. I did my honours thesis on a computer, that was interesting. But prior to that all my undergraduate, we were writing pen and paper, looking up the library using library cards. There was a huge transition happening in the workforce everywhere as the transition to computers, and Griffith Artworks had bought a Mac, an Apple Mac, and set up, and got a guy who developed a database program for them. They were transferring all of the records for the artworks onto this database and giving them formal accession numbers and coming up with systems to formalise those collection records, and so, I was the data entry person who worked with that database guy to make that happen.

AG Great. And what was your knowledge of the institution at that time? Was it already called Griffith Artworks?

BJ Yes. I want to say yes. I came in 1989, but the workshop programme was still running, so we were in the demountable building that was later demolished. I think the year I joined Judy Watson had her residency and there was a mural painted on that building. Kath Kerswell was there and running the studios. So I was right there, I started on the cusp of that transition from the QFDC and its community accessed

studio-based programme and workshop programme and concert programme into a more curatorial collection-based entity.

AG What was your sense of this institution within the community, the QFDC? Where did it fit within the sector?

BJ The QFDC was modelled on the Tin Sheds. Griffith, when it was founded in the 70s was a university that didn't teach the Arts. It had the Humanities. It had four faculties, the Environmental Science, Humanities, Asian and International Studies and Business. And it was an interdisciplinary university, so for example, prior to them formalising Environmental Science didn't exist, so they got a bunch of academics who were statisticians and ecologists and, you know, people with environmental expertise and stuck them all together and called it the Faculty of Environmental Science. So, it was a very innovative interdisciplinary, leading Institution in that way, and in their enlightened thinking they thought that Arts were an important part of education, all education, and that they needed an art component in a non-art university. And so the QFDC was started to give the students the opportunity to experience art and art making. And so that was the basis of that. But interestingly, I guess when you look at Brisbane generally, there was also a lot of – for example one of the studios that was very busy was the screen-printing studio and the poster making and that was very closely associated with the Student Union movement. And so students were in there printing their T-shirts and their posters for their rallies, and the social issues of the day. There was a lot of culture around that, you know, again, prior to social media and technology and those sorts of things the hand printed poster was the medium for rallying around social issues. So Griffith University was very busy with that, but also so was University of Queensland and they had a very important workshop over there as well. And they were almost in competition, I think, in terms of who could come up with the latest, greatest taglines and posters for those issues. The other studios were equally busy, in some ways the etching and litho studio doing a more fine art practice and the photography, and film and video editing suite was very busy. And so these were being accessed not just by students but also by the wider community and the art world. So there was a lovely mix, I guess of usage going on there.

AG And so you'd come across from University of Queensland doing an art history degree, perhaps a much more formal kind of traditional academic background. Can you talk a little bit about where, where your career or your vision was sitting at that point?

BJ Yeah, it was a formal background in some way, I guess, but Urszula Szulakowska was a very interesting academic and she did teach a subject called "Post Modernism" and she also encouraged students to write about advertising and write about feminism, and write about film. I did my honours thesis on film, which was weird really but, it was coming from a feminist perspective and it was just what I was interested in at the time. And so, yeah, she was an important person to me, and I think that attitude of mine gelled very well with Griffith Artworks and that kind of issues-based collection that they were busy with, yeah.

- AG So can you talk a bit about this curatorial position? Was this the first time they'd appointed a curator?
- BJ Yeah so, I guess I was a cataloguer for a couple of years. The curator's position started in 1993 as a full-time position and prior to that I was part-time. The collection had a policy, it was governed by this policy that was written by Colin Crisp, an academic in the Humanities, and it was a very important document. It framed the reasons why a university would have an art collection in a very intelligent way. I was inspired by it. It was an issues-based collection and debate-centred, it was about collecting art that was about ideas, and it wasn't about collecting objects. So my job, when I was cataloguing the art collection, I was also tasked with writing commentaries for all of the artworks and in reference to this debate centred policy, the intellectual framework that we had. And also, it was a fantastic education for me, because when you do art history degrees, obviously you focus on historical periods, and so you do your Renaissance subjects and your Impressionism, all of that and you get a very poor, limited education in Contemporary Australian Art. Or you did at that time anyway. And so, when I was cataloguing this collection I just was exposed to all of these, if not their best artworks, then certainly the most important names, I think, of the contemporary artists of Australia. It was always a national collection and so I did get a really fantastic education going through the collection and writing these commentaries. Because I had this feminist lens, I remember somebody reading my commentaries – and I was straight out of uni as well, I have to say was very young so I was no authority on writing commentaries on very mature artworks – but you know I made my very best stab at it, and, I remember some of the other people coming in later to look at the collection asking me "Beth, is everything about Feminism?" and I was like "Maybe, I don't know?", but that was all I had at the time, you know, and it was important but I think it was my primary critical lens for the writing I did at that time. But you know, Margriet was happy and those commentaries took it from being just a data base into something that was a lot more substantial.
- AG And Margriet being the director at that time, so she was supportive of your work, what's your sense of her leadership of the institution in that those first years of you joining the university?
- BJ Margriet was terrifying. She, she was very... worked very long hours, very demanding, expected a lot of people, but was extremely loyal. And very, a good boss, in that she would put in the hours to teach you what she knew and expected a very high standard of work. She had a lot of admiration for me, I don't know if it was misplaced, but because Margriet herself was not an art-world person, she actually had done her PhD in literature, in Australian literature. She also came from a sort of filmmaking background that was sort of it was perfect for Griffith at that time and the QFDC and there was, she had no reason to feel insecure at all. But I think she did feel insecure when it came to "Oh well I'm now managing an art collection, and I don't have the degree in art history," and that was just her own desire to have expertise, high expertise in everything. So, yeah she was very supportive of me and really wanted, really supportive of a lot of people, with art expertise. So she had the acquisition program was governed by a committee of very important people. Sarah Follent, was on that committee, Urszula Szulakowska was on that committee, Jay

Younger, Colin Crisp from the Humanities. So external experts as well as internal academics and these were important round-table discussions happening about why we would acquire an artwork and why it was important to the day, to the university to the context, to the art form itself. It was a very rigorous process. When I look back it's astonishing that they cared, that this rigorous process existed for so little dollars, because the art budget, the acquisition budget itself was miniscule, it was \$12,000 or \$10,000 for as long as I was always there, so I was there for 12 years or something and it had never shifted. It was a paltry amount really and it forced us to collect works on paper and photographs and things that were, that didn't have the, we couldn't afford painting, but actually, that was a good thing because we probably weren't very interested in painting. We were more interested in these inter-media debates, these interdisciplinary practices and these social debate issues that were going on around identity and so on. So that was the way in which we were busy.

AG So you would present to these meetings, you would present the works for discussion?

BJ Yes, we would, that's right.

AG And the committee met quite regularly, didn't they? It was a pretty arduous process.

BJ It was an arduous process. And we weren't very popular either with the galleries because we would go through this two-step process where we would get slides – these are the days before digital files even or emails – so we would get slides and we would look at all of the images, and then we would ask for the real thing, so we would have this two-stage process. We would spend half of the meeting looking at slides and then the next half of the meeting with a bunch of work out on the table to consider. And then quite often we would order more work than we could afford so we'd send half of it back which used to annoy the galleries quite a lot. They were used to a very different model where curators could walk in and just, more or less, guarantee a purchase even if they had to present it for approval. There was a different mechanism going on whereas with us, well you'd never know what the committee's going to say. We think they might like this, but you know, they might have some argument about whether this was really important or not. And it wouldn't get purchased. So, yeah they were very interesting meetings and the catering was always essential, because they would go on for the best part of a day sometimes.

AG Wow. It's really interesting reflecting on this time in Brisbane and the kind of, intellectual context of the university as well within this sphere. What do you remember of Nicholas Zurbrugg and this particular aspect of the Brisbane art history and cultural critical theory, milieu of Brisbane. You've spoken of Urszula Szulakowska, but she was just one element of a whole, it seems, community at that time surrounding the university as well.

BJ Yes, yes. Very interesting vibrant time with ideas. Nick was a very special person. He was one of those people that was an academic and an artist. He could have

those conversations with whoever, and he was very enthusiastic and encouraging; if you wanted to have a conference about Baudrillard then "we should ring Baudrillard up and we should ask him to come to Brisbane," and so that happened. Because he just believed that you could talk to these gurus of theory and we could have these conversations in Brisbane. I don't know that he was ever involved in the art acquisition panel, he was certainly someone that we just gravitated around at that time. Nick Tsoutas was actually on the panel for a while and again another powerhouse of ideas that man. And Nick Tsoutas was a curator, but he was someone who loved academia and loved working with academics. So, he created those links between artists and academics and platforming of ideas and ideas-centred programs, and really wanted to ask the curly questions and be provocative and I so think there was a lot of alignment between those people. And figures like Luke Roberts as well, very important, again, just somebody who was an artist but also some kind of thought leader. Someone who was a great collaborator so people would love to work with Luke and on his performance projects and costumes and all these things. Certain people actually just created opportunities for others and nurtured others through, just the nature of the way they worked.

AG And was there much interaction with Nancy Underhill's, you know, Visiting Scholars program at the University of Queensland during those years as well?

BJ I'm trying to think. I mean I certainly was, as a student experienced the Visiting Scholar program. I guess that Peter Kennedy the a Visiting Scholar, that was a very... because sometimes Nancy would get academics who were not artists, obviously. I loved my Visiting Scholar program and I've forgotten the academic who drove it, but it was about nineteenth-century landscape, so it didn't have to be about contemporary art or anything like that. The Peter Kennedy one was quite interesting because he was a contemporary artist. He had founded the first Australian artist-in-residence space, artist-run space Inhibodress in Sydney. That's what his visiting scholar thing was about, it was about history of artist-run spaces. And then the other thing that the art history department had which I think was very important – I don't know how long it lasted, but they had this brownie point system where if you wanted to pass your semester it didn't matter what marks you got you still had to get a number of brownie points and you got these brownie points by going to art world events. So they would tell the class "Oh, there's an opening on Friday night and it's worth a brownie point if you show up," or "there's a talk at the gallery on Saturday, it's worth a brownie point if you show up." So you'd have to accumulate five brownie points a semester or something like that. But it forced the students to interact with the art world and you know, made us go to... and Urszula made the brownie points at things like John Mills National and That Space. Very interesting spaces. And so we little cossetted art history students doing our Medieval Art subjects or whatever were going to very interesting...then exposed to these very interesting sides of contemporary art and it was a very cool period of time in Brisbane for experimental art. I saw my first performance artwork at John Mills National, I think it was Hiram To and blew my mind! That was, then that all became part of why Griffith was doing what it was doing, why we were collecting the art we were collecting. It sort of all made sense to me in a very kind of avant garde-y way.

- AG Now, I wanted to ask you a little bit about your knowledge of the background to the name Griffith Artworks, because it's such a curious name for an institution and there's a certain kind of point being made in terms of that name. It was changed in around 1987-88 following a review of the QFDC, and Margriet Bonnin has said that it was selected by a relatively new VC, and others, while she was away on maternity leave in 1987. Do you have any recollections of that time or the way it was spoken about?
- BJ Yeah, so it was before my time. I started in '89, but my understanding is the new VC Roy Webb was an economist. He was deliberately I think brought in to Griffith to change its culture in some ways, time to take cost-cutting. The seventies, when Griffith was founded, were heady days of good funding and I think the QFDC had enjoyed the benefit of that Whitlam-era, post-Whitlam era generosity and belief in community. Although, I have to say, the workshop program did pay for itself and it did get some subsidised support from the Queensland Government though as well, we did get funding that way. And we also got some support I think from the student union as well for the workshops and studios or for the studio program, I think. And for the concert program. Because we ran a lunchtime concert program which was also very interesting with, which had sound artists and one of the first residencies I experienced was with Warren Burt, the sound artist. Anyway, I'm off track. So the name change, I believe, was selected by Roy Webb to mark that shift that Griffith Artworks, or the QFDC, was no longer about studios, because the Queensland Film and Drama Centre was an inappropriate name in his view. And we would no longer run studios and workshops and we would look after the art collection. So it was about artworks and it's as literal as that I think and it's as blatant, as pointed as that. It was really telling us that we were different now. And yeah, the funding for those facilities dried up.
- AG And eventually the spaces too?
- BJ That's right.
- AG Do you think it had any relationship to the kind of other institutions around Brisbane at that time? I know that the Artworkers Alliance had been established in 1986, was there any interesting interaction with that organisation?
- BJ Well, Margriet and John Stafford were good friends, I believe. Well Lindy Johnson was John Stafford's partner, and was in the Queensland Artworkers Alliance. But it was interesting, I guess. Margriet was on the board of the first Arts Queensland when it was established by the Labor Government so that would have been in the early nineties. And John Stafford was in Arts Queensland by that stage. So obviously there was close connections, but I can't really say that Griffith Artworks worked with the Queensland Artworkers Alliance or anything like that. They were certainly aware of each other.
- AG So you're coming on as part of this shift to a more focused on the collection of the university and there's some incredible acquisitions in those early years and when you first joined the University. Two that I'd like to see your recollections of: Tracey Moffatt's *'Something More'* and Gordon Bennett's *'Aboriginal Australian: Notes on Perception'* from that amazing *'Notes on Perception'* series in 1989. Both of those

works were acquired in '89, can you tell us what prompted these purchases and what the energy was around these acquisitions?

BJ They are standout acquisitions. They did stand out at the time I think too. I think we were interested in their relationship to the acquisition policy obviously, so we saw them as very debate-centred works, very intellectual works that were questioning Australian identity, that were talking about Aboriginality in very interesting, innovative ways. That's what we were interested in, that's what we wanted. We weren't a collection that went after people's names, and we didn't have enough budget to do that anyway. We would have loved to buy the whole 'Something More' series, or more of the series of Gordon's as well. We were in poverty street. We picked what we thought were the best.

AG They're both also alumni of the school, so it was the art school at that time, the Seven Hills. Tracy did Film studies, I think. And Gordon, of course, at the Queensland College of Art.

BJ Gordon would have been known to us; Kath taught Gordon. Because he went to TAFE, or BIA.

AG Yeah, he went to TAFE before he went to university.

BJ They had some connection before he went to college, but anyways so they go way back. That relationship would have been known, and him as a local figure. But my own recollection of Tracey was that I wasn't aware that she was a Brisbane person and we saw that show at Roslyn Oxley, through the invitation in the mail, saw that and said we need the slides from that show. We need to see those works and it was straight out of Sydney for us, well for me, I don't know maybe Margriet knew more, that she was Brisbane or that she had hailed from here but yeah. So, it was definitely the work itself and not her relationship to the local scene if you like, or Brisbane or anything. Those considerations would have been considered to be pretty hokey. Which I mean, I don't think that, not valid for that context at that time, you know? I'm not saying that they are, I think they are valid considerations, that local artists and local value and all of that sort of thing.

AG That's fascinating. Now, the political posters. So, following the restructure to Griffith Artworks a large number of political posters were transferred from the QFDC in 1990 and other years. Was this part of a process of a big formalising of the art collection that you were also involved with, Beth? Can you talk a bit about that?

BJ Yeah, so the collection did come together in a kind of amalgamated way because the posters would have been acquired simply through donation, because people that used the studios when they are community-minded they would leave an artist's proof, or leave a print from the edition. And they did they same in the etching and litho studio. So there was a pile of prints, and they were pretty, quite rough and ready, there was no systematic overview of that acquisition. It was just pretty random. People who used the studio left something. But that in itself was a valuable archive of the activity of the time. And in some instances, we ended up with a whole stack of copies, like with Michael Callaghan's residency, which was very important, and he produced the *What the F**K*, or *Whatever, the ***** poster

of his. The very famous poster. We ended up with a whole stack of those because he was an artist in residence and he produced them for the campus. When he put that poster up across campus overnight it was promptly taken down the next day because it was considered to be so provocative

AG That's the *"If the unemployed are dole bludgers..."*

BJ *"...What the F are the idle rich?"*

AG Yeah. Great poster. Key. Iconic within Australian poster making history.

BJ And then Michael Callaghan...so he started his practise here and then went down to found Redback Graphix. He is always thought of as Redback Graphix but he was Redback Posters here first. And so it was a really interesting place.

AG I can imagine for you managing that collection, even just documenting the artists and who'd been involved in what can be very collaborative processes, that would have been a challenge in terms of bringing those works into the collection?

BJ Yeah. Claire Williamson wrote a thesis on the posters. So that was 'Signs of the Times'. Her thesis was very important. She was the same age as me, we went through the university together. She did her honours at the same time and that's when she did that. Her thesis was very helpful.

AG Now moving to a different aspect of the collection. There's quite a lot of text and conceptually driven works in the collection by major figures really including Nicholas Zurbrugg, Richard Tipping, Ian Burn, John Young and Peter Tyndall. Can you talk a bit about what drove the acquisition of these works at this time?

BJ Yes well, the policy was very focussed in Post Modernism and Post Object art. The relationship between signs, sign systems, the verbal and the visual. It was really busy with all of that. They were works on paper but they were also remnants of these people, these big thinkers and their practice and their output. So we were very keen, we used to get a reputation that we would buy anything that had text in it. [laughs] Yeah, sometimes it was hard to get a more conventional picture across the line, even if it was by someone really good. So it was interesting.

AG Now in 1993, a few years after you'd started working for Griffith Artworks, the Creative Workshop programme winds up and then there's a collection audit and a five year conservation programme commences. Can you talk a bit about this kind of pivot, you know, was there an increase in in funding or attention towards artworks?

BJ No. No there wasn't, unfortunately. It's interesting. Kath Kerswell became the collection manager, from running the workshops and studio programmes, and having a background as a technician. She then became this collection manager and is self-taught in a lot of respects you know, all respects, actually. And so self-taught in terms of collection management, conservation, registration and did a fantastic job of that. Took her research very, very seriously. And is an outstanding professional, and I owe so much of my art education or collection management education to her, she's she was very, very thorough and Margriet was also extremely thorough. These people were just outstanding in terms of their

dedication. Yeah, but unfortunately Roy Webb was hostile. He was a hostile VC for Griffith Artworks. And I think there's one layer which is a very general problem amongst universities, that they all have art collections, but they don't know why they have them. They're not part of seen as part of core business. They're not, you know, "a part of teaching and research, so why do we have them?" kind of thing But I think there was another layer on top of that where Roy Webb really didn't appreciate the humanities generally. [laughs] And really, I know at one stage we thought we'd get Ian Lowe on to our management committee, because we had the art acquisition panel but we also had a management committee which had some very heavyweights in the university that were allies. And we threatened to get Ian Lowe on it and the VC wouldn't have it because that was the sort of... they were the sort of people that did want us and could understand us. Max Standage from Science was a great ally. Having someone outside of humanities who really did support us and was a Pro VC and he was just absolutely essential to our survival. But yeah, I think we really had our work cut out for us in terms of survival and we just undertook that conservation and collection audit because that was our job now and we wanted to do it properly and the university needed to be aware of the asset that they had and how much it required for its care. But that said, because we didn't have a lot of money for its care, and because the collection was displayed throughout the university buildings in these non museum-standard conditions. We did have a kind of de facto policy of "the collection will just be displayed to death." We couldn't rotate works on paper every three months, and put them into darkness and reframe them, and take things in and out of frames – we just simply could not do that. And we took the view that the collection was there to be viewed, and let's get it out there and let's just display it. And it's not there for posterity's sake, it's there because we want people to see it, students to see it, academics to see it.

AG Was there a policy driving that, that you recall or was the collection being displayed throughout university buildings, was that quite a kind of less formal process?

BJ It was actually quite formal in a way, because, and I think this might have been from the beginning of the University, because it was before my time. That there was a little percentage of funds for every building that was built that was dedicated to the installation of hanging track. And it was a miniscule amount, but it actually formally wedded the collection to the buildings. And we had this relationship with Facilities Management that when buildings were being built, they would we would be shown the plans, we would mark up the plans where the hanging track would go. Then we would go in to see and we'd find out that they'd put a clock right in the middle of our wall, and things like that. But it was a known relationship and then also then whenever they were doing work in the buildings they'd have to notify us because we would have to take the artwork out to protect the artwork. It became – I don't know if it was – it must have been written down somewhere, but I don't recall seeing that, but it was certainly a formal relationship.

AG I think that universities can use their displays of works from their collection within public areas in quite a strategic way. You know, they convey values in all sorts of ways. Can you recall some of the displays that would have gone into the Chancellery or some of the more public spaces?

BJ I don't think I was helpful in that way. Maybe. Well we did have a policy that we would not hang in offices. This is actually contrary to a lot of universities where primarily the art collection is seen to be something that you can offer to deans and pro vice-chancellors, and so on, the hierarchy, as something they get when they get their own office they also get an artwork, and you are supposed to do that, but we refused to do that and the only offices that we were then forced to hang in, of course, was the vice-chancellery and the pro Vice-chancellor's offices. But it was actually very hard. We just didn't have a decorative art collection so it was hard for them to choose a work as well. And I do recall one year that I did hang the Juan Davila up in the vice-chancellery. I think I was, I think I did it deliberately. But it was not very well received, but he did put up with it, he didn't make me take it down. But it was all Juan Davila... they were video stills and one them is him was holding up the sign "Disobedience". I thought it was very radical and I was just trying to make my point, in a way. Universities just get... of course you would have this ongoing... one of the huge things was to pick a cover for the Christmas card every year and the amount of work that went into that was just painful. Yeah, we didn't have that sort of art collection. It was a huge part of my job to actually curate little exhibitions for the teaching and learning areas. I would love it. I loved putting artworks into Environmental Science buildings and putting those works that dealt with environmental issues in those buildings. So this interdisciplinary art collection really had its purpose to makes sense in all of these different contexts. We would really try to marry the artists, the artworks with teaching and learning area themes and issues, and that was really satisfying, that work. We generally got a lot of support and good feedback in that way from the community.

AG We are going to shift now to the new media and video focus of the collection because it's so important, but I thought I'd quickly ask Michael if he had any— we might leave the governance and those bigger institutional issues here unless you had a few questions while we're on that track?

Michael Barnett *inaudible

AG Do you remember that, Beth? I can frame it as a question, though, because that wouldn't have been picked up in the audio. It's about the establishment of the Cultural Gifts Programme, yep, okay. So, in terms of this increasing status or professionalisation of the collection in the way that it was administered, the University acquires a status of deductible gift recipients through the Federal Government Cultural Gifts Programme, and gifts start being received. Do you recall that process and what impact that might have had within displays and the collection itself?

BJ Not exactly. When I started we always had Central Theatres on the Nathan campus which had a big foyer, like, biggish, and hanging track in that foyer and we used to call that a gallery. It was the closest thing we had to a gallery and Central Theatres was also the place for the lunchtime concert programme. So there was a Green Room there which performers used to use for that programme later became the collection's storage space. That was sort of our closest thing we had to a gallery. There were many plans floated for a gallery, whether they be at Nathan or

elsewhere, as a standalone or amalgamated with other things, other centres, restaurants, eco centres, goodness knows we tried various ways and means to get a gallery and none of them really happened. I can't recall the first Cultural Gifts Program donation that I ever handled. I remember the Davida Allens but that was much later in my time with the collection, so it was probably not the first, though it was just very significant. It was a wonderful donation. Davida gave us the paintings from the "Death of Her Father" series and she specifically said that she admired the way the artworks were hung throughout the university, and the didactic panels that were accompanying them that spoke about the works and the relationship to the places they were hung. I don't know, she felt moved to give us that series but I was just blown away because they were so beautiful.

AG Any other questions, Michael, before we move on? Lots of notes. That's ok.

So Beth, a great legacy of your time at the University and your involvement with Griffith Artworks is the New Media Art and Video Collection. What sparked your interest in this particular aspect and medium? Was it related to the Film Studies Programme that was happening in the School of Humanities, or studios and workshops, campus cinema, the Film Society or trends in general practice?

BJ For me it was art. It was the most interesting thing that was happening in the art world, but I have a passion and always have for performance art and that's not collectable. And so I was interested in documentation of performance art, and we had acquired some photographs, even of installations as well. So installation art was also huge and very important thing that was happening in the contemporary art spaces at that time. So, just getting out of the frame and off the wall. We had photographs of Wendy Mill's installation work. But it was not just my idea, it was Margriet's idea. We just shared that same passion, I think, for the art form.

AG And so there's quite a lot of activity happening around 1993-94. At one stage there's both a film maker in residence, which was Geoffrey Weary, and then also a video artist in residence, which was John Gillies. Was this a deliberate pairing, do you think?

BJ Ah so, we got the Collection Development Grant of \$60,000.

AG Is this from The Australia Council?

BJ Yes, and it was the highest Collection Development Grant awarded under that program, and it was to collect video art and documentation of performance. This all sprung out of one of the debates in the Art Collection policy was the impact on technology on art. It was a central debate. We were interested in it. We wanted to collect in that area. Another of the debates was the transition from the original to the multiple. So, anything that was reproducible and, that was all to do with technology as well, obviously, so these reproducible media. I think collecting video art was innovative, no one was doing it. When we first started collecting video art the way you did it was you bought a VHS tape, you couldn't pay more than like a couple of hundred bucks for a VHS tape because it wouldn't last, so you weren't actually buying anything that was 'proper' in a way. So that was when we developed the 'Acquisition Reproduction Rights Agreement' which allowed us to acquire a master of the work and then a reproduceable licence with the artist to

make as many viewing copies as we needed for the purposes of education and display, so that allowed us to have that archival master. We were excited about that, we were breaking new ground nationally, it was a leading thing we were doing with our meagre, meagre money. Then we also got to go back into the history of the art form with that Collection Development grant. That also tied into our own history, because the first artist in residence at Griffith Artworks was a video maker.

AG David Perry.

BJ Thank you, David Perry, and his artwork is that very beautiful, little video of a kettle boiling in the etching and litho studio. A humble, animated still life, if you like, quite painterly, really. We felt we had a right to this history. We had a claim to the very early days of that media. The people who helped us to acquire works – John Gillies was a big help, he was a teacher in video at that time, as well as an artist himself, so he had great advice for us about what we should be collecting, who we should be talking to. Geoff Weary was another big name in that field and we were talking to him too. The residencies came about through Australia Council Grants, or grants from anywhere we could. So as you say, Geoff Weary's grant came from the...

AG Australian Film Commission?

BJ Yeah, that's right. If we thought we had a shot at getting some money from somewhere to do a project then we'd have a crack at that, and innovation was the name of the game, right? So, Geoff Weary's work is a lot more filmic but it was very artistic work – yeah, very different aesthetic to John's. I guess it was just a coincidence in some ways that they were in the same year, not at the same time. We were just busy talking to them and working with them.

AG And spending these funds. Did they have to be spent within a certain kind of time period, because it seems that 1993–94 is a huge amount of activities going on?

BJ I guess we would've, but I can't recall. I guess there would have been a sunset clause on the expenditure. I don't remember.

AG There's also, you curated *Interfaces: Art and Technology* which opened at the Gold Coast campus and then toured 7 regional venues in 1994. Can you talk a bit about exhibitions and this one touring in particular?

BJ The exhibition had video work in it, but it also had digital works on paper. There was just a hunger for art and technology shows at that time. But I do recall that by the end of the tour, and this was really just in a couple of year's time, it already looked dated. People were a little bit disappointed. You know, the last venue, I think, was a bit disappointed at about the fact that it just framed works on the wall and a video, instead of these more – you know, CD-ROMs were coming out, projection-based works or more, you know, challenging kind of technology-based things that were obviously a big part of what was going on in the scene. We were just limited in terms of what you can put in a touring show. Peter Callas's work was very important, Adam Wolter, his prints – very important. And Adam and Nick Zurbrugg collaborated, so yeah, a nice, sort of, local scene works as well as the national perspective which was really good to achieve.

- AG Was that show also shown in Brisbane – “Interfaces”? Was it shown at the city gallery as well, possibly? Do you recall, Michael?
- BJ I don’t think so.
- AG So, just at the Gold Coast and then seven regional venues? That’s so interesting, isn’t it?
- BJ Yeah, it’s always hard to get shown in Brisbane. The other thing about the videos which was really meaningful to us was that although we couldn’t show them across the campuses, like, on the walls, we could have them in the library. They could make them available for borrowing by students and, so to us, they were a really valuable addition, in that way because they were accessible, they could be not just part of an art collection database but part of the library database. We were excited about trying to promote the videos into those teaching programmes, I guess, and making them available to lecturers and students. We also had a couple of screenings at the State Library in their theatrette as well, when we acquired them.
- AG I think we’ll get to Kim Machan a bit later. So, the acquisition’s policy is rewritten in 1994 into a document that covers ’95-’97. Can you talk about... was there any institutional change that drove that change?
- BJ I don’t think so. I think it was just coming up for a refresh and we just wanted to take another look at it. It was great fun thinking about our debates and were they still relevant and had they shifted. One of the things I remember about that was we were having a residency at the time with Marian Pastor Roces. She’s a curator and historian from the Philippines. We did it at the same time as the APT, so ’93, and her and I curated an exhibition from the collection that was shown in the Central Theatres Gallery, at the same time as the APT, as our, kind of, parallel project. She added the debate, the tension between artefact and art object. She has an anthropology background and, for her, the Philippines, looking at all the Indigenous cultures of the Philippine archipelago and their shifting identity and the impact of Post Modernism, I guess, on those cultures, that discourse was very important to her. She was very, very busy with it and she was fascinated by Contemporary Aboriginal Art. She wanted us to have that in the policy at that time.
- AG That’s really interesting. So APT begins in 1993. Does that have a big impact – so that obviously is one aspect, it has an impact on your policies and perspectives of collecting, what about more broadly in terms of the Asia Pacific Region and Griffith’s context within that?
- BJ Well, the collection doesn’t collect internationally, but that said, Brisbane is a cosmopolitan place and the cultural diversity is very important. Asia and International Studies was one the founding faculties of Griffith University, so it was very relevant to Griffith and we welcomed the APT and any relationship we could have with it, really. It was exciting, it was very exciting. Those early conferences of the first APTs were vital. They were so exciting and The influx of artists to Brisbane was really extraordinary.
- AG It seems like it would be natural then that they would feed into the residency programme with artworks? How did that work?

- BJ I don't know how Marians residency... I think, maybe, the gallery, the Queensland Art Gallery gave us that connection, or Margriet had a conversation with someone to make that happen. But, certainly in '96 with Ellen Pau – her residency was directly facilitated by APT. Rana Davenport, she recommended Ellen to us, and then Ellen was given a work, allowed to show her work in the APT so it was a true partnership. That was a really wonderful residency. Then, through Ellen, Griffith Artworks forged a relationship with Ellen's "Videotage", Ellen's organisation in Hong Kong, and then we had a couple of projects that were curatorial exchanges between our organisations. While we didn't collect video art internationally, we did want to show it, we wanted to show our collection over there and we showed some of their collection here. So we did the joint curating of "Sick and Dizzy" for the APT in '99. Part of the ancillary programme of that APT, not their core programme, I don't think. It was shown at the Queensland Art Gallery though, in the video screening.
- AG But by 1998 the residency programme, as such, at Artworks is, kind of, wound up. Do you think that relates to the amalgamation with QCA and then it becomes more the College of Art continues that relationship?
- BJ So, it was not deliberately wound up. Roy Webb instructed Griffith Artworks that if they were going to do any projects, they had to do it in partnership with others, with another faculty. We weren't allowed to act independently. So, the last residency was that partnership with the Supercomputer facility and Jeremy Hynes. We were happy to do that, but it does make things more challenging, in a way. That's the same with the touring exhibition, "Art, Law, Justice", the "re/form" exhibition, which was a partnership working with the faculty of Law. According to that directive from the Vice Chancellor we had to work with other faculties if we wanted to do projects, and that's how those came about. The amalgamations with the colleges was a huge shift for Griffith. Griffith went from being a little university that didn't teach art to being the biggest art institution in the country. We amalgamated with two teachers' colleges that taught art education, plus the Conservatorium of Music, and the College of Art. We amalgamated with their art collections too, which was, not that they were significant, but it was more work for us. Then we had to exhibit the collection across five campuses, which was very challenging. As you know, Angela. So, I think maybe that's why the residencies might have wound up, because we got exhausted. We had our hands full, sorry, with trying to manage those amalgamations and work out who we were. We, eventually, were given the management of the Queensland College of Art Gallery. They had a gallery at Seven Hills, and when they moved to Southbank that gallery became Griffith Artworks, and Griffith Artworks stopped being centrally funded and started to be funded through the College of Art. We got a new parent organisation and that was a huge political shift, a huge political shift, and that's when I left, because it marked... The new director of that Art College, Mostyn Bramley-Moore did not want the acquisition panel, he did not want the acquisition policy and he did not want the independence of that entity that was Griffith Artworks. It became, very much, subsumed under the management of the college. And that was something I saw the writing on the wall, and I didn't want to participate in that.
- AG So, we've gone forward a few years but that's really great to have that context. I can see how challenging that would have been as a whole new brand and group of

professionals move in but professionals from a very different corner of the sector. Very interesting. But maybe we can return a little bit in terms of the... Now, notes indicate that the Artworks received a Regional Arts Development Funding Grant in 1991 to examine galleries in regional Queensland and Northern New South Wales to feed into defining its own gallery needs, which were later developed in '94 into a two-stage project to develop art storage first and then a gallery. So, would that have been the prompting of the Central Theatre's green room storage space and issues like that?

BJ '91? That's very early, isn't it? It must have been.

AG But maybe that reflects back to your comments that you were saying there was always a swirling discussion about an eventual gallery space.

BJ Well, yeah. Just the desperate need for the infrastructure to support the collection storage, proper storage and climate control and things like that, that we really needed. But it was a long time coming, that was. We did have a rather tragic – I don't know whether this story is worth telling but in the green room, we wanted to take over the whole green room for storage and we had this problem that there was a grand piano in it. That was a leftover from the concert programme. We had this brilliant idea that we will give the piano to the 'Con', because they would want it and now that we are amalgamating with these places, surely, they will take this thing off our hands. So, when Mostyn came on board, he was our new boss, I asked him "Would he please have a conversation with the VC and get rid of this piano". Mostyn, instead, had a conversation with the VC which enabled – Mostyn was living on the Nathan campus at the time– and he got a conversation with the VC which enabled his wife to get access to that piano in the green room. And, therefore, if it was her getting access, then any Con' students that were living on the campus, Nathan campus, could get access to the piano for practicing. So, we had to build a cage around the piano and the piano had to stay in the middle of the store because we needed secure – If they were gonna have access we couldn't allow them access to the collection, so we had to build a cage around the piano. It was one of those conversations which brought me to tears really. I just couldn't understand how that could possibly backfire on me, what I thought was quite a straightforward thing. So, god knows when the piano did eventually end up with the Con.

AG Ah, universities! I want to ask you about a couple of personalities. Kim Machan and Media Arts Asia Pacific, perhaps relating to our conversation about the APT and Contemporary Asian and Pacific Art, how did Kim Machan fit into the picture, in terms of what Griffith Artworks was doing at this time with video art and technology?

BJ Kim Machan had already curated ArtRage, which was artists producing video artworks for television broadcast during Rage, the music programme on the ABC on Friday and Saturday nights. And it was a coup! We just thought, "how did you do that, Kim? How did you get contemporary artists works shown on television? On mainstream television?" So, Kim Machan was god-like to me, and she was very entrepreneurial in that way, prepared to have conversations with anyone. So, we acquired ArtRage because it was so groundbreaking and very significant for video art and video artists at that time. She went on to do a couple of further series of

ArtRage with the ABC. I wrote the education kit that went with the children's ArtRage, which must have been a touring show at some point, I think. It was through those acquisitions that we started our initial association. Then when Kim established herself in Brisbane she founded this organisation, Multimedia Art Asia Pacific, and that was, I guess, directly thinking about the APT, the context of the APT, how she could play in her space in relation to that scene. Then the need, I guess, in Queensland for an organisation that was dedicated to digital media art. So, you've got ACME in Melbourne and...

AG ANAT

BJ ANAT in Adelaide, DLUX in Sydney. That's right. So it was really "what did Brisbane have?" So, she saw that gap and managed to get funding from Arts Queensland and then Australia Council as well, to actually run an organisation, and I was the First Chair, I think, of MAAP. I was on her Management Committee. We did a couple of things jointly. The Jeremy Hynes residency in '99 was part of the MAAP festival. But the initial MAAP festival, I curated an exhibition under the auspices of MAAP. That wasn't part of Griffith Artworks, that was a separate thing I did for MAAP. We were tight for a while, and Griffith Artworks would also auspice her grants, because she didn't have, before she got organisational status. So, we really helped each other to establish that, sort of scene, that curatorial, digital media scene.

AG So, Beth, in 1996 you curate an exhibition out of the collection, a 25-year survey called "re collection", at the Brisbane City Gallery. Can you tell us a bit about the genesis of that project and, also, some of the works in the tenor of the show itself?

BJ Yes, that was a very significant show for me personally and for the university and for the art collection. Barbara Tuckerman was the acting director at that time, so Margriet would have been on leave, or long-term leave at that stage, so I was all alone, really, with doing that. It was fine, it was great fun, and I had Kath of course. We showcased – it was a 'best of' show, really. We did have a really big wall that was just plastered with posters because the posters were so important to the collection, I felt. We wanted to really showcase the breadth of the collection as well as the really stunning prime pieces in it as well. The photography was a real standout and those huge pieces by Julie Rrap and Robyn Stacey. The feminist photography in the collection is awesome and it was just beautiful to see that statement at that time. I think the show really was important –sorry, that's a really lame word. It did set us apart as a collection, I think, from other collections. It showed what we had been busy with.

AG It also included two performances by Barbara Campbell and Luke Roberts. Can you talk a bit about those inclusions?

BJ Yes, so again performance art was an important part of what we were busy with and focussed on. We saw it as an opportunity to add to the collection. We commissioned new performances for this opening event, then we could video them and have the video documentation brought into the collection and then showcase these artists. Barbara had done a residency with us as well, and Barbara was from Brisbane, way back, and was involved in founding the IMA in the early days. So, she was a very important figure for Brisbane. She decided to re-enact an early performance piece of hers, and she got Peter Anderson to do the work with her

which was really gorgeous. Peter being a very important person in Brisbane as well. It was a lovely gesture for the 25th anniversary. We were really trying to celebrate, you know, the collection over the 25 years, what was important over that historical period. The other performance by Luke Roberts is self-explanatory, him being such an iconic Brisbane performance artist figure. Yeah, and great acquisitions at the same time.

AG There was a catalogue published as well, so having the works documented in that form was pretty significant.

BJ Yeah and the opening night was great.

AG So, our campuses of Griffith University often, well, many of our campuses feature public artworks and outdoor sculptures. Can you tell me if you were involved in any of those projects, Beth?

BJ Yes, sure. The work by Bill Yaxley at Nathan, that predates me. I was aware and made aware of the history of that commission. It was quite controversial, the selection, and the art committee had chosen a different work, and the VC came in and overrode the decision and chose the Bill Yaxley. So, it's always haunted me that we could have had a Ken Unsworth. And it would have been a very important Ken Unsworth because he was at the very early stages then of his career. I've seen the sketches. It would have been an awesome piece, actually. Not to say that – the Bill Yaxley was also a very interesting work. What I loved about Bill's was the little trees that were planted in a circle around the piece, and so the integration that he had with the native landscape, which was core to the Nathan campus experience. That was interesting to have that work as part of the collection from its early days and that relationship with the campus environment. So when they built the new administration building at the Nathan campus we took the opportunity to commission a new permanent art piece for the campus. Oh, you've just made me remember there is a Nevil Matthews in the collection, that predates me as well. That's an iconic work of his, a really gorgeous stainless-steel piece. Important Brisbane figure and abstractionist. So, when we commissioned some concepts for the new administration building and, I mean, you've noted in your question here that Wendy Mill's concept was knocked back. Hilary Boscott's work was selected by the committee and it was considered to be more contemporary in its approach and themes. It was a distributed series of things. There was photographic prints onto aluminium and engraved work in the concrete. It was kind of an installation, if you like, that was meant to create a space or zone of ideas about the environment. I guess it was a controversial outcome in some ways, but in keeping with the ideas and the "post object" ethos of the collection policy.

AG What about the Logan campus? There's quite an extensive public art project there.

BJ Yeah, well, we got a grant for that from Arts Queensland. They were substantial pieces. That was a lot of work, actually. The Logan campus was built from ground up. It was a green fill site. Brand new and we thought, "It needs some art pieces to make it a proper, a better learning environment." Nola Farnham was doing some really interesting things in public art at that time and we thought she would be a really good choice. So, Nola was from Sydney and then Mona was a really important Brisbane figure, who'd also been working in public art and sculpture, and then Rick

Roser was the Indigenous artist that we put forward and he was local, he had links to the Logan area and we thought that was really important that Indigenous relationship to Place be expressed and celebrated. And he made a great work based on learning circles. Nola's piece involved a wind turbine. So, three tree trunks made of twisted brick columns and then one with a tree form on the top with anemometer cups which are used for measuring windspeed, and so the wind turbine drove – well, it was wind driven, the piece. That was all about sustainability, new energy, environmental science, the environment as being a key issue of the day, and continues to be. We did have nightmares about anemometer cups coming off in high wind speeds and killing people, becoming projectiles. The health and safety was a really big learning curve around the working in permanent and built materials for everyone, working with engineers and all of that which is something I do a lot now.

AG Which then informed your later practice, really.

BJ Yeah, I got pretty excited working with that. I jumped from Griffith into working into public art, because even though it had always been an aim of ours to get a gallery it was still never a priority in way because, we wanted one of the core aims of the art policy was the connection between everyday life and integrating art into the environment of the university and this integrated approaches of art in the environment. For me, it was a logical jump into public art rather than go into the gallery world.

AG But, the university does eventually build a gallery on the South Bank campus in 2001. Do you have any recollections as to the institution, the construction of that space, and also starting to devise the programming that might occur within it?

BJ Yeah, the gallery – given all of the collecting we'd done in video and new media- we were determined that this gallery would be able to show that work, that type of work. So, we were all about the power points and the cable traps, and dip traps and so on, and trying to get good infrastructure in that. Just generally, I guess, what the whole artworld had seen was a real shift for galleries from being wall-based, display-based environments to these more theatrical, theatre-like spaces, environmental installations, immersive environments, and these more experiential exhibitions. That's only continued to grow, that emphasis. Unfortunately, a lot of gallery budgets didn't increase with this increased expectation from audiences. That was where we had the idea that the whole ceiling could just be a grid and it didn't have to be a white ceiling. It could be a black ceiling like a theatre and it could have all the gear up the top that you could use more flexibly, and we really wanted a flexible space. The other thing that we investigated was the use of sound in galleries, which is really increasing again, in terms of audience expectation, but is so not ideal because galleries are very echoey spaces. So, that is the reason why we don't have parallel walls in your gallery because the sound tends to just bounce between parallel walls. So, having a slight angle on the outer walls helps acoustically, but it's still full of hard surfaces. The best thing you can do for sound is put a carpet on the floor, but, unfortunately, well that would just be awful so we didn't do that of course. Those sorts of considerations – Kath put a lot of time into that research and we were very much involved in designing the gallery at South Bank, but I wasn't very involved in programming it. It didn't happen.

- AG So, you departed by the time that Tim Morrell came on board and curated the collection exhibition *Other Views*, but you do return as guest curator in 2005 to curate *Zootopia: Posters from the Urban Jungle* in conjunction with the State Library of Queensland. Was that very much a return to looking at those collection strengths that you had developed in your time here?
- BJ It was something I was asked to do. I probably wouldn't – it wasn't an initiative of mine and it wouldn't have been a priority for me. It wasn't something I would have approached them with. But I think Simon wanted– was it Simon at that stage? It was Craig Douglas, as well, I was working with. Yeah, I think it was Craig that wanted to use the collection as a teaching tool, and he just thought I would be a good person to help him do that. And then the State Library had a bunch of posters so they wanted to utilise their collection as well and it a way of exploring those relationships that exist in that new environment at South Bank. So, you'd now got the Cultural Precinct as your neighbour, and how do you work with them? And what do the students get out of that new location. So, I think, that's where that came from. I had done some teaching when I was the Director at Griffith Artworks, it was considered a kind of academic equivalent position. I gave guest lectures in various Humanities subjects and I'd supervised some Honours students at the college so I did have links with the teaching staff.
- AG When you look back on your time, which was well over a decade of experience with this institution and through a lot of change, what would you consider to have been your most rewarding experience in your time with Griffith Artworks?
- BJ Oh my goodness. I think the most rewarding would have to be the videos. Having that opportunity to talk to people that were right there in the beginning, early days of video art, and then collecting those works and encouraging people to get stuff out from under their bed and getting it archived. That was very exciting work, and it felt very important curatorially. And I think it just felt very lucky to get that grant, and we were in the right place at the right time to do that work. And because of the connections that it brought and the conversations that were had it was very rewarding for that reason.
- AG Well, we've now digitised all of those video works in the collection in a programme that's taken three or four years to, kind of, complete. But it feels good to now have them all secure and preserved for the future because it is such a fugitive medium in many ways. But yes, we're grateful for that legacy because we are now described as having the most significant collection of early video art in the country. So, thank you for that, Beth. Are there any other aspects of your time with Griffith Artworks that you would consider to be a significant legacy?
- BJ Well, at the time we did another iteration of the policy, but it probably didn't even get endorsed, I don't know. It would have been close to when I was leaving, and I thought at the time when I was writing it that it was the most important thing I had ever done for Griffith Artworks. So, I was very attached to that document. It was very important, and I've never seen anything like it, before or since. The valuing of art as an idea rather than an object is a very hard conversation to have when it comes to collections. So, that was important to me. One of the other things we did was were one of the first, I think we were the first in Queensland, collection to be

made available online. So, we got a tiny grant from Arts Queensland, I think it was \$5,000 or something. They didn't believe we would do it. I remember talking to them, "you think you can do that for \$5,000?". And we went "well, yeah". It was a dinky, little thing. It was just a publishing interface on FileMaker Pro to the web, of all of our little photos. But it was huge for me because that was what I started doing when I started at Griffith Artworks, I started on this little database, and then publishing it on the web was like, "oh, that's awesome". You know, especially at a time when it's like, "we can have pictures on the internet, it's amazing!", and now you wouldn't bat an eye. Now, it's not even anything, but it was a big deal then.

AG Well, many of our national institutions don't have their entire collections online still, remaining now. So we're proud that our entire collection sits online. And, whilst the interface isn't as fancy as certain other institutions, it's still there, the information is there and can be accessed if you're looking for it. That is an amazing legacy. I wonder if there was anything further you wanted to add, Beth, about your time here and your recollections?

BJ I don't think so.

AG Other key colleagues, maybe?

BJ The questions have been comprehensive, so, thank you, Angela. It's been helpful to be managed like this, because certainly it's overwhelming when you think about the amount of work that was done and, it doesn't really, to me, bear thinking about. Other colleagues, Beth Porter, of course, and it was great working with another Beth, if not weird. She was fantastic as our administrator. Briefly, Panos Couros, was our project manager, project officer. He did some lovely projects with us, with Electric Tipi, and some very nice, little projects. So many artists, so many artists that we worked with, but where do you start?

AG Well, thank you. Thanks so much for joining us Beth and giving us these insights into this institution, which, well, we've renamed ourselves, Griffith University Art Museum. What are your thoughts on the renaming of the institution to becoming an art museum?

BJ Look, I think that it's a natural progression, in terms of increased professionalisation and specialisation and recognition of the expertise that's involved in caring for a collection and having a substantial collection. I welcome that. I guess it's a little bit, "oh, now you're just like everyone else", but that's ok, that's totally fine. Griffith Artworks probably just had its period, you know.

- AG Which leads me to ask, what was your sense of the university art museum network? Some of the university art museums throughout Australia have been around in terms of collections indeed, but also gallery spaces and different kinds of programming and residency activities. Did you have a sense of a network at that time?
- BJ Well, CAUMAC started when I was at Griffith Artworks - that's the Council of Australian University Art Museums... I'm not getting the full acronym there. But, they were important.
- AG Do you mean UAMA?
- BJ Oh yes, so, it was called C-A-U-M-A-C.
- AG Council of Australian University Museums.
- BJ Yes, so maybe they were museums and art galleries or something? Museums and collections, maybe? Anyway, so it's shifted but that was vital. A lot of the issues that we faced at Griffith, and I'm sure still face, are common to a lot of universities, as I was saying before. They all have art collections and most of them don't know why. So, the universities are struggling for the same reasons, but I do think universities do provide a very special platform within the art museum environment, different to regional galleries, different to our state galleries, different to the national galleries, and so on. They're a particular platform and they can take more risks, they can be more ideas based, they can be more intellectual, for what the university affords them- the environment affords them. They can lead the art form practice and the exhibition practice in many ways. We did get support from that group, and it was welcomed by us, definitely.
- AG Do you remember particular institutions that were helpful at that time? I think Flinders University Art Museum also has quite an interesting video and more conceptually based collection., Do you remember those networks?
- BJ Yes, is that where Leigh Hobba is? No, he's in Tasmania. He invited me to write an essay for his video art show that he curated. I don't think any particular universities are jumping into my mind, no.
- AG And much of an interaction with University of Queensland's collecting, or the art museum itself, rather than the teaching faculty?

- BJ Not really. I guess we defined ourselves in opposition in a sense, because I always regarded their collection as a very good painting collection, like very predominantly about painting. I guess because I studied with Nancy and knew the collection at that time, and she was shopping for the collection, she was acquiring the works and showing, so I saw all the works she was acquiring. So when I moved to Griffith it was just so different, it was very different. So, I think in some ways, it was in opposition perhaps that we defined ourselves. I'm not sure, but I mean not to say that... they just had bigger, more bucks, they could buy the paintings, and good work you know, no problem there, but yeah, interesting difference.
- AG What about QUT? I mean they themselves opened a gallery on the city campus. What was the interaction like with QUT, who late 90's, early 2000's also opened a university art museum space, repurposing their Chancellery Building in the city campus, Gardens Point.
- BJ Yeah, I don't know that we actually directly did much with them. QUT, in university terms, were always considered the competition, because Griffith wasn't a sandstone university, we didn't compete with UQ, so we competed with QUT, and just in marketing university speak. But we're more colleagues in the arts, than competitors, so I don't think there was really any of that much going on. Steven Rainbird was at QUT, and I think he had maybe a little bit of early work pre-me on the collection at Griffith, cause it's such a small handful of people at that time, we sort of all knew each other, I guess we're all just growing up at the same time, making canvases, building buildings, building galleries at the same time because Brisbane was doing that.
- AG It's often in the last few minutes of an interview where you just get such interesting content by the end as we just did, in terms of the interaction with other universities and QUT and UQ, that's all just fascinating. Well, thank you Beth, we really appreciate it. It's so invaluable to have this kind of information and knowledge. As universities can be, all sorts of water under the bridge and different personalities and different interactions but what stands and what remains is the collection.
- BJ For sure, yeah.
- AG So, thank you.
- BJ That's my pleasure, Angela. Thanks for having me.

*Supporting research and questions for this interview were compiled by Michael Barnett.